

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ANIMAL PROTECTION: IDENTIFYING 'WIN-WINS'**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Sustainable development is defined as *“development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”* The EU Treaty requires the integration of sustainable development into all European policies, so that they contribute in an integrated way to meeting economic, environmental and social objectives.

In June 2006 the European Council adopted a renewed sustainable development strategy (EU SDS), building on, rather than replacing, the original 2001 strategy.

Experience with the SDS prior to this revision has shown that implementation has been problematic. Critics of a “Sustainable Development” approach describe the very principle as a contradiction in terms – the drivers of development running counter to those of sustainability.

Partially in anticipation of this, the revised strategy stresses the need to *“get the price right”*, promoting process that reflect the real environmental, social and economic costs of products and services, in reconciling sustainability and economic growth.

The review recognises that to reconcile environmental protection and smart economic growth, win-win opportunities will have to be exploited<sup>1</sup>. Animal protection and the role it plays in the sustainable management of natural resources and in safeguarding public health represent such an opportunity.

As an established, well developed and science based discipline, which is supported by a mature market for welfare friendly goods and by institutions within government, private and non-governmental sectors, animal welfare provides a practical vehicle for realising many of the objectives of the EU SDS.

However the relationship between sustainable development and animal welfare is two-way. The economic activities of a Sustainable Development impact on animals.

In recognition of this, in 1997, the European Community agreed the need to *“ensure improved protection and respect for the welfare of animals,”* enshrining the principle in a protocol included in the Treaty of Amsterdam. The protocol continues *“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.....”*

The European Union’s commitments to *“improved protection and respect for the welfare of animals”* and to Sustainable Development have thereby become mutually supportive at the policy level. The success in realising both objectives will depend on how well those synergies can be identified and exploited.

This paper identifies areas where the ‘real’ social benefits of measures to improve sustainability are expressed through improved protection of animals, and *vice versa*. It similarly identifies areas where the goals of animal welfare and sustainable development provide win-win opportunities for each other. Finally it suggests supporting policies to help implementing these opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> EU SDS – Renewed strategy. Para 22

## 2. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE EU SDS

The EU SDS defines its outputs in terms of seven “Key Challenges.” Importantly it recognises that delivering its objectives will mean exploiting win-win opportunities, where gains in one area deliver gains elsewhere.

Below, we highlight such opportunities in relation to animal welfare and the objectives of the EU SDS.

### 2.1. PUBLIC HEALTH

A “Key Objective” of the EU SDS is:

*“To promote good public health on equal conditions and improve protection against health threats”*

The strategy for achieving this includes

- Promoting high animal health and animal welfare standards in the EU and internationally.
- Improving EU legislation on the safety of food and feeding stuffs.
- Ensuring that by 2020 chemicals do not pose a significant threat to health or the environment.

In achieving this key objective on public health, the following areas present potential win-win opportunities between sustainable development and animal welfare.

#### Reducing the health risks of intensive livestock production

Intensive<sup>2</sup> livestock production often causes animal suffering through serious health problems, pain and by preventing them from behaving naturally.

Animal health is part of animal welfare: when an animal's health is poor, so is its welfare. Conversely, studies<sup>3</sup> have now clearly established how poor welfare leads to poor health.

Long distance live animal transport, for instance, may cause exhaustion, dehydration and injury which in turn provoke diseases, such as pneumonia. In 2002<sup>4</sup> the European Commission's SCAHAW report highlighted how this can cause animals to shed more pathogens and shed them for longer periods of time.

The risk involved in the movement of ill and infective animals cannot be understated. Millions of farm animals are transported daily. The practice has the potential to spread zoonotic<sup>5</sup> diseases such as *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* and animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth and swine fever. A 2004 report by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) pointed out how transportation can “... spread both animal and zoonotic diseases, sometimes over large distances”.<sup>6</sup>

In 2006, the review of the Community Animal Health Policy found animal transport to be a “significant factor increasing the risk of disease spread” and recommended its reduction (in duration and in the number of transported animals) as a key step in reducing Europe's disease risk.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In this context, we consider as intensive production systems where animals are kept in close confinement, the density is too high to allow them to express their natural behaviour (sometimes they cannot turn around) and the environment is characterised by poor or no enrichment. We recognise that so-called extensive systems which allow too many animals per area unit, fail to allow for proper husbandry care, and/or don't provide shelter against adverse climatic conditions, also lead to poor animal welfare and damage to the environment.

