

Brussels, 14 February 2006

Eurogroup Commend European Parliament On Vote For Stronger Broiler Protection

Eurogroup endorsed the view of the European Parliament, who today sent the clearest of messages to the Council of Ministers, that measures proposed in the Commission's Broiler Directive currently being finalised by the Council, are too weak. It is the Parliament's view that the legislation needs to be substantially strengthened, and as a result is calling for stronger minimum standards for Broiler production throughout the 25 EU Member States. The Parliament therefore passed a report calling for stronger measures.

"The Parliament, on behalf of the peoples of Europe, has sent a stark message to the Council of Ministers that the Broiler Directive must be strengthened," commented Eurogroup Director, Sonja van Tichelen.

Major points of European Parliament concern include stocking densities, the condition of parent birds, genetic acceleration of the growth rate of birds and environmental enrichment.

A high proportion of the chickens suffer from severe leg problems due to the forced growth rate. As their hearts and lungs often cannot keep up with their bodies' fast growth rate, they frequently suffer from heart failure. In cramped conditions floor litter becomes wet and ammonia laden. This results in dreadful blisters and hock-burns. A majority of birds are raised in large insulated barns and exposed to near permanent artificial light to encourage constant eating. Barren environment and high stocking density also grossly restrict the bird's exploratory behaviour.

Minimum standards for Broiler Chickens are desperately required. Bred and farmed solely for their meat, they are by far the most numerous farmed species in the EU, with some 5.2 billion animals reared every year. Without minimum standards, extensive and unnecessary suffering takes place.

Strengthening amendments passed to the Report today by the European Parliament include:

- Stocking Densities - Stronger than the original Commission proposal in that it reduces the Stocking Density to 34kg/sqm in 2013.
- Pushing Commission to improve it's position in trade negotiations with 3rd Countries and WTO.
- Emphasis on the need to correct the genetic deficiencies of birds.
- All establishments, including those with lower stocking densities are to be subject to inspections of welfare standards.

Ends

For further information contact Dil Peeling, Tel.: +32 (0)2 740 08 20; Mobile: +32 (0)473 333 912,
www.eurogroupanimalwelfare.org; Eurogroup for Animal Welfare, 6 rue des Patriotes, B-1000 Brussels.