



INTERGROUP ON THE WELFARE & CONSERVATION OF ANIMALS

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Report of the 278th Session

Thursday 15th December 2011, 10.00 - 11.00 hrs
Room LOW N 3.2 – European Parliament, Strasbourg

I. Introductory remarks

Written declaration N°46 on the marketing of eggs from hens housed in outlawed cages

- Co-authors: Alyn SMITH, Bairbre de BRÚN, Esther de LANGE, Jörg LEICHTFRIED, Marit PAULSEN
- Date opened : 14-11-2011
- Lapse date : 16-02-2012
- Number of signatories : **66**

Written declaration N°47 on fish as a common good

- Co-authors: Guido MILANA, Kriton ARSENIS, Corinne LEPAGE, Maria do Céu PATRÃO NEVES, Raül ROMEVA i RUEDA
- Date opened : 30-11-2011
- Lapse date : 15-03-2012
- Number of signatories : **109**

Written declaration N°49 by on the establishment of a maximum 8-hour journey limit for animals transported in the European Union for the purpose of being slaughtered

- Co-authors: Dan JØRGENSEN, Esther de LANGE, Pavel POC, Carl SCHLYTER, Andrea ZANONI
- Date opened : 30-11-2011
- Lapse date : 15-03-2012
- Number of signatories : **119**

The Chairman asked all MEPs present to support these written declarations and to promote them within their Political Groups.

II. The CAP and animal welfare concerns

Elisabeth Jeggle MEP (EPP, DE) said that the first thing to know about the CAP 2014-2020 would be, how much money will be available and how much money the Member States will have in their budget to spend on the CAP and on agricultural policies as a whole.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is based on two pillars: the first one subsidises EU agricultural holdings through direct payments whereas the second pillar is meant to improving the competitiveness of farm, forest and agri-food businesses, helping to protect the natural environment and animals, supporting rural economies, and assisting quality of life in rural areas.

The Commission has come up with a proposal which is basically the right one as it puts more emphasis on sustainable agriculture. This should be however better reflected within the first pillar.

The second pillar is something the Member States will use depending on co-financing and on their own ideas. In this context several Member States have made considerable efforts to promote environmental and animal protection. However, it is unacceptable that these countries and their farmers are discriminated in comparison to those who have done very little in this regard.

In the new proposals certain measures of the second pillar have been put in the first where there is a risk that they fall aside and are eliminated. The Parliament will have to make sure that this will not happen.

For animal welfare, the second pillar will provide additional funding possibilities but it is up to the Member States to set up their own priorities.

During the last two parliamentary terms a great deal has been achieved for animal welfare. The Commission proposal on rural development policy contains numerous references to animal welfare. This has not been the case in the past. It will be necessary to make sure that these references are implemented and that money is provided for them. However, everything has to be seen in the right perspective. It is dangerous to fight for high animal welfare standards in the EU but to ignore the reality on global level.

Animal welfare is a universal right and this has to be made clear when it comes to trade negotiations with third countries. The trade agreements have to contain clear and consistent rules on how animal products are manufactured and under which conditions animals are being kept.

The discrepancies between the EU Member States regarding the implementation and enforcement of EU animal welfare legislation have to be diminished to avoid distortion of competition. This will be a major challenge.

She assured that the Agriculture Committee will do its part for including animal welfare concerns in the debates on the new CAP and that it will fight for an acceptable compromise.

Funding for Animal welfare in the CAP

Juan Álvarez de la Puente, Policy Officer at DG AGRI, Euyropean Commission, spoke about how animal welfare is dealt with in the CAP in the context of rural development, direct payments, cross compliance, marketing standards and refunds.

Rural Development and Animal Welfare¹

There are three measures with particular potential to address animal welfare issues which are:

- a) investments in agricultural holdings or modernisation
- b) measures for meeting standards (including those on the welfare of animals) which will contribute to cut the costs and recompense the farmers for loss of revenue
- c) Animal welfare payments

For the **measure modernisation** the CAP provides support to farm investments for the improvement of the overall performance of holdings in respect of EU legislation including the one on animal welfare.

