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Belpork Integrated chain monitoring

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COMPARED TO 2011
THE USE OF
BROAD-SPECTRUM
ANTIBIOTICS FELL BY

79%

It's not a sin **to eat meat**

We had a hot summer in Europe. And as the days heated, so did the discussions about climate change. Once again, the meat sector was presented as the major culprit with regard to global warming. Self-proclaimed do-gooders wanted to halve the total number of livestock or introduce a meat tax. Because, dear consumer, it's a sin to eat meat!

But the heated discussions are rarely scientifically underpinned. The facts speak for themselves. The greenhouse gas emissions of livestock farming are only a limited share of all emissions. So it is nonsense that we can "eat our way out of the climate problem by replacing meat".

However, the meat sector is not avoiding the challenge. On the contrary. All kinds of innovations that have been achieved in the past few years show that the entire chain continues to become more sustainable as a result of efficiency gains.

Not only improving the emission level of greenhouse gases, but also reducing the use of antibiotics is a major challenge. Which is why in 2011 AMCRA was founded, the federal knowledge centre for the use of antibiotics. In addition, in 2014 Belpork started the AB Register, first in the pig sector, later expanding it to the other types of animals. And the parties and government together drew up a covenant with clear reduction targets. Now it is 2019: time for an interim evaluation.

So there we are, with our good results and all that technical progress. Face to face with a poorly informed consumer. A consumer whose attention has become scarce and therefore expensive.

And that topic formed the challenge of our 14th round-table debate at the end of August. Rendez-vous at the Patershof, a seminar centre in a former church in the heart of beautiful Mechelen. A grand location, that helped to ensure that the debate was animated.

**"THE CONSUMER'S ATTENTION
HAS BECOME SCARCE AND
THEREFORE EXPENSIVE."**



Joris Coenen
Manager Belgian Meat Office

Belgium fights antibiotics

INITIATIVES IN BELGIAN LIVESTOCK FARMING
ACHIEVE TREMENDOUS RESULTS



The use of antibiotics has only been commonplace for around 70 years. And although in the beginning, they seemed to be the miracle drug both for human health and livestock farming, we are now being confronted with the side effects of antibiotics: bacteria are becoming resistant, with consequences for our own health. High time to restrict the use of antibiotics. During the Belgian Meat Office Round Table, Prof. dr. Jeroen Dewulf of Ghent University explains the action plan and results of the Belgian livestock farming sector.

“SINCE 2011, THE USE OF ANTIBIOTICS IN BELGIAN LIVESTOCK FARMING HAS BEEN CLOSELY MONITORED. IN THIS WAY, THE RESULTS OF THE EFFORTS MADE ARE MADE VISIBLE AND THE USE OF ANTIBIOTICS CAN BE REDUCED FASTER.”



Prof. dr. Jeroen Dewulf,
UGent.

“Every use of antibiotics means we actively select on the basis of resistance. That collateral damage is always present,” emphasises Prof. dr. Jeroen Dewulf of Ghent University. A specialist in the area of veterinary epidemiology, Prof. dr. Dewulf charts the use of antibiotics in animals and he actively participates in the programmes to reduce the use of antibiotics in Belgian livestock farming to the sustainable level.

One world, one health

“We live in a world where people, pets, livestock farming and game together are one large entity. Our actions in livestock farming therefore also have an impact on our own health. And vice versa, people can also infect animals, consider for example, the MRSA bacteria”, illustrates Prof. dr. Dewulf. “Thanks to proper monitoring, however, there are hardly antibiotics to be found in the meat we eat. The doses we can still detect are furthermore so low, that they cannot cause resistance.”

“Each application of antibiotics has the side-effect of selecting resistant bacteria. It’s unavoidable. However, we can limit this collateral damage by using antibiotics very consciously. For example, the total amount of antibiotics administered naturally plays a decisive role. But the dose and treatment duration are also important factors. What’s more, we can limit the occurrence of resistance by choosing for narrow-spectrum antibiotics instead

of broad-spectrum products. Finally, the method of administering is crucial. After all, individual treatment of animals is far more efficient than oral administration via feed or water.”

Successful action plan for reduction

Since 2011, the use of antibiotics in Belgian livestock farming has been closely monitored via the national report of BelVet-Sac, the Belgian Veterinary Surveillance of Antibacterial Consumption. In this way, the results of the efforts made are made visible and the use of antibiotics can be reduced faster. The type of antibiotics makes a major difference in the area of resistance. That is why the report looks in more depth at the types of antibiotics. This shows that the Belgian livestock farming sector is firmly committed to limiting broad-spectrum antibiotics.

