



OPEN LETTER TO THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENT AND GOVERNMENT IN FAVOR OF THE RECONSIDERATION OF ANIMAL SUFFERING AT SLAUGHTER THROUGH THE SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF RITUAL SLAUGHTER WITHOUT STUNNING

Whereas:

1. A full appreciation of animal welfare within Italian legislation and national agricultural policies is a legitimate objective of general interest of citizens.
2. Animals are sentient beings, whose sensitivity and susceptibility to pain require a careful evaluation of the methods and practices available to operators in the agri-food sector to minimize their suffering.
3. The slaughtering phase is regulated by the European legislator with the explicit aim of providing a careful assessment of the interests involved in the killing practices, recognizing how animal protection plays a fundamental role in guiding consumer choices and ensuring a high quality food.
4. Science has amply demonstrated how the use of prior stunning is an effective technique, useful for making the animal insensitive to pain, reducing anguish and suffering during the phases of jugulation and bleeding.
5. The need to consider the needs of religious communities interested in carrying out the ritual slaughter has forced the European legislator to choose to introduce a specific derogation from the use of prior stunning, a practice incompatible with the cultural traditions of those communities, the failure of which however causes serious problems regarding the protection of animal welfare.
6. The European legislator has decided to leave to national legal systems the margin of appreciation necessary to operate a more effective balance between the interests of religious communities and that of the protection of animal welfare, in consideration of the most appropriate assessments regarding the reality with which it comes into contact, and the greater degree of suffering that slaughter without prior stunning entails for the animal.
7. According to latest scientific evidence, the protection of animal welfare at slaughter has a direct impact on food quality, affecting the organoleptic characteristics of the finished product, which are proportionally higher if a more effective minimization of pain and anxiety at slaughter is guaranteed
8. The marketing of products obtained through the use of slaughtering without prior stunning, in the absence of any reference that allows the buyer to be informed about the origin of the product he is about to purchase, constitutes a significant problem, both in relation to the public interest to the protection of animal welfare, and to the interest for a conscious consumption of food products.

9. The need to operate an effective balance between the interests of religious communities and the interest in the protection of animal welfare makes it necessary to search for a compromise solution, which considers the problems that animal stunning poses in relation to respect for traditional uses, as well as the criticalities that these determine with respect to the degree of protection guaranteed to the animal.
10. The solutions identified in other legal systems provide as references: the imposition of preventive stunning on all types of slaughtering; stunning at the same time or after jugulation.
11. A recent more balanced compromise solution was adopted by the Flanders legislator, which imposed the general use of reversible stunning, even in the case of ritual slaughter.
12. The Court of Justice of the European Union has established the legitimacy of this intervention in relation to the necessary protection of freedom of religion, in full compliance with Article 10 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and Article 9 of the European Convention of human rights.
13. Science has shown how the use of reversible stunning ensures: the integral preservation of the animal state of health; the effectiveness of the bleeding phase following jugulation.
14. The introduction of the mandatory use of reversible preventive stunning for all types of slaughterings would allow for a more effective balance between the pursuit of the legitimate objective of general interest of an effective protection of animal welfare, the interests of consumers and the interests of religious communities to carry out the practice of ritual slaughter, in full compliance with Constitutional and European principles.
15. Considering the Italian regulatory framework, there is nothing to prevent the legislator from introducing a legislative provision which, by imposing the use of previous reversible stunning, or equivalent measures, innovatively regulates ritual slaughter. In fact, despite law n. 101/1989, to be considered reinforced by an agreement stipulated pursuant to art. 8 co. 3 of the Constitution, this innovative measure should be considered not as an expression of an illegitimate exercise of state sovereignty in the matter of bilateral competence, but as a measure of adjustment of sovereignty to a higher instance: in implementation, as appropriate, of community directives.
16. An implementation of certification regulations in Italy, through the introduction of new practices which correspond to greater protection of animal welfare at slaughter, would be fully consistent with the high quality of "*Made in Italy*"

This considered, we the undersigned

ASK THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENT

To provide for the introduction of a legislative provision that makes the use of prior and reversible stunning - or as an alternative to an equivalent technique such as simultaneous or post cut stunning, able to ensure greater protection of animal welfare - even in those cases in which today it is possible to resort to slaughter without the adoption of preventive stunning.

Consequently amend the following acts:

- Ministerial Decree of 11 June 1980, authorising the slaughter of animals according to Jewish and Islamic religious rites
- Law 8 March 1989, n. 101
- Legislative Decree 6 November 2013, n. 131