<sup>3</sup> Kirkden & Broom, 2004. Links between animal health, in the terms of the World Trade Organisation, and animal welfare. Report commissioned by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

<sup>4</sup> “The Welfare of Animals during Transport (details for horses, pigs, sheep and cattle)”, Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> A disease that can spread from animals to humans.

<sup>6</sup> Opinion of the Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare on a Request from the Commission Related to the Welfare of Animal During Transport. EFSA. Parma March 2004. p 6.

<sup>7</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/strategy/main\\_report\\_part1\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/strategy/main_report_part1_en.pdf) page 18

On farms, overcrowded, often unsanitary conditions facilitate the rapid transmission of infectious diseases within the farm unit, some of which are zoonotic. In addition, the selective breeding of animals for high production levels can weaken immunity, making the animals more susceptible to this disease challenge.<sup>8</sup>

From a development perspective, potential savings through disease prevention are large. The review of the Community Animal Health Policy highlights disease prevention as a *“more cost effective way of addressing animal health”* in the long term, linking this to the Lisbon Strategy’s objectives of increasing competitiveness and minimising economic loss.

Maintaining animal health is an objective of the EU SDS in its own right, but the public health threats from animal disease<sup>9 10 11</sup> give the issue dual importance. Animal suffering is a cause of animal disease, and while some food poisoning is caused by poor handling, most is caused by infected animals<sup>12</sup>.

### Threats to human and animal health from the trade in exotic animals

The dissemination of epizootic diseases through trade is a major threat to animal health and led to the creation of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) as early as 1924. But not only animal health is threatened by these epidemics, as many diseases – called zoonoses – can be transmitted from animals to humans. Zoonotic organisms can move back and forth among species, mutating and changing their characteristics in the process<sup>13</sup>. Indeed human and animal health are intimately connected, as shown by recent outbreaks of various diseases, such as West Nile fever, Ebola hemorrhagic fever, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), monkeypox, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and avian influenza, which originate in animals<sup>14</sup>. Factors which lead to the emergence of these zoonoses in humans include increased contacts between humans/domestic animals and wild animals both in their native environment and following increased international trade in wildlife<sup>15 16 17</sup>. The EU is a major importer of wild-caught exotic animals for the pet trade, with very few regulations in place for sanitary control. Researchers have warned that the trade in some species should be prohibited on the basis of the risks they represent for human health, deploring the fact that commercial pressure and the lack of public awareness makes action at source very difficult so far. Rather than attempting to eradicate pathogens or the wild species that may harbor them, a practical approach would include decreasing the contact rate among species, including humans, at the interface created by wildlife trade. Focusing efforts at markets to regulate, reduce, or in some case eliminate the trade in wildlife could provide a cost-effective approach to decrease the risks of disease for humans, domestic animals, wildlife and ecosystems<sup>16 17</sup>, reducing at the same time the economic consequences of epidemics.

### Antimicrobial resistance and public health

Many pathogens responsible for serious human disease have developed resistance to antimicrobials. This is partly due to irresponsible use of antimicrobials in human medicine, but also due to their excessive use in highly

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<sup>8</sup> Kirkden & Broom, 2004. Links between animal health, in the terms of the World Trade Organisation, and animal welfare. Report commissioned by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

<sup>9</sup> Allison R. 2006. Happiness breeds safety. Poultry World, May p.4

<sup>10</sup> Haslam S., Kestin, S and Corry J. 2004. ‘Reduced welfare in broilers may be associated with increased risk of colonisation with Campylobacter Species’. In: Weeks CA & Butterworth A (eds) Measuring and auditing broiler welfare. CABI publishing, Oxford. UK 293-4

<sup>11</sup> Scientific Committee on Veterinary Measures relating to Public Health (2000). Opinion on Food-Borne Zoonoses . [http://ec.europa.eu/food/fs/sc/scv/out32\\_en.pdf#search=%22Opinion%20on%20Food-Borne%20Zoonoses%20%22](http://ec.europa.eu/food/fs/sc/scv/out32_en.pdf#search=%22Opinion%20on%20Food-Borne%20Zoonoses%20%22)

<sup>12</sup> Allison R. 2006. Happiness breeds safety. Poultry World, May p.4

<sup>13</sup> Karesh, William B. & Cook, Robert A. (2005). The Next Pandemic? The human-animal link. Foreign Affairs, July-August 2005: 38-50.

