



# Antibiotic reduction schemes in the French poultry industry:

## Choosing the right claim for the right market

### Context & Methodology

Following the first French national action plan EcoAntibio (2012-2016) which has two main goals; 25% reduction of antibiotic (AB) use in veterinary medicine in 5 years, and a reduction of the use of critical antibiotics (fluoroquinolones and cephalosporin), several French broiler companies started to communicate on their antibiotic reduction schemes.

In the scope of the ROADMAP project, six interviews were conducted within the broiler sector including 3 producers' organizations (PO), 1 PO president (poultry farmer), 1 hatchery and 1 retailer. The purpose of these interviews was to understand how the aforementioned private standards work and what their roles are in the reduction of antimicrobial (AM) use.

### Problem

AB-free labels lead to little price premiums according to stakeholders. Considering the importance of antimicrobial resistance, how producers' organizations can commit to reduce their AB use in an economically sound way?

### Solution

Action plans to reduce AM use should follow different specifications depending on the production system and the client (market) demand. There are several types of claims concerning AB use in the French broiler sector such as:

- "Raised without antibiotic treatment" labels from national brand aiming at the retail market.
- PO committing to reach 90% of untreated flocks for the retail brands.
- PO committing to the removal of fluoroquinolones and colistin aiming at the catering market.

### Outcome

- In France, the "raised without antibiotic treatment" labels are usually included in a broader labelling approach (Label Rouge, Animal Welfare, GMO-free...) and farmers receive a price premium, however it is hard to differentiate the bonus allocated to health from the bonus allocated to welfare or feed.
- In the case of a less restrictive antimicrobial reduction scheme (ban of colistin, 90% treated flocks), there is generally little to no price premium on the product.
- Stakeholders generally involve in an AB reduction scheme or a label since it is a technically feasible strategy to differentiate from competitors or to secure market sales.

### Authors

Jonathan Hercule, Nathalie Rousset  
 ITAVI (French technical institute for poultry)

Contact email: [rousset@itavi.asso.fr](mailto:rousset@itavi.asso.fr)

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### Images



Example of labels.





- However, interviewed stakeholders from the poultry sector agree that there won't be a development of antibiotic-free claims in the near future since the market is mature, which is confirmed by low price premiums.
- A generalization of AB-free labels is often ruled out by stakeholders given the high health risks in conventional systems and the high price competition on poultry products at EU level.
- Nevertheless, action plans implemented to reduce AB use have resulted in higher than expected results which is confirmed by the sharp decrease of AB use at national level following the first EcoAntibio plan.

### Practical recommendations

- The level of investment in biosecurity and buildings (water quality, litter, floor...) seems to play a big part in reducing the AB use in conventional systems. In the case where farmers can switch between AB-free and conventional production, co-benefits of the "AB-free label" investments (training, biosecurity...) has been reported for conventional production by one stakeholder.
- Implementation of action plans or labels revealed a psychological barrier to avoid treatment linked to the natural peak of chick mortality occurring within the first days of the cycle, highlighting the importance of farmers' and technical advisors' training and experience on these issues.
- First results from farmers' interviews show that a high level of technicity is required to raise AB-free birds with Ross 308 breeds in conventional systems. Therefore, it should be noted that these labels don't address all farms and are involving financial risks in some production systems.

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