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# **REPORT**

Implementation report on on-farm animal welfare  
(2020/2085(INI))

Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

Rapporteur: Jérémy Decerle

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## **EXPLANATORY STATEMENT – SUMMARY OF FACTS AND FINDINGS**

This report addresses the implementation of EU legislation on the welfare of food-producing animals. It focuses on Directive 98/58/EC concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes, Directive 1999/74/EC on the protection of laying hens, Directive 2007/43/EC on the protection of chickens kept for meat production, Directive 2008/119/EC on the protection of calves, and Directive 2008/120/EC on the protection of pigs. Welfare issues in animal transport or slaughtering practices are not covered. The report draws on the conclusions of the EPRS study ‘Animal welfare on the farm – ex-post evaluation of EU legislation: prospects for animal welfare labelling at EU level’.

### **Findings**

#### *Implementation of the legislation*

Most stakeholders agreed that the current legislation needs to be updated to incorporate scientific advances in our understanding of animals and technical progress in farming practices.

On-farm animal welfare legislation has not proved an unalloyed success: some directives have led to positive structural changes to the way in which animals are reared (the pigs, calves and laying hens directives), but the general directive and broiler directive have had little effect. Assessment of the legislation was limited by the quality and consistency of the information available in the assessment of the legislation: it was not possible to get a clear picture of what is happening on the ground.

The reasons for this include the failure to lay down specific requirements in the legislation regarding compliance and monitoring methods. The fact that the Member States have been left so much discretion has led to inconsistency in the implementation of the legislation.

The legislation was found to be broadly consistent with legislation on animal health, although it could be better integrated with other EU policies.

#### *Labelling*

EU animal welfare labelling systems, most of which are private, are all voluntary and incorporate other aspects such as traceability, sustainability and health. The way they work and were designed varies considerably. There is no consensus among stakeholders on the prospect of mandatory labelling at EU level.

### **Conclusions**

The way the current legislation is worded makes it impossible to properly analyse its implementation. The Commission should update these directives to make them more effective with a view not to tightening the rules up but to providing greater clarity and going into greater detail, and thus ensuring that the Member States read and interpret them in a more uniform manner.

For that to happen, the European Parliament, the relevant national authorities and farmers will have to be involved.

Labelling rules could be devised, providing a practical framework but leaving operators room for manoeuvre to ensure a balance is maintained on the market.

What is more, a clear distinction should be made between the objectives of the legislation and practical measures. Most of the practical measures provided for in animal welfare legislation have been taken, and where there are objectives that have yet to be fully achieved, it is because they are very general and very ambitious. Regardless of any developments, discussions will have to be held in conjunction with farmers, applying a pragmatic and realistic approach to both farming and commercial practices.

## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### Implementation report on on-farm animal welfare (2020/2085(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European (TFEU), which affirms that ‘the Union and the Member States shall, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals, while respecting the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage’,
- having regard to the study by the Policy Department for Citizens’ Rights and Constitutional Affairs of its Directorate-General for Internal Policies of November 2020 entitled ‘End the cage age: Looking for alternatives’, to its resolution of 10 June 2021 on the European Citizens’ Initiative ‘End the Cage Age’<sup>1</sup>, and to the Commission communication of 30 June 2021 on the European Citizens’ Initiative ‘End the Cage Age’ (C(2021)04747),
- having regard to Council Directive 98/58/EC of 20 July 1998 concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes<sup>2</sup> (the General Directive),
- having regard to Council Directive 1999/74/EC of 19 July 1999 laying down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to Council Directive 2007/43/EC of 28 June 2007 laying down minimum rules for the protection of chickens kept for meat production<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to Council Directive 2008/119/EC of 18 December 2008 laying down minimum standards for the protection of calves<sup>5</sup>,
- having regard to Council Directive 2008/120/EC of 18 December 2008 laying down minimum standards for the protection of pigs<sup>6</sup>,
- having regard to the research paper by the European Parliamentary Research Service of June 2021 entitled ‘Implementation of EU legislation on “on-farm” animal welfare: potential EU added value from the introduction of animal welfare labelling requirements at EU level’,
- having regard to the study drawn up for the Commission in October 2020 to support the evaluation of the EU Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012-2015,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 March 2017 on minimum standards for the

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2021)0295.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 221, 8.8.1998, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> OJ L 203, 3.8.1999, p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> OJ L 182, 12.7.2007, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> OJ L 10, 15.1.2009, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> OJ L 47, 18.2.2009, p. 5.

- protection of farm rabbits<sup>7</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 25 October 2018 on animal welfare, antimicrobial use and the environmental impact of industrial broiler farming<sup>8</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 9 June 2021 on the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030: Bringing nature back into our lives<sup>9</sup>,
  - having regard to the Council conclusions of 16 December 2019 on animal welfare – an integral part of sustainable animal production,
  - having regard to the Council conclusions of 7 December 2020 on an EU-wide animal welfare label,
  - having regard to the European Court of Auditors Special Report No 31 of 14 November 2018 on animal welfare in the EU: closing the gap between ambitious goals and practical implementation,
  - having regard to the fitness check currently being carried out by the Commission on EU animal welfare legislation,
  - having regard to the opinion of the European Committee of the Regions of 5 December 2018 on reform of the common agricultural policy<sup>10</sup>,
  - having regard to the Special Eurobarometer 505 entitled ‘Making our food fit for the future – Citizens’ expectations’,
  - having regard to the five freedoms described by the World Organisation for Animal Health, namely freedom from hunger, malnutrition and thirst, freedom from fear and distress, freedom from heat stress or physical discomfort, freedom from pain, injury and disease, and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour,
  - having regard to the Commission communication of 12 May 2021 entitled ‘Strategic guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture for the period 2021 to 2030’ (COM(2021)0236),
  - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure, as well as Article 1(1)(e) of, and Annex 3 to, the decision of the Conference of Presidents of 12 December 2002 on the procedure for granting authorisation to draw up own-initiative reports,
  - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (A9-0296/2021),

A. whereas animal welfare, an important consideration for our farmers, is an ethical and

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<sup>7</sup> OJ C 263, 25.7.2018, p. 90.

<sup>8</sup> OJ C 345, 16.10.2020, p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2021)0277.

<sup>10</sup> OJ C 86, 7.3.2019, p. 173.

increasingly important issue for consumers and our society in general; whereas consumer interest in the quality of food purchased and animal welfare is higher than ever and EU citizens want to be able to make more informed choices as consumers; whereas food quality in relation to animal welfare and animal health has an important part to play in achieving the goals of the Farm to Fork strategy;

- B. whereas Article 13 TFEU recognises that animals are sentient beings and stipulates that the Union and its Member States shall pay full regard to their welfare requirements in formulating and implementing the Union's agriculture and fisheries policies, while respecting customs relating to religious rituals, cultural traditions and regional heritage in the Member States;
- C. whereas although European food production standards, including animal welfare criteria, are among the highest in the world, they still require improvement; whereas several countries and regions have taken further steps in this direction, such as banning certain forms of caged farming;
- D. whereas ensuring the uniform wording and application of animal welfare legislation and updating it in line with the latest scientific knowledge is a prerequisite for raising animal welfare standards and enforcing full compliance therewith;
- E. whereas some European farmers have made some progress in recent decades by looking critically at their practices and making improvements and adjustments in their work; whereas they rely on the support of advisory and research bodies and a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to improve their practices; whereas the uptake of smart farming technologies to monitor animal health and welfare has the potential to further improve disease prevention and the implementation of animal welfare standards; whereas European farmers want to continue to move forward in this area, but face technical, legislative and economic obstacles; whereas the improvement of animal welfare must take into account the health-related aspects particular to each species, and whereas the cost should not be borne by producers alone;
- F. whereas industrial livestock farming plays a prominent role in EU agriculture; whereas in just over a decade, several million farms – more than a third of all farms in Europe – have ceased to exist, the vast majority of which were small family businesses, as a result of the upscaling and intensification of the agricultural system;
- G. whereas economic volatility is forcing stockbreeders to factor in lengthy periods of amortisation and investment, for example in livestock accommodation designed to enhance animal welfare;
- H. whereas European farmers are currently taking further action regarding the evolution of breeding and animal housing with a view to strengthening convergence with the five freedoms of the World Organisation for Animal Health;
- I. whereas animal welfare goes hand in hand with the well-being of farmers and farm operators, all of which should be given appropriate resources and greater practical support at EU level;
- J. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the direct link between animal and human health and well-being; whereas animal welfare is also linked to the environment,

as best explored through the One Welfare framework;

