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EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE  
EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 22 October 2020

**Subject: A call to do more for animals in the context of the EU-Japan  
Economic Partnership Agreement**

Dear Ms Okada,  
Dear Ms Hameleers,  
Dear Mr Hasegawa,

Thank you for your letter of 27 July 2020 on the above-mentioned subject. You call on the Commission and Japan to set up an animal welfare technical working group and to adopt a working plan on the topic under the auspices of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

As you may be aware, under the European Green Deal<sup>1</sup>, the Commission adopted a Farm to Fork Strategy<sup>2</sup>, which identified an urgent need to further improve animal welfare considering that: *“better animal welfare improves animal health and food quality, reduces the need for medication and can help preserve biodiversity.”*

For this reason, the Commission has launched an evaluation of the entire EU legislation on the welfare of farmed animals<sup>3</sup>, including on animal transport and slaughter, with a view to align it with the latest scientific evidence, broaden its scope, make it easier to enforce and ultimately ensure a higher level of animal welfare.

In parallel, the Commission has also started to explore options for animal welfare labelling to better transmit information to consumers. The matter will also be discussed in a dedicated sub-group, established under the EU Animal Welfare Platform, in the year to come.

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<sup>1</sup> COM/2019/640 final

<sup>2</sup> COM/2020/381 final

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/animals/docs/aw\\_fitness-check\\_roadmap.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/animals/docs/aw_fitness-check_roadmap.pdf)

The Farm to Fork Strategy also includes wide-ranging international activities which “*should contribute to enhance cooperation with and to obtain ambitious commitments from third countries in key areas such as animal welfare, the use of pesticides and the fight against antimicrobial resistance.*”

We agree that increased cooperation on animal welfare should also be part of EU-Japanese co-operation. The EPA, under the good regulatory practices and regulatory cooperation chapter, lays down provisions to strengthen cooperation on animal welfare issues.

In particular, EU and Japan may adopt, by mutual consent, a working plan defining the priorities and categories of animals to be addressed and establish an animal welfare technical working group to exchange information, expertise and experiences in the field of animal welfare and to explore the possibility of promoting further cooperation.

In your letter, you suggest the welfare of laying hens and broilers as topics of particular interest. As you know, the Commission and EU Member States have made substantial efforts, through specific legislation, to increase the welfare of these animals. We therefore acknowledge that these could be relevant issues. However, as befits the co-operative nature of our relations, this must be decided on a consensual basis with our Japanese partners.

The Commission has already reached out to Japan to discuss modalities for establishing an animal welfare working group and will continue exploring the opportunity for enhancing cooperation on animal welfare in one of the forthcoming EPA meetings.

Thank you for your interest on this important subject and we assure you that the Commission remains committed to bringing about positive change in the area of animal welfare.

Yours sincerely,



Valdis Dombrovskis



Stella Kyriakides