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PRESS RELEASE

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Ensure the availability of antibiotics in human and veterinary medicine while preserving the environment: a government priority

At the request of the French Government, and in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), the European Commission has agreed to fund a project aimed at offering practical solutions to combat the unavailability of certain antibiotics in human and veterinary medicine in France, while avoiding environmental pollution during their production.

This **three-year** project in human health, animal health and the environment (in line with the "One Health" approach) will start in November 2020 and be carried out in close collaboration with all the French stakeholders in the human, veterinary and environmental sectors. It is being co-funded by the European Union through the [Structural Reform Support Programme \(SRSP\)](#). The European Commission's Directorate General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM) and the WHO will provide technical assistance to the French Government¹.

The unavailability of essential medicines has become a major concern in France and around the world in recent years, a problem that has been aggravated and spotlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Antibiotics, one of the pillars of medicine, are particularly affected by issues of shortage or lack of availability, especially those products whose patents have fallen into the public domain, whether in human or veterinary medicine. This is due to multiple, often combined factors, such as the complexity of production lines and supply channels, or the maintenance of marketing authorisations. The unavailability of some antibiotics has serious consequences: when an essential antibiotic is no longer available, human and animal health professionals often have to resort to second-line antibiotics, which may be less effective, more toxic, or at higher risk of antimicrobial resistance.

Progress on this ambitious project will be shared regularly, in particular with all the Member States of the European Union, in order to provide input for international discussions on this subject of global importance.

This project's activities contribute to implementation of:

- the [interministerial roadmap for controlling antimicrobial resistance](#) published on 21 November 2016, and more specifically the following actions:
 - Action 24: "**Maintain the effectiveness of the therapeutic arsenal** by adopting incentive measures that allow existing antibiotics to be retained in the market"
 - Action 37: "**At European level, make a proposal** to set up a specific framework dedicated to developing products that contribute to controlling antimicrobial resistance"
 - Action 40: "In collaboration with the WHO and the OIE, **develop a network for monitoring the emergence and spread of resistance to antibiotics** (in humans, animals and the environment) **in low-income countries**, by relying on existing networks"
- the Ministry of Solidarity and Health's [2019-2022 national roadmap on drug shortages](#),
- the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's [Ecoantibio 2 plan](#): "Maintain the therapeutic supply of antibiotics" (Action 16),
- the [priority research programme on antimicrobial resistance](#) set up at the instigation of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Solidarity and Health, and the General Secretariat for Investment.

France is thus pursuing a dynamic policy in the fight against antimicrobial resistance, designed mainly to reduce overall consumption of antibiotics. The broad prescription of antibiotics in humans and animals, for both curative and preventive purposes, could lead to the emergence of bacterial resistance through mechanisms that are transmitted through the environment or food to humans or animals. In recent years, therefore, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food has successfully implemented the multi-year Ecoantibio plan to reduce the use of antibiotics in veterinary medicine, with the development of alternatives and the reinforcement of good practices (a 39% reduction in veterinary antibiotics for the first Ecoantibio plan, 2012-2016).

PRESS LIAISON

Ministry of Solidarity and Health

presse-dqs@sante.gouv.fr - Tel.: +33 (0)1 40 56 84 00

Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation

presse-mesri@recherche.gouv.fr - Tel.: +33 (0)1 55 55 99 12 / 86 90

Ministry of Agriculture and Food

ministere.presse@agriculture.gouv.fr - Tel.: +33 (0)1 49 55 60 11

ANSM

presse@ansm.sante.fr

Aude Rodriguez - Alessandro Evola - Eymeric Sudreau - Tel.: +33 (0)1 55 87 30 22 / 30 66 / 30 33

ANSES: presse@anses.fr - Tel.: +33 (0)1 49 77 22 26 / (0)1 49 77 13 77

ⁱ Ministry of Ecological Transition; Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Recovery (in conjunction with the strategic committee for the health industries and technologies sector, as part of its action against antimicrobial resistance); Ministry of Solidarity and Health; Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation; Ministry of Agriculture and Food; French Health Products Safety Agency (ANSM); French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES); French Agency for Veterinary Medicinal Products (ANSES-ANMV).

