# Evaluation and assessment of the animal welfare action plan 2006-2010

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the evaluation and assessment of the Animal Welfare Action Plan 2006-2010 in response to the Commission Communication on the subject.

Action plan for 2006-2010: Members welcome the Commission?s decision to focus on a few essential fields of action. They note that the vast majority of the measures contained in the current action plan have been implemented satisfactorily, and that there has been a positive development in the welfare of animals as a result of the action plan 2006-2010. However, EU farmers have not benefited from their efforts on the markets and in international trade and this should be highlighted in the next action plan. The Commission is asked to outline what progress has been made in WTO negotiations towards securing acknowledgment of non-trade-related concerns, which include animal welfare, as well as the extent to which animal welfare issues and standards are being taken into account in the Doha round of WTO negotiations.

Parliament stresses the need to enforce existing rules before drawing up new ones. It draws attention to the importance of effective penalties for non-compliance in all Member States. It emphasises the need for the Commission?s own evaluation exercise, to be undertaken in 2010, to include a thorough analysis of achievements and of the lessons to be learned from potential flaws. Members regret that the Commission has not, during this period, developed a clear communication strategy on the value of products that comply with animal welfare standards, contenting itself with the report presented in October 2009.

They make the following observations on the current action plan:

- there is a need to ensure proper implementation of the existing rules on animal transport in the EU Member States, particularly on the issue of developing a satellite system to monitor such transport. Members want an economic impact analysis on livestock farming to be conducted before any new rules are implemented;
- it would make sense to create incentives for the regional breeding, marketing and slaughter of animals in order to obviate the need for breeding and slaughter animals to be transported over long distances;
- there is a lack of stringent supervision to ensure compliance with Council Directive 1999/22/EC relating to the keeping of wild animals in zoos, and Members urge the Commission to initiate a study on the effectiveness of the Directive in all Member States;
- workable plans are still lacking as regards the implementation of individual provisions of Directive 2008/120/EC on minimum standards for the protection of pigs, and they call for efforts to ensure greater compliance with this Directive;
- the Commission should ensure that the ban on systems lacking cages with nests for laying hens, which enters into force in 2012, is fully complied with.

Parliament acknowledges that the Community regards all animals as sentient beings. Recognising that action has thus far predominantly focused on food-producing animals, it considers that there is a need to bring other categories of animals into the Action Plan 2011 ? 2015.

Action plan for 2011-2015: following on from its 2006 resolution, Parliament urges the Commission therefore to submit a report assessing the implementation of the current plan and the situation concerning animal welfare policy in the EU, on the basis of which it should compile the action plan for animal welfare 2011-2015 backed by the required funding. Any proposals for new legislation should be assessed against the alternative course of fully implementing existing legislation, to avoid unnecessary duplication.

A general European animal welfare law: Members call on the Commission, in the light of Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, to submit, no later than 2014 a reasoned proposal for general animal welfare legislation for the EU. This general animal welfare legislation must include guidelines on responsible keeping of animals, a uniform system for monitoring and for gathering comparable data, as well as requirements relating to the training of animal handlers and provisions establishing the particular responsibilities of animal owners, farmers and keepers. All these requirements should go hand in hand with the provision of resources to producers in order to ensure that they are properly implemented. Parliament considers that European animal welfare legislation should establish a common basic level of animal welfare in the EU, which is the precondition for free competition within the internal market for both domestic products and third-country imports. However, Member States and regions should have the possibility of allowing producers to introduce voluntary systems which are more far-reaching while avoiding distortion of competition and safeguarding the EU?s competitiveness on international markets. Imported products must comply with the same animal welfare requirements as those imposed on European operators. The resolution calls for European farmers to be compensated for the higher production costs associated with higher animal welfare standards, and Members suggest that financing for animal welfare measures be incorporated into the new common agricultural policy support schemes from 2013.

They consider that, before any new legislation is drafted, existing rules should be enforced properly. Parliament points, by way of examples, to the ban on battery cages for hens, the rules on pigs and the rules on animal transport and the rearing of geese and ducks.

A European network of reference centres for animal welfare: Members consider that a European coordinated network for animal welfare should be set up under the existing institutions, and that its work should be based on the general animal welfare legislation proposed above. The coordinating body should become a support tool providing assistance regarding training and education, best practices, consumer communication and assessing policy proposals and their impact on animal welfare. Members stress that the public should be provided with information about animals? needs, since imparting knowledge on the basis of standardised quality criteria is fundamental if people are to be prevented from developing extreme views.

Better enforcement of existing legislation: Parliament calls on the Commission to assess the cost to European producers of animal welfare measures, and to propose in 2012 recommendations to tackle the loss of competitiveness of European livestock farmers. The EU budget must include sufficient appropriations to enable the Commission to perform its monitoring tasks, and to counter the loss of competitiveness faced by producers as a result of the adoption of new animal welfare standards, bearing in mind that the cost of these standards is not passed on in the price received by farmers when they sell their products. The resolution calls on Member States to ensure that any violations of EU animal

welfare rules result in effective penalties. It welcomes the considerable reduction in the use of antibiotics for animals in Member States since their use as a growth promoter was banned in the EU, while still being allowed in the US and some other countries. However, the Commission and Member States must address the growing problem of antibiotic resistance in animals in a responsible way.

Indicators and new techniques: Members call for an assessment and further development of the Animal Welfare Quality Project, and they call on the Commission, on the basis of the final report of the Animal Welfare Quality Project, to propose a trial period for the assessment of animal welfare within the EU using the methods developed in the Project. Lastly, Member States are asked to make better use of the opportunities for applied research beneficial to animal welfare which is available from EU rural development funds and DG Research?s 7th Framework Programme (2007-2013).