<sup>14</sup> More than 60% of the 1415 infectious diseases currently known are capable of infecting both animals and humans (Karesh & Cook, 2005)

<sup>15</sup> Moutou, François (2004). Les risques sanitaires liés au commerce des animaux exotiques. In I. Inech (éd) Le commerce et l’exploitation des animaux sauvages. Bull. Soc. Zool. Fr 129 (1-2): 229-238.

<sup>16</sup> Karesh, William B., Cook, Robert A., Bennett, Elizabeth L., and Newcomb, James. Wildlife trade and global disease emergence (2005). Emerging Infectious Diseases 11 (7), 1000-1002.

<sup>17</sup> Recital 4 of Directive 2003/99/EC on the monitoring of zoonoses and zoonotic agents, amending Council Decision 40/424/EEC and repealing Council Directive 92/117/EEC Official Journal L325, 2003: 31-40.

reads: “Zoonoses transmitted through sources other than food, especially from wild animal and pet animal populations, are also a matter of concern.”

intensive animal farming. From the farm environment, antimicrobial-resistant bacteria can be transmitted from animals to humans, mainly through the food chain<sup>18</sup>.

Antimicrobials are routinely used in intensive farming both as growth promoters and as prophylactics. When large numbers of animals are kept in overcrowded, often unhygienic conditions the disease risk is high. When antimicrobials are then given to whole herds/flocks to reduce this disease risk, they are in effect used as a substitute for good husbandry.

An EU prohibition on all antimicrobials used as feed additives came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006. In practice the prohibition of their use as feed-additive might well trigger an increase in their use as a prophylactic to treat whole herds/flocks when only one or two animals are actually infected. In addition, there may be an increase in therapeutic use of medicines to treat animals in systems where the consequences of poor practices were previously masked through use of prophylactic drugs. If the EU is to halt the decline in the efficacy of antibiotics in human medicine, it must phase out their routine prophylactic use in farming in conjunction with a programme to enhance the health status of animals by improving the conditions in which they are kept, as recommended by scientists<sup>19; 20</sup>. There is, of course, no objection to the therapeutic use of antibiotics to treat individual sick animals.

### Improving animal welfare as an integral part of food quality

The 2003 review of the Common Agricultural Policy included food quality as a major objective of EU agriculture, and recognised its link with animal welfare. Some quality assurance schemes, such as Label Rouge in France for example, have included animal welfare among their standards, understanding that better animal welfare also brings better food quality, in addition to better economic return. However very little has been done in practice under the reformed CAP to improve the way food is produced and consequently its quality, and this needs to be taken into account in the next revision which will take place in 2009.

The need for high animal welfare standards to protect farm animals is an area of concern high on the agendas of European citizens and consumers who are willing to pay more for welfare friendly products<sup>21</sup>. Consequently, consumer reaction to the way farm animals are reared, transported and slaughtered should be seen as an important driver of policy reform in the EU.

### International trade and animal welfare standards

Increasing trade is one of the causes of intensification of farming in developing countries. This is unfortunate, because many developing countries have extensive land and relatively cheap labour, which are needed among other requirements for good animal husbandry. They can use these advantages in agricultural trade, with potential for targeting high-value organic and welfare markets in developed countries. Countries in Latin America and elsewhere may be able to sell into these niche markets with little change to their agriculture. This is because many aspects of their housing of farm animals – such as giving them plenty of space – are already those that people in developed countries prefer.

The rules of the World Trade Organisation do allow promotion of such opportunities as “trade related assistance and capacity building,” and some such work has begun on a small scale. Bilateral trade agreements between developed and developing countries, for example between the European Union and Chile, are increasingly considering animal welfare – including veterinary treatment and humane slaughter – which will yield advantages for trade, for development of local economies, for food production and for the protection of the

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<sup>18</sup> David Taylor (2003). Antimicrobial Resistance and Community Based Animal Health. In: Community Animal Health Workers – Threat or opportunity? The IDL Group eds. Crewkerne 2003 pp.56-64.

<sup>19</sup> Opinion of the Scientific Steering Committee on antimicrobial resistance (1999) – visited at:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/food/fs/sc/ssc/out50\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/fs/sc/ssc/out50_en.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Katherine M. Shea, and the Committee on Environmental Health and Committee on Infectious Diseases (2004).

