Basic information

2009/2202(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Evaluation and assessment of the animal welfare action plan 2006-2010 **Subject** 3.10.04.02 Animal protection	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development	PAULSEN Marit (ALDE)	30/09/2009
	Shadow rapporteur GARCÍA PÉREZ Iratxe (S&D)	

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Agriculture and Fisheries	2995	2010-02-22
Agriculture and Fisheries	2982	2009-12-14

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Agriculture and Rural Development	CIOLOŞ Dacian

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
26/11/2009	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
14/12/2009	Debate in Council		Summary
22/02/2010	Debate in Council		Summary
17/03/2010	Vote in committee		Summary
23/03/2010	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0053/2010	
19/04/2010	Debate in Parliament		
05/05/2010	Decision by Parliament	T7-0130/2010	Summary
05/05/2010	Results of vote in Parliament		

05/05/2010	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2009/2202(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AGRI/7/01196

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE430.922	18/12/2009	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE438.478	15/02/2010	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0053/2010	23/03/2010	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0130/2010	05/05/2010	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2010)4415	06/09/2010	

Evaluation and assessment of the animal welfare action plan 2006-2010

2009/2202(INI) - 14/12/2009

The Council took note of the presentation by the Commission of its **report on options for animal welfare labelling** and the establishment of a **European Network of Reference Centres** for the protection and welfare of animals.

The report identifies various issues concerning animal welfare labelling and communication, and the possible establishment of a European Network of Reference Centres for the protection and welfare of animals, based on the results of an external study provided to the Commission in January 2009.

The most feasible option for EU action empowering consumers to make informed purchasing decisions appears to be a Community Animal Welfare Label modelled after the EU organic label. This option is to a large extent in line with the guiding principles and also more compatible with limitations concerning the currently available scientific knowledge on animal welfare and related indicators. On the other hand, mandatory labelling of welfare standards is the option that provides most information to consumers, and leads to the highest pressure on producers to improve animal welfare. However, there are limited additional costs for processors and farmers possible under this option, as well as negative impacts on existing schemes.

The debate on how to improve the communication to consumers regarding animal welfare in livestock production has been running in the EU for several years.

The results of the feasibility study show that animal welfare labelling may raise consumer awareness and accelerate market penetration of animal welfare-friendly products that go beyond the minimum standards foreseen in EU legislation. The overall goal of policy in this area is to make it easier for consumers to identify and choose welfare-friendly products and thereby give an economic incentive to producers to improve the welfare of animals.

Surveys show that a majority of European consumers said that they lack information on the level of animal welfare provided in the production of the goods they buy. This is why the Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-2010 suggests the development of

standardised animal welfare indicators, in order to provide for a science-based tool to make animal welfare measurable, more enforceable and easier to communicate to people.

In recent years, certification schemes have been widely introduced into the European agri-food sector. An animal welfare labelling scheme is a certification system that certifies an animal welfare standard above existing legal standards.

There are mainly three drivers of animal welfare relevant labelling schemes:

1) as a reaction to the BSE crisis and several other food incidents, food law has been undergoing major changes in the EU in recent years. The general trend of the growing body of food-related EU legislation is very much driven by the EU's objective to see a quality-driven single market in foodstuffs;

2) public as well as private certification has become a widely accepted instrument for regulating food markets;

3) consumer demands support animal welfare labelling. Although consumer demands are still extremely diverse, especially with regard to products of animal origin, and major consumer segments have become increasingly price sensitive, empirical studies (mainly cluster analyses) have revealed the existence of a group of consumers who are interested in high-quality products. For these consumers, high quality often includes higher animal welfare standards.

A number of private schemes have emerged in recent years. Among these can be mentioned:

- schemes that focus only on animal welfare (e.g. Freedom Food (UK), Neuland (DE), Animal Index System (AT));
- schemes that focus on various aspects including animal welfare (e.g. organic farming, Label Rouge (FR));
- schemes that focus on aspects other than animal welfare but have positive side effects on animal welfare (e.g. PDO/PGI schemes).

