Rules on prohibited antimicrobials in imported animal products

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EU bans use in food-producing animals of antimicrobials to promote growth or increase yield, and of certain antimicrobials reserved for human treatments

Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2023/905 of 27 February 2023 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2019/6 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the application of the prohibition of use of certain antimicrobial medicinal products in animals or products of animal origin exported from third countries into the Union

Update

Regulation 2023/905 imposes restrictions on the use of antimicrobials in live animals and animal products exported to the EU. It bans the use of antimicrobials as growth promoters or to increase yield, and the use of certain antimicrobials reserved for human treatments. These measures extend the restrictions that apply to animals reared in the EU to include exported live animals and food of animal origin to the EU, reinforcing the fight against antimicrobial resistance.

In order to export such products to the EU from **3 September 2026**, countries have to be included in the official list of authorised exporting countries (confirming they are compliant with the new antimicrobial rules), and must use the updated official certificates that have an attestation of compliance signed by their competent authorities.

Impacted products

Livestock and animal products for human consumption.

Exceptions are:

- gelatine, collagen, highly refined products, composite products, wild animals, and products from insects, frogs, snails, and reptiles

- animals and food of animal origin in transit not placed on the EU market

- animals or products of animal origin not intended for human consumption or when the destination has not been decided at entry into the EU

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- samples from food of animal origin for product analysis and quality testing not placed on the market.

What is changing?

Regulation 2019/6 (Art. 107) bans the use of antimicrobials for growth promotion in the EU. Regulation 2022/1255 complements 2019/6 by laying down the list of antimicrobials reserved for human treatment in the EU (and thus are prohibited from being used in food-producing animals). Non-EU countries (2019/6, Art. 118) must:

- show evidence of compliance with the prohibition on antimicrobials; compliant countries will be placed on the list of authorised exporting countries
- confirm compliance by signing a new specific attestation for each consignment, which must be added to the official certificates already required for animal product exports.

Regulation 2023/905 enforces these rules to animals or products of animal origin exported to the EU. The EU implemented these rules by establishing a list of authorised countries that have demonstrated that they meet EU requirements, and providing revised Model health certificates that include a specific attestation on antimicrobials.

The new rules will not apply to products in transit in the EU, or to gelatine, collagen, highly refined products, composite products, wild animals, insects, frogs, snails, or reptiles (2023/905, Art 1(3)).

Why?

Antimicrobial (antibiotic) resistance is viewed as a major threat to global health. The EU seeks to ensure prudent and responsible use of antimicrobials in animals. It prohibits the use in animals of certain antimicrobials that are used to treat humans, to ensure their continued effectiveness. Antimicrobials cannot be used either as growth promoters or to increase yield.

Timeline

The new rules apply from **3 September 2026**.

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What are the major implications for exporting countries?

Only countries that can guarantee exported animals and food of animal origin meet the EU's antimicrobial requirements will be able to continue exporting them to the EU. From 3 September 2026, non-EU country authorities will need to be on the list of authorised exporting countries and must certify that each consignment of food of animal origin exported to the EU have not been treated with the prohibited antimicrobials.

Recommended Actions

Non-EU countries exporting livestock and food of animal origin to the EU need to have in place a system that can guarantee prohibited antimicrobials are not used in goods exported to the EU market during the whole lifetime of the animals. It can be either by legislation mirroring the EU ban or by channeling the production of animals intended to be used through a split system (or segregated system) for food exported to the EU. Coordination with representatives of the livestock and animal products sector is recommended to adapt control systems and the legislation.

Particular attention must be paid to products that have a long cycle of production (beef, casings, processed products, etc.). To be able to export such products to the EU from 3 September 2026, the guarantees must be in place **from the birth** of the food-producing animals, which may mean, for example, a period of 2 years or more prior to export. If a legislation is in application in the country before the birth of the animals, the guarantee is given by this legislation. If not, other guarantees must be put in place in order to prevent the export of non-compliant commodities.

The guarantees given in the declaration will be checked by the EU via its health and food audits (see Health and food audits and analysis programme 2025).

Background

To fight antimicrobial resistance and combat its global spread, Regulation 2019/6, Art. 118(1) established that the following provisions are also to be applied to operators from non-EU countries exporting animals and certain animal products for human consumption to the European Union:

- the prohibition of using antimicrobials to promote growth and increase yield
- the prohibition of using antimicrobials reserved for the treatment of specific infections in humans, as listed in the Annex of Implementing Regulation 2022/1255 (see List of antimicrobials reserved for treatment of certain infections in humans); the criteria for which antimicrobials are reserved for human use are established in Regulation (EU) 2021/1760.

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The list of non-EU countries, and the adaptation of the official certificates, fall under the legal framework of the Official Controls Regulation 2017/625 (Arts. 126 and 127).

Resources

European Commission (2024) State of play concerning the implementation of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2023/905. Powerpoint presentation, 6 March.

European Commission: Regulation (EU) 2019/6 – Delegated Acts: "Detailed rules regarding animals or products of animal origin imported into the Union (Article 118 (2))"

Regulation 2024/399 as regards model certificates for the entry into the Union of consignments of certain products of animal origin and certain categories of animals

Regulation (EU) 2022/1255 designating antimicrobials or groups of antimicrobials reserved for treatment of certain infections in humans

Regulation (EU) 2021/1760 establishing the criteria for the designation of antimicrobials to be reserved for the treatment of certain infections in humans

Regulation 2019/6 on veterinary medicinal products

Sources

Regulation 2023/905 as regards the application of the prohibition of use of certain antimicrobial medicinal products in animals or products of animal origin exported from third countries into the Union

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