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His Excellency Phung Duc Tien
Vice Minister
Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
A2 Building, 2 Ngoc Ha Street,
Hanoi, Vietnam

Re: Recommendations to drafting circular on management of veterinary drugs containing narcotic substances, pre-substances, additive substances and psychotropic substances; prescription and vet prescription

Dear Vice Minister Tien:

Greetings from US-ASEAN Business Council! On behalf of the Council and its members, I would like to wish you the best of health. We are writing today to provide recommendations to the esteemed Drafting Committee of the Decree providing guidelines to implement the Animal Husbandry Law. As you already know, the Council represents U.S. livestock companies, feed mills and veterinary drug manufacturers/dealers, all of which operate throughout ASEAN countries, including Vietnam.

We understand that regulations are necessary to manage and implement veterinary oversight and the prescribing of veterinary medicines or drugs, especially in veterinary drugs containing narcotic substances, pre-substances, additive substances, psychotropic substances and medically important antibiotics. The US-ABC fully supports the urgency shown by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development ("MARD") to promulgate such a Circular.

Having participated in a few consultative workshops on this particular veterinary prescription Circular, we would like to send our appreciation to you and the Drafting Committee for taking into consideration the industry's concerns on classification of anticoccidials as well as classification of antibiotics for use in livestock production in Vietnam.

We have reviewed the draft Circular on veterinary prescription publicly available on the website of the Department of Animal Health ("DAH") and would like to provide our recommendations as well as seek your clarification on the draft Circular through this letter:

1. Clause 2, Article 14:

"2. Only prescribe veterinary drugs to prevent diseases for young cattle and poultry when determination results of disease risk are available; except for veterinary drugs containing active ingredients belonging to Critically Important Antibiotic group as prescribed in Appendix IX of this Circular."

According to this draft Circular, prevention use of the Critically Important Antibiotic Group ("CIA Group") shall be banned from the effective date of this Circular. We note our concern that this language is not consistent with the timeline stated to phase out prevention use of antibiotics in the draft Decree providing guidelines to implement that CIA Group. The draft Decree states that the CIA Group shall be banned for prevention use in young animals from 1st January 2021.

The industry seeks clear guidance and a consistent timeline for the use of the CIA Group for prevention of disease in young animals, especially when the Animal Husbandry Law and its Decree to implement this Law come into effect in early 2020. We request that Your Excellency and the Drafting Committee consider keeping the deadline for prevention use of this CIA Group until 31st December 2020 which would allow producers to plan and comply with their removal. Sudden removal, before the pre-published timeline will seriously affect animal health and welfare, production and business plans of companies that contribute significantly to Vietnam's economy for 2020.

2. Appendix VIII on vet prescription form:

This form, as we understand, indicates that only veterinarians from farms or animal husbandry establishments can prescribe veterinary drugs. Therefore, small, individual farms shall not have access to any veterinary drugs (antibiotics, antiviral, antiparasitic, antifungal, etc.) through commercial feed for treatment or prevention. We seek your clarification on the following issues:

- Can feedmills designate a licensed veterinarian to prescribe and distribute medicated feed to distributors and farms directly and if so, how will this process be implemented?
- How will smaller farmers have access to veterinary drugs that require prescription for both treatment and prevention?

In Vietnam, there are currently not enough qualified veterinarians. Furthermore, small and individual farms cannot afford a veterinarian. If veterinary drugs that require vet prescription are not mixed into feedmills, small and individual farms would have to mix the veterinary drugs into the feed or administer the veterinary drugs themselves. These scenarios could invoke the following consequences:

- Farmers will have to manage antibiotics regularly without veterinary oversight or guidance on safety;
- Farmers will not have guidance on how to purchase and choose antibiotics, including how to mix the antibiotics accurately;
- Inappropriate duration of antibiotics use.

All these factors increase the risk of antibiotic resistance development. Due to the low level of biosecurity from these small and individual farms, coupled with pressure from a changing climate and onset disease outbreaks, young animals are more prone to sickness, therefore resulting in higher use of antibiotics.

Considering the above, the animal husbandry sector in Vietnam consequently faces a potential increase in antibiotic resistance levels, low animal productivity, higher risk of disease outbreak, increased production costs, and low levels of food safety.

We trust you will take into account our comments on the revised draft Circular. The Council appreciates the opportunity to work with you and your officials from DAH and MARD closely. We believe that with your kind consideration, the industry can create a stable environment for business development, and development of the animal husbandry sector in Vietnam. Appropriate and scientifically supported actions will contribute to reducing antimicrobial resistance spread through the food chain and ultimately protect human health.

Many of the recommendations outlined above require more engagement between the Council, our members in the Food & Agriculture sector, and relevant MARD officials in the Department of Animal Health, and the Department of Livestock Production. The Council's upcoming series of workshops under the auspices of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the US-ABC and MARD provide a platform for these engagements. Please do not hesitate to have your staff contact the Council's Vietnam Representative, Ms. Bui Kim Thuy at tbui@usasean.org, or +84 916445678 with any requests for external technical expertise. Once again, thank you.

Sincerely,



Amb. Michael W. Michalak
Senior Vice President and
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US-ASEAN Business Council

cc: His Excellency Ha Kim Ngoc, Ambassador of Vietnam to the United States
The Honorable Daniel Kritenbrink, U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam
Department of Animal Health - MARD
Department of Livestock Production - MARD
Department of Legal Affairs - MARD
Archives