- K. whereas European livestock farms employ around 4 million people (salaried and non-salaried), 80 % of whom reside in the newer Member States<sup>11</sup>;
- L. whereas intra-EU fish trade plays an essential role in the EU's fishery trade as a whole, having accounted for 86 % of total trade within and outside the EU in 2014, with a total volume of sale of 5.74 million tonnes for a value of EUR 20.6 billion – the highest registered since 2006<sup>12</sup>;
- M. whereas animal health and welfare are key to ensuring food safety, food security and public health and contributing to high-quality standards in the EU;
- N. whereas healthy livestock is a key component of achieving sustainable, lower-carbon farming;
- O. whereas scientific and technical developments have improved our understanding of animal sentience, behaviour and welfare;
- P. whereas significant difficulties were encountered in the collection of data on the implementation of on-farm animal welfare legislation as regards both the quality and the availability of data, due to the lack of requirements for monitoring and data collection on Member States;
- Q. whereas the current legislation is partly obsolete and lags behind the knowledge on the specific needs of animals according to their species, age, size and physical condition, as well as the scientific advances and technical progress made in farming practices;
- R. whereas co-existing with national laws is the current body of EU legislation, which provides a combination of opt-outs, exceptions and unclear requirements and fails to provide specific safeguards or to guarantee levels of protection, thereby giving rise to a number of undesirable practices, resulting in legislative fragmentation and legal uncertainty on the domestic market, all of which are considered to have distorted competition;
- S. whereas EU animal welfare legislation only establishes species-specific minimum welfare standards for pigs, laying hens, broilers and calves, while there is no species-specific legislation for any other species farmed for the production of food, namely for dairy and beef cattle beyond six months old, sheep and goats, the parent birds of broiler chickens and laying hens, pullets, turkeys, ducks and geese, quail, fish and rabbits; whereas EU animal welfare legislation currently lacks species- and age-specific provisions that cover all production cycle stages; whereas numerous terrestrial farmed animals and farmed fish belonging to different species are currently only protected by the general provisions of the General Directive;
- T. whereas initiatives other than EU legislation and official checks have played a part in the improvement of farming practices; whereas many Member States have implemented

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<sup>11</sup> Study undertaken for the Commission entitled 'Future of EU livestock: How to contribute to a sustainable agricultural sector?', June 2020.

<sup>12</sup> European Market Observatory for Fisheries and Aquaculture Products, *The EU fish market: 2015 edition*.

their own animal welfare standards that are more stringent than the EU's;

- U. whereas the Member States have been given considerable discretion over how to set requirements and assess compliance therewith; whereas the Member States have taken different approaches to the allocation of resources and prioritisation of official checks;
- V. whereas the implementation of the legislation is highly inconsistent across the Member States; whereas this has led to different levels of compliance and risks disadvantaging compliant farmers;
- W. whereas the directives on pigs (for pregnant sows), calves and laying hens have led to positive structural changes to the way in which animals are reared; whereas in the egg, veal and pigmeat sectors, the directives have led to significant changes to buildings and equipment and played a part in some advances in the number and size of holdings;
- X. whereas the General Directive has generally been found to have had less of an impact than the species-specific directives and a modest effect in terms of improving animal welfare owing to the vague nature of its requirements, its broad margins for interpretation, and the absence of species-specific protections for dairy cows, broiler and hen breeders, rabbits, sheep and turkeys;
- Y. whereas due to production pressure, the main issues that the legislation was designed to address remain widespread, including mutilations and cramped and stressful conditions; whereas the sow housing targets were not attained and implementation of the legislation has been inconsistent overall, with sow housing still too cramped and stressful and lacking sufficient enrichment material;
- Z. whereas Directive 1999/74/EC on laying hens has been a success in providing good definitions for the different production systems; whereas this success is limited, however, given the broad range of approaches applied by the Member States to its implementation and the directive's lack of clear, mandatory and comprehensive provisions, which have enabled distorted competition to persist in the single market, and given that this directive has shown insufficient progress, did not meet the real needs of laying hens and gradually brought pressure for change, which is why alternatives to a cage housing system<sup>13</sup> began to be used more in individual Member States;
- AA. whereas it is in the interests of both farmers and consumers to ensure equal conditions in the internal market and equal conditions for imports of products from third countries;
- AB. whereas working conditions have improved for laying-hen and veal farmers, but not necessarily for pig farmers;
- AC. whereas the Commission has decided that it will complete the impact assessment of the ban on cage farming prepared by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in 2022 and the revision of animal welfare legislation, including the General Directive, by 2023;
- AD. whereas a distinction should be drawn between anecdotal cases of non-compliance, which are the focus of too much attention, and the vast majority of farmers who follow

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<sup>13</sup> European Parliament study entitled 'End the cage age: Looking for alternatives', November 2020.

the rules;

- AE. whereas livestock farming methods and production systems vary between the Member States;
- AF. whereas Europe's agricultural demography is experiencing an alarming decline; whereas insufficient generational renewal would have an undesirable effect on the implementation of animal welfare norms;
- AG. whereas the EU's agricultural, environmental and international trade strategies and measures to ensure a level playing field within the single market should be coherent, complementary and appropriate;
- AH. whereas the common agricultural policy (CAP) is one of the regulatory and financial tools that can be used as a stimulus to improve the health and welfare of farm animals, notably through eco-schemes but also through supporting investments, although other financing in addition to the CAP is also required to make progress in this direction; whereas according to the Commission's evaluation of the latest EU Animal Welfare Strategy, however, Member States have neglected to take full advantage of the funds for animal welfare purposes and millions of euros in EU rural development funding for improving animal welfare are currently unused or poorly used; whereas livestock farming is the main beneficiary of second pillar aid to farms in areas with natural constraints, which make up 50 % of Europe's utilised agricultural area, as well as of agro-environmental measures, which compensate for the additional costs linked to unfavourable location or the obligation to respect specific legislation<sup>14</sup>;
- AI. whereas particular attention should be paid to ensuring better animal welfare through the entire production cycle and to the promotion of higher animal welfare standards on both the domestic and international markets, and ensuring that our political decisions do not weaken the European livestock production sector or serve to reduce production, which would lead to the relocation of production to other parts of the world where livestock conditions and standards are lower than in Europe, as well as other related problems that are detrimental not only to animal welfare standards but also European environmental objectives;
- AJ. whereas labelling can only be effective if it is science based, easy for consumers to understand and to make an informed choice, designed for an integrated single market applied to all animal products, and underpinned by a coherent EU trade policy to prevent products made to lower standards from entering the market, and only if it does not have additional economic implications for food sector operators, especially farmers, and is truly feasible for our producers without overly onerous implementation costs or constraints; whereas such labelling must also help to create market openings for producers; whereas research and public consultation findings show that certain stakeholders, especially business, are not fully behind the proposal for mandatory labelling; whereas voluntary labelling will earn rewards on the market in the absence of differentiation by the latter based on production characteristics; whereas there is little understanding of the impact of the labelling systems studied on food businesses as well

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<sup>14</sup> Study undertaken for the Commission entitled 'Future of EU livestock: How to contribute to a sustainable agricultural sector?', June 2020.

as on consumers' confidence and understanding of animal welfare practices;

- AK. whereas the use of DNA traceability technologies to track and trace every sick animal or infected food has the potential to reassure consumers by ensuring food safety and prevent food fraud;
- AL. whereas information tools for consumers should be designed in such a way as to maintain a level playing field and a harmonised approach, which is currently made impossible by the welter of private initiatives using unprotected animal welfare terms and claims for varying standards; whereas there is a growing market in the EU for animal products from cage-free, free range and organic systems, and for plant-based alternatives;
- AM. whereas the aim in legislative action should be to harmonise and improve the implementation of regulations and standards;
- AN. whereas the majority of animal welfare labelling schemes are initiated by the private sector, while the rest are the result of public-private partnerships or – to a lesser extent – initiatives by national competent actors in some Member States;
- AO. whereas animal welfare systems in the EU are voluntary; whereas most of them include aspects other than animal welfare, such as traceability, sustainability and health; whereas they vary greatly in terms of operation and design;
- AP. whereas there is no consensus on the prospect of mandatory animal welfare labelling rules, mainly due to the economic implications arising from their implementation, in particular for livestock farmers; whereas even if mandatory rules were to even out certain irregularities on the European market, they would have a dampening effect on private initiatives aimed at creating product differentiation and the use of animal welfare as a commercial lever;

