







Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2007/2260(INI)	Procedure completed
New animal health strategy for the European Union (2007-2013)		
Subject		
3.10.04.02 Animal protection		
3.10.08 Animal health requirements, veterinary legislation and pharmacy		
3.10.08.05 Animal diseases		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Agriculture and Rural Development		08/10/2007
		UEN WOJCIECHOWSKI Janusz	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	 International Trade		09/10/2007
		PPE-DE GLATTFELDER Béla	
	 Industry, Research and Energy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	 Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Agriculture and Fisheries	2841	17/12/2007
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Health and Food Safety	VASSILIOU Androulla	

Key events			
18/09/2007	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2007)0539	Summary
29/11/2007	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
17/12/2007	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
01/04/2008	Vote in committee		Summary
11/04/2008	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0147/2008	
21/05/2008	Debate in Parliament		
22/05/2008	Results of vote in Parliament		
22/05/2008	Decision by Parliament	T6-0235/2008	Summary
22/05/2008	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2007/2260(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Strategic initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AGRI/6/54818

Documentation gateway					
Non-legislative basic document		COM(2007)0539	19/09/2007	EC	Summary
Document attached to the procedure		SEC(2007)1189	19/09/2007	EC	
Document attached to the procedure		SEC(2007)1190	19/09/2007	EC	
Committee draft report		PE398.296	31/01/2008	EP	
Committee opinion	INTA	PE400.305	26/02/2008	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE402.752	06/03/2008	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0147/2008	11/04/2008	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0235/2008	22/05/2008	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2008)3593/2	12/06/2008	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2008)4116	17/07/2008	EC	

New animal health strategy for the European Union (2007-2013)

PURPOSE: to present a new Animal Health Strategy for the European Union (2007-2013) entitled "Prevention is better than cure?"

BACKGROUND: in December 2004, the Commission launched an external evaluation to thoroughly review the outcomes of EU action on animal health and the direction it may wish to take in the future. Policy re-evaluation was necessary for several reasons: the main elements of the existing policy were drawn up when we were still a Community of twelve Member States; new challenges and diseases have emerged; trading conditions have changed radically; and science, technology and the institutional framework have evolved substantially.

Based on the evaluation results and the stakeholder consultation, the Commission is now presenting its proposal for a new EU Animal Health Strategy (2007-2013). The strategy provides direction for the development of animal health policy and will facilitate the establishment of priorities that are consistent with agreed strategic goals and the revision of, and agreement on, acceptable and appropriate standards.

CONTENT: the EU Animal Health Strategy covers the health of all animals in the EU kept for food, farming, sport, companionship, entertainment and in zoos as well as wild animals, animals used in research and those transported to, from and within the EU. The strategy is aimed at the entire EU and builds on the current animal health legal framework in the EU and the standards and guidelines of the World Organisation for Animal Health.

Strategic goals: to ensure a high level of public health and food safety by minimising the incidence of biological and chemical risks to humans; to promote animal health by preventing/reducing the incidence of animal diseases, and in this way to support farming and the rural economy; to improve economic growth/cohesion/competitiveness assuring free circulation of goods and proportionate animal movements ; and to promote farming practices and animal welfare which prevent animal health related threats and minimise environmental impacts in support of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy .

Action plan: the action plan to deliver the strategic goals will focus on four main pillars:

- prioritisation of EU intervention: the strategy must be seen as an integrated risk assessment and management strategy focusing on biological and chemical risks of EU relevance;
- a modern animal health framework: towards a single regulatory framework, with a greater focus on incentives rather than penalties, consistent with other EU policies and converging to international standards;
- animal-related threat prevention, surveillance and crisis preparedness: identifying problems before they take hold, and being ready to manage outbreaks and crisis;
- science, innovation and research: to stimulate and coordinate risk analysis, science, innovation and research, hence contributing to a high level of public health and to the competitiveness of EU animal health businesses.

