

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE: ANIMAL WELFARE AS A KEY DRIVER FOR FUTURE CAP REFORM

BACKGROUND

The review and reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) should offer an opportunity to better enforce Article 13 of the Treaty, which recognises the sentience of animals and ensures the integration of animal welfare into the EU's agriculture, transport, and research policies, among others. The EU strategy for the protection and welfare of animals 2012-2015 also highlights the need to optimise synergies between animal welfare and agriculture policies, indicating that there is a need for improved policy coherence in this field.

Eurogroup for Animals believes that higher standards of animal welfare must be recognized in all farming practices not only in light of the principle of animal sentience, but also in recognition that improved integration and harmonisation of animal welfare standards into the CAP framework would contribute to the sustainable development of EU agriculture and rural areas. In times of growing resource scarcity, environmental concerns, and looming health threats, higher animal welfare standards can contribute to improved animal and public health, greater resource efficiency, and improved public perception of EU agriculture. It can also contribute to a level playing field within the EU where standards currently may differ considerably between countries.

Furthermore, consumers and EU citizens care about animals. Improved recognition and support for higher animal welfare standards coupled with increased transparency about methods of production will help to deliver sustainable jobs and growth through driving the demand for sustainable farming methods from the market.

CURRENT SITUATION

Animal products and live animals play an important role in EU agriculture, with Europe considered as a world leader in sectors like meat and dairy. Some statistics show that more than 40% of the value of EU agricultural goods come from animal products, including food produced from hundreds of millions of cattle, dairy cows, pigs, broilers and laying hens, among others. These products equate to almost 20% of world production for

those products combined and also make up a considerable proportion of global trade in these products. Indeed, animals play a significant role in current farming systems.

Unfortunately, animal welfare is often neglected on many farms and in the existing policy framework for farming. Instead of being respected as sentient beings that provide important products, farmed animals are often treated simply as tools to maximise production and profit with little regard for the sustainability of such practices, nor ethical considerations. Although the structure of farms varies widely across the EU both in terms of size and number of animals, statistics show that the majority of animals are held on a relatively small percentage of farms, which may signify an overall trend towards industrialised farming methods that may be associated with specific animal welfare concerns. Livestock production already accounts for 70 percent of all agricultural land (and 30 percent of the earth's land surface).

The wide-scale production of animal products and animal feed is one of the greatest sources of resource inefficiency of our food production, as calories fed to animals could be better used by people. Currently almost 40 percent of grain produced globally is fed to livestock, and this figure is expected to increase substantially. For every calorie that we feed to animals in the form of crops, we only receive on average about 30% of the calorific value. In this context, we think that efforts to improve livestock farming methods must also be complemented by efforts to moderate or reduce the consumption of animal products. The only sustainable way forward for the farming sector is to produce “less and better” animal products.

CHANGES URGENTLY NEEDED

We call on the Commission to take on the following opportunities:

1. Use your authority as guardian of the Treaty to better enforce Article 13 of the Treaty. We call for improved development, harmonisation and enforcement of animal welfare standards that are currently significantly underdeveloped, including:

- a. Improvement of animal welfare on the basis of scientific findings (many EFSA opinions show that practices like tethering, long transportation journeys, and certain slaughter practices and mutilations are bad for welfare).
- b. Further development and revision, including improved enforcement where necessary, of relevant EU legislation, including rules for husbandry, transport and slaughter. Rules for some species like rabbits and dairy cows are even missing!

2. Ensure that higher animal welfare standards are developed and implemented in organic farming.

The current organic regulation and the new proposal for an organic regulation that is undergoing its first reading in the Council and Parliament include animal welfare as one of its principle objectives; however the legislation does not adequately address all organic livestock sectors in practice and provides several loopholes that may allow for the neglect of higher animal welfare objectives, including exceptions to relevant welfare provisions at multiple stages along the livestock production chain. Improved definition and harmonization of higher welfare standards will lead to overall simplification by enabling improved and coordinated control and monitoring of animal welfare, essential for building consumer confidence in the organic logo. Efforts to

improve longer term sustainability in the sector and to improve consumer confidence in organic animal products must not be hijacked by short term interests.

3. It is vital to support the improvement of farm animal welfare as an important objective of sustainable food and farming through relevant labelling, promotional, and rural development tools. There is a clear link between the current scale of intensive systems of livestock production and consumption, and environmental, public health and animal health and welfare problems.

The following steps are vital for driving a sustainable and higher welfare food chain:

- **Only promote food products and systems of production which are better for animals, the environment, and humans.** This includes favoring more balanced diets (including less and better meat and more plantbased foods).
- **Put in place informational and labelling tools for citizens and consumers to help them make informed choices when buying agricultural produce,** in terms of impacts on animal welfare and wider sustainability. Improved information to consumers about how farm animals are kept will open new markets for quality products. In this context, we encourage you to:
 - **Support mandatory method of production labelling, starting with poultry meat,** as is currently done for shell eggs. The current review of the poultry marketing regulation offers a perfect opportunity to change optional terms to mandatory terms, which would drive sustainable development in this sector, as has already happened in the egg sector since mandatory labelling was introduced in 2004.
 - **Support credible, voluntary farm assurance schemes that deliver higher animal welfare outcomes for livestock species,** such as have been developed by our members in the UK, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, and Austria. Such schemes and related higher welfare standards should receive rural development and promotional support where relevant.

4. Facilitate the development of holistic food and farming policies and improve cooperation with DG SANTE and DG ENV on this topic. DG AGRI should see the eventual publication of the long awaited Communication on Sustainable Food, as called for in recent letters by several Members of the European Parliament and several CAP-NGOs, as an opportunity for wider, innovative development of the EU's agricultural sector.

5. Collect information and support relevant research on the past and present use and impacts of CAP measures that impact animal welfare, such as relevant measures contained in rural development programs. At present we feel that there is a severe lack of information on this, and we would especially welcome efforts to improve information on this topic at EU level, in order to better assess public expenditure in this important area. We would greatly welcome any initiative to collect and assess relevant information on animal welfare across all relevant sectors and farming systems, and we are also available to assist any such efforts if desired under a future EU research project. Unfortunately, we have recently discovered that the Commission aims to divert needed funds from related research objectives under Horizon 2020 to other investments, which may not deliver outcomes for animals. We therefore encourage DG AGRI to defend the need for retaining adequate funding for sustainable farming objectives especially as it relates to ensuring appropriate research on animal welfare in farming.