Nontherapeutic Use of Antimicrobial Agents in Animal Agriculture: Implications for Pediatrics. Pediatrics (114) 3, 862-868. Visited at: <http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/pediatrics;114/3/862.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Special Eurobarometer 229 – attitudes of EU consumers towards animal welfare (2005; 2007)  
[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_229\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_229_en.pdf);  
[http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/survey/sp\\_barometer\\_fa\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/survey/sp_barometer_fa_en.pdf)

environment. These developments fit with the SDS objective of improving animal welfare standards internationally.

### Testing methodologies and reducing the threat from chemicals

To achieve the key objective on public health, by 2020 the European Community will ensure that chemicals are produced, handled and used in a way that does not pose a significant threat to the environment or public health.

The Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of chemicals (REACH) will be central to this and will require some 30,000 chemicals to be tested. This process will require million of animals to be used in safety testing.

Developing alternatives to the use of animals in experiments will help ensure this process does contribute to sustainable development, not only by improving its ethical acceptability, but also through delivering better scientific results.

The use of animals as 'models' of human pathology is frequently not the ideal technique. In contrast to techniques that do not involve animals, there is no legal requirement to test the accuracy of animal tests. Differences in biology between species mean their accuracy cannot always be guaranteed<sup>22 23 24</sup>.

A range of non-animal methodologies has been developed and validated. These include in-vitro techniques, computer and mathematical models, and non-invasive human brain imaging. They often have the competitive advantage of being cheaper and quicker to use, while their development is in itself a high-value process associated with high-skilled job creation.

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<sup>22</sup> Wilson, J.G. [1978]: "Feasibility and Design of Subhuman Primate Studies", in Wilson, J.G. and Fraser, F.C. (eds) Handbook of Teratology, vol. 3., (New York: Plenum Press).

<sup>23</sup> C. Reiss, A.Ménache, S. Parvez and H. Parvez (2003). Scientific toxicity assessment of pesticides, drugs and other chemicals. Biogenic Amines (18) 1, 41-54.

<sup>24</sup> Reiss C. (2006). Science Based Toxicology – A new strategy for toxic risk assessment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. 16 p. Available at: <http://secure.wsa.u-net.com/www.animalaid.org.uk/viv/sbt.pdf>

## 2. 2. MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

A “Key Objective” of the EU SDS is:

*“To improve management and avoid overexploitation of natural resources, recognising the value of ecosystem services”*

The strategy for achieving this includes

- The use of the new programmes for rural development, the new legislative frameworks for organic farming and animal welfare.
- Improving the management of renewable natural resources such as fisheries and biodiversity and avoiding their overexploitation.
- Avoiding the generation of waste and enhancing efficient use of natural resources.

In achieving this key objective on natural resource management, the following areas present potential win-win opportunities between sustainable development and animal welfare:

### Wildlife trade and halting global biodiversity loss

The EU has a long term commitment to halting biodiversity loss, making significant moves in that direction by 2010. Part of this will be achieved through implementation of the existing EU Biodiversity Strategy<sup>25</sup> which stresses the need to conserve the genetic diversity of animal breeds.

The EU is one of the world’s largest importers of wild animals and products. In terms of protected (CITES<sup>26</sup>-listed) animals and products, between 1996-2002 official records show imports into the EU and the new Member States accounted for 86% of the global live bird trade, 17% of traded live reptiles, 35% of traded reptile skins and 25% of traded live mammals. The imported birds included 1.6 million CITES listed parrots. Imported reptiles include lizards, snakes, tortoises and crocodiles.

Alongside the above legal trade, a large illegal trade thrives; the global illegal trade being estimated as second in value only to the drug trade.

This trade is fuelled by the growing demand for exotic pets and poses a serious threat to the survival of many animal species in the wild. As a major wildlife consumer, the EU has a particular responsibility to ensure that the trade does not endanger species.

### Threats to EU biodiversity and habitats

The Commission acknowledges that, due to pressure from activities such as intensive farming, many natural habitats have been destroyed. The Commission stresses that the EU’s biodiversity is under threat: 42% of our native mammals, 38% of birds, 30% of amphibians, 45% of reptiles and 52% of freshwater fish are threatened.

