Resolution on the European Citizens' Initiative 'End the cage age'

2021/2633(RSP) - 10/06/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 558 votes to 37, with 85 abstentions, a resolution on the European Citizens' Initiative 'End the cage age'.

The European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) 'End the Cage Age' - which received 1.4 million validated signatures from all the then EU-28 Member States - is the first valid ECI for farmed animals. The proposed ECI refers to the hundreds of millions of farmed animals in the EU that are kept in cages for most of their lives. It aims to improve animal welfare.

Given the importance of the ECI but also the lack of action and follow-up to successful ECIs so far, Parliament called on the Commission to ensure the proper transposition of the demands of the 'End the Cage Age' ECI into the current revision of Directive 98/58/EC on the protection of animals used in agriculture, in line with the European Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy.

Phasing-out cage farming

The resolution noted that the market for free-range and organic animal products is growing in the EU and that alternatives to cage farming are being successfully implemented in a number of Member States. Alternative systems should therefore be developed, improved and promoted.

In particular, the Commission is invited to:

- develop a more **comprehensive food policy**, in order to support the transition to a more sustainable food system and to avoid, in particular for small and medium-sized farms, further reductions in animal production and its further concentration;

- **propose a revision of Council Directive 98/58/EC** which aims to phase out the use of cages on EU farms, possibly with a view to complete phasing out by 2027; this phasing out should be based on a scientifically supported impact assessment and provide for a sufficient transition period;

- **remove bureaucratic and regulatory burdens** to allow farmers to make the necessary structural changes to their facilities to incorporate the new animal welfare provisions;

- adopt a species-by-species approach, taking into account the characteristics of each animal, which should have a farming system adapted to its specific needs;

- propose specific EU legislation on minimum standards of protection for farmed rabbits and put forward proposals to ban the cruel and unnecessary force-feeding of ducks and geese for *foie gras* production;

- **support farmers** in their efforts to improve animal welfare, in particular in the framework of the European Green Deal and the strategic plans under the CAP, in order to avoid a loss of competitiveness and a subsequent relocation of EU production to third countries with less ambitious animal welfare standards.

Fair trade policy

Parliament reiterated the importance of including enforceable trade and sustainable development chapters in all **EU trade agreements**. Such chapters should also take account of equivalent production standards, including animal welfare. Members called for all animal products imported into the EU to be produced in full compliance with the relevant EU legislation, including the use of cage-free systems.

The Commission is called upon to: (i) step up its efforts to control imported food products; (ii) reassess trade agreements with third countries to ensure that the same animal welfare and product quality standards are met; and (iii) promote animal welfare at international level.

Informing consumers

Members considered that the Commission must help farmers to educate consumers and communicate the high animal welfare standards currently in force.

In order to adapt to changing legislation as well as consumer preferences, the livestock sector should be rewarded for its efforts with direct aid. Members consider that a voluntary animal welfare label would demonstrate the food chain's commitment, from farm to fork, to contributing to the aims of the ECI ‘End the cage age’, while ensuring adequate pricing.