The strategy can only bring about real change if everyone involved in animal health works together and with all interested citizens. Animal health is a concern for all European citizens, stemming from the public health and food safety aspects of animal health but also from the economic costs that animal disease outbreaks can trigger and animal welfare considerations. The Commission is, therefore, committed to pursue its objectives of clarity and transparency when communicating with consumers and stakeholders what the EU is doing, and there will be annual reporting on the strategy's progress and wider communication of policies and initiatives.

New animal health strategy for the European Union (2007-2013)

The Council adopted conclusions welcoming the Commission's communication and the proposed strategic approach to the development of future EU animal health policy, which takes into account other policy areas. It welcomes a future establishment of a single, clear Community general legal framework and emphasises the importance of consistency with the OIE standards without undermining the establishment of higher Community standards in line with the WTO SPS agreement.

The Council highlights the importance of: i) continuous efforts to improve the health status of animals in order to achieve a high level of animal health throughout the Community; ii) further evaluation of the rules for co-funding (including the scope for efficient cost and responsibility-sharing schemes); iii) consideration to be given, under a preventive policy, to the improvement of better bio-security measures and the use of vaccination, when appropriate. It also reiterates that veterinary policy is both a cross-sector and cross-border responsibility and welcomes the involvement of the Chief Veterinary Officers in providing strategic advice on animal health policy, in close cooperation with the Commission.

The Council recognises that progress on a sustainable animal and public health policy can only be achieved and maintained if the veterinary services, as a public good of general interest, are consistent with OIE standards in all Member States. Therefore, resources should be made available for the achievement of this objective in order to protect public health and the global economy. It also recognises the need to further evaluate the priorities and criteria for the funding of science and innovation, consistent with the Community Animal Health Strategy and to consider making available a flexible mechanism for funding EU research in emergency situations.

The Commission is invited to:

- to present an action plan, as envisaged in the animal health strategy;
- to propose a legal framework for the Animal Health Law, establishing the general principles, defining the roles and responsibilities and stressing the prevention and control of disease, consistent with other relevant Community policies;
- both reflecting clear strategic objectives and including performance indicators;
- to propose the definition of priorities for a more effective use of resources and to envisage the prioritisation of EU action based on a transparent and scientific assessment of risks to health, including categorisation of animal diseases. Furthermore, the possibilities for effective implementation by the Member States should be assessed and taken into account;
- to establish and clarify the role of the "Advisory Committee" in order to identify and improve its consultative role involving the different stakeholders at a very early stage and allowing for the sharing of responsibilities and costs;
- to further evaluate the EU funding schemes' sources, rules and priority criteria, including in emergency situations. Sufficient resources should be devoted according to the objectives of the policy;
- to further evaluate the priorities and criteria for the funding of science, research and innovation and to consider making available a flexible mechanism for funding EU research in emergency situations.

New animal health strategy for the European Union (2007-2013)

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development adopted the own-initiative report by Janusz WOJCIECHOWSKI (UEN, PL) on a new Animal Health Strategy for the European Union (2007-2013).

MEPs support the objectives and principles set out in the Animal Health Strategy Communication and call upon the Commission to present an action plan. They note, however, that it is impossible to comply with the 2007-2013 timeframe laid down in Animal Health Strategy Communication given that the discussions relating to the Communication are still on-going and the basic legislation required for its implementation will not be in place until 2010 at the earliest. Therefore, they call for greater ambition and a longer-term view from the Commission when bringing forward its legislative proposals.

MEPs criticise the Commission for making no reference to the funding requirements for its policy in its Communication, since the proposed strategy can only produce positive results if clear and transparent arrangements are laid down for the funding of the individual measures. They highlight that increased financial support will be necessary, particularly in the strengthening of surveillance systems and biosecurity measures. MEPs also express their dissatisfaction at the indications that individual measures will be financed from existing funds and call on the Commission to advocate enhancing the possibilities of the current veterinary fund.

