



**Eurogroup for Animals’
recommendations for the
EU Farm-to-Fork Strategy**

Introduction

Intensive livestock farming presents a well-documented and unique set of problems for the environment, including high levels of soil, water and air pollution, high levels of GHG emissions, and numerous welfare challenges for farmed animals.

Animal welfare is intrinsically related to environmentally friendly livestock systems and belongs at the core of a future EU food policy whilst delivering on the United Nation (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Indeed, most of the targets set up by the UN cannot be achieved if the welfare of animals is not improved (Eurogroup for Animals, 2019).

An obvious example of these interconnections is the spread of intensive farming. Highly industrialized animal production systems have had devastating effects on both the welfare of the animals exploited and on the environment, as they lead to water and ground pollution, deforestation, and usually to an increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Production systems with the potential to provide higher animal welfare conditions are also more likely to have a lesser impact on the environment, the climate and livelihoods.

For years, polls have demonstrated that citizens want a European Union that is more effective in delivering on farmed animal welfare. More than nine in ten European citizens believe it is important to protect the welfare of farmed animals and 82% believe the welfare of farmed animals should be better protected than it currently is (EC, 2016).

Now the European Commission has the opportunity to implement the synergies between climate neutrality and farmed animal welfare through the implementation of the EU Green Deal and the EU Farm-to-Fork strategy. The next reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) offers a unique opportunity to reallocate funding to promote and support higher welfare and sustainable livestock farming.

Animal welfare as part of the solution to global sustainability challenges in food systems

“While agricultural activities are a major source of pollutants and land-use change, livestock production systems dominate the environmental consequences [...] livestock production contributed between 73% (water quality) to about 80% (biodiversity, air quality, soil acidification and global warming) of the overall agricultural impact” (Adrian Leip et al., 2015)

High levels of animal welfare - including in the aquaculture sector - are positively correlated with environmentally friendly farming practices. In some instances, practices with the potential to improve farmed animal welfare can become co-drivers of climate neutrality. For instance, well-managed grazing systems for ruminants currently account for only a very small fraction of overall animal protein supply globally at about 1 g/person/day, whereas the potential output could be higher (Garnett et al., 2017). Agro-ecological production methods (including silvopastoral systems, where the introduction of trees and shrubs into production systems) can also - to a certain extent - help combat climate change (Cox J., Bridgers J., 2019).

Some best practices

Farming systems that combine circular economy models with higher animal welfare practices are already a reality in the EU. For example, Kipster in the Netherlands produces carbon-neutral and higher welfare eggs. Density on-farm is low, with 6 to 7 hens per square metre. The building is equipped with large verandas, provides outdoor access, and has enriched indoor areas where the animals can engage in natural behaviours such as perching or dustbathing.

Another example of successful circular higher welfare animal agriculture is Adam Arnesson's farm in Sweden. He cut his greenhouse gas emissions in half by shifting from conventional dairy production to more extensive pig farming and growing oats for human consumption.

Aquaculture, not the solution to feeding the planet

Fish from aquaculture are often highlighted as having a lower environmental impact than terrestrial farming systems. In this context, it must always be remembered that its demands on resources are significant, especially on wild fish populations to produce fish meal and fish oil, and on ecosystems being replaced by soy production. The central finding of the Commission's 'Food from the Oceans' report, that any increase in seafood production can only come from low trophic level species and especially algae and bivalves, must guide policy.

Further, bivalve aquaculture is increasingly recognised as capturing a significant amount of carbon. Fish aquaculture's demands on resources, particularly wild fish populations to produce fish meal and fish oil and sensitive ecosystems to produce soy, can be reduced by reducing stress in aquaculture systems. Best practice guidelines including operational welfare indicators can deliver significant improvements to feeding efficiency.

International trade should be a driver of sustainable higher welfare farming practices

While the new Farm-to-Fork strategy can be seen as impacting EU trade policy, the recent development at the global level proves that there is more room for manoeuvre than a decade ago. For a long time, the EU has decided not to impose most of its animal welfare standards on imported products, arguing that it was not allowed under WTO rules. However, recent case law from this organisation demonstrates that rules should not be interpreted so narrowly. Several rulings have shown that method of production, even if not identifiable from the final product, could be used to differentiate, and thus discriminate, products.

In addition, the ruling on the EU Seal ban confirmed animal welfare as a legitimate public moral concern, based on which trade could be restricted. In other circumstances, the rulings of the WTO have confirmed the "living nature" of the interpretation of its rules.

With all these developments at the WTO and with the recent recognition at UN level that animal welfare was a missing dimension from the UN SDGs, trade policy can be designed to support the EU's sustainability objectives, and not to stand as an obstacle towards a more humane world.

Our calls for the EU Farm-to-Fork strategy

The examples of Kipster and Adam Andersson can be considered best practices in terms of animal welfare and sustainability and therefore justify the inclusion of animal welfare targets under each of the key areas identified by the EU Commission in the framework of the Farm-to-Fork strategy. The latter should also explicitly acknowledge the detrimental effects that intensive industrial production and low-welfare animal farming systems have on the environment. **Thus, an animal welfare dimension should be inserted in the EU Farm-to-Fork Strategy as a stand-alone sustainability challenge for food systems.**

Proposed animal welfare targets per focus areas

Sustainable food systems that improve lives and well-being

- Animal welfare: given the link between antimicrobial use and animal welfare (EMA and EFSA, 2017), promote higher welfare farming systems to obtain a 50% reduction (compared to the current level) in the use of veterinary antibiotics by 2030.

Proposed action:

- Improve animal welfare by accelerating the process of phasing out cages. To this end, revise Council Directive 98/58/EC.

Sustainable food systems that ensure healthy and climate-smart eco-systems

- Animal welfare: support climate-smart transportation by eliminating the long and very long distance (≥ 8 hours) transport of live animals by 2022. Thus, favour the transport of meat and carcasses as well as embryos and semen. The target is to lower transport-related CO₂ emissions by 50%.

Proposed actions:

- Revise the EU Regulation 1/2005 to eliminate all the provisions that allow long- and very long-distance journeys.
- Promote healthier diets by stimulating a shift towards the consumption of plant proteins and away from meat and dairy consumption. The ultimate target is a 50% reduction in animal source food consumption by 2050.

Proposed actions:

- Prioritise low trophic species, specifically algae and bivalves, whenever promoting consumption or an increase in consumption of seafood. This is in line with the central finding of the Commission's 'Food from the Oceans' report;
- Reduce the feed use and resource demands from aquaculture by reducing stress through the development of welfare best practice guidelines including operational welfare indicators;
- Eliminate or severely restrict funding for promotional programmes aimed at increasing the consumption of meat and dairy products and dedicate increase funding for the promotion of healthier diets incorporating alternative sources of protein.
- Animal welfare: support livestock farming systems that, by combining the use of renewable resources and the implementation of high animal welfare standards, substantially contribute to reducing by 2030 the pressure on the environment, nature, and climate while fostering farm productivity.

Proposed actions:

- Introduce mandatory method-of-production labelling for poultry meat by revising the EU Regulation 543/2008;
- Urge Member States to firmly anchor financial support for farmers to transition towards higher welfare and environmentally friendly systems in their strategic plans;
- Evaluate and revise the fishery marketing standards with a view to developing method-of-production categories that allow the consumer to make informed choices based on the aquaculture system that fish come from.

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