AMCRA (the knowledge centre for the use of and resistance to antibiotics in animals) and Belpork (see p. 4-5) drew up concrete action plans, linked to ambitious targets to drastically reduce the use of antibiotics in Belgium by 2020. With result. AMCRA set three targets, that have already been achieved or which Belgium is well on the way to achieving (see charts).



Avoiding is the best option

“At present, the use of antibiotics is still embedded in our livestock farming. That has to change, because livestock can be farmed without antibiotics. That is why we are focussing on the general health within companies, because no antibiotics are needed in companies with healthy animals. That’s good for animal welfare, good for the fight against antibiotic resistance and good for the producer who spends less money on medicines,” summarises Prof. dr. Dewulf.

“To achieve this, we do have to urge individual companies to take action. There is a great difference in the use of antibiotics by the various companies. Through individual reports, the companies can evaluate their own progress and benchmark against colleagues. Thanks to the reports, we can also detect the major consumers. This enables us to take more appropriate action and let the use of antibiotics further reduce sharply,” concludes Prof. dr. Dewulf.

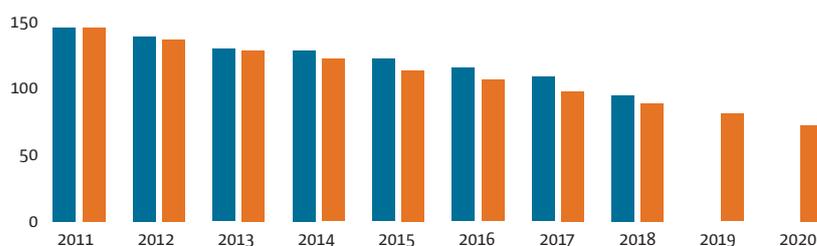
3 TARGETS FOR THE REDUCTION OF ANTIBIOTICS

1 Reduction in the total use of antibiotics by 50% in 2020 (compared to 2011)

In 2018, the administration of antibiotics per kg of biomass fell by 35.4% compared to 2011. The biomass produced in Belgium remained approximately stable, which also meant a sharp reduction in the total use of antibiotics. The prospects are that the target set (a 50% reduction in 2020) will be achieved.



AMCRA 2020 plan: total consumption (mg/kg of biomass)

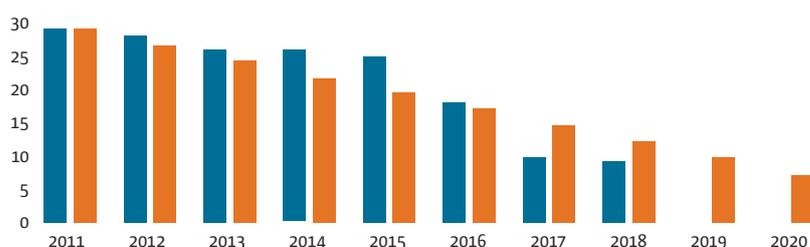


2 Reduction in medicated feed by 75% in 2020 (compared to 2011)

For medicated feed, the target was a 50% reduction by 2017. It was reached. One year later, in 2018, the livestock farmers achieved a 69.6% reduction.



AMCRA 2020 plan: premix consumption (mg/kg of biomass)



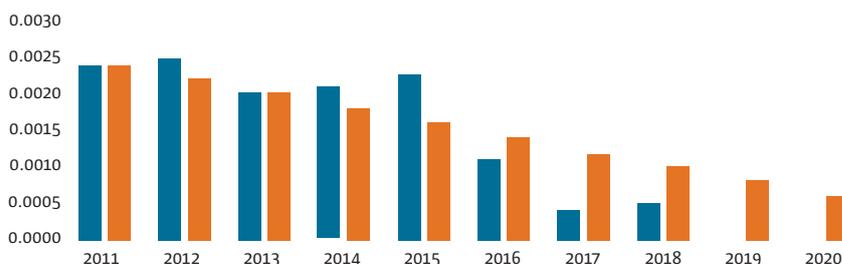
3 Reduction of the use of broad-spectrum antibiotics by 75% in 2020 (compared to 2011)

In 2018, we recorded a 79.1% reduction for broad-spectrum antibiotics. That meant the target (75% less in 2020) had already been achieved. AMCRA considers this category of antibiotics, indicated with the colour code red, as the most critical group.

The use of zinc oxide has also fallen in Belgium. As zinc oxide is often used as an alternative for antibiotics and it also causes pollution, this product is also monitored.



AMCRA 2020 plan: consumption of red molecules (mg/kg of biomass)



■ Achieved ■ Target

Source: AMCRA

Belpork vzw Integrated chain monitoring



Liesbet Pluym, coordinator and quality adviser.