Evaluation and assessment of the animal welfare action plan 2006-2010

2009/2202(INI) - 22/02/2010

The Council held an exchange of views on the Commission's report "Options for animal welfare labelling and the establishment of a European Network of Reference Centres for the protection and welfare of animals"

In general, ministers agreed that information about animal welfare in livestock production could enable consumers to make informed purchasing decisions and help EU farmers to obtain the desired recompense for their efforts. At the same time, Ministers made it clear that any welfare information system would have to be simple and easy to understand, as well as in line with the rules of the WTO. Many ministers also highlighted the need to avoid an increase in production costs as well as in the administrative and control burden. They also stressed the need to evaluate how to cover imported products.

Some ministers mentioned the organisation of information campaigns and the publication of flyers on animal welfare as other or complementary options for informing consumers.

Many ministers argued in favour of **a label** to recognize animal welfare levels going beyond the legal minimum standards. However, several of them insisted that such a label should not lead to any downgrading of food produced in accordance with the legal minimum standards for animal welfare nor to any confusion with existing standards such as those for organic farming. Some ministers expressed a preference for a label recognizing the EU legal minimum standards, which are already very high.

The majority of ministers expressed a **strong preference for a voluntary animal welfare labelling scheme rather than a compulsory scheme.**

Many ministers supported the idea of an information system for the "European production model" as a whole, rather than having a separate information system for each standard. Some ministers suggested a step-by-step-approach, introducing as a first stage separate information systems for some key standards and creating, if appropriate, a new information system for other standards at a later stage.

Furthermore, a majority of ministers agreed that **more research** was needed to obtain scientifically sound and reliable indicators enabling labelling to allow consumers to distinguish between different animal welfare levels. They supported in general the creation of a European Network of Reference Centres which could facilitate sharing of information and provide technical support for the development and implementation of such indicators.

Following a conference on "Animal Welfare - Improving by Labelling?" organised by the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Commission and the German EU presidency in Brussels on March 2007, the Council, in May of the same year, adopted conclusions on animal welfare labelling inviting the Commission **to assess further this issue** and to submit a report in order to allow an in-depth debate on the issue.

The Commission published its report on 28 October 2009 year, identifying various issues concerning animal welfare labelling and communication, and **the possible establishment of a European Network of Reference Centres for the protection and welfare of animals**. The Commission expects an inter-institutional discussion on its text, feeding its reflections in shaping possible future policy options.

Evaluation and assessment of the animal welfare action plan 2006-2010

2009/2202(INI) - 05/05/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the evaluation and assessment of the Animal Welfare Action Plan 2006-2010 in response to the Commission Communication on the subject.

Action plan for 2006-2010: Members welcome the Commission's decision to focus on a few essential fields of action. They note that the vast majority of the measures contained in the current action plan have been implemented satisfactorily, and that there has been a positive development in the welfare of animals as a result of the action plan 2006-2010. However, EU farmers have not benefited from their efforts on the markets and in international trade and this should be highlighted in the next action plan. The Commission is asked to outline what progress has been made in WTO negotiations towards securing acknowledgment of non-trade-related concerns, which include animal welfare, as well as the extent to which animal welfare issues and standards are being taken into account in the Doha round of WTO negotiations.

Parliament stresses the need to enforce existing rules before drawing up new ones. It draws attention to the importance of effective penalties for non-compliance in all Member States. It emphasises the need for the Commission's own evaluation exercise, to be undertaken in 2010, to include a thorough analysis of achievements and of the lessons to be learned from potential flaws. Members regret that the Commission has not, during this period, developed a clear communication strategy on the value of products that comply with animal welfare standards, contenting itself with the report presented in October 2009.

