

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2006/2046(INI)	Procedure completed
The protection and welfare of animals for 2006-2010		
Subject 3.10.04.02 Animal protection		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Agriculture and Rural Development		26/01/2006
		PPE-DE JEGGLE Elisabeth	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	 International Trade		16/03/2006
		Verts/ALE LUCAS Caroline	
	 Environment, Public Health and Food Safety		
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Agriculture and Fisheries	2797	07/05/2007
	Agriculture and Fisheries	2793	16/04/2007
	Agriculture and Fisheries	2739	19/06/2006
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Health and Food Safety	KYPRIANOU Markos	

Key events			
23/01/2006	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2006)0013	Summary
16/03/2006	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
19/06/2006	Debate in Council	2739	Summary
12/09/2006	Vote in committee		Summary
19/09/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0290/2006	
11/10/2006	Debate in Parliament		
12/10/2006	Results of vote in Parliament		
12/10/2006	Decision by Parliament	T6-0417/2006	Summary
	End of procedure in Parliament		

12/10/2006			
16/04/2007	Debate in Council	2793	
07/05/2007	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary

Technical information

Procedure reference	2006/2046(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
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Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AGRI/6/33803

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(2006)0013	23/01/2006	EC	Summary
Document attached to the procedure		COM(2006)0014	23/01/2006	EC	Summary
Document attached to the procedure		SEC(2006)0065	23/01/2006	EC	
Committee draft report		PE371.839	02/06/2006	EP	
Committee opinion	INTA	PE371.770	20/06/2006	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE376.360	13/07/2006	EP	
Committee opinion	ENVI	PE374.123	14/07/2006	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0290/2006	19/09/2006	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0417/2006	12/10/2006	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2006)5316-2	23/11/2006	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2006)5318-2	14/12/2006	EC	

The protection and welfare of animals for 2006-2010

PURPOSE : [to adopt an action plan on the protection and welfare of animals 2006-2010.](#)

CONTENT : this present Community action plan on the protection and Welfare of Animals embodies the Commission's commitment to EU citizens, stakeholders, the European Parliament and the Council for a clear and comprehensive map of the Commission's planned animal welfare initiatives for the coming years. It also responds to the principles set out by the Protocol on Protection and Welfare of animals annexed to the EC Treaty by the Amsterdam Treaty.

The action plan will ensure that initiatives in the field of Animal Welfare take due account of their cross-cutting nature, their European and international dimensions and value, and the range of associated and inter-connecting competencies as distributed today among the Commission's various Directorates General. The Action Plan thus also contributes to better regulation by serving the consolidation of legislative instruments.

The primary objectives that the Commission wishes to achieve with the elaboration of this Action Plan are to:

- define more clearly the direction of Community policies on animal protection and welfare for the coming years;
- continue to promote high animal welfare standards in the EU and at the international level;
- provide greater coordination of existing resources while identifying future needs;
- support future trends in animal welfare research and continue to support the 3Rs principle: Replacement, Reduction and Refinement alternative approaches to animal testing;
- ensure a more consistent and coordinated approach to animal protection and welfare across Commission policy areas, also taking into

account aspects such as the socio-economic impact of any new measures.

The five main areas of action identified are:

- upgrading existing minimum standards for animal protection and welfare in line with new scientific evidence and socio-economic assessments as well as possibly elaborating specific minimum standards for species or issues that are not currently addressed in EU legislation. A particular priority will be designing EU rules in order to secure efficient enforcement and to take account of rules governing international trade;
- giving a high priority to promoting policy-orientated future research on animal protection and welfare and application of the 3Rs principle: in order to respect the obligations under the EC Treaty Protocol to pay full regard to the welfare of animals in formulating and implementing these policies in parallel with enhancing the development, validation, implementation and monitoring of alternative approaches to animal testing;
- introducing standardised animal welfare indicators: to classify the hierarchy of welfare standards applied (from minimum to higher standards) in order to assist the development of improved animal welfare production and husbandry methods and to facilitate their application at EU and international levels. On this basis, options for EU labelling will be explored in a systematic manner;
- ensuring that animal keepers/ handlers as well as the general public are more involved and informed on current standards of animal protection and welfare and fully appreciate their role in promoting animal protection and welfare. In respect of farm animals for example this could include working with retailers and producers to facilitate improved consumer trust and awareness of current farming practices and thus more informed purchasing decisions, as well as developing common initiatives in the field of animal welfare to facilitate the exchange of information and the application of best practices;
- continue to support and initiate further international initiatives to raise awareness and create a greater consensus on animal welfare, including engaging with Developing Countries to explore trade opportunities based on welfare friendly production systems. The Community should also actively identify trans-boundary problems in the area of animal welfare, relating to companion or farm animals, wildlife etc., and develop a mechanism to tackle them in a more timely, efficient and consistent manner.

The Commission states that continued and reinforced efforts are needed to ensure that Community legislation is drafted in a rational and comprehensible manner, thus facilitating uniform implementation and enforcement. Community animal welfare policies need to be founded on the best available scientific evidence as well as taking into account the concerns of civil society, socio-economic consequences and relationships with international trading partners and organisations. Specific legislative provisions should also be foreseen for species for which minimum protection standards are not currently outlined in Community legislation.

