

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: Tuesday 30th September.

UN urged to put animal welfare on the agenda

September 30th , Rome: A coalition of leading international animal welfare organizations, supported by the governments of Brazil, Argentina, Sweden and Costa Rica have called on the UN' s Food & Agriculture Organization (UN FAO) to place the welfare of animals on their agenda for the first time. The call comes as a panel of international experts, appointed by the FAO' s Animal Production and Health Division, begins discussions at the first ever *'Expert Meeting On Capacity Building To Implement Good Animal Welfare Practices'* in Rome (30 Sept – 3 Oct).

The coalition of animal welfare organizations has issued a set of 10 recommendations¹ for the UN FAO to include animal welfare considerations in all its actions. Improving the health and welfare of animals would bring considerable benefits to farmers and their families, especially in developing nations, help protect the environment, support trade, ensure effective preparation for and recovery from disasters, as well as address the growing global demand for higher welfare practices and production systems.

" Farm animals and working equines play such a key role in helping sustain poor nations that the UN FAO can no longer afford to ignore their health and welfare," said Justine Holmes, spokesperson for the coalition. "More than two-thirds of the world' s poor are dependent on farm animals for incomes and food, while working horses, donkeys and mules underpin everything from agriculture to transport systems for hundreds of millions of people worldwide. By bringing the well-being of these animals under its remit, the UN FAO would be taking the biggest single action to help improve livelihoods, reduce poverty, contribute to nutritional goals, support trade and elevate the welfare of these animals."

¹ Link to the position paper

The on-going meeting of the FAO experts was preceded by an open forum on Monday 29 September, at which the coalition made its case for the UN FAO to embrace animal welfare and listed the ten recommendations. These include a call for the UN FAO to assess the well-being of animals as part of its aid work and to establish an Animal Welfare in Development Group to promote animal welfare as a key pillar of community development.

The coalition is also urging the FAO to engage in an official discussion of animal welfare and its relevance to the FAO agenda at its Committee on Agriculture meeting at its Rome HQ in April 2009.

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Notes to Editors

Quotes from the Open Forum Meeting:

Dr Tjeerd Jorna, President of the Executive Committee of the World Veterinary Association:

"We can no longer separate animal welfare, animal health and public health."

Agustin Zimmermann, secretary, the Embassy of the Republic of Argentina

"We consider animal welfare as an important component for food safety, animal health prevention measures and production methods. We firmly believe that the best mechanism to assure animal welfare is at a farm level, particularly, with extensive production methods rather than intensive ones."

"We recognize that animal welfare is becoming a crucial and sensitive topic for consumers, retailers and governments. The OIE has developed standards to promote animal welfare through a scientific-based approach. Argentina will continue to participate actively in this process, based on latest scientific information and advice of scientific experts."

Andrea Gavinelli, Head of Unit Animal Welfare, Directorate General for Health and Consumers, European Commission

"I fully support the initiative of the FAO, especially as it encompasses the international commitment to raise awareness on the issue as presented in the Community Animal Welfare Action Plan of 2006. As a multilateral organisation, the FAO is a key actor in improving animal welfare globally, particularly in developing countries."

Saulo Arantes Ceolin, First Secretary, Permanent Representation of the Federative Republic of Brazil to the FAO

“We are carrying out studies in geographically diverse part of Brazil on production and economic effects of implementing animal welfare to inform our future works. All our decisions are based on studies from within Brazil and so relevant. Extensive cattle raising brings benefits not enjoyed by intensive methods.”

H.E. Mr Jan Anders Klum, Ambassador of Sweden, Rome

“It’s an historic event that the FAO is putting animal welfare on the agenda. Sweden whole-heartedly supports this initiative and will work towards making animal welfare an integrated part of FAO’s working methods – especially for developing countries. Working animals works better if they are treated well and healthy slaughter animals provides a better price. That is common reason and will not only benefit animals but also bring huge improvements to the millions of people that are directly depending on animals.”

Jorge Revello Franco, Alternate Permanent Representative, Mission of the Republic of Costa Rica to the FAO/IFAD/WFP

“Our nation is at peace with the human beings and we want to be a nation at peace with all forms of life.”

IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements)

“Animal welfare is strongly linked to sustainable agriculture, human and animal health. We need to think about livestock solutions for the future, and animal welfare can provide solutions for both the north and south. Industrial systems bring about many problems for animal and human health. IFOAM supports animal welfare NGOs and the work they do to raise awareness amongst consumers.”

Dick Kates, cattle farmer and owner of Cates Family Farm, USA

“The support from the animal welfare community has been an important embrace for myself and my family and made and given additional meaning to our work as producers of food and animal husbandry people. It provides a strong sense of pride that we can pass on to the consumers buying our products.”

1. The coalition of animal welfare organisations comprises the Brooke, Compassion in World Farming, Eurogroup for Animals, Humane Society International, RSPCA and WSPA.

2. The programme for the FAO *'Expert Meeting On Capacity Building To Implement Good Animal Welfare Practices'* is available at <http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/home/en/index.htm> The appointed experts have been tasked to examine current knowledge on animal welfare standards, practices and policies and to advise the Division on the requirements for capacity building. They will explore options for how the UN FAO could contribute towards promoting good animal welfare practices.