They make the following observations on the current action plan:

- there is a need to ensure proper implementation of the existing rules on animal transport in the EU Member States, particularly on the issue of developing a satellite system to monitor such transport. Members want an economic impact analysis on livestock farming to be conducted before any new rules are implemented;
- it would make sense to create incentives for the regional breeding, marketing and slaughter of animals in order to obviate the need for breeding and slaughter animals to be transported over long distances;
- there is a lack of stringent supervision to ensure compliance with Council Directive 1999/22/EC relating to the keeping of wild animals in zoos, and Members urge the Commission to initiate a study on the effectiveness of the Directive in all Member States;
- workable plans are still lacking as regards the implementation of individual provisions of Directive 2008/120/EC on minimum standards for the protection of pigs, and they call for efforts to ensure greater compliance with this Directive;
- the Commission should ensure that the ban on systems lacking cages with nests for laying hens, which enters into force in 2012, is fully complied with.

Parliament acknowledges that the Community regards all animals as sentient beings. Recognising that action has thus far predominantly focused on food-producing animals, it considers that there is a need to bring other categories of animals into the Action Plan 2011 – 2015.

Action plan for 2011-2015: following on from its 2006 resolution, Parliament urges the Commission therefore to submit a report assessing the implementation of the current plan and the situation concerning animal welfare policy in the EU, on the basis of which it should compile the action plan for animal welfare 2011-2015 backed by the required funding. Any proposals for new legislation should be assessed against the alternative course of fully implementing existing legislation, to avoid unnecessary duplication.

A general European animal welfare law: Members call on the Commission, in the light of Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, to submit, no later than 2014 a reasoned proposal for general animal welfare legislation for the EU. This general animal welfare legislation must include guidelines on responsible keeping of animals, a uniform system for monitoring and for gathering comparable data, as well as requirements relating to the training of animal handlers and provisions establishing the particular responsibilities of animal owners, farmers and keepers. All these requirements should go hand in hand with the provision of resources to producers in order to ensure that they are properly implemented. Parliament considers that European animal welfare legislation should establish a **common basic level of animal welfare in the EU**, which is the precondition for free competition within the internal market for both domestic products and third-country imports. However, Member States and regions should have the possibility of allowing producers to introduce voluntary systems which are more far-reaching while avoiding distortion of competition and safeguarding the EU's competitiveness on international markets. Imported products must comply with the same animal welfare requirements as those imposed on European operators. The resolution calls for European farmers to be compensated for the higher production costs associated with higher animal welfare standards, and Members suggest that financing for animal welfare measures be incorporated into the new common agricultural policy support schemes from 2013.

They consider that, before any new legislation is drafted, existing rules should be enforced properly. Parliament points, by way of examples, to the ban on battery cages for hens, the rules on pigs and the rules on animal transport and the rearing of geese and ducks.

A European network of reference centres for animal welfare: Members consider that a **European coordinated network for animal welfare** should be set up under the existing institutions, and that its work should be based on the general animal welfare legislation proposed above. The coordinating body should become a support tool providing assistance regarding training and education, best practices, consumer communication and assessing policy proposals and their impact on animal welfare. Members stress that the public should be provided with information about animals' needs, since imparting knowledge on the basis of standardised quality criteria is fundamental if people are to be prevented from developing extreme views.

Better enforcement of existing legislation: Parliament calls on the Commission to assess the cost to European producers of animal welfare measures, and to propose in 2012 recommendations to tackle the loss of competitiveness of European livestock farmers. The EU budget must include sufficient appropriations to enable the Commission to perform its monitoring tasks, and to counter the loss of competitiveness faced by producers as a result of the adoption of new animal welfare standards, bearing in mind that the cost of these standards is not passed on in the price received by farmers when they sell their products. The resolution calls on Member States to ensure that any violations of EU animal welfare rules result in effective penalties. It **welcomes the considerable reduction in the use of antibiotics for animals in Member States** since their use as a growth promoter was banned in the EU, while still being allowed in the US and some other countries. However, the Commission and Member States **must address the growing problem of antibiotic resistance** in animals in a responsible way.

Indicators and new techniques: Members call for an assessment and further development of the Animal Welfare Quality Project, and they call on the Commission, on the basis of the final report of the Animal Welfare Quality Project, to propose a trial period for the assessment of animal welfare within the EU using the methods developed in the Project. Lastly, Member States are asked to make better use of the opportunities for applied research beneficial to animal welfare which is available from EU rural development funds and DG Research's 7th Framework Programme (2007-2013).