Pillar 1 ? Prioritisation of EU intervention: MEPs acknowledge the crucial importance of risk profiling and categorisation, including the determination of an acceptable level of risk for the Community and the creation of a series of precise measures to reduce the risk.

The report points out that high stocking densities in intensive farming systems may increase the risk of disease spread and hamper disease control where inadequate disease control measures are practised. It also highlights the importance, in terms of controlling epidemic diseases, of the distance between farms.

The EU has put in place strict regulations on animal transport, which meet the need for high animal welfare standards and disease prevention and control measures. MEPs insist that those high standards be fully implemented by all Member States. Countries exporting animal products to the EU should also meet these standards so as to promote and ensure high standards of animal welfare and health globally.

Pillar 2 ? EU legal framework: MEPs share the view that the current EU animal health framework is complicated and fragmented and thus needs to be simplified. They believe that the fundamental rules governing action on animal health should, where possible, be set out in a

single legislative act.

The report highlights that the EU legal framework should clearly, and in an appropriately flexible manner, lay down the obligations of owners of animals, including animals kept for non-commercial purposes, in risk situations, in such a way as not to give rise to unwarranted conflicts and disputes.

MEPs call on the Commission to carry out a comparative analysis of existing compensation systems in the Member States and, on that basis, to draw up an EU-wide framework model. The Commission is asked to create a legal framework for an efficient cost-sharing scheme in the Member States in order to ensure that the direct costs for eradicating an animal disease are also co-financed by the sector. MEPs indicate the need for a substantial Community contribution in respect of those major diseases, in order to ensure equal treatment and opportunities where these are beyond the resources of the countries and producers concerned.

The parliamentary committee urges the EU to defend its high animal health and welfare standards at international level within the WTO, in order to increase animal health and welfare standards globally. It welcomes the proposed steps towards an export strategy at Community level and stresses that the Commission should make every effort to improve access to third-country markets and remove export barriers.

Pillar 3 ? Animal-related threat prevention, surveillance and crisis preparedness: the parliamentary committee acknowledges the need to promote on-farm biosecurity measures. In this respect, measures such as the isolation of new animals brought to farms, the isolation of sick animals and regulating the movement of people, can have a major impact in restricting the spread of disease.

In order to improve traceability, MEPs support action covering the compulsory electronic and DNA-based genetic identification and registration of animals at EU-level and the introduction of a comprehensive and secure animal movement monitoring system. The Commission is called to help farmers cope with the high costs incurred through the procurement of the required equipment, by creating the possibility for Member States to incorporate such measures within their rural development programmes.

In view of the risk of infection-carrying or diseased animals being brought into the EU, veterinary and sanitary checks at EU borders need to be particularly thorough and stringent, in order to prevent the illegal importation of or trafficking in animals and animal products. In this respect, MEPs draw attention to the need for organisational, training and financial assistance to be provided to veterinary services at the EU's external borders, in particular in the new Member States, third countries neighbouring the EU, and developing countries.

In addition, the report stresses the need for economic operators, members of the veterinary profession and their assistants, control bodies and other competent authorities to be provided with effective training to enable them to detect animal-related threats promptly and for an update of EU minimum standards on veterinary training. MEPs support such training at EU level and suggest that a European accreditation system of veterinary schools could help achieving the objective of a high-level veterinary education.

Lastly, MEPs support action to increase the use of (both suppressive and protective) emergency vaccinations, and believe that it is crucial to expand EU vaccine banks. They call for: (i) a ban on consumer labelling of products derived from vaccinated animals; (ii) the definition of an effective public communication strategy regarding the harmlessness of products derived from vaccinated animals; (iii) the conclusion of conventions on the free circulation of products derived from vaccinated animals between governments, farmers' organisations, consumer organisations, and retail and trade operators.