## ***Conclusions and recommendations***

### *Implementing the rules*

1. Welcomes the Commission's evaluation and revision of the animal welfare legislation by 2023, including on animal transport and the slaughter of animals, which aims to align it with the latest scientific evidence, broaden its scope, make it easier to enforce and ensure a higher level of animal welfare, as stated in the Farm to Fork strategy;
2. Acknowledges the strides made by many livestock farmers on their farms, particularly in improving animal welfare, and the drive and commitment of some of them to forward thinking and progress;
3. Recommends giving all livestock farmers the means, via an EU-level framework, to take part in a process of progress, based on objective indicators referring to the five fundamental freedoms defined by the World Organisation for Animal Health;
4. Calls for any future legislative initiative (whether the establishment of new legislation or a review of existing texts) entailing an amendment or change to the livestock-raising system (including accommodation) and livestock welfare criteria to be based on sound,

recent scientific data or studies derived from research grounded in a systemic approach, taking all aspects into account in order to achieve sustainability and animal welfare; advocates for balance to be maintained, for scientific advice on how the changes to be introduced will affect the animals, the environment and farmers, especially small farmers, and for the competent bodies of the Member States to be consulted as early as possible in the legislative process;

5. Emphasises the need to carry out impact assessments before any decisions are taken and the need to develop a species-by-species approach in order to lay down specific requirements for each type of livestock farm;
6. Calls for the better management of veterinary prevention and promotion of high animal health and welfare standards, notably on vaccination and preventing the unnecessary use of antimicrobials, in order to prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases;
7. Is aware of the fact that EFSA has produced several opinions on the use of animal-based measures for species not covered by specific legislation (dairy cows and beef cattle) in response to requests from the Commission; regrets the fact that these animal-based measures proposed by EFSA have not been implemented so far; calls on the Commission, therefore, to ensure that these animal-based measures are updated with the latest scientific knowledge and integrated into the existing specific legislation;
8. Acknowledges that according to scientific bodies, animal-based measures – although desirable – are not always enforceable and objectively verifiable; calls on the Commission, therefore, in the context of its revision of the EU animal welfare legislation, to formulate highly specific and verifiable requirements in the light of the latest scientific opinions and the various production systems across the Member States;
9. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the existing animal welfare legislation is complied with and to update the rules, where necessary, to better match them with society's demands, in the light of scientific progress and research findings in this field, while broadening the scope and flexibility of those rules to adapt to the latest scientific and technological developments and the objectives of the Green Deal;
10. Recalls that output-oriented quantifiable changes must be made after appropriate scientific evaluation and in consultation with the competent bodies and stakeholders in the Member States, with a view to meeting the challenges facing stock breeders, on the one hand, and the needs and expectations of citizens and the health and welfare of animals, on the other, taking due account of the best choices for consumers and their purchasing power; recalls that our European food system should provide access to affordable, high-quality food; considers that producers should be guaranteed a fair share of the price of food products complying with EU animal welfare legislation;
11. Calls for shorter supply chains in nutrition, relying on locally or regionally produced food to provide consumers with better direct access to local food and support small farmers;
12. Urges lawmakers to familiarise themselves with and be fully aware of the consequences of these developments; calls for changes to be assessed using a holistic approach taking in the social, environmental, animal welfare and economic components of sustainability, as well as ergonomics for farmers and health-related aspects, and taking particular

account of the 'One Health' approach; recalls that animal welfare must be combined with a sustainable economic approach;

13. Underlines the need to improve animal welfare and health in animal agriculture as part of the 'One Health' approach; points to the fact that in order to achieve this goal, improved animal husbandry practices are essential, as better animal welfare improves animal health, thereby reducing the need for medication and curbing the spread of zoonoses; calls on the Commission also to develop the 'One Welfare' approach as part of the revision of the legislation on animal welfare;
14. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to step up their checks monitoring for antibiotics and other banned chemical residues found in imports from non-EU countries, as part of the Commission's strategy to effectively address the unregulated use of antibiotics and pesticides used in animal, seafood and aquaculture production;
15. Calls for measures to be introduced to guarantee the safety and integrity of farmers in the event of certain actions being taken towards animals;
16. Stresses that any change must be considered in the light of the time, support and financing needed for livestock farmers to implement it, its economic and bureaucratic implications, and the inertia it may entail; stresses the need to take particular account of investment costs, given the risk that low profit margins result in lengthy loan repayments; notes that changes to improve on-farm animal welfare need an appropriate transition period; acknowledges that livestock farmers are engaged in an ongoing investment cycle owing to recent animal welfare initiatives and long pay-off periods;
17. Welcomes the European Citizens' Initiative 'End the Cage Age'; points out that any changes to cage farming will need to be accompanied by precise and unambiguous definitions of what constitutes a cage and its characteristics for different species in order to provide for an effective transition to alternative housing systems, which are already commercially viable and in use, such as barn, free-range and organic systems for hens, park systems, floor pens, outdoor free-range and organic systems for rabbits, free-farrowing and group housing systems for sows, barn and aviary systems for quail, or pair and group housing systems for calves;
18. Urges the Commission, as part of the implementation of the new legislation, to precisely and clearly define the condition and facilities for the breeding of individual species of animals, which should be based on examples of good practices in alternative housing systems; recommends that the Commission focus its activities on enhancing food security and making the EU agricultural market more robust; calls for the revision of Council Directive 1999/74/EC on laying hens in order to rapidly phase out and prohibit battery cages and introduce cage-free systems for all laying hens, create a level playing field, and improve the welfare of animals kept in the EU;
19. Recalls that investments in improved animal welfare incur higher production costs, no matter the type of livestock farming concerned; notes that additional public aid or a clear return on investment from the market must be set out, otherwise the rise in production costs will impede or prevent farmers from investing in animal welfare, which would be an undesirable situation; considers, therefore, that the raising of animal welfare standards should take place gradually and in a responsible manner, based on a system of financial incentives, including funds outside the CAP budget;

20. Urges the Commission to decide on appropriate financial support for livestock farmers to encourage them to invest in better animal welfare; urges the Commission to address these shortcomings as a matter of urgency and to encourage and implement sustainable improvements in remunerating farmers' efforts; calls for further special financial support for breeders linked to the transition to alternative housing systems for animals in connection with the implementation of new legislation banning cage farming, which the Commission has committed to doing by 2027 on the basis of a call by Parliament in its resolution of 10 June 2021 on the 'End the Cage Age' European Citizens' Initiative; acknowledges that this depends on measures to ensure the necessary additional resources coupled with fair market prices; notes that while always welcome, continually raising animal welfare standards and other areas of regulation places additional burdens on compliant farmers; stresses that primary consideration should always be given to ensuring compliance and consistency with existing standards as a first step in order to ensure that the least compliant farmers are brought up to speed and comply with the existing standards before any additional burdens are placed on progressive farmers; underlines that farmers' incomes and the competitiveness of European livestock producers in the global agricultural market need to be taken into account on the basis of reciprocity in the context of measures to enhance EU welfare legislation;
21. Is aware of the limited overall consistency between EU animal welfare legislation and the 2014-2020 CAP, and of the poor integration of the specific legislation into the national rural development plans and insufficient allocation of funding for the objective of animal welfare, with substantial differences from one Member State to another; encourages the Member States to draw up animal welfare eco-schemes in their national strategic plans and calls on the Commission to ensure that the national strategic plans provide support and direction for farmers in improving animal welfare standards; urgently calls for financial support to be provided to livestock farmers who will effect a transition on their farms, including through better housing conditions which meet the physical and behavioural needs of animals, whether by means of public policies (a coherent combination of different tools, including the CAP and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund) or the market, and for consumers to be provided with clear and transparent information by ensuring clear and reliable labelling of animal products on welfare-related aspects of the entire production cycle, including the method of production; calls, furthermore, for the implementation of a transparent, positive and non-stigmatising communication strategy across all animal products, taking into account the specificities of certain traditional regional products, in order to raise awareness of the expertise, importance and quality of farmers and animal breeders' work and the benefits of the new animal welfare legislation;
22. Invites the Commission to communicate and help give visibility more effectively to good practices and to assist the livestock sector in its efforts to make progress with positive actions, by supporting the means of implementation, thus respecting the efforts of all stakeholders to get their initiatives off the ground and adopting an encouraging stance that incentivises the incorporation of new practices;
23. Invites the Commission to invest in the welfare of farmers who handle livestock and the attractiveness of their occupation with a view to enhancing motivation and productivity among settled and future farmers, thereby directly boosting animal welfare;
24. Proposes enhancing affordable training for farmers and operators who handle animals in

the sector by adding a specific module for initial and ongoing training with a view to honing skills; calls on the Commission to carry out regular reviews of Member States and farmers' efforts to improve the quality of education and training and to reward special commitments accordingly; supports continued efforts to collate examples of best practice in the field of education and training and the sharing of these with the Member States by means of annual reports; notes that many of the animal welfare hazards identified originated from the action and behaviour of animal handlers and owners; encourages the Commission to check that training for farmers and handlers is included in the national strategic plans;