The Community will contribute to the ongoing evolution of animal welfare as a scientific discipline, through the funding of research, promotion of dialogue etc., thus facilitating a fuller exchange of views and expertise. The Commission will strive to ensure that full regard is paid to animal welfare in the context of related policy fields such as agricultural and research policies, animal health, food safety, chemicals testing/risk assessment.

Efforts will be made to incorporate specific measurable animal welfare indicators where available into existing and future Community legislation. Further investigations and research will be promoted for the development and application of such objective measurable indicators of animal welfare. Improved marketing, labelling and communication strategies will need to be developed and analysed to ensure that consumers are able to make more informed purchasing decisions.

In the international arena full support and Community coordination will be provided for the animal welfare activities of international organisations such as the OIE and Council of Europe. The Community will also press for the acceptance at WTO level of animal welfare as a non-trade concern in agricultural trade and will work with international trading partners having developed animal welfare policies in order to build a common understanding on the implementation of mutually agreed animal welfare standards, including in the context of specific EC multilateral and bilateral agreements.

The protection and welfare of animals for 2006-2010

This Commission working document presents a Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals for 2006-2010. Five actions are being proposed:

Action 1: Upgrading existing minimum standards for animal protection and welfare.

Animal welfare has always featured large in the formulation of Community policies. Indeed, the 'Protocol on Protection and Welfare of Animals', which is annexed to the EC Treaty sets out key fields of action and obliges the Community, as well as the Member States, to take account of the welfare of animals when formulating policy options. Given the importance that consumers attach to animal welfare issues it is important that related agricultural regulations adapt to this trend. Within the context of recent CAP reforms, the Commission suggests that more account be taken of animal welfare issues, through the introduction of more animal welfare instruments.

Action 2: Supporting future research on animal protection and applying the 3Rs principle (replacement, reduction and refinement).

The European Commission has, in the past, supported a number of research projects examining the issue of farm animal welfare. The 7th research programme is currently under preparation but includes a number of animal welfare priorities under theme 2 'Food, Agriculture and Biotechnology'. The 3R's activities will be supported in four out of the nine thematic priorities namely: 1) health, food, agriculture and biotechnology; 4) nanosciences, nanotechnologies, materials and new production technologies and 6) Environment. In other measures, the action programme foresees supporting a 'European Centre or Laboratory for the protection and welfare of animals?'; applying new practical tools to ensure animal welfare and the application of the 3R's principle for animal experimentation. As far as the latter point is concerned, the Commission points to the 'Declaration of Brussels?', which was supported by the Commission and industry alike. The Declaration sets up a task force of stakeholders. This taskforce will seek to find appropriate solution for the promotion of alternative approaches to animal testing including: the mapping of research activities; research co-operation; the development of alternative approaches; practical mechanisms to improve the validation process using available knowledge and practical mechanisms to facilitate the regulatory acceptance of alternative approaches.

Action 3: Introducing standardised animal welfare indicators

Under this action the Commission envisages the creation of an 'EU label for animal welfare. Retailers and producers are beginning to

recognise the importance of animal welfare. The creation of an EU label for animal welfare is an option worth exploring. A clear label identifying the level of welfare applied could represent an effective marketing tool similar to the identification of certain agricultural products with regional specialisations. The system would need to be based on standardised scientific indicators and supported by sound scientific research.

Action 4: Ensuring that animal handlers, as well as the public, are more involved and informed of current standards of animal protection and welfare.

There has been a clear shift of public attitudes towards animals in recent decades. European consumers provide a good example and many are increasingly focusing on clean and green production methods. The mindset of both consumers and producers has undergone a seismic shift, from merely preventing the cruelty and avoidable suffering of animals, to focusing on their wellbeing. The action plan, under this heading, seeks to define a communication strategy on animal welfare and protection issues. Consideration will be given to the establishment of a specific 'Information Platform' on animal welfare in order to nurture further dialogue and exchange experiences.

Action 5: To support and initiate further international initiatives; to raise awareness; and to create a consensus on animal welfare.

At present there is limited international consensus on the relative importance accorded to animal welfare and EU measures can not easily be compared to standards in third-countries. To tackle this challenge, the Action Programme will allow for close collaboration with the World Organisation for Animal Health OIE. It will also: promote animal welfare in the EU's multilateral and bilateral relationships and raise knowledge on animal welfare issues in developing countries.

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The Council held an exchange of views on the Communication on animal welfare. The Council also took note of the Presidency conclusions which summarise the main points of concern that emerged from a Conference on animal welfare held in Brussels on 30 March 2006. At that conference, representatives of the Member States, of the European Institutions, international parties and a wide range of stakeholders representing the whole of the food chain discussed the Communication, which mainly covers the welfare of animals kept for food production. The debate was broadcast to the public.

