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281

Policy development to reduce antibiotic usage in Vietnam: understanding its implementation from the actors of the veterinary drug value chain perspectives

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Following the development of the National Action Plan to fight antimicrobial resistance, new policies have been issued in Vietnam to reduce the use of antibiotics in livestock production. However, to be effective, regulations need to be understood and implemented by local stakeholders. In this study, we aim to map the power dynamics between actors of the veterinary drug value chain and to identify bottlenecks in the implementation of these new antibiotic uses policies.

We conducted a stakeholder mapping and analysis through a focus group (n=12 participants) and 38 semi-structured interviews with respondents from the public, private, foreign partner sectors of the veterinary drug value chain. Based on the thematic analysis, each participant was defined in terms of their level of legitimacy, resources, connections, and power within the value chain and barriers and motivations to the implementation were identified.

From the drug value chain mapping, we found that involvement in the legislative process improved regulatory compliance by stakeholders. The differences in business sizes, legal status, and resources held by stakeholders generated the different performances in implementing the regulations then created the distance between regulations and realities. For example, large companies implemented legislation better than local stakeholders (veterinarians, farmers), who did not participate as active stakeholders in the legislative strategy. The lack of knowledge and human and technical capacity to implement regulations effectively could be explained by a lack of connection between policymakers and small to medium-scale farms.

Developing new policies is the first step toward more prudent antibiotic use. However, to achieve a change in practices, this strategy requires improving the capacities of state bodies and collaboration across sectors. It must also be combined with other locally developed solutions such as the development of cooperatives or sales channels for antibiotic-free chicken production.