25. Points out that practices intended to improve animal well-being can incur higher production costs and increase farmers' workload, and that this must be offset by corresponding remuneration; stresses, by way of example, that phasing in loose housing in farrowing units would require a lengthy transition period to ensure that the additional costs incurred are recovered from the markets, and would require the construction of new buildings; demands the cooperation of relevant authorities in issuing building permits and the reduction of administrative burdens;
26. Stresses that some measures believed to improve animal welfare may in fact be counterproductive and undermine other aspects of sustainability, namely welfare and health and safety-related issues and the fight against antimicrobial resistance, as well as efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions if they are not developed holistically; cites the fact, by way of example, that keeping rabbits in the open air can increase stress and mortality levels, and that installing collective cages in rabbitries may lead to aggressive behaviour among does, causing stress, injury and reduced performance<sup>15</sup>; points out that outdoor rearing may also lead to reduced control over droppings and emissions and to greater amounts of feed needed, thereby potentially causing a greater carbon impact; notes that there is a linear relation between increasing pen dimensions and ammonia emissions<sup>16</sup>, leaving farmers facing contradictory legislation on animal welfare and environmental issues; notes that totally 'free farrowing' housing systems or the sudden phasing out of cage rearing could create additional sources of infection among farm animals and increase the stress caused by territorial dominance and rivalry; points out that accommodation in adequate pens at certain times in their life cycles can help curb the spread of animal diseases and pathogenic infections and prevent debilitation and avoidable mortality among young calves or piglets<sup>17</sup>; recalls, in this regard, that a species-by-species approach is therefore needed; calls on the Commission to thoroughly assess any potentially harmful effects of each proposal on animal health and welfare;
27. Emphasises the multifaceted complexity of the serious welfare problem of tail biting in pig farming; observes that technical difficulties have been encountered throughout the EU during extensive research and analysis on the risk factors that trigger this behaviour;

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<sup>15</sup> Fortun-Lamothe, L., Savietto, D., Gidenne, T., Combes, S., Le Cren, D., Davoust C., Warin, L., *Démarche participative pour la conception d'un système d'élevage cunicole socialement accepté*, 'Colloque Bien-être animal: des valeurs à partager' [*Participatory initiative with a view to designing a socially accepted rabbit farming system*, 'Animal welfare: shared values' symposium], Strasbourg, 1 and 2 July 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Guingand, N., 'Réduire la densité animale en engraissement: quelles conséquences sur l'émission d'odeurs et d'ammoniac?', *Journées Recherche Porcine* ['Reducing stocking density in the fattening phase: effects on odour and ammonia emissions', *French Swine Research Days*], 39, pp. 43-48, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Kollenda, E., Baldock, D., Hiller, N., Lorant, A., *Assessment of environmental and socio-economic impacts of increased animal welfare standards: transitioning towards cage-free farming in the EU*, Policy report by the Institute for European Environmental Policy, Brussels & London, October 2020.

notes that this has meant that no reliable solutions whatsoever have been found so far and has consequently led to the widespread practice of tail-docking in spite of the Commission and Parliament's considerable efforts to disseminate information and best practices on keeping pigs with tails intact; regrets the fact that only two Member States have prohibited the practice of tail-docking so far; stresses that providing appropriate environmental enrichment, particularly materials that can be manipulated, as well as ensuring good space, implementing good feeding-related practices and providing a solid floor, can significantly reduce the problem of tail biting; suggests that more scientific research be funded and carried out with the aim of mapping an economically sustainable pathway to guarantee that pigs can be reared commercially indoors with tails intact; believes that solutions are needed within the scope of the current legislation to safeguard the welfare of pigs and to reduce the use of antimicrobials to treat injured pigs; urges the Commission to ensure that all Member States comply with the ban on the routine tail-docking of pigs; considers, furthermore, that clarity is needed regarding penalties in cases of tail-docking where pigs have been raised in one Member State and are exported to another for fattening<sup>18</sup>;

28. Recalls that the full implementation of the current legislation in every Member State is crucial to enhance on-farm animal welfare and ensure a fair and level playing field in the internal market;
29. Recognises the efforts made by the European pig farming sector to seek alternatives to piglet castration and stresses the need for amendments to the veterinary rules regarding pig farms to take account of progress in the field of alternatives to piglet castration;
30. Invites the Commission to ensure the availability in the various Member States of a harmonised EU list of the available products and protocols for the use of pain-killers and anaesthesia for piglet castration; asks the Commission to permit the short-term storage of veterinary medicines on farms and to allow veterinarians to leave them there in accordance with strict regulatory framework provisions;
31. Notes that the production of foie gras is based on farming procedures that respect animal welfare criteria, since it is an extensive form of production that predominantly takes place on family farms, where birds spend 90 % of their lives in the open air and where the fattening phase, which lasts between 10 and 12 days on average with two meals per day, respects the animal's biological parameters;
32. Applauds the Commission for publishing strategic guidelines on 12 May 2021 for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture; emphasises the importance of promoting the development of the EU aquaculture sector towards more sustainable methods which pay particular attention to fish welfare in order to address the current overdependence on imports; welcomes the fact that Parliament's Committee on Fisheries is drafting an own-initiative report on these guidelines; calls on the Commission to put forward specific, scientifically sound provisions for the welfare of farmed fish;
33. Invites the Commission to improve the internal market by including changes resulting

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<sup>18</sup> See the Council conclusions of 5 October 2021 on the crisis in the pigmeat sector and the Commission draft report of an audit carried out in Denmark from 9 to 13 October 2017 in order to evaluate Member State activities to prevent tail biting and avoid routine tail-docking of pigs.

from updated EU animal welfare legislation, devising a harmonised, comprehensive and shared strategy on animal welfare in European countries with harmonised implementation of the relevant legislation and ensuring that the ambition and standards to improve animal welfare are not lowered, while monitoring the proper implementation of and compliance with existing legislation throughout the Member States;

34. Urges the Commission to inform consumers and raise awareness of the reality of livestock farming and its real impact on the environment, biodiversity and the climate, and the diversity and origin of production methods by showing, without dogmatism or stigmatisation, the care and attention that farmers devote to their animals; calls on the Commission and the Member States to significantly improve public awareness and understanding of the reality of livestock farming and animal welfare, including through education in schools;
35. Calls on the Commission to redraft its regulatory framework to improve the welfare of animals in the EU by making it clearer, more comprehensive, more predictable and more accessible with a view to making the objectives and indicators more easily comprehensible and thus leaving less room for interpretation and enabling and facilitating uniform national transposition by the Member States, before tightening the rules further or adding to them; suggests that the General Directive be updated in accordance with the latest scientific knowledge to include the Commission's objectives and citizens' expectations regarding the welfare of farm animals and systemic research findings, together with work on the species-specific directives, taking due account of the nature of livestock farming, the various stages of the animals' lives, on-farm practices that do not relate to livestock farming, traditions and regional conditions, and the diversity of soil and weather conditions;
36. Notes that the current EU legislation on animal welfare is not comprehensive and invites the Commission to assess the need for and impact of specific animal welfare legislation in the light of the latest scientific knowledge for food-producing species that are not covered by species-specific legislation at present; takes note of the lack of animal-based welfare indicators for the General Directive, Council Directive 2008/120/EC on pigs, Council Directive 2007/43/EC on chickens, and Council Directive 1999/74/EC on laying hens; acknowledges, moreover, the lack of quantifiable requirements for the implementation and monitoring of environmental conditions such as air quality (nitrogen, CO<sub>2</sub>, dust), lighting (duration, brightness) and minimal noise, which not only affects animal welfare but also distorts competition because of the margin for interpretation; calls on the Commission to set up enforceable and quantifiable such indicators, which should be species-specific and up to date from a scientific point of view;
37. Urges the Commission to clarify its framework for monitoring Member States and to ensure that detrimental practices are tackled and to begin infringement proceedings for non-compliance; emphasises the importance of precision livestock farming technologies, including the potential of on-farm animal health and welfare monitoring tools, which help to prevent and better control disease outbreaks on farms; underlines that there are many factors behind the rate of non-compliance with animal welfare legislation, including unenforceable and unquantifiable animal-based indicators; notes that the frequency of inspections across the Member States ranges from a minimum of 1 % to a maximum of 30 %; is concerned that this large variation in the frequency of

inspections either means non-compliance with the Control Regulation<sup>19</sup> or entails considerable pressure for farmers; calls on the Commission and the Member States, therefore, to harmonise the implementation of the Control Regulation to align the frequency of inspections between Member States and livestock sectors; calls on the Commission to report to Parliament every year on its actions and the actions of the Member States to improve the welfare of animals kept on farms in the EU;