Pillar 4 ? Science, Innovation and Research: MEPs recall Parliament's amendment to the 2008 EU budget, which increased appropriations for the development of (marker) vaccines and testing methods. They call on the Commission to make effective use of those increased appropriations.

The report points to the need for the strengthening of the network of Community and national reference laboratories dealing with animal diseases. It emphasises the importance of pooling scientific information on animal health and welfare, as well as the importance of communicating with consumers, in order to ensure that they understand the means by which animal diseases are spread and their enormous impact.

MEPs are concerned that European standards could be undermined by imports from third countries whose farmers do not face the same obligations with regard to animal health and welfare. The Commission is called upon to investigate ways in which to safeguard against such third-country competition, including consideration of import measures, and by raising the matter for debate in the relevant WTO fora.

Lastly, the report points out that the new generation of Free Trade Agreements with India, Korea and the countries of South-East Asia should have a balanced chapter on sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures and animal welfare. The Commission is asked to conclude veterinary protocols with potential export markets, such as that of China.

New animal health strategy for the European Union (2007-2013)

The European Parliament adopted, by 482 votes to 9 and 16 abstentions, a resolution on the Commission Communication on a new animal health strategy for the European Union 2007-2013. The own initiative report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Janusz WOJCIECHOWSKI (UEN, PL), on behalf of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.

Parliament welcomes the development of a strategic approach to EU animal health policy, but calls for greater ambition and for a longer-term view from the Commission when bringing forward its legislative proposals.

Members point out that the proposed strategy can produce positive results if clear and transparent arrangements are laid down for the funding of the individual measures, something that the Animal Health Strategy Communication fails to do. They criticise the Commission for making no reference to the funding requirements for its policy in the Communication. Parliament draws attention to the fact that the common animal health policy is one of the most integrated EU policies and that most of its funding should be covered by the Community budget, which should not preclude the financial responsibility of the Member States and of farmers. Parliament is dissatisfied about the indications that individual measures will be financed from existing funds, and calls on the Commission to advocate enhancing the possibilities of the current veterinary fund, preparing its arguments for the budget discussions that will be launched in 2009. It points out that the animal health strategy should also cover the activities of abattoirs, animal transport businesses and animal feed manufacturers and suppliers, while taking account of the need for administrative simplification.

Pillar 1 ? Prioritisation of EU intervention: Parliament acknowledges the crucial importance of risk profiling and categorisation, including the

determination of an acceptable level of risk for the Community and of the relative priority for action to reduce the risk. It believes that efforts must be made to define clearly the situations in which the risk of disease is heightened and exceeds the acceptable level, as well as the consequences. It points out that high stocking densities in intensive farming systems may increase the risk of disease spread and hamper disease control where inadequate disease control measures are practised and that the same could happen in other farming systems if disease control measures are not well implemented. It also highlights the importance, in terms of controlling epidemic diseases, of the distance between farms.

Members point to the potentially heightened risks involved in the long-distance transport of live animals. They consider that sanitary and animal welfare rules concerning the transport of live animals should be intensely controlled and tightened if deemed necessary, and call for the swift introduction of an integrated electronic European animal registration system, including GPS tracking of lorries. They believe that the quality of transport is more important than its duration for animal welfare.

Pillar 2 ? EU legal framework: Members share the view that the current EU animal health framework needs to be simplified. The fundamental rules governing action on animal health should, where possible, be set out in a single legislative act. The EU legal framework should clearly, and in an appropriately flexible manner, lay down the obligations of owners of animals, including animals kept for non-commercial purposes, in risk situations, in such a way as not to give rise to unwarranted conflicts and disputes. Parliament acknowledges the need to revise the current co-financing instrument, so that it is possible to ensure that all players assume their responsibilities and play a part in detecting and eradicating disease. The compensation system should not be limited to providing compensation to owners of animals that are culled in response to the outbreak of disease, but should be combined with risk-prevention incentives based on a reduction in contributions to national or regional animal health funds by farmers who take extra risk-reducing measures and promoting the use of (emergency) vaccination instead of stamping out. Parliament agrees that provision should be made in the EU legal framework for support for the possibility of covering indirect losses not resulting from disease-eradication measures alone, and points out that indirect losses can, in some cases, be more severe than direct losses, and that provision should therefore be made for compensation for those losses.