Belpork unites all the stakeholders of the pork pillar, from farm to fork, to create added value in Belgian pork. Belpork creates that added value using integrated chain monitoring. Liesbet Pluym, coordinator and quality adviser explains.

Belpork's main objective is to create added value in the pork production chain. What is that added value and how is it created?

Liesbet Pluym: "Belpork creates added value in the pig pillar by amongst other things monitoring quality labels and setting up projects that reach beyond the chain. As Belpork we manage two labels: Certus (for fresh pork) and Meesterlyck (for cooked ham and dried ham). Both labels guarantee a quality, flavoursome product for the consumer that stands apart from standard pork and is competitive both on the domestic and the international markets. We achieve the difference in quality by acting on various issues such as animal welfare, (animal) health, food safety, traceability and meat quality. The accompanying specifications impose extra-statutory requirements with regard to these issues for each link in the pig chain. In this way, everyone in the chain does their bit to arrive at a high-quality product.

In addition, we support scientific projects and set up our own projects such to monitor the use of antibiotics. The result of these projects is then included in the specifications if relevant. Although, as Belpork, we are pioneers in setting up these projects for the pig chain, we always ensure that they can be expanded to other sectors. For example, in 2017 AB Register project was expanded to include the poultry sector and in 2018 the dairy sector so that our database is now also used for those two sectors."

"Belpork always aims to play a leading role"

The projects that Belpork sets up or participates in, are they relevant for the consumer?

Liesbet Pluym: “Belpork always aims to play a leading role. We strive to set up projects that revolve around what is important to consumers—such as animal health, resistance to antibiotics, animal welfare and sustainability. Naturally this changes over time. When Belpork started back in 2000, food safety and traceability were very important issues for the consumer. The establishment of the Certus quality label and the development of an own tracking system, TRACY, followed from that. Later, resistance to antibiotics became a key theme and in 2014 Belpork set up the very first database to register the use of antibiotics in the pig sector: the AB Register. At the moment there are ongoing projects concerning animal welfare and animal health.”

How does Belpork’s herd health plan differ from the company veterinary support stipulated by law?

Liesbet Pluym: “The statutory company veterinary support stipulates that the company vet visits the company six times a year, so every two months. The vet visits the livestock farmer, discusses any problems and examines bottlenecks. Together with the livestock farmer, the vet discusses what action can be taken to resolve those problems and bottlenecks. However, this company veterinary support is not compulsory.

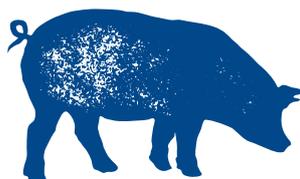
Belpork included the company veterinary support in the Certus specifications so that it is compulsory for the participating livestock farmers. Livestock farmers with high use of antibiotics are furthermore under the Certus specifications obliged to draw up a plan of approach. In this way, Belpork wants to accompany the companies to a higher level of health and a more responsible use of antibiotics.

Taking appropriate action fast as soon as problems occur or too much use is made of antibiotics is a good step in the right direction but not enough. In addition, we want to tackle the company veterinary support in a more systematic way. That is why we are currently developing an online tool with an external partner. That tool can be used by livestock farmers and their vets to simply register the findings during a veterinary visit, award tasks, measure results and follow-up on developments. By offering a practical tool, we want to stimulate dialogue between the livestock farmer and their vet to thus proactively promote the health of the pigs at all the companies, regardless of the current level of use of antibiotics.”

The Welfare Initiative is a collaboration with the Bristol university. Why this initiative and collaboration?

Liesbet Pluym: “Animal welfare has already been included in Belpork’s quality scheme but we want to focus even more on this and develop it further. To this end, we evaluate whether the current animal welfare standards are still relevant and whether the specifications can be expanded with additional standards that are also practically feasible for the livestock farmers. We also carried out a screening of the various links in the chain with regard to animal welfare and we plan audits with inspectors who are specially trained in the area of animal welfare.

To this end we collaborate closely with Bristol university. Why? Because they have international experience with quality systems and are renowned in the area of welfare assessment at company



“Belpork’s strength is integrated chain monitoring”

level. The changes to our Certus specifications have been drafted in collaboration with them and they also trained the inspectors. This occurred on the basis of the principle of ‘train-the-trainer’. In this way, trained inspectors can pass on their knowledge to other inspectors and keep their own knowledge—up to par without staff from Bristol university having to come to Belgium each time.