38. Asks the Commission to accompany any decision with a scientific and impact assessment (including the environmental, economic and social impacts), which should take into account the diversity of farming methods in each sector in the EU and analyse the situation from the perspective of both the animal (species by species and at different stages of production) and the farmer, with a view to considering citizens' expectations and creating a system of effective breeding to ensure that animals live in favourable conditions, animal welfare is respected and farmers are economically profitable;
39. Stresses that Member States should provide for appropriate enforcement regimes, which could be harmonised between Member States, and that Member States must at all times ensure the strict enforcement of EU legislation; calls on the Commission to submit regular reports to Parliament on the implementation and enforcement of EU animal welfare legislation, which should identify gaps and include a breakdown of infringements by Member State, species and type of infringement;
40. Calls on the Commission to improve cooperation between all the stakeholders concerned and to facilitate dialogue between the various stakeholders in the Member States so as to enable joint consideration of developments in livestock farming systems; encourages the sharing of 'good' practices between livestock farming sectors and countries; wishes to see the development of tools to encourage pioneering livestock farmers to participate in development projects; asks for livestock farmers and animal welfare scientists to be involved at all stages of the studies carried out in Europe's various regions; wishes to see the study documents and documents for disseminating good practice translated into all the languages of the European Union; recognises the potential of the Horizon Europe programme for research and innovation and expects an appropriate balance across the Member States in terms of projects; encourages the Commission to promote an output-oriented approach, as a proper environment to gather Member States' representatives, scientific bodies, stakeholders, farmers and NGOs and exchange views and best practices with a view to ensuring a more uniform implementation of the future animal welfare legislation across the Member States in line with the objectives of the Green Deal;
41. Welcomes the setting up of EU reference centres dedicated to the welfare of different species and categories of animals (EURCAWs) as part of the EU Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012-2015; encourages the Commission to further develop the network of EURCAWs, especially for species not covered by the specific legislation, as an effective platform for the consistent and uniform dissemination of technical information across the Member States on how the EU legislation should be implemented;

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<sup>19</sup> Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on official controls and other official activities performed to ensure the application of food and feed law, rules on animal health and welfare, plant health and plant protection products, OJ L 95, 7.4.2017, p. 1.

42. Points out that targeted individual management practices often have a substantial influence on animal welfare; calls on the Commission to introduce a results-based approach to future projects based on scientific evidence and expert knowledge, and on peer-to-peer sharing of best practices among farmers;
43. Stresses the importance of regular exchanges with representatives of national and regional authorities, agricultural farmers' and stakeholder organisations, NGOs, citizens and experts concerning examples of good practice and needed improvements in the area of animal welfare; points out that, despite its low cost, knowledge transfer in this area is highly efficient and should therefore be put into practice more often; welcomes, in this regard, the Commission's renewal of the mandate of the Platform on Animal Welfare; takes the view that exchanges of good practices and knowledge transfer should be further strengthened and facilitated in order to help the parties involved to speed up and simplify their regular exchange process, as well as store and secure their flows of information; stresses the importance of holding such regular exchanges also with representatives of the non-EU countries which import animals from the Union;
44. Urges the Commission to link its various strategies by implementing rules drawn up in a manner consistent with the European Green Deal, the Farm to Fork strategy, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and agricultural policies relating to trade, commercial practices and promotion; stresses that consistency between these strategies is a precondition for a viable agricultural sector; calls for the revised animal welfare legislation to be fully aligned with the priorities of the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy, broadening its scope and flexibility to adapt to the latest scientific and technological developments; calls on the Commission to bring trade policy into line with EU animal protection and welfare standards, by re-evaluating trade agreements with third countries and bringing reciprocity to new bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, in order to create a level playing field and avoid undermining the economic profitability of its own producers and ensure that they meet EU animal welfare and product quality standards;
45. Calls on the Commission to join up the various legal texts on animal welfare, whether on farms, during transport or at slaughter;

#### *Animal welfare labelling*

46. Deplores the limited return on investment for farmers who take part in voluntary animal welfare recognition schemes; notes, furthermore, that animal welfare labelling will only prove successful if a return on investment is forthcoming from the higher price point and if costs and benefits are fairly distributed throughout the entire agri-food chain, allowing farmers a fair share of the higher price paid by the consumer for the purchase of food products complying with EU animal welfare labelling requirements;
47. Calls on the Commission 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;
48. Stresses that the introduction of any animal welfare labelling requires, at an early stage, harmonised mandatory rules that are drawn up in collaboration with all stakeholders and based on clear scientific indicators together with large-scale promotion campaigns and education activities to provide information to European consumers;

49. Calls on the Commission to also guarantee animal welfare in the rest of the chain downstream of the producer and to incorporate it in the harmonised voluntary labelling provisions;
50. Calls on the Commission to begin work on a comprehensive EU animal labelling system with a view to developing a mandatory EU framework for voluntary labelling, which should cover all livestock farms but include and recognise specific features for each species, so as to limit the risks of competition being distorted in the internal market, while leaving sufficient room for private initiatives that invest in product diversity and observe higher animal welfare standards as market leverage;
51. Asks the Commission to propose a harmonised and mandatory EU framework with common requirements for voluntary animal welfare labelling which is based on EU rules and which invites the Member States to record the various approaches being used; calls for the specifications of the framework 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 in order to enable market-driven progress in animal welfare; insists that the labelling scheme must be based on a clear set of technical references, with a well-defined use of the terms and claims which can be made in marketing, to prevent misleading consumers and animal welfare-washing;
52. Recalls that for the purposes of consistency, processed products and ingredients of animal origin may also be able to benefit from such labelling; recommends that the proposed animal welfare labelling scheme take into account consumers' growing demand for information and the concurrent objectives of Farm to Fork as regards sustainability, health and dietary concerns, alongside animal welfare;
53. Invites the Commission to conduct an in-depth examination of the possible implications, particularly for livestock farmers, of introducing a mandatory EU framework with common requirements for labels, thoroughly assessing the impact on all the actors involved in the food supply chain, from farmers to consumers, while drawing in particular on experience gained in recent public labelling schemes in some Member States; calls on the Commission to avoid conflicts between possible future schemes and existing labelling systems, especially in relation to the mandatory requirements in the specific animal welfare directives; is concerned about the results of a previous impact assessment conducted by the Commission in 2012, which indicated that labelling would increase industry costs without necessarily increasing benefits;
54. Calls on the Commission to implement a policy to protect European livestock farming by prohibiting the import into Europe of livestock or meat that does not comply with European animal welfare standards;
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55. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

13.10.2021

## **OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY**

for the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

on the implementation report on on-farm animal welfare  
(2020/2085(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: Marlene Mortler

### **SUGGESTIONS**

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its report:

- having regard to the European One Health Action Plan against Antimicrobial Resistance;
  - having regard to the Commission’s Fitness Check Roadmap to assess the effectiveness, relevance, efficiency and consistency of on-farm animal welfare, including EU rules on animal transport and slaughter;
- A. whereas in accordance with Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), in formulating and implementing the Union’s agriculture, fisheries, transport, internal market, research and technological development, and space policies, the Union and the Member States must pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals, since animals are sentient beings; whereas EU legislation must therefore ensure that animals are kept in conditions that do not subject them to maltreatment, abuse, pain or suffering;
- B. whereas animals should no longer be adapted to the system, but the system should instead be adapted to animals’ needs and behaviour, meaning that it should not be allowed to hurt an animal, cause injury to an animal, or harm the health or welfare of an animal by housing the animal in a certain way;
- C. whereas livestock farming is of economic, social and cultural significance in the EU and especially in certain rural areas, and should work in synergy with environmental goals; whereas, however, livestock farming contributes to greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions and has a significant environmental impact in terms of both biodiversity and ecological balance; whereas, according to the Farm to Fork Strategy, 10.3 % of EU

greenhouse gas emissions are attributable to agriculture, with almost 70 % of agricultural emissions coming from the livestock sector; whereas traditional small-scale extensive livestock farming is under threat; whereas significant developments in animal welfare science have taken place since the existing EU farm animal welfare legislation was adopted; whereas it is vital to revise and augment the existing body of animal welfare legislation to bring it into line with these latest scientific advancements and to respond to societal demands for improvement in the welfare of animals;

