Humane trapping standards: Agreement between EC and the United States on international standards of trapping

1997/0360(CNS) - 11/12/1997 - Legislative proposal

OBJECTIVE: to conclude an international agreement between the Community and the USA on humane trapping standards equivalent to that concluded in 1997 between the Community, Russia and Canada. SUBSTANCE: Under Regulation (EEC) No 3254/91, the Community prohibits the introduction into the Community of pelts and manufactured goods of certain wild animal species originating in third countries unless the country in question has prohibited the use of leghold traps or uses methods that meet internationally agreed humane trapping standards. In June 1996, the Council authorized the Commission to negotiate a framework agreement on humane trapping standards with Canada, the United States and Russia. An agreement was reached in July 1997 only between the Community, Canada and Russia (see 'fiche de procédure' CNS97019). The aim of the new proposal is to conclude a similar agreement with the USA, with which no agreement has so far been concluded. As a result of the negotiations, an agreement was initialled on 03.12.1997 which, like the agreement with Canada and Russia: - provides for the adoption of harmonized humane trapping standards relating to traps for killing or catching certain wild mammals (particularly the species referred to in Regulation (EEC) No 3254/91), - lays down that communications and cooperation between the parties are to be improved in order to apply and develop these standards, - provides for trade between the parties to be facilitated. The agreement, concluded in the form of an agreed minute or understanding, in particular lays down a common framework with a view to the use of less cruel traps and trapping methods, which the respective competent authorities are responsible for applying (in the case of the United States, both national and tribal authorities). More specifically, the agreement provides for: 1) thresholds and indicators by means of which to measure the degree of 'welfare' of animals to be killed or captured, 2) adoption of a timetable for compliance by traps with the standards laid down in the agreement: .3 to 5 years after the entry into force of the agreement for restraining traps, .5 years for killing traps, 3) a ban on all traps not certified as complying within 3 years of the deadlines laid down in the timetable for compliance (however, derogations are provided for whereby certain traps which do not comply may temporarily be used, particularly with the aim of taking account of certain cultural or environmental aspects). In a letter annexed to the agreement, the United States states that the use of all leghold traps to catch ermine or muskrats will be banned 4 years after the entry into force of the agreement between the EC, Canada and Russia on humane trapping (these two species account for about 50% of all animals trapped in the United States). For all other species, the use of conventional metal leghold traps will be banned 6 years after the entry into force of that agreement.