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Subject: Livestock vessels from Spain

Honourable Members,

Thank you for your letter of 22 February 2021 on the above-mentioned subject. I share your concerns fully.

As soon as I was informed of the situation of the two livestock vessels, we established close contact with the Spanish authorities to offer any assistance possible. Spanish authorities have accepted to receive the animals back.

MEP Niels Fuglsang (S&D)

MEP Tilly Metz (Greens)

MEP Anja Hazekamp (GUE)

MEP Sylwia Spurek (Greens)

MEP Francisco Guerreiro (Greens)

MEP Pascal Durand (Renew)

MEP Eleonora Evi (Greens)

MEP Thomas Waitz (Greens)

MEP Annika Bruna (ID)

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Already last week, I wrote to the Ministers of Agriculture of Spain and Cyprus, expressing my deep concern and asking them to give priority to this issue in order for the animals involved to avoid any additional unnecessary suffering. In the case of the ship “Elbeik”, which until yesterday was off the coast of the city of Famagusta, the Cyprus authorities unfortunately couldn’t intervene as that ship was located in an area not under the effective control of the government of Cyprus. According to information currently available this vessel is now in all likelihood also returning to Spain.

The vessel “Karim Allah” has now docked in the port of Cartagena in Spain and are being inspected by the Spanish authorities.

In the absence of official information regarding the sanitary status of the animals and the possible contacts with persons, materials or feed coming from third countries affected by contagious diseases, the Spanish authorities may have to cull these animals.

The Commission remains in close contact with the Spanish authorities to ensure that, in such a case, the operations are performed in a way that the animals do not suffer and all provisions applicable for such operations are fully respected. I will continue to follow very closely the situation.

So far, the Commission has no evidence that the transport conditions on departure were not in compliance with EU legislation. Nevertheless, I assure you that the Commission will look thoroughly into the matter.

The Commission is aware that transport on livestock vessels may entail risks to animal welfare. The EU has specific provisions regarding the transport of animals on livestock vessels, including the approval of the vessels and their inspection before allowing the loading of the animals.

In the context of the revision of the animal welfare legislation, the Commission has mandated the European Food Safety Authority to provide a scientific opinion, notably on animal transport. This request includes a specific question on export by livestock vessels.

In the light of this scientific opinion, as well as the experience gained during the implementation of the legislation, the Commission will consider the most appropriate measures for the future.

Yours sincerely,