EU funding is granted to be able to comply with standards which have been newly introduced through European Directives. It is paid up to 36 months after new EU standards have become mandatory in national legislation. It can cover 40-75 % of the costs depending on the family situation and the location of the holding (mountain, Natura 2000 site)

The **measure meeting standards** covers partly the costs incurred and income losses caused by the application of compulsory standards based on EU legislation in the fields of environmental protection, public health, and animal and plant health, animal welfare. The support is an annual flat-rate, temporary and digressive that can be granted during a maximum of 5 years from the date the standard becomes mandatory. The maximum amount of support is € 10000/holding. It was introduced in 2003 and is implemented by 10 Member States with a total amount of € 104 million of EAFRD. **This measure is withdrawn in CAP reform proposal.**

The **measure animal welfare payments** regard a voluntary commitment to go beyond relevant mandatory requirements. They are flat-rate payments for a period of 5 to 7 years with the aim to help farmers to go ahead.

The farmers have to commit to improve the animal welfare situation on their holding with regard to housing, water and feed conditions, outdoor access, absence of systematic mutilation and prevention of illnesses.

The commitments have to be concrete, clear and controllable for the Member States and the farmers have to proof that they have additional costs when applying the supplementary requirements. The maximum support that can be granted is of 500 €/animal/year. Eight Member States have currently implemented this measure in 24 rural development programmes. The total allocation for this is € 446 million.

Direct Payments and animal welfare

The direct payments under the first pillar of the CAP allow financing farmers who comply with animal welfare

¹ Council Regulation (EC) no 1698/2005 on support for Rural Development from the EAGGF as amended with the CAP reform and Implementing rules: Commission Regulation (EC) no 1974/2006

standards. This is laid down in Article 68 of Regulation (EC) No 73/2009 *establishing common rules for direct support schemes for farmers under the common agricultural policy*. Member States may grant specific support to farmers for practising enhanced animal welfare standards. This support is granted in form of annual additional payments. In the CAP reform proposals Article 68 is discontinued.

Cross-compliance

The 2003 midterm reform has established a link between direct payments and the respect of a number of basic and specified requirements of public interest that include animal welfare. Since 2007 the respect of the following standards is part of cross compliance:

- Minimum standards for the protection of calves (Council Directive 91/629/EEC)
- Minimum standards for the protection of pigs (Council Directive 91/630/EEC)
- Minimum standards for the protection of all animals kept for farming purposes (Council Directive 98/58/EC)

In any case, cross compliance scheme cannot be considered as the implementing tool of animal welfare legislation which shall be implemented by the Member States with their own sanction system. Thus cross compliance reductions are part of an independent scheme aiming to contribute making the CAP more compatible with the expectations of the society, and in particular animal welfare.

The 2014 CAP reform proposal has made no change on the cross compliance scope related to animal welfare. It will even add the rules on the group housing sows as from 1 January 2013.

Marketing standards

The Commission recently simplified marketing standards for eggs. Regulation (EC) No 589/2008 has given the sector a streamlined marketing legal frame. The proper identification of the farming conditions under which eggs are produced is crucial in providing market incentives for animal welfare friendly operations allowing the consumer in making informed choices.

As from 1/1/2012 battery cages for eggs production will be abolished as provided for in EU legislation on animal welfare of laying hens.

Market measures: Export refunds

EU legislation on export refunds for live cattle required the respect of animal welfare conditions during transport and imposed reductions of the subsidies when those conditions were not respected. However, giving growing concerns about the treatment of live animals when they are shipped abroad and after landing export refunds for slaughter cattle were abolished in December 2005. Animal welfare requirements for exports of breeding cattle were strengthened at the Trade Mechanisms Committee in January 2006.

Conclusion

Animal welfare is integrated into the CAP through a large range of tools: cross compliance, rural development, organic farming, marketing standards and refunds on live animals.

Questions and debate

Roger Helmet (ECR, UK) agreed with Mrs Jeggle about the need of raising animal welfare standards also outside the EU. He warned against a sort of animal welfare protectionism and mentioned the EU ban on conventional battery cages for laying hens in this regard. By increasing the costs of raising poultry in the European Union, the danger arises that the problem is moved to third countries or to EU Member States that are less accurate in enforcing the EU legislation.

The Chairman pointed out that Sweden and Germany have enforced the battery cage ban already in 2007. Some of the Swedish battery cages were sold to Finland. In Germany the price for eggs went up right after the enforcement of the ban, which allowed farmers to recover their investment costs but the free riders who did not change their cage system profited as well.