The Presidency conclusions insist in particular on the setting up of a European network of scientific institutes and laboratories responsible for questions relating to animal welfare, and stress the need for an impact assessment and that the need to legislate must be based on the results of sound scientific studies which demonstrate necessity and feasibility. Objective and measurable indicators on animal welfare are also considered a high priority. It is also envisaged that the Commission will investigate possible options for an animal-welfare labelling scheme at EU level.

Finally, the conclusions support the mutual recognition of animal welfare worldwide on the basis of multilateral standards.

The Communication outlines the Commission's intentions regarding future animal welfare initiatives.

On 20 February the Council held a first exchange of views on the Communication on the basis of a questionnaire. During that exchange of views, a majority of delegations insisted on the need to check the socio-economic impact on producers and consumers before any amendment of the existing minimum requirements; several Member States agreed on the need for a sound-scientific basis for updating the existing minimum requirements; several delegations were in favour of an information campaign in order to inform farmers, retailers and consumers better on existing Community animal-welfare rules and on their application.

The protection and welfare of animals for 2006-2010

The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Elizabeth JEGGLE (EPP-ED, DE) in response to the Commission communication proposing a Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2006 - 2010. The report took as its basic premise that "animals are sentient beings whose specific needs must be taken into account", and that "the protection of animals is an expression of humanity in the 21st century and a challenge facing European civilisation and culture".

The committee therefore supported the Commission's plans and pointed to the greater emphasis already placed on animal protection under the Common Agricultural Policy, although it regretted that European policy on animal welfare had so far focused almost exclusively on the welfare and protection of farm animals.

MEPs stressed that "animal protection and animal health impact closely on each other." They therefore called on the Commission to "take greater account of animal protection aspects in the fight against animal diseases." However, they also recognised that higher standards may come at a cost, and argued that, when introducing higher animal protection welfare standards, the situation of individual EU regions should be taken into account. And they were keen for measures to improve animal welfare to be seen "from the standpoint of their socio-economic effects", especially on farmers. The committee also urged the Commission to push at international level, "notably at the WTO and the OIE" (the world organisation for animal health), for a single legislative standard for animal protection rules.

MEPs said that "consumers should be informed and prepared to pay higher prices for products originating from farms with higher animal welfare standards and that these products should be appropriately labelled". They supported the development of an 'EU label' as well as voluntary private labels that would guarantee even higher standards of animal protection and which could spread animal welfare standards around the world. They even suggested imposing levies on products which do not meet EU standards of animal welfare, to avoid "animal protection dumping".

Lastly, the committee called on the Commission to propose a total import ban on seal products and 'cruelty products' from third countries, such as fur from animals skinned alive, fur from animal breeding farms with no veterinary control and pharmaceutical products based on endangered species. And it urged the European Community to bring an end to dog, bull and cock fighting.

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report by Elizabeth JEGGLE (EPP-ED, DE) on the Commission's communication on a Community Action Plan on the Protection and Welfare of Animals. (Please see the summary of 12/09/2006.) Parliament adopted the report by a large majority - 565 votes in favour to 29 against and 15 abstentions - and called for stricter animal welfare rules in the EU. Whilst Parliament called for an end to dog and cock fighting and an end to state or national subsidies relating to these activities, it voted against extending this passage to bull fighting. The report called on the Commission to submit plans for animal protection labelling, to urge the strengthening of animal protection in WTO negotiations, and to ban seal and 'cruelty products' imports into the Union.

Parliament regretted that EU rules on the transport of live animals are frequently flouted in practice. It supported the idea of introducing a label guaranteeing respect for European standards, but acknowledged that an accumulation of measures designed to improve animal welfare can have negative consequences for the competitiveness of the European farming sector. It was also important to avoid all dumping in third countries and any deterioration in the treatment of animals in these countries. Parliament therefore emphasised the urgent need to include a tightening of animal protection measures on the agenda of World Trade Organisation negotiations, in order to raise international welfare standards. It also proposed imposing embargoes on countries where production of animal products involve cruelty.

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The Council adopted conclusions in which it recognises that animal welfare is of concern to many European citizens and that consumers could appreciate information on the animal welfare conditions under which products of animal origin are obtained, thereby enabling them to favour higher animal welfare standards through their purchasing decisions.

It considers that an EU-wide information campaign to explain the EU animal welfare standards to EU consumers and third countries might be appropriate, including the explanation of labelling schemes. It underlines that labelling could be one important element in the provision of information to consumers and could allow producers to capitalise on high animal welfare standards. Labelling should be simple, easy to recognise, comprehensible and credible and should not mislead consumers.

The Council considers that the possibility of introducing a label to recognise compliance with EU and/or recognised equivalent animal welfare standards, including the possibility of voluntary animal welfare labelling, should be evaluated. Such labelling should not lead to the deterioration of the functioning of existing labelling schemes requiring inter alia animal welfare standards above statutory requirements.

It considers that a European framework for animal welfare labelling would have to be based on sound scientific criteria and avoid any unnecessary administrative burden on producers and national authorities. The use of independent audit and certification schemes might be considered.

Lastly, the Commission is invited to take into account the abovementioned factors with a view to assessing further the issue of animal welfare labelling in all its aspects and to submit a report to the Council on animal welfare labelling in order to allow an in-depth debate on this subject.