The results of this project will be phased into the Certus quality scheme. The additional standards ensuing from the evaluation of the specifications and screening of the primary sector will be implemented on 1 January 2020. This amongst other things concerns registering the mortality of the various categories of animals, the evaluation of tail biting, the assessment of exploratory behaviour of the pigs and a compulsory culling policy for which Belpork will draw up a basic version. This project will continue into 2020 and will be further implemented in phases in the coming years.”



WHAT IS CERTUS?

Certus is a quality label for pork, intended to create added value. The specifications contain specific requirements for each link in the chain in addition to the existing Belgian and European legislation. External, independent inspection and certification bodies ensure that the specifications are enforced. Approximately 60% of pig producers in Belgium are Certus certified.

✓ AB Register

WHAT IS AB REGISTER?

The AB Register is an online monitoring system to register the use of antibiotics at farm level in the pig industry. It was established in 2014 by Belpork, the first monitoring programme for the use of antibiotics in Belgium. In 2017 and 2018 the database was expanded for use in the poultry and dairy sectors respectively. For this reason, in 2018 the management of the AB Register was housed in a new organisation, AB Register vzw. Belpork is one of the founding members.



Colruyt, an innovative retailer.

With Fine Food Meat, Colruyt has its own **STATE OF THE ART** meat cutting plant where it processes all the meat for its various branches.

Fine Food Meat

100%

BELGIAN MEAT



21,000 BULLS

6,500 CALVES



450,000 PIGS

36,000 M² PRODUCTION SURFACE AREA

1,000 EMPLOYEES



At Fine Food Meat, only 100% Belgian beef, pork and veal are processed. The site has a production area of 36,000 m² and just under 1,000 employees. Every year, 21,000 bulls, 6,500 calves and 450,000 pigs are processed into consumer products.

Colruyt strives for long-term relationships with its suppliers and whilst looking for innovations. Recently, Colruyt established a 100% Belgian, organic pig chain. To this end, Colruyt is cooperating with Biovar that will supply the pigs and with Delavi that will transport, slaughter and cut the pigs. Colruyt itself will then handle the further processing into consumer products.

About Colruyt

Colruyt Group is the umbrella of the Colruyt retailer, the wholesale and foodservice activities and in addition a few other activities such as petrol stations. Retail, which represents 83% of the group's turnover (EUR 9.43 bn) is the main sector. Colruyt has a 32.2% market share of the Belgian retail landscape. The company has evolved from a baker into a wholesaler via a discounter into a full-blown retailer in 1997.



Communicating in times of attention economy

These are difficult times for brands and companies. Since the arrival of the Internet and above all social media, we are flooded with information. However, the influx of information means that there is a constant clamoring for the consumer's attention. Convincing him of your message thus becomes a real struggle. And how to bring across a positive story about a product battling with a negative image?

What people say vs. what they do

There is a great difference between what people say and what they do. What's more, there is a gap between the consumer's trust, his expectations and his behaviour. On the one hand there is the conscious citizen who attaches great importance to the environment and animal welfare. And on the other hand, is a consumer whose decisions are frequently dictated by his wallet.

brand of sustainable sneakers, Veja, but also Tony's Chocoloney that has made slavery-free chocolate the reason for its existence, are good examples of this. Leading brands, such as Coca-Cola, on the other hand are increasingly the subject of condemnation.

What can the meat sector do?

The meat sector also has a poor image to handle. How can the sector succeed in convincing the consumer that quality has improved? By focussing on four areas:

1. Be authentic.

As a sector show that you are totally going for improvement and be aware that the consumer will not tolerate errors. If something negative happens, it will reflect on the entire sector.

2. Communicate an unambiguous, clear story.

Transmit it to the consumer through various channels.

3. Do not equate a quality label with a premium product.

In the meantime, consumers consider reliable quality self-evident.

4. Involve the consumer in what you do and let him understand the 'why' himself.

Make the consumer aware of how that piece of meat got to his plate so that he starts to respect the product.

“**How can the sector convince the consumer that quality has improved?**”

In a survey in Germany, 85% of the respondents declared that they were willing to pay more for meat products if the money went directly to the farmer or to animal welfare. In Belgium, too, animal welfare, food safety and the reduction of greenhouse gases are gaining in importance as criteria for purchasing meat. So the modern consumer is far more concerned with the world around him than was previously the case. However, we do not always see the same trend in the consumer's behaviour.

The importance of 'Why'

The most important consumer trends appearing are awareness and authenticity. Consumers demand that companies consciously handle their 'why' or reason for existence. What's more, the consumer wants companies to be authentic, not just in their communication but also in their actions. Practice what you preach is no longer an empty slogan. The



Erik Lenaers is Director Integrated Media Strategy at the public relations agency Weber Shandwick.