Elisabeth Jeggle (EPP, DE) agreed with Roger Helmer and the Chairman. Germany has been a major exporter of eggs before introducing the ban on conventional battery cages in 2007. Now it has become an importing country. If the European Union loses its competitiveness in the animal rearing sector, food will be produced elsewhere under

different conditions that cannot be controlled. Regardless whether it is the second pillar or Article 68 for the first pillar, farmers will get less money.

Esther de Lange (EPP, NL) said that if the market is not functioning, rules and subsidies will never suffice to make a change. The Netherlands has an animal welfare rating system for meat. One, two or three stars are given to certain levels of animal welfare standards in pig production. This is in principle a good initiative but farmers are not compensated accordingly. The consumer however pays a lot more for a “*three stars*” meat. She asked the Commission representative whether more would be done in future to consider the functioning of the market, the food production chain and the fairness of the price that the farmer actually gets.

Juan Álvarez de la Puente replied that the Commission is very concerned about price volatility. This issue will be certainly forming part of the new proposals for a better monitoring of food prices.

Andrea Zanoni (EPP, IT) asked if there is support available for companies which transport animals. In many EU Member States animals are still transported under terrible conditions.

Juan Álvarez de la Puente ignored if transporters receive any EU aid as this goes beyond the concerns of DG Agriculture. Poor rearing conditions are however an issue for the CAP. The enforcement of animal welfare standards is monitored on the ground. There are several aspects which are looked at and which have to be adhered to and this will have an impact on what payments farmers get.

The Chairman was puzzled by the answer that animal transport is not an issue for DG Agriculture. He regretted that there is little communication among the different Directorates of the Commission.

Michèle Striffler (EPP, FR) found it unacceptable that the Commission is still very sector minded. The EP Committees work much more closely together as policies are usually interlinked.

Juan Álvarez de la Puente countered that the different Commission services work together. Whenever there is a proposal on animal welfare or animal transport DG Agriculture analyses its content and gives its opinion during the inter-service process. This leads to a collegial decision among the Directorates.

George Lyon (ALDE, UK) asked how many Member States are using rural development measures to provide support to those producers who are converting to enriched cages or should be converting to enriched cages and to producers who are converting to removing sow stalls. In January 2012, 55 million hens will still be housed in illegal battery cages. He inquired if under the rural development measures some Member States provide grants also to farmers who do not change the housing systems. **Sirpa Pietikäinen (EPP, FI)** asked which Member States have been using the grants for animal welfare and which have not used them at all.

Juan Álvarez de la Puente replied that he did not have the exact list of the Member States which adhere to the new rules of the laying hens Directive. There are several Member States which already apply the new standards. Eight of them have asked for money to help with the conversion. There is work to be done to ensure that Member States are encouraged to use the tools that are available to them. The European Veterinary Office (FVO) will increase monitoring the enforcement of the cage ban for laying hens there in the coming months.

Andrea Zanoni (EPP, IT) inquired what kind of controls are carried out by the FVO.

Juan Álvarez de la Puente replied that the FVO checks the general enforcement of relevant EU legislation in the Member States but also in third countries. Animal welfare inspections are only a minor part of the FVO's work task.

The Chairman replied that the Intergroup is not at all content about how the Commission carries out its controls. Concerning animal transport a great majority of Member States do not comply with the EU rules concerning inspections. Many Member States have not carried out one single control on the road.

III. The new CAP: better conditions for the farmers and the animals?

Véronique Schmit, Executive Officer for Policy at Eurogroup for Animals said that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was conceived as a subsidy system to foster more productivity, to guarantee a good income for farmers and to make food affordable to consumers. This has led to a general intensification of production which is now in place in the majority of EU agricultural production systems. There are few alternative animal welfare friendly systems as has been shown in a Dutch study².

² (1) Source: Verkenning van dierlijke tussensegmenten in onze Buurlanden, LEI report

In the Netherlands only 1.2 % of the pig meat production corresponds to alternative systems, in the United Kingdom it reaches 18 %. In Denmark, less than 1% of the chicken meat production is produced in alternative systems but reaches 49 % in France. This is partly due to the fact that for French consumers meat quality is a high priority. This means at the same time better welfare conditions.

The impacts of intensive rearing systems can be seen on all levels: since 2003 the number of farmers has diminished by 30%. For the environment *Birdlife International* has made several studies showing a 50% decline in common farmland birds during the last 25 years. A study by the European Commission has given evidence that the impact of pig and poultry production is incisive for the environment. It recommends giving more incentives for more extensive pig rearing systems and to decentralise and de-concentrate the production.

