Corporate food retailers, meat supply chains and the responsibilities of tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

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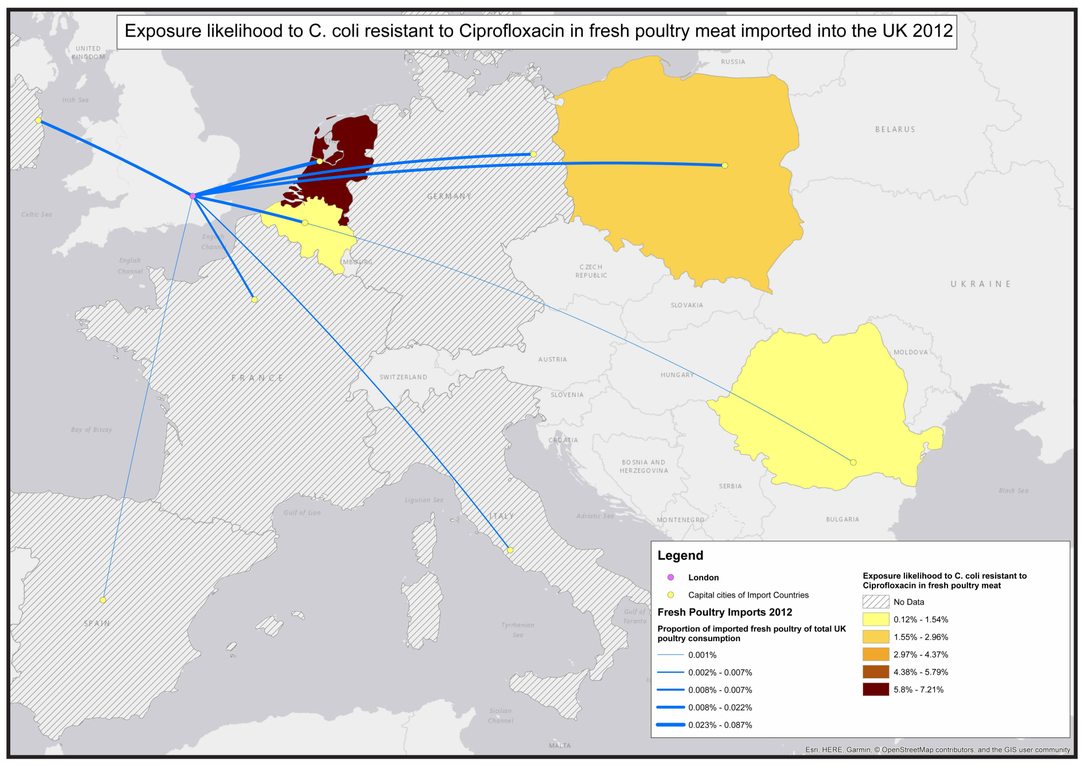
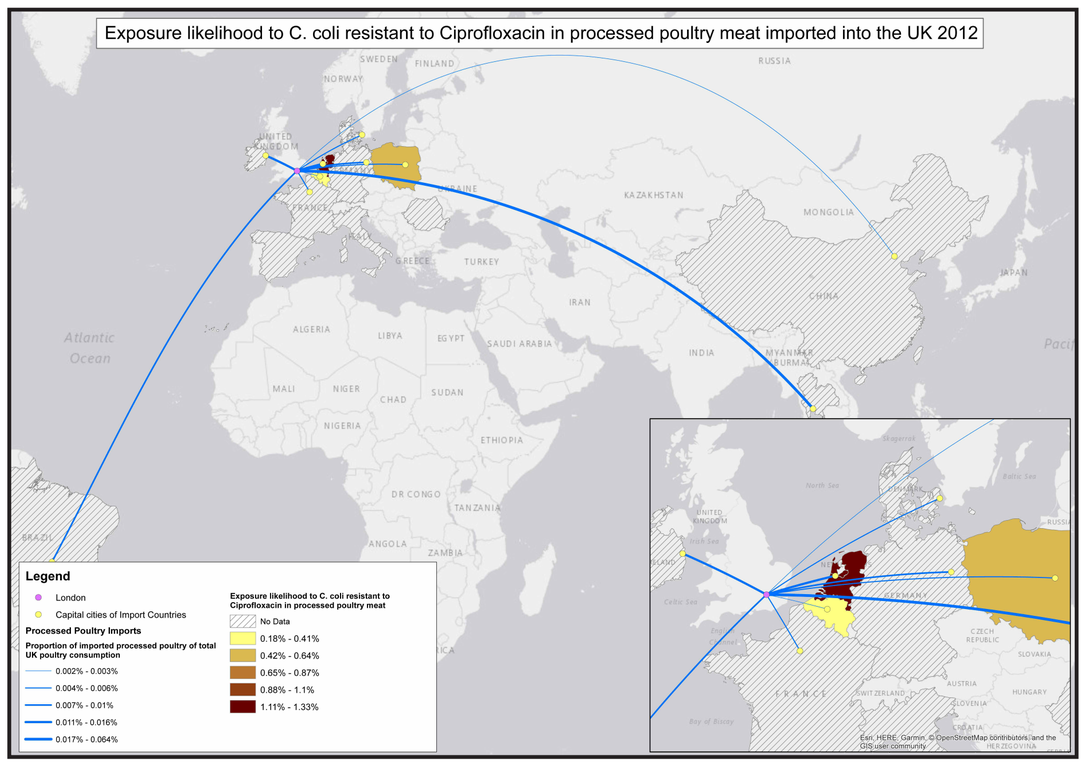
Corporate food retailers and AMR

Supermarket chains are strategically positioned to address the global challenge of reducing antimicrobial use in food supply chains and potentially raising consumer awareness as part of tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Retailers source food through international as well as local supply chains, and operate overseas as well as national store networks. *In the UK, the top five food retailers—Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Morrisons and Aldi—have just over 75% of the grocery market share.* Market consolidation translates into corporate buying power in food supply chains and influence over product development, pricing and ethical and safety standards, including antimicrobial stewardship.

Experimental mapping exercises to illustrate the risk of AMR in poultry meat supply chains

It is possible to visualise AMR risk in food supply chains through experimental mapping exercises. These maps, produced by the University of Southampton's GeoData Institute, represent examples. Although available data have limitations and can mask particular trade complexities such as meat coming into the UK from the Netherlands, some of which may originate from other sources, it demonstrates what kinds of mapping exercises for risk management could be conducted by retailers and other organisations through sharing of more fine-grained data.





Sources: Agricultural & Horticultural Development Board trade data and publicly available data on antimicrobial resistance risk, mainly from the European Food Safety Authority.

Critical perspectives on the role of corporate food retailers in tackling AMR in food supply chains

The challenge for retailers tackling AMR in global food chains requires engagement with: the (un)known dynamics of microbial life; demonstration of corporate control; neo-liberal governance through standard-setting; metrics as modes of surveillance; and the movement of resistant genes and antimicrobial residues through food supply chains crossing not only national but species borders. Our conceptual work blends perspectives from political economy to grasp the corporate coordination of vast networks of global food supply with notions of material assemblage to apprehend how corporate power and Government-led standards grapple with the liveliness of microbial life.

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