The resolution goes on to stress the importance of the consistent application of the precautionary principle with respect to the reintroduction of animal protein into feed, and the need for greater efforts to introduce effective control and monitoring mechanisms on the elimination of all pathogens during manufacture, to ensure traceability and to avoid the contamination and mixing of types of animal meal in feed. Parliament urges the EU to defend its high animal health and welfare standards at international level within the World Trade Organization, in order to increase animal health and welfare standards globally. It acknowledges that EU producers face higher costs due to the higher EU standards in place and that they must be protected from imported animal products whose production is subject to lower standards.

Pillar 3 ? Animal-related threat prevention, surveillance and crisis preparedness: Parliament acknowledges the need to promote on-farm biosecurity measures. In this respect, measures such as the isolation of new animals brought to farms, the isolation of sick animals and regulating the movement of people, can have a major impact in restricting the spread of disease. In order to improve traceability, MEPs support action covering the compulsory electronic and DNA-based genetic identification and registration of animals at EU-level and the introduction of a comprehensive and secure animal movement monitoring system. The Commission is called to help farmers cope with the high costs incurred through the procurement of the required equipment, by creating the possibility for Member States to incorporate such measures within their rural development programmes.

In view of the risk of infection-carrying or diseased animals being brought into the EU, veterinary and sanitary checks at EU borders need to be particularly thorough, in order to prevent the illegal importation of or trafficking in animals and animal products. In this respect, MEPs draw attention to the need for organisational, training and financial assistance to be provided to veterinary services at the EU's external borders, in particular in the new Member States, third countries neighbouring the EU, and developing countries.

In addition, the resolution stresses the need for economic operators, members of the veterinary profession and their assistants, control bodies and other competent authorities to be provided with effective training to enable them to detect animal-related threats promptly and for an update of EU minimum standards on veterinary training. MEPs support such training at EU level and suggest that a European accreditation system of veterinary schools could help achieving the objective of a high-level veterinary education.

Lastly, MEPs support action to increase the use of (both suppressive and protective) emergency vaccinations, and believe that it is crucial to expand EU vaccine banks. They call for: (i) a ban on consumer labelling of products derived from vaccinated animals; (ii) the definition of an effective public communication strategy regarding the harmlessness of products derived from vaccinated animals; (iii) the conclusion of conventions on the free circulation of products derived from vaccinated animals between governments, farmers' organisations, consumer organisations, and retail and trade operators.

Pillar 4 ? Science, innovation and research: MEPs recall Parliament's amendment to the 2008 EU budget, which increased appropriations for the development of (marker) vaccines and testing methods. They call on the Commission to make effective use of those increased appropriations.

Parliament points to the need to strengthen the network of Community and national reference laboratories dealing with animal diseases. It emphasises the importance of pooling scientific information on animal health and welfare, as well as the importance of communicating with consumers, in order to ensure that they understand the means by which animal diseases are spread and their enormous impact. It strongly believes that the cloning of animals for economic purposes should be banned.

MEPs are concerned that European standards could be undermined by imports from third countries whose farmers do not face the same obligations with regard to animal health and welfare. The Commission is called upon to investigate ways in which to safeguard against such third-country competition, including consideration of import measures, and by raising the matter for debate in the relevant WTO fora.

Lastly, Parliament points out that the new generation of Free Trade Agreements with India, Korea and the countries of South-East Asia should have a balanced chapter on sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures and animal welfare. The Commission is asked to conclude veterinary protocols with potential export markets, such as that of China.