Antimicrobial resistance is a serious concern in Europe and worldwide. We all have a role to play in controlling and reducing this problem and maintaining the effective treatment of bacterial infections in animals and humans in the future.

In March 2012, European farmers and agri-cooperatives unanimously agreed on an ambitious roadmap which emphasised science-based discussions and responsible use of antimicrobials in its actions. Improving animal health through good hygiene, proper feed, an appropriate animal environment and good management are at the top of farmers’ agendas. However, even with the best care, animals can still become ill, and appropriate therapy should be available.

In relation to critically important antibiotics, European farmers believe that third and fourth generation cephalosporins and fluoroquinolones should be excluded as a first drug of choice for clinical diseases in individual animals/groups of animals unless clinical history or specific antibiograms indicate that they are the only way forward. This does presume, however, that a broad and effective diagnostic system will be available across all EU Member States. Furthermore, increased transparency regarding the use of antimicrobials is essential, and a harmonised system of data collection for epidemiological surveillance of antimicrobial use across all EU Member States must be made available. This official monitoring would be carried out on in an aggregated manner by a veterinarian/pharmacist, and should be based on veterinary prescriptions. Farmers, however, would still be obliged to record all treatments for on farm control and to facilitate post-treatment evaluation and possible readjustments.

Copa-Cogeca supports setting up a voluntary and farm-based health management planning system to monitor, manage, measure and prevent health problems in the herd as a best practice tool to encourage high health status among farmed animals.

European farmers are also active in the European Platform for the Responsible Use of Medicines in Animals (EPRUMA), a multi-stakeholder platform linking best practices with animal health and public health. The platform works on broad principles at EU level, which in turn can be tailored nationally to reflect local specificities in EU Member States.