The renewed SDS is clear that further action is needed to halt biodiversity decline. In particular the EU should:

- (a) ensure that sustainability objectives are fully integrated into decisions on the nature of future agricultural and aquatic production,
- (b) secure improved implementation by the Member States of the Habitats and Birds Directives, and
- (c) take steps to ensure effective management of Natura 2000 sites.

### Agricultural extensification, reducing the generation of waste and enhancing efficient use of natural resources

The environmental impact of pesticides used in intensive arable farming and horticulture are well known. Their legal use in normal agricultural practice causes substantial harm to wild animals<sup>27</sup>. As well as their impact on

<sup>25</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/docum/pdf/9842en.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> CITES: Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

<sup>27</sup> “Effects of pesticides on Wild Terrestrial Mammals in Britain” Literature review by David MacDonald for the RSPCA, 2002

non-target species, the extreme suffering that they often inflict on the species that they control can often be mitigated by selecting the most appropriate control method for a given situation.

Highly intensive livestock production is also putting an unsustainable pressure on water, land and the atmosphere, in addition to its inherent animal welfare concerns. In reasonable amounts manure can enrich soil; however the volume of effluent associated with intensification will often overload the capacity of the local environment to assimilate the waste<sup>28</sup>. Pigs and poultry excrete about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the nitrogen and phosphate in their feed. These pollute rivers, lakes and groundwater, contaminating sources of drinking water and damaging aquatic and wetland ecosystems through both toxicity and eutrophication.

The European Environment Agency has underlined the damage done to biodiversity by the state of Europe's rivers and lakes. While acknowledging the progress that has been made by industry in reducing pollution they stress how little improvement has been made in the agricultural sector.<sup>29</sup>

As will be seen in the section on climate change, animal farming is also responsible for the emission of damaging greenhouse gases.

When well managed, extensive systems offer a win-win opportunity in avoiding the problems of poor animal welfare and of pollution. Developing an extensive agricultural base in Europe and beyond will require a clear policy shift by the EU, and it is welcome that the renewed strategy makes this commitment in terms of organic production. Organic farming means no pesticides and generally better animal welfare and support to organic farmers in the European Union should be increased. The potential to support sustainable agriculture is not confined to organic production however. Throughout Europe, markets for high-welfare animal products provide a growing economic incentive to reduce intensification. The indications are that effective policy to support the supply of high welfare products, notably in the areas of rural development and marketing, will provide a practical mechanism for reducing intensification. This policy support would be improved if more funding was made available for rural development under the Common Agricultural Policy budget and through making it compulsory for Member States to include animal welfare measures in their rural development programmes.

### **The marine environment and the sustainable management of fisheries**

A wide range of activities threatens marine species and ecosystems including pollution from chemicals and oil. An integrated approach to the protection of the marine environment is urgently needed. Two major animal welfare problems related to unsustainable practices are:

#### **Dolphin and porpoise by-catch**

The main threat to the conservation status of dolphins and porpoises arises from fisheries by-catch. Each year thousands of these small cetaceans are accidentally entangled and drowned in fishing nets. A 2004 regulation introduced some largely inadequate measures. It requires a proportion of vessels to carry observers to monitor by-catch and pingers (acoustic deterrents attached to the nets) to be used in certain fisheries. Disappointingly, smaller vessels are exempt from these requirements. Moreover, though useful, pingers are of limited effectiveness. There are concerns that due to habituation cetaceans become accustomed to sounds emitted by pingers and are no longer deterred. Strengthening this regulation is essential. Significant changes to fishing gear and methods are urgently needed to halt the decline of dolphins and porpoises.

#### **Need to protect whales from military sonar and from whaling.**

High-intensity sonar systems – used to track submarines – are linked with fatal mass stranding of whales. These sonars can also lead to deafness and damage to internal organs. The European Parliament has voted for moratoria and restrictions on the use of high-intensity, active, naval sonars.

Whaling continues to threaten the survival of small cetaceans, many of which are not protected by the moratorium of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), and of several whale species. Such hunting is a threat to marine biodiversity and ecology, and to the value that people have placed in the existence of the

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<sup>28</sup> O'Connor J. 1989. Uneven and combined development and ecological crisis. Race and Class. University of California. USA

<sup>29</sup> [http://themes.eea.europa.eu/Specific\\_media/water](http://themes.eea.europa.eu/Specific_media/water)

whales themselves for thousands of years. The political environment surrounding whaling is turbulent, and the likelihood that commercial whaling will resume is growing. In June 2006, support for commercial whaling was expressed at IWC for the first time in over 20 years, with the adoption of the – however non-binding - “St Kitts and Nevis Declaration”.<sup>30</sup>

The IWC states that death should take place “without pain, stress or distress perceptible to the animal.” After 40 years of research, no whaling technology has been developed to achieve this.

