Implementation report on on-farm animal welfare

2020/2085(INI) - 16/02/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 496 votes to 140, with 51 abstentions, a resolution on the implementation report on on-farm animal welfare.

Animal welfare, an important issue for farmers, is an ethical issue that is becoming increasingly important for consumers and society in general. Consumer interest in the quality of the food they purchase has never been greater and EU citizens want to be able to make more informed choices as consumers.

Parliament made the following conclusions and recommendations.

Implementation of the legislation

Parliament welcomed the Commission's intention to carry out an assessment and review of animal welfare legislation by the Commission by 2023. It called for any future legislative action involving modification or change of production systems (including housing) and farm animal welfare criteria to be based on **sound scientific data or studies** and taking into account all aspects to achieve sustainability and animal welfare. It stressed the need for impact assessments to be carried out before decisions are taken and for a **species-by-species approach** to be developed to define the specific needs of each type of livestock farming.

The resolution called for the development of **shorter feed supply chains** based on locally or regionally produced food to give consumers better direct access to local food and to support small-scale farmers.

The Commission is invited, *inter alia*, to:

- develop the **'One Health'** approach as part of the review of animal welfare legislation, and increase controls to detect the presence of antibiotics and other banned chemical residues in imports from third countries;

- define precisely and clearly the **conditions and facilities** for keeping each species of animal, based on examples of best practice in alternative housing systems; Members called for the phasing out and prohibition of battery cages and the introduction of cage-free systems for all laying hens;

- set out **appropriate financial support** for livestock farmers to encourage them to invest in better animal welfare; the Commission is urged to address these shortcomings as a matter of urgency and to encourage and implement sustainable improvements in remunerating farmers' efforts;

- Members called for accurate and transparent information for consumers through clear and reliable labelling of animal products on the welfare aspects of the whole production cycle, including the production method;

- better communicate **best practice** and invest in the welfare of farmers who keep livestock and in the attractiveness of their occupation;

- regularly monitor and reward the efforts of Member States and farmers to improve their initial and further **training**;

- **raise awareness and communicate to consumers** on the reality of livestock farming and its real impact on the environment, biodiversity and climate, as well as on the diversity of production methods and their origin;

- define animal welfare **indicators** for pigs, chickens and laying hens, as well as **quantifiable requirements** for the establishment and monitoring of environmental conditions, such as air quality (nitrogen, CO2, dust), lighting (duration, brightness) and minimum noise - clarify its framework for **monitoring** Member States, ensuring that action is taken against harmful practices and that infringement proceedings are launched in cases of non-compliance;

- better develop **cooperation** between all stakeholders and facilitate dialogue between the different actors in the Member States to enable them to reflect collectively on developments in livestock systems;

- linking its various strategies through regulations that are consistent with the European Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy, the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and agricultural policies relating to trade, commercial and promotion.

In general, the Commission is called on to redraft its regulatory framework to improve animal welfare in the EU, making it clearer, more comprehensive, predictable and accessible with the aim of making the **objectives and indicators more readable**, leaving less room for interpretation and enabling and facilitating uniform national transposition between Member States.

Animal welfare labelling

Parliament believes that successful animal welfare labelling will only be possible if the costs and benefits are fairly distributed throughout the agri-food chain and farmers are guaranteed a **fair share of the higher price paid by the consumer** for food products that comply with EU animal welfare labelling requirements.

The Commission is asked to propose a **harmonised and mandatory EU framework with common requirements for voluntary animal welfare labelling**, based on EU rules and requiring Member States to register the different approaches used. Members called for the framework's specifications to be drawn up according to a technically realistic and scientifically sound approach that reflects the methods of production throughout the entire cycle and for this framework to ensure that value is redistributed towards livestock farmers.

For the sake of consistency, processed products and ingredients of animal origin should also be eligible for labelling.

The Commission is called upon to negotiate reciprocity clauses at a multilateral level and in bilateral agreements regarding compliance with animal welfare standards for imported products, including for the purpose of providing accurate information to consumers.