

Protection of chickens kept for meat production

2005/0099(CNS) - 30/05/2005 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to lay down minimum rules for the protection of chickens kept for meat production.

PROPOSED ACT : Council Directive.

CONTEXT : a report of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare of March 2000, "The Welfare of Chickens Kept for Meat Production (Broilers)", identified a number of welfare problems, such as metabolic disorders resulting in leg problems, ascites, sudden death syndrome and other health concerns.

The farming of chickens for meat production represents an important farming sector within the EU. This is illustrated by the fact that more than 4 billion chickens are slaughtered for meat production in the EU-15 each year, a higher number of animals than from any other farming system.

With the accession of the ten New Member States on 1 May 2004 this number increased by approximately 18 %. This sector is not covered by specific Community legislation; only the general requirements of Directive 98/58/EC concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes apply. Therefore the Commission has decided to propose a specific Council Directive laying down minimum rules for the protection of chickens kept for meat production.

CONTENT : this proposal aims to introduce animal welfare improvements in the intensive farming of chickens by means of technical and management requirements for the establishments, including enhanced monitoring on the farms and an increased flow of information between the producer, competent authorities and the slaughterhouse based on a welfare-specific monitoring of the chicken carcasses after slaughter. This proposal will be a key element in the context of the European Action Plan on Animal Welfare to be prepared by the Commission during 2005. It clearly demonstrates the Commission's commitment to bringing forward policy proposals with the aim of improving animal welfare standards, taking account of the welfare problems with current production systems identified by scientific experts. It also responds to the growing demands of EU civil society to move towards higher standards of animal protection.