- D. whereas farmers must be able to benefit from the necessary support from the European Union in order to meet the expectations of European consumers by transitioning to models that better respect animal welfare, while guaranteeing planning security for farmers;
- E. whereas animal welfare spending under the EU and national budgets should be cost-efficient and make a tangible improvement to the lives of the animals concerned;
- F. whereas EU farmers, as well as NGOs, have expressed concerns over the economic, social and environmental impacts of imports of cheaply produced chicken meat and the misleading labelling of chicken meat processed in the European Union, but originating from third countries; whereas unfair competition and a failure to comply with EU standards places European businesses at a competitive disadvantage;
- G. whereas the ‘One Health’ approach recognises that human and animal health and welfare and environmental protection are interlinked in many ways, and that diseases are transmissible from humans to animals and vice versa, and should therefore be addressed together; whereas it is moreover acknowledged that stressed animals living in close proximity to each other are more prone to infections, as evidenced notably by the case of animals bred for their fur; whereas the ‘One Welfare’ approach, which is also promoted by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), recognises the close interlinkage between animal welfare and human welfare, biodiversity and the environment<sup>1</sup>;
- H. whereas antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a growing cross-border public health threat; whereas one of the Farm to Fork Strategy’s aims is a 50 % reduction in sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals and aquaculture by 2030; whereas further effort is required to develop health-orientated systems for the rearing of animals;
- I. whereas unhealthy diets high in salt, sugar, fat and animal protein are important risk factors for disease and mortality in Europe; whereas a sustainable, and more organic diet rich in plant-based foods and with fewer foods from animal sources, in line with dietary needs, could confer global health, climate and environmental benefits, and accelerate the achievement of the objectives of the Green Deal and the Paris Agreement;
- J. whereas consumer interest in the origin, preservation and quality of food purchased is higher than ever and results in consumers making more sustainable and conscientious decisions; whereas the 2016 Special Eurobarometer on animal welfare showed that 94 % of EU citizens believe that the welfare<sup>2</sup> of farm animals is important, 82 % think farm animals should be better protected, 59 % are willing to pay 5 % more for animal-

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.onewelfareworld.org/uploads/9/7/5/4/97544760/bull\\_2017-1-eng.pdf](https://www.onewelfareworld.org/uploads/9/7/5/4/97544760/bull_2017-1-eng.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2096>

friendly products, and 52 % of Europeans look for animal welfare labels when shopping, although one in ten Europeans do not know that these labels exist; highlights that 47 % of Europeans think that the choice of animal welfare-friendly food products in retail is limited;

1. Notes the shortcomings of the EU directives on on-farm animal welfare in that they are outdated, often inadequate, too vague, and lacking in species-specific protection for a number of species such as dairy cows, broiler and hen breeders, rabbits, sheep and turkeys; welcomes the Commission's commitment to revising legislation on animal welfare and animal health; calls on the Commission to do so without delay and to ensure that the requirements are clear, precise and fit to protect farmed animals during birth, rearing, transport and slaughter; welcomes the Commission's revision of legislation in this area, planned for 2023, but calls for this revision to be completed as soon as possible, in line with scientific evidence on animal welfare and needs, which should result in a high level of animal welfare and subsequently an impact assessment covering all sustainability levels and the cost of non-action;
2. Calls on the Commission to create a resilient animal welfare system through this reform that is coherent with environmental and climate legislation and other EU policies, such as the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement;
3. Calls for all policy instruments to be used to coherently work towards supporting the traditional European landscape, adopting agricultural regenerative models such as agro-ecology and organic systems, achieving the objectives of the Green Deal and the Paris Agreement, and setting high standards of animal welfare;
4. Considers extensification to be one of the quickest and most effective ways of improving on-farm animal welfare, as well as many other benefits for the environment, climate and human health; points out that support should be provided to ensure that, while the revised animal welfare legislation comes into effect, livestock farms, including small-scale livestock farms, can be transformed; stresses that it is important to reduce stress at the time of transport and slaughter;
5. Stresses that the animal welfare requirements must be applied correctly and uniformly throughout the EU, as well as to imports, through an EU-wide harmonised system of implementation; emphasises that the Commission should ensure that the relevant EU rules are fully implemented by Member States; points out the need to ensure that there is sufficient data available on the implementation of the legislation; recognises that the audits carried out by the Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety can serve as an important source of information to assess the implementation of the current framework; calls for increased efforts to monitor implementation and for any breaches to be duly investigated and handled appropriately, as laid down in Articles 258 TFEU and 259 TFEU, without delay;
6. Stresses the importance of a level-playing field for farmers; calls on the Commission to harmonise animal welfare legislation between Member States where possible;
7. Stresses that regular and comprehensive checks on terrestrial and aquatic animal production must be carried out in line with the applicable legislation; expresses its concern about the low number of checks on compliance with animal welfare legislation;

highlights that, according to the implementation study, there are sometimes no or very few official controls, particularly for species which are not subject to specific regulations; considers that this and the absence of species-specific protection for a number of species, such as dairy cows, broiler and hen breeders, rabbits, sheep and turkeys, should be addressed in the revision of animal welfare legislation; reiterates that the EU Regulation on Official Controls requires Member States to audit their systems for official inspections on feed and food law and animal health and welfare, and that Commission Decision 2006/677/EC sets out guidelines recommending that such audits be conducted at least every five years; notes that the European Court of Auditors has identified a general lack of enforcement of EU animal welfare legislation and practices prohibited under EU law;

8. Stresses that Member States should provide for appropriate enforcement regimes, which could be harmonised between Member States, and that Member States must at all times ensure the strict enforcement of EU legislation; calls on the Commission to submit regular reports to Parliament on the implementation and enforcement of the Union's animal welfare legislation, which should identify gaps and include a breakdown of infringements by Member State, species and type of infringement;
9. Stresses that legislation relating to the welfare of farm animals must be species-specific, promoting the five domains: nutrition, the environment, health, behaviour and mental state, should be compatible with scientific data relating to animal sensitivity and should be updated as scientific knowledge evolves; expresses concern that, with the exception of the Laying Hens and Calves Directives, a combination of derogations, exceptions, vague requirements and the absence of specific protection in EU legislation have existed in parallel to various national laws, all of which have been blamed by many stakeholders in different fields for distorting competition;
10. Calls on the Commission to put forward proposals in order to regulate specific species that currently remain unprotected or inadequately protected by EU animal welfare legislation, such as dairy cows, broiler and hen breeders, rabbits, sheep and turkeys; underlines the need for the revision of Council Directive 98/58/EC concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes and highlights that Council Directive 98/58/EC has generally been the least impactful of the directives in scope, and that with the vague nature of the requirements and the large margins of interpretation it has allowed, links between improvements on the ground and the directive have been impossible to characterise; underlines the importance of introducing species-specific animal welfare legislation, calls on the Commission to bring forward proposals in that regard;
11. Urges the revision of Council Directive 2007/43 of 20 July 1998 laying down minimum rules for the protection of chickens kept for meat production in order to reduce the maximum stocking density and the sector's dependence on antibiotics, drastically improve the poor welfare of chickens by providing them with natural light, fresh air, more space and enrichment, and establish a ban on the rearing of extremely fast-growing chickens; reiterates its call for an accelerated shift to alternative rearing systems that use higher-welfare or traditional broiler breeds, which are more robust and healthy than fast-growing breeds, and to disallow any import products that do not meet EU standards;

12. Disapproves of the unethical and systematic killing of billions of male chicks in the EU every year, whether using a shredding machine or carbon dioxide gas, as it is a violation of animal welfare law; emphasises that France and Germany have already announced a ban on the systematic killing of male chicks and urges the Commission and the Member States to follow this example;
13. Calls for Council Directive 2008/120/EC of 18 December 2008 laying down minimum standards for the protection of pigs to be revised in order, inter alia, to remove the 28-day exemption for confining sows in individual stalls and to ensure that the animals are kept in group housing throughout the entire gestation period and farrowing;
14. Reiterates its call on the Commission to put forward proposals without delay to immediately ban the cruel and unnecessary force-feeding of ducks and geese for the production of foie gras;
15. Highlights that the legal standards designed to protect fish are generally far fewer in number and less stringent than those designed to protect other animals farmed for human consumption; in the light of this, points out the need to align EU regulations on fish welfare to the standards set out in the OIE Aquatic Animal Health Code;
16. Welcomes the establishment of the Committee of Inquiry on the Protection of Animals during Transport (ANIT), set up in order to examine alleged violations in the application of EU law on the protection of animals during transport within and outside the EU, and to assess the responsibilities of the Commission and the Member States in this regard; considers that the findings of this committee should be duly taken into account by the Commission and the Member States, and that its recommendations should be reflected in the necessary revision of Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005<sup>3</sup>;
17. Recalls the judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union in Case C-424/13 stating that animal transporters departing from the European Union must also comply with European animal welfare rules when leaving the EU and urges the Commission and the Member States to fully abide by this;
18. Points out that animal welfare requirements are difficult to maintain during long-distance journeys of farm animals; draws attention to the importance of ensuring high animal welfare standards during transport; underlines that, in addition to the requirements, economic instruments should be used to further reduce lengthy transport times whenever possible;
19. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote the use and development of regional abattoirs and mobile slaughterhouses, as well as on-farm slaughter or slaughter at the nearest facility; reiterates its call on the Commission to develop a strategy to shift from live transport to a meat and-carcasses-only trade, especially for long transports, whenever possible, given the environmental, animal welfare and food safety impact of live animal transport; calls on the Member States to conduct efficient and systematic inspections of animal consignments before loading, in order to halt practices that worsen animal welfare conditions for transport by land or sea, such as allowing

