

Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals

- COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL on a Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-2010
- Report by the Agriculture Committee – rapporteur Mrs Jeggle

Eurogroup for Animals, representing the views of millions of animal protectionists in the EU, welcomes the action plan as a recognition of the huge, EU-wide, public support for higher animal welfare standards as shown by the recent Eurobarometer survey¹.

The action plan aims to consolidate animal welfare achievements to date and proposes a strategy to maintain and increase animal protection in the coming years. It is welcomed that the Commission will be using different mechanisms; legal standards, research, communication, training, a stronger market for animal welfare, support to farmers through the CAP and coherence with other EU policies to improve the lives of millions of animals in the EU and beyond. These mechanisms have demonstrated to provide opportunities for producers through improved animal welfare.

Eurogroup believes that in so doing there are areas which should be further strengthened. In particular we draw attention to the following issues in relation to the forthcoming Parliamentary debate;

- The Plan is a *Community* plan and needs commitment, **support and resources from all EU institutions**, in order in future to pay “full regard to the welfare of animals” as required under the Protocol on Animal Welfare². It is the Community as such which benefits from high animal protection standards and as such all stakeholders; including farmers, industry, retailers, consumers NGOs should take on board animal protection concerns. This calls for the urgent set-up of an animal welfare stakeholders platform and the Centre on animal protection to provide expertise on EU level.
- **Integration and coherence** of animal welfare with other policies should become a basic principle whenever new policies or legislative proposals are being considered in particular in the area of environment protection, food safety, agriculture, trade, research and safety testing. The Protocol on Animal Welfare legally requires that full regard is paid to the welfare of animals. This means that as a basic principle any impact assessment should also evaluate the impact on the welfare of animals.
- Impact assessments should also fully take into account the **positive impact of high animal welfare standards** on sustainable development, rural livelihoods, biodiversity and animal health.

¹ Attitude of Consumers Towards the Welfare of Farmed Animals” European Commission. June 2005. Brussels.
http://europa.eu.int/comm/food/animal/welfare/euro_barometer25_en.pdf

²The Treaty of Amsterdam which came into force on 1 May 1999 includes a protocol on animal welfare designed to “ensure improved protection and respect for the welfare of animals as sentient beings”:
“In formulating and implementing the Community’s agricultural, transport, internal market and research policies, the Community and the Member States shall 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”.

- The achievement of high animal welfare standards requires a variety of different mechanisms which often fall under the responsibility of different parts within the Commission; subsidies and funding, development aid, communication, tariffs, The Commission **should, as part of the implementation of the plan, identify the different measures and propose how, when and where they can be used.**
- Uniform and correct enforcement are crucial for improving animal protection and for this reason the EU should increase the animal protection inspections undertaken by the Food and Veterinary office in the area of food safety. In addition there is at this moment no Community control mechanism to monitor enforcement of all other animal protection legislation in particular where it relates to environment policy; the protection of wildlife and laboratory animals. This leads to serious problems in the implementation of EU legislation. Also Member States should increase resources in the control of animal protection rules and reports of enforcement should be available to the EU institutions and to the public.
- In order for market forces to facilitate high animal welfare and to ensure that consumers are able to make more informed purchasing decisions the EU should **analyse and develop improved marketing, labelling and communication strategies.** In addition there is an urgent need to set a legal framework for quality assurance schemes in order to avoid consumers' confusion and distrust in the face of competing and poorly communicated quality claims. The EU should extend the compulsory labelling scheme of eggs to imported eggs as well.
- As foreseen in existing EU rules and in line with new scientific evidence, there is a need to upgrade existing minimum standard. In particular we urge the revision of legislation on live transport, slaughter, the protection of calves and of pigs.
- In many areas, in particular relating to farming, there are at present no Community standards. This leads to animal welfare problems and unfair competition between producers. The EU is furthermore legally required to implement its obligations under the Council of Europe Conventions in this regard. For these reasons we call for **the introduction of new EU standards to give priority to the following issues; dairy cattle, beef cattle, farmed fish and the welfare problems of genetic selection.**
- The focus of training and education, as proposed by the plan, is mainly on the consumer, with little attention given to the training and information requirements of producers. The plan should envisage the development and implementation of a communication and training strategy for farmers, in support of the plan's policy objectives.
- The areas of animal health and animal welfare are intricately linked and mutually supportive. Value is added to policies which promote animal welfare when their benefits for animal health are given full consideration, and vice versa. The Animal Welfare Action Plan should promote husbandry systems in which the animals' ability to cope with diseases is not compromised by breeding or stress. This principle should also steer the ongoing development of the Community's Animal Health Policy.
- While seeking greater international consensus on animal welfare as a business opportunity, as recognised by the World Bank's International Finance Cooperation guidelines, the EU should also strive **to include animal welfare concerns as a genuine concern of EU citizens and consumers in WTO negotiations.**
- In all bilateral agreements with Third Countries the EU should include the provision that **imports from Third Countries are produced to standards of animal welfare at least comparable with those in the EU.**