Intensive productions systems do not provide a right environment for the animals to carry out their natural behaviour. Often animals are even mutilated to prevent aggressions among them. There are also impacts on animals on human health with the development of antimicrobial resistance which is a topic that has been discussed in the Parliament.

Eurogroup for Animals thinks that among the tools that are needed to move to more sustainable livestock farming incentives are needed to move to better systems. The consumer awareness about rearing methods to be increased and innovative systems of production have to be developed, that are better for the animals and easier to manage for the farmers.

For most farmers the profit margin for their products is too low. Responding to consumer demands should contribute to better competitiveness. When asked why farmers join quality schemes like the “*Label Rouge*” in France or other innovative systems that are in place, farmers say that they like it because the quality scheme respects farming traditions, because they feel better and because of a better balance between the environment, humans and the natural behaviour of animals.

The Common Agricultural Policy contains some rules that foster animal welfare requirements. In the new Commission proposals there is no real reference to animal welfare as being an objective of the CAP. This needs to be improved to make it clear that subsidies are also allocated with the goal of respecting animal welfare concerns.

As for the rules applying to direct payments it is not very clear yet what this will implicate for greening, for permanent grassland payments and for extensive farming.

Regarding cross compliance Eurogroup for Animals would like to see the Laying Hens and Broiler Directives included among the rules to be applied in order to get funding. Cross compliance is a good tool for better enforcement. The evaluation of the EU animal welfare policy which has been published recently in the framework of the new Strategy on Animal Welfare has shown that there is a lot to do to improve enforcement. This can be fostered through cross compliance.

The animal welfare payment within the rural development policy should become mandatory and a specific budget should be allocated to it.

The new Commission proposals foresee still the possibility to give export refunds for breeding animals which is unacceptable as it promotes long distance transports.

IV. Implication of the CAP proposal on the livestock sector: estimated effects and alternative approaches

Henk Westhoek, Programme Manager for agriculture and food at the Dutch Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL), made some introductory remarks about the goals and objectives of the Agency. The PBL is the national Dutch institute for strategic policy analysis. It tries to perform policy relevant studies, which have to be scientifically sound and have to integrate various aspects. Although being part of the Dutch Government, it is an independent body which does not necessarily represent the position of the Dutch Government.

This year, the PBL has published a report on the CAP and livestock, titled “the Protein Puzzle”³. It is a study on the CAP’s impact on biodiversity. The PBL is currently analysing also the CAP proposals, notably the greening aspect. A position report will be published soon.

The CAP can support livestock farmers to convert into a more sustainable sector with better animal welfare, lower or no use of antibiotics, less impact on the environment and more jobs in rural areas. This could be achieved through innovations in animal husbandry systems, including the development of more robust breeds and better housing

³ http://www.pbl.nl/sites/default/files/cms/publicaties/Protein_Puzzle_web_1.pdf

systems. Farmers need to be stimulated and supported to take a more sustainable direction. And farmers need to be better rewarded for better production methods and products. For this, regulation might be needed to encourage unresponsive farmers.

Mr Westhoek's presentation focused mainly on the pig and poultry sector as they represent 17 % of the EU agricultural output, but presently receive little attention from the CAP.

With respect to animal welfare, many farm animals experience various forms of discomfort, mainly due to poor air quality in stables, wet and slippery floors, concentrated feed and factors related to breed characteristics.

Another issue of rapidly growing concern is the **widespread use of antibiotics** in livestock production. This has led to the development of antibiotic resistant bacteria on a large scale. Coli-bacteria from broilers have progressively become resistant to many groups of antibiotics. In the Netherlands, many pig farmers carry multi-resistant-bacteria and even people living in the vicinity of pig farms are infected with these bacteria. Especially in poultry, ESBLs⁴ are a problem. In the Netherlands around 90% of the poultry meat contains signs of ESBL.

Livestock production has also a large impact on the environment through Green House Gas (GHG) emissions (mainly coming from the dairy and beef sector), emissions of nutrients and effects on biodiversity.

Part of the issues around livestock are connected with the high concentration of livestock in some areas, like the Po-valley (It), Bretagne (Fr), the NL and Flanders (B) and the western part of Germany.

Solutions to the issues mentioned above are interrelated. The issue of antibiotics cannot be seen separately from the type of animal housing or the breeds being used. Animal housing is related to environmental impacts. Sometimes there are synergies, but it has to be acknowledged that there are trade-offs as well.