Protecting whales from whaling is therefore a socially desirable objective, both from a point of view of biodiversity, and of animal protection.

### **Aquaculture and the sustainable management of fisheries**

Welfare problems occur in intensively managed fish farming systems, including problems of handling, transport, water quality and slaughter. Despite this, the EU has not laid down any specific welfare standards to protect them. Atlantic salmon and rainbow trout are the main fish species farmed in Europe, although increasing interest is being shown in other species such as cod and halibut.

Aquaculture attracts large scale subsidies from the EU, in part because it is considered a more sustainable alternative to commercial fishing. There are several environmental challenges to aquaculture which remain to be addressed however.

At sea, fish faeces and uneaten feed falls to the seabed, polluting the aquatic environment. This sediment can kill marine life and lead to damaging algal blooms. Although the problem may not be completely avoidable, management techniques do exist which can limit the effects to a small area in the immediate vicinity of the cages<sup>31</sup>.

Fish farming may also be detrimental to wild fish when they breed with escaped farmed stock, the hybrid offspring losing part of the genetic adaptation of wild fish and having lower survival rates, although the long-term effects on wild population trends are not entirely clear. In addition, parasites and disease may be transferred from farmed to wild fish.

Aquaculture often relies on the capture of wild species. This is either to provide the juvenile fish for further fattening or to provide food fish for predatory farmed species. In both cases, the pressure on wild stocks is often unsustainable, both with respect to the target species and other species that are taken as by-catch, then discarded.

If it is to be a viable and sustainable alternative to depleted wild fish stocks, aquaculture must be conducted in an environmentally and animal welfare friendly way.

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.iwcoffice.org/documents/commission/IWC58docs/Resolution2006-1.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> AMEC Earth & environmental Ltd 2002. Aquaculture Information Review. Canadian Technical Report of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences 2434

## 2. 3. CLIMATE CHANGE

A “Key Objective” of the EU SDS is:

*“To limit climate change and its costs and negative effects to society and the environment”.*

The strategy for achieving this includes

- Meeting Europe’s commitments under the Kyoto protocol.
- Integrating mitigation of climate change into all relevant policy areas.

In achieving this key objective on climate change, policies that support more extensive forms of agriculture, with lower numbers of animals being raised, present potential win-win opportunities between sustainable development and animal welfare.

Livestock production is responsible for 18% of global greenhouse emissions, which is higher than that produced by cars<sup>32</sup>. In terms of emissions, it is responsible for 37% of methane, 65% of nitrous oxide and 64% of ammonia. Most greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from livestock production, even in developed countries where concentrated feed, fertiliser and machinery are used, arise from natural biological processes (ie: methane and nitrous oxide from digestion and manure).

The Food and Agriculture Organisation warns that urgent action is needed to remedy the situation. GHG emission from livestock is mostly intrinsic: it comes from the digestive processes of the animals. Ruminants particularly release large amounts of methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) through digestion of fibrous feed (enteric fermentation). Because of this specific origin of GHG emissions in livestock the only possibility to keep to the same level of emission or reduce it is to reduce the number of animals raised globally. As global livestock production is predicted to double in the next 45 years, emissions from this sector will rise accordingly. Under the Kyoto Protocol, by 2012 the EU is committed to reach a level of emissions 5% below its 1990 levels.

Intensification, because it allows very high numbers of animals to be raised on small areas of land, exacerbates the contribution that livestock make to Europe’s greenhouse gas emissions<sup>33</sup>, in addition to the pressure on the environment (water, air, soil pollution). Intensifying livestock production also leads to deforestation for feed crops production, contributing to an increase of GHG emissions. More extensive systems of production with less number of livestock are more sustainable, can provide for better animal welfare and would have less impact on climate change<sup>34</sup>.

A solution would be to reduce demand by reducing the consumption of animal products in developed countries. This would have public health implications, with a reduction of the prevalence of obesity, heart conditions and cancers. Positive consequences on the environment would also come from the reduction in intensive production of feed crops, with improved farmland biodiversity. And eating less meat would allow consumers to buy better quality products, coming from more animal welfare friendly systems, with opportunities being developed for job creation and the competitiveness of the quality farming sector.

