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Modernizing the antimicrobial residue monitoring programs for pig meat in Europe – The balance between flexibility and harmonization

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ABSTRACT

The EU Residue Directive is currently being renegotiated. One key question is how to balance flexibility and harmonization. To address this, we reviewed Danish, Dutch and Swiss monitoring programs for antimicrobial residues in pig meat using the recently developed RISKSUR design tool. The results identified variation regarding number of surveillance components, reactions to suspect and positive findings, prevention activities, diagnostic method, sample matrix, use of targeted/risk-based approaches, and sampling frequency. This variability could largely be explained by differences in overall surveillance objective: Denmark and the Netherlands have a large pork export and higher need for documenting compliance with legislation, whereas Switzerland only trading with EU has a lower need for spending resources on monitoring. It is recommended that the future EU Directive should set standards for monitoring to ensure a basic level of monitoring enabling comparison of results. Minimum handling of carcasses with residues above maximum residue level should be harmonized. Risk-based sampling should be encouraged, and results from risk-based and random sampling should be reported separately. Harmonization is unnecessary for number of surveillance components (but a private component is recommended), prevention, diagnostic method, and way of sampling – assuming that the diagnostic method and sampling matrix combination have sufficient validity.