New housing systems

New housing systems can integrate many solutions. Organic and free-range systems may have many advantages over conventional systems but they are not perfect: in some ways they are less resource efficient and the price difference with conventional systems is large.

Strongly improved conventional systems have many advantages over conventional systems, but at a lower price. They can be in-door or with limited outdoor access only. Their welfare conditions might be probably lower than free-range or organic or can even be similar. Usually, they are more resource-efficient. The limited cost difference with conventional systems makes it a very viable option. Given the fierce competition farmers will not be able to change their practices without compensations. The present trend goes towards low cost production, leading to the up-scaling of the farm size and the disappearance of small and medium sized farms.

Concerning the broiler production, the used breed is different from a conventional system, with more robust, slower growing chickens. In many countries products from improved conventional systems are already for sale next to products from organic farms.

The current the options in the CAP to improve housing systems

Within **Pillar 1** of the CAP, the Netherlands is the only EU Member State which has used Article 68⁵ to stimulate improved housing systems. The current **Pillar 2** has more options for improving animal welfare, but they are only limitedly used, as explained in the presentation of Mr **Álvarez de la Puente**. A large share of the Pillar 2 budget has been spent on modernization of farms, but with uncertain, unknown or in case of pig farms in Germany, even negative effects on animal welfare.

The new CAP proposals

In the greening proposals for Pillar 1 of the CAP no attention is paid to animal welfare. **The current Article 68 is discontinued.**

In principle the **six priorities laid out in the proposals for Pillar 2 offer many options** that can help to improve animal welfare:

- Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas;
- Enhancing competitiveness of all types of agriculture and enhancing farm viability;

⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beta-lactamase>

⁵ Regulation (EC) No 73/2009 establishing common rules for direct support schemes for farmers under the common agricultural policy

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- Promoting food chain organization and risk management in agriculture;
 - Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry;
 - Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors;
 - Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.

However, **there are also risks involved** as the current practice shows modernization as support from Pillar 2. Often modernisation does not necessarily lead to improvements for animal welfare. Another risk is that the rural development plans will not be coherent enough to bring about real changes. Furthermore, concentration of livestock production in certain regions should be avoided, as it leads to high local emissions and is not always resource efficient.

Options for the improvement of the CAP

There are a number of options to improve the effectiveness of the CAP in supporting the livestock sector for a move in a more sustainable direction.

- **Stimulate or require a concerted approach between the Member States**

For the intensive livestock sector many solutions are more or less universal. A good stable design can be used across many countries. This calls for good cooperation between the Member States.

- **Demand action plans for a shift towards sustainable livestock farming**

Innovations are needed.

- **Exchange of knowledge between farmers, and between farmers and researchers**

Information and knowledge exchange on different stakeholder levels can be an efficient trigger for the promotion of more sustainable and animal welfare friendly rearing systems.

- **A 100% EU support for certain instruments**

Pillar 2 is underfinanced and fragmented, which is a major risk. For this, Mr Westhoek suggested a shift of Pillar 1 money to Pillar 2.

- **Support market based solutions**

In many countries consumers, retailers and farmers ask for rapid changes and strong, coherent support.

Questions and debate

Sabine Ohm from Provieh asked if the pig and poultry sector represent 17% of the agricultural value in the Netherlands or if the figure applies to the whole of the EU. **Henk Westhoek** replied that 17% is the EU figure. It represents not the added value but the economic value of the product.

Stuart Agnew stressed that in Britain farming birds are in good health. The Entry Level Stewardship scheme (ELS)⁶ has helped to protect more habitats. There have been huge increases in predators and subsequently some of the songbirds are going down. Different designs in farm buildings make it difficult for birds to nest.

He suggested taking a more consumer led approach for the promotion of animal welfare standards. Retailers have to be on board. This is how the free range sector was successfully promoted in the United Kingdom.

The Chairman pointed out that recently Birdlife International had given a very interesting presentation on how UK farms have radically improved their environmental and economic situation with very small measures.

V. Closing remarks

The next Intergroup meeting will be held on Thursday 19th January in Strasbourg. As half term has been reached, the Intergroup will elect a new President as well as an additional Italian Vice-President. The Chairman encouraged therefore all Bureau Members to be present for the election. The issues of debate will focus on biodiversity and the enforcement of the Birds Directive.

⁶ <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/farming/funding/es/els/default.aspx>

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