

Resistance AND Responsibility

Antibiotic use in supermarket supply chains

Most of the UK's leading supermarkets have commitments to sourcing animal products produced only with responsible antibiotic use. However, these usually only cover some or all of their own-brand animal produce and frequently only that which is of UK origin.

Progress has been made since the Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics published our last supermarket assessment in 2019. All supermarkets have now prohibited their own-brand suppliers from using antibiotics for routine

disease prevention and several supermarkets have increased the level of detail in their policies. However, there is still a lack of data on actual antibiotic usage being published and still virtually no information on usage by farming system.

Key findings of the report

All ten leading supermarkets have public antibiotic policies. All supermarkets have a ban on most or all of their UK own-brand suppliers from using antibiotics for routine disease prevention. In 2019, only five supermarkets had such a ban.

- M&S and Iceland are the only supermarkets which apply their antibiotic policies to all their suppliers of animal-derived foods. Iceland's policy covers own-brand and branded produce and M&S only sells own-brand animal produce.
- The Co-op, Iceland, M&S, Sainsbury's and Waitrose make clear that their policies apply to all their own-brand supply chains, including fresh, frozen, processed and imported produce.
- ASDA, Aldi, Lidl, Morrisons and Tesco have policies which do not clearly cover all their own-brand produce. These policies often only cover UK-sourced own-brand fresh produce, such as raw meat, fresh milk and fresh eggs and do not explicitly include animal-derived ingredients in own-brand ready meals and processed food or imported food.
- M&S and Morrisons are the only supermarkets which have banned the use of colistin, a last-resort antibiotic used to treat seriously ill people. Sainsbury's and Waitrose suppliers also do not use this antibiotic, although no ban is included in their policy.
- M&S, Tesco and Waitrose are the only supermarkets to publish comprehensive, up-to-date data on the total antibiotic use in their supply chains. Morrisons and Sainsbury's indicate whether their usage is above or below target levels in each species, but mostly they do not give exact figures.
- Very little data is reported by farming system, to show the level of antibiotic use in intensive, free-range, organic or pasture-fed systems. M&S reports some of this information for their 2020 free-range chicken supply and Asda have published data for caged, colony and free-range egg production from 2018.
- Supermarkets need to ensure that the standards they set apply equally to imported and branded food. This is particularly important now that the UK government is seeking to reach new trade deals with non-EU countries which often have weaker regulations governing farm antibiotic use.

	1. Policy publicly available	2. New for 2021: Policy covers all own brand products	3. New for 2021: Policy covers all branded products	4. Bans routine prevention	5. Does the policy restrict the use of HPCiAs?	6. Bans colistin	7. Monitors antibiotic use	8. Publishes antibiotic-usage data	9. Publishes data by farming system	10. Reduction strategy in place	11. New for 2021: Antibiotic use reduction targets	12. New for 2021: Policy covers imported products inc ingredients
	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
	✓	✗	✗	✓	—	✗	—	—	—	✗	✗	✗
	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	—	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
	✓	—	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	—	✗	✓	✓	✗
	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✓
	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	✗	✓	✓	✗
	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	—	✓	—	✗	✓	✓	—
	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗
	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	—	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	—

Results from November online survey of UK adults*



The Alliance has launched a petition asking supermarkets to include ALL animal produce and products in their antibiotics policies.

Sign the petition here

Read the full report here

Watch the campaign video here

Read the press release here

* All figures are from YouGov UK. Total sample size was 2105 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 5th - 7th November 2021. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

Supported by the Oak Foundation

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