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<sup>3</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations and amending Directives 64/432/EEC and 93/119/EC and Regulation (EC) No 1255/97, OJ L 3, 5.1.2005, p. 1.

overstocked means of transport or unfit animals to continue long journeys, or permitting the continued use of control posts with inadequate facilities for the resting, feeding and watering of animals in transport;

20. Recalls the recent events in the Mediterranean Sea (the *Elbeik* and *Karim Allah* cases) and in the Suez Canal; stresses that animal welfare requirements can hardly be met during long-distance journeys of farm animals, especially during transport by sea; stresses the need for better monitoring of maritime livestock transport, especially following the accidental blockage of the Suez Canal, which resulted in the deaths of thousands of animals on transport vessels; urges the Commission to launch a debate on the necessary changes to the relevant EU legislation in this context; calls on the Commission to evaluate and revise the existing animal welfare legislation, including comprehensive species- and category-specific requirements, and the maximum duration of a transport after an impact assessment, including for live animal transport and the slaughter of animals, without delay;
21. Calls on the Commission to fully implement and enforce Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure in the meantime that the requirements of Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 are respected and that violations of its provisions are dealt with by all appropriate means, including the infringement procedure;
22. Regrets the fact that Member States have used only a small part of the common agricultural policy (CAP) funds available under the rural development pillar for animal welfare purposes; confirms that the CAP seeks to enhance the welfare of on-farm animals by providing financial incentives and by enforcing animal welfare legislation; considers that the improvement of farm animal welfare should be adequately supported by the new CAP and through the use of the new EU Strategic Guidelines on Agriculture, inter alia, by considerably reducing the need for medication and antimicrobials, and by preserving biodiversity; at the same time, points out the progress and improvements which some Member States have made at national level and welcomes the specific initiatives to that end; calls, therefore, on the Member States to specify concrete actions for improving animal welfare in their CAP strategic plans and to offer greater and effective support, including financial incentives, to farmers who voluntarily comply with more stringent and sustainable animal welfare requirements, including through national support programmes; calls on the Commission and the Member States to assess subsidies that are harmful to animal welfare by 2022 and phase them out; considers that one of the goals of CAP and national funds should be to assist farmers in the transition to high-welfare, agro-ecologically sound farming methods, including plant-based agricultural practices and farms characterised by extensive agricultural practices, on the basis of high-quality training, in order to ensure the welfare of the animals and the environmental and financial health of farms; deems it crucial to ensure future policy coherence by also integrating animal welfare requirements into other policies, such as international trade and aquaculture policy, and the CAP and fisheries;
23. Points out that targeted individual management practices often have a substantial influence on animal welfare; calls on the Commission to introduce a results-based approach to future projects based on scientific evidence and expert knowledge, and on peer-to-peer sharing of best practices among farmers;

24. Underlines the significance of the appropriate use of digitalisation; notes, however, that digitalisation tools cannot solve fundamental problems but should be a supplementary measure, given that they cannot replace qualified professionals;
25. Acknowledges the citizens' initiative 'End the Cage Age' and welcomes the announcement by the Commission to present a legislative proposal to prohibit cages as part of the revision of the animal welfare legislation, assessing a possible phasing-out by 2027 after a science-based impact assessment; calls on the Commission to adopt a species-by-species approach that takes into account and assesses the characteristics of each different animal, which should have housing systems suited to their specific needs, while safeguarding animal and human health; moreover, points to the need for adequate measures, including the use of CAP funds and national envelopes, to support farmers in the transition to cage-free, high animal welfare, ecological farming methods with high-quality training provided in order to ensure the welfare of animals and environmental and financial health which will help to ensure a resilient and sustainable economy, while ensuring a fair level playing field; points out that farmers need adequate timeframes to improve their housing systems owing to the large investments that are often required; suggests that the Commission continue cooperating with the Member States in order to support the implementation and proper enforcement of legal provisions for the phase-out of all cages in EU animal farming;
26. Stresses the importance of regular exchanges with representatives of national and regional authorities, agricultural farmers' and stakeholder organisations, NGOs, citizens and experts concerning examples of good practice and needed improvements in the area of animal welfare; points out that, despite its low cost, knowledge transfer in this area is highly efficient and should therefore be put into practice more often; welcomes, in this regard, the Commission's renewal of the mandate of the Platform on Animal Welfare; takes the view that exchanges of good practices and knowledge transfer should be further strengthened and facilitated in order to help the parties involved to speed up and simplify their regular exchange process, as well as store and secure their flows of information; stresses the importance of holding such regular exchanges also with representatives of the non-EU countries which import animals from the Union;
27. Given the ethical dimension of animal welfare, considers it crucial that citizens are provided with clear, easily understandable and accessible information on the existing standards and on compliance with animal welfare rules; calls on the Commission and Member States to promote awareness and engage in dialogue with citizens on issues of animal welfare; underlines the need for Member States to strengthen public awareness and understanding of the importance of animal welfare in the context of advertising campaigns, school courses and agricultural training courses;
28. Stresses the importance of moving forward with the Commission proposal for an integrated nutrient management action plan in order to address nutrient pollution at source and increase the sustainability of the livestock sector, as outlined in the Farm to Fork Strategy;
29. Underlines the need to improve animal welfare and health in animal agriculture as part of the 'One Health' approach; points to the fact that in order to achieve this goal, improved animal husbandry practices are essential, as better animal welfare improves animal health, thereby reducing the need for medication and curbing the spread of

zoonoses; calls on the Commission also to develop the 'One Welfare' approach as part of the revision of the legislation on animal welfare;

30. Calls for veterinary and human medicine alike to ensure the responsible use of antimicrobials in order to achieve a significant reduction; points out that a positive correlation exists between improving animal welfare, such as through more sustainable practices, for example grassland-based, extensive livestock production, and reducing dependency on antimicrobials, since animals that are well cared for and appropriately housed are less prone to diseases and infections, and therefore require less veterinary antimicrobials; calls for the further promotion of activities that reduce the use of antimicrobials in the livestock sector, thereby mitigating the risk of antimicrobial resistance and contributing to animal welfare;
31. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to step up their checks monitoring for antibiotics and other banned chemical residues found in imports from non-EU countries, as part of the Commission's strategy to effectively address the unregulated use of antibiotics and pesticides used in animal, seafood and aquaculture production; calls for short, local and regional supply chains;
32. Notes that sustainable and more balanced diets, as well as a reduction in the use of pesticides, benefit public health, biodiversity and the environment;
33. Notes that, according to the Farm to Fork Strategy, most Europeans' diets are not in line with recommendations on healthy eating, and that a population-wide shift in consumption patterns is needed in order to encourage healthier foods, diets and lifestyles, including greater consumption of sustainably produced plants and plant-based foods, which will also benefit the environment, through better animal welfare, and help secure a more resilient economy; emphasises that EU-wide science-based recommendations for sustainable, healthy and more balanced diets, including clear objectives, taking into account the cultural and regional diversity of European foods and diets, as well as consumers' needs, would help and encourage consumers, and permeate Member States' own efforts to integrate sustainability components into national dietary advice;
34. Stresses that the market for animal products from cage-free, free range and organic systems, as well as the market for plant-based alternatives, is growing in the EU;
35. Welcomes the Council's commitments to promote the development of a single EU animal welfare label, based on harmonised and scientifically based species-specific animal protection indicators; acknowledges the importance of the Commission's external study on animal welfare labelling; calls on the Commission to proceed with the relevant preparations with a view to submitting a proposal without delay, subsequent to an impact assessment covering all levels of sustainability and the cost of non-action; takes the view that this label should provide consumers with objective and scientific information on the quality of all stages of the animal's life, including birth, transport and methods of slaughter; proposes that such a label be developed in synergy with the updated minimum criteria when revising the animal welfare legislation; considers that the EU animal welfare label should be made mandatory; considers that this label would increase transparency, create a level playing field and increase consumer awareness, while encouraging improvements in animal welfare; points out, however, that labels

cannot guarantee high animal welfare and can only be considered complementary or transitional measures;

