

# The protection and welfare of animals for 2006-2010

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The Council adopted conclusions in which it recognises that animal welfare is of concern to many European citizens and that consumers could appreciate information on the animal welfare conditions under which products of animal origin are obtained, thereby enabling them to favour higher animal welfare standards through their purchasing decisions.

It considers that an EU-wide information campaign to explain the EU animal welfare standards to EU consumers and third countries might be appropriate, including the explanation of labelling schemes. It underlines that labelling could be one important element in the provision of information to consumers and could allow producers to capitalise on high animal welfare standards. Labelling should be simple, easy to recognise, comprehensible and credible and should not mislead consumers.

The Council considers that the possibility of introducing a label to recognise compliance with EU and/or recognised equivalent animal welfare standards, including the possibility of voluntary animal welfare labelling, should be evaluated. Such labelling should not lead to the deterioration of the functioning of existing labelling schemes requiring *inter alia* animal welfare standards above statutory requirements.

It considers that a European framework for animal welfare labelling would have to be based on sound scientific criteria and avoid any unnecessary administrative burden on producers and national authorities. The use of independent audit and certification schemes might be considered.

Lastly, the Commission is invited to take into account the abovementioned factors with a view to assessing further the issue of animal welfare labelling in all its aspects and to submit a report to the Council on animal welfare labelling in order to allow an in-depth debate on this subject.