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<sup>32</sup> CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent. FAO report 2006. <http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2006/1000448/index.html>

<sup>33</sup> The Livestock and Environment Toolbox. 2000. *Natural Resources Institute (UK), the International Agricultural Centre (The Netherlands), and CIRAD (France)*.

<sup>34</sup> Global warning : climate change and farm animal welfare (2007). A report by Compassion in World Farming. Available at: <http://www.ciwf.org.uk/globalwarning/index.html>

## 2. 4. SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

A “Key Objective” of the EU SDS is:

*“To promote sustainable consumption and production patterns”*

The strategy for achieving this includes

- Promoting sustainable consumption and production by addressing social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems and decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation.
- Improving the environmental and social performance for products and processes and encouraging their uptake by business and consumers.
- Improving green procurement throughout the EU.

In supporting this key objective on production and consumption, animal welfare already benefits from an established and growing market for high welfare products.

For example:

- The consumption of eggs from non-caged systems has increased to an average of 275% of its 1998 levels in the EU 15.
- The extensive ‘Label Rouge’ production system accounts for approximately one third of the French whole-chicken market.
- The UK’s animal welfare assurance scheme, Freedom Food, has seen sales of its assured chickens rise from six and a half million birds in 2004 to seventeen million in 2006.

Similarly, consumer concerns about welfare have helped reduce unsustainable consumption patterns, particularly with respect to the trade in wild animals and their products, or products tested on animals.

The market for high-welfare, sustainable products has been driven throughout the food chain by people who are aiming to add value to their product. This market is frequently strengthened by animal welfare organisations that work to raise public awareness about animal welfare.

In recent years also, governments have increasingly recognised their role in supporting the market, as illustrated by commitments made in recently adopted “Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006-2010”

In the coming years, the Community will be taking the following steps to consolidate and expand the market for such products:

- Research into consumer perceptions and the nature of the market for high welfare products.
- Development of a communication strategy that will train and inform citizens, particularly children, on animal welfare issues.
- Exploring the potential of labelling to support the market for animal welfare.
- Developing an instrument to validate higher welfare systems.

In the light of the synergies between sustainable development and animal welfare that this paper highlights, the market for animal welfare provides a practical method of contributing to the key objective of sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Further strengthening of the market will be necessary to exploit this potential to the full. Customer research shows that while Europeans are looking for high welfare products on the supermarket shelf, they frequently find them hard to identify due to an absence of clear labelling.

Furthermore, while individual consumers may be changing their consumption patterns due to concerns about animal and the way they are treated, public procurement is lagging behind and will require a change of policy at national level. Successfully achieving this would provide gains for the EU’s goals of animal protection and sustainable development.

### 3. PRACTICAL POLICIES

Practical policies which will help improve animal welfare and sustainability in the areas highlighted above, at both EU and national level, include:

- Introducing market-based instruments designed to internalise costs, such as a tax on excess manure production.
- Reducing tax on livestock products coming from sustainable systems of production.
- A further transfer of CAP funds into rural development, with a requirement that measures to encourage extensive animal farming and high animal welfare standards are included in all Member States' rural development plans.
- Promoting changes in consumption and production patterns that support a move away from unsustainable animal exploitation.
- Public procurement policies – by governments, schools, hospitals, armed forces and prisons - that support delivery of sustainable and animal welfare friendly consumption.
- Private procurement: the adoption by supermarkets, food manufacturers and chain restaurants of a policy – under their Corporate Social Responsibility Strategies - of sourcing products that have been produced sustainably and under good animal welfare standards.
- Legislative frameworks and enforcement mechanisms that encourage livestock production to develop sustainably, profitably and in an animal welfare friendly way.
- A negotiating position in the WTO negotiations which recognises animal welfare as a consumer preference and a non-trade concern allowing government to support farmers financially for applying high animal welfare standards.
- Including measures of improved animal welfare among the indicators to the EU and national SDS.
- Promoting sustainable livestock production in developing countries as an alternative to the industrial livestock production, through development aid among other means.
- Ensuring animal welfare is included in bilateral/multilateral trade and veterinary agreements.
- Reducing the import of exotic animals for the pet trade.