36. Considers it crucial that future policy coherence be ensured, also by integrating animal welfare requirements into international trade policy in order to, inter alia, support the efforts being made by European farmers and to prevent unfair competition from imported products which do not comply with the minimum animal welfare guarantees; underlines that, in addition to ensuring high animal welfare within the European Union, the EU's foreign and trade policy should also promote animal welfare in the relevant international bodies, and in bilateral and multilateral agreements;
37. Calls on the Commission, in its bilateral trade negotiations with non-EU countries, to ensure compliance with the EU's animal welfare rules and defend sustainable development, within the framework of the World Trade Organization's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994 and in particular, Article XX thereof, which lays down exceptions for measures connected to the conservation of exhaustible natural resources, and Article XX(a) thereof, which includes animal welfare under 'reasons of public morality'; calls on the Commission to promote similar measures in existing EU trade and investment agreements in order to ensure that imported animal, fish and aquaculture products have been produced in line with the EU's environmental, social, food safety and animal welfare standards in order to ensure a fair and level playing field for EU producers;
38. Recommends that EU trade agreements should only grant trade preferences for animal-based products on condition that they respect all relevant EU animal welfare standards, including standards currently not applied to imported products ('conditional liberalisation'); stresses the need to allow imports from non-EU countries which comply with the same animal welfare standards as those applicable in the EU; recommends that trade agreements allocate sufficient resources to the implementation of provisions on animal welfare cooperation and include an article on 'Sustainable Agriculture, Seafood and Aquaculture' in the 'Trade and Sustainable Development' chapters; calls further on the Commission to ensure that all trade agreements are fully compatible with the European Green Deal, the Paris Agreement, the EU's biodiversity commitments and the SDGs, and that, in the event of non-compliance, binding and enforceable sanctions should apply.

## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

<b>Date adopted</b>	12.10.2021
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 62 -: 1 0: 14
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Nikos Androulakis, Bartosz Arłukowicz, Margrete Auken, Simona Baldassarre, Marek Paweł Balt, Traian Băsescu, Aurélie Beigneux, Monika Beňová, Sergio Berlato, Alexander Bernhuber, Simona Bonafè, Pascal Canfin, Sara Cerdas, Mohammed Chahim, Tudor Ciuhodaru, Nathalie Colin-Oesterlé, Esther de Lange, Christian Doleschal, Bas Eickhout, Cyrus Engerer, Agnès Evren, Pietro Fiocchi, Catherine Griset, Jytte Guteland, Teuvo Hakkarainen, Anja Hazekamp, Martin Hojsík, Pär Holmgren, Jan Huitema, Yannick Jadot, Adam Jarubas, Petros Kokkalis, Athanasios Konstantinou, Ewa Kopacz, Peter Liese, Sylvia Limmer, Javi López, César Luena, Fulvio Martusciello, Liudas Mažylis, Joëlle Mélin, Tilly Metz, Giuseppe Milazzo, Silvia Modig, Dolores Montserrat, Alessandra Moretti, Ville Niinistö, Ljudmila Novak, Grace O’Sullivan, Jutta Paulus, Stanislav Polčák, Jessica Polfjård, Luisa Regimenti, Frédérique Ries, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Sándor Rónai, Rob Rooken, Silvia Sardone, Christine Schneider, Günther Sidl, Linea Sogaard-Lidell, Nicolae Ștefănuță, Nils Torvalds, Edina Tóth, Véronique Trillet-Lenoir, Petar Vitanov, Alexandr Vondra, Pernille Weiss, Emma Wiesner, Tiemo Wölken, Anna Zalewska
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Kateřina Konečná, Danilo Oscar Lancini, Dace Melbārde, João Pimenta Lopes, Manuela Ripa, Susana Solís Pérez, Róza Thun und Hohenstein

## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

62	+
ID	Sylvia Limmer
NI	Athanasios Konstantinou
PPE	Bartosz Arłukowicz, Traian Băsescu, Alexander Bernhuber, Nathalie Colin-Oesterlé, Christian Doleschal, Agnès Evren, Adam Jarubas, Ewa Kopacz, Esther de Lange, Peter Liese, Fulvio Martusciello, Liudas Mažylis, Dolors Montserrat, Ljudmila Novak, Stanislav Polčák, Jessica Polfjärd, Luisa Regimenti, Christine Schneider, Róza Thun und Hohenstein, Pernille Weiss
Renew	Pascal Canfin, Martin Hojsík, Jan Huitema, Frédérique Ries, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Susana Solís Pérez, Nicolae Ștefănuță, Linea Søgaaard-Lidell, Nils Torvalds, Véronique Trillet-Lenoir, Emma Wiesner
S&D	Nikos Androulakis, Marek Paweł Balt, Monika Beňová, Simona Bonafè, Sara Cerdas, Mohammed Chahim, Tudor Ciuhodaru, Cyrus Engerer, Jytte Guteland, Javi López, César Luena, Alessandra Moretti, Günther Sidl, Petar Vitanov, Tiemo Wölken
The Left	Anja Hazekamp, Petros Kokkalis, Kateřina Konečná, Silvia Modig, João Pimenta Lopes
Verts/ALE	Margrete Auken, Bas Eickhout, Pär Holmgren, Yannick Jadot, Tilly Metz, Ville Niinistö, Grace O'Sullivan, Jutta Paulus, Manuela Ripa

1	-
ECR	Sergio Berlato

14	0
ECR	Pietro Fiocchi, Dace Melbārde, Giuseppe Milazzo, Rob Rooker, Alexandr Vondra, Anna Zalewska
ID	Simona Baldassarre, Aurélia Beigneux, Catherine Griset, Teuvo Hakkarainen, Danilo Oscar Lancini, Joëlle Mélin, Silvia Sardone
NI	Edina Tóth

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention

## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

<b>Date adopted</b>	26.10.2021
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+:                36 -:                5 0:                 7
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Mazaly Aguilar, Clara Aguilera, Álvaro Amaro, Eric Andrieu, Carmen Avram, Adrian-Dragoş Benea, Benoît Biteau, Mara Bizzotto, Daniel Buda, Isabel Carvalhais, Asger Christensen, Angelo Ciocca, Ivan David, Paolo De Castro, Jérémy Decerle, Salvatore De Meo, Herbert Dorfmann, Dino Giarrusso, Francisco Guerreiro, Martin Häusling, Martin Hlaváček, Krzysztof Jurgiel, Jarosław Kalinowski, Elsi Katainen, Gilles Lebreton, Norbert Lins, Chris MacManus, Colm Markey, Alin Mituța, Marlene Mortler, Maria Noichl, Juozas Olekas, Pina Picierno, Maxette Pirbakas, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop, Bronis Ropė, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Anne Sander, Petri Sarvamaa, Simone Schmiedtbauer, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Veronika Vrecionová, Sarah Wiener, Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Giuseppe Ferrandino, Charles Goerens, Anja Hazekamp, Hilde Vautmans

## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

36	+
ECR	Krzysztof Jurgiel, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Veronika Vrecionová
ID	Ivan David, Gilles Lebreton, Maxette Pirbakas
PPE	Álvaro Amaro, Daniel Buda, Salvatore De Meo, Herbert Dorfmann, Jarosław Kalinowski, Norbert Lins, Colm Markey, Marlene Mortler, Anne Sander, Petri Sarvamaa, Simone Schmiedtbauer, Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez
Renew	Asger Christensen, Jérémy Decerle, Charles Goerens, Martin Hlaváček, Elsi Katainen, Alin Mituța, Hilde Vautmans
S&D	Clara Aguilera, Eric Andrieu, Carmen Avram, Adrian-Dragoș Benea, Isabel Carvalhais, Paolo De Castro, Giuseppe Ferrandino, Maria Noichl, Juozas Olekas, Pina Picierno

5	-
The Left	Anja Hazekamp
Verts/ALE	Benoît Biteau, Francisco Guerreiro, Martin Häusling, Sarah Wiener

7	0
ECR	Mazaly Aguilar
ID	Mara Bizzotto, Angelo Ciocca
NI	Dino Giarrusso
The Left	Chris MacManus, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop
Verts/ALE	Bronis Ropé

### Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention