

I would like to thank the organizers for providing me with the opportunity to provide the civil society or consumer advocacy organization view on antibiotic resistance and its relationship to animal agriculture. We have heard about the first reports of transferable colistin resistance starting last November in China with its detection in pigs, meat, and sick humans. Just last month we learned about the first detection in a human patient and a pig in the US. Colistin resistance is just the last in a long line of resistance that has caused concern. Prior to 2000 the focus was on resistance to ampicillin and tetracyclines the drugs that were first used to treat infections you were likely to get from food animals. Then around 2000 we became concerned with fluoroquinolone resistance and cephalosporin resistance the drugs that had replaced the older drugs when resistance made them no longer the first choice for infections coming from animals. Now with resistance to fluoroquinolones and cephalosporins we are concerned about resistance to carbapenems and colistin. Antibiotic use is the primary driver of the spread of resistance so addressing use is an important part of controlling use. The AMR review makes some important recommendations that we support.

Setting targets for reductions in the use of antibiotics is important but we need to be careful that the reductions do not cause disparate impacts and harm small producers or create unfair advantages for some countries. Restrictions on antibiotics use are also important. While we support restrictions none of the groups that I work with argue that antibiotics should never be used on farm. Instead we recommend that certain drugs and uses be restricted. First we need a way to come to an international consensus on what drugs should not be used in food animals for any reason. I believe that colistin is one and carbapenems and linezolid are others. In addition to drugs that should not be used at all there should also be restrictions on types of use. This must go beyond growth promoters and include drugs used for disease prevention or routine prophylaxis. The example from the Netherlands shows that a growth promoting ban along with veterinary oversight can be put in place with very little impact on antibiotic use.

Reduction targets and restrictions on use require strong international standards. The Codex Alimentarius is meeting later this month to consider new work on antibiotics. I hope that this new work does move forward. In addition to strong international recommendations, countries need to put in place appropriate regulations. A recent survey by the OIE found that 110/130 countries do not have adequate regulation of veterinary drugs.

Finally transparency in food production is needed. My organization and the groups I work with have been involved with campaigns to urge retailers, primarily fast food companies, to commit to requiring meat suppliers to use less antibiotics. These types of commitments only work when there is transparency around use. We feel that corporate action supports and helps move forward needed regulation.

Monitoring is important as well of both resistance in food bacteria and of amounts of drugs used. Monitoring should be used to support action.

Closing comments:

The FAO speaker is correct that we need to be concerned about people living in close contact with livestock facilities. As farms get bigger the risk also are larger. We also believe that there are certain resistant bacteria that should not be allowed in food. Carbapenem resistant bacteria is one. Finally we think that instead of a global awareness campaign, awareness can better be raised by empowering civil society organizations to help promote change.