

Brussels, 22 June 2009

## **Council adopts Commission proposal improving animal treatment at time of slaughter**

***Conditions for animals at the time of killing will improve considerably as of January 1, 2013, when a regulation, adopted today by the Council and providing for a series of practical measures to ensure animals are humanely treated, enters into force. To simplify existing legislation and bring it into line with food hygiene regulations, the proposal integrates welfare considerations into the design of slaughterhouses and requires the regular monitoring of the efficiency of stunning techniques. Every year, nearly 360 million pigs, sheep, goats and cattle as well as several billion poultry are killed in EU slaughterhouses for their meat. In addition, about 25 million animals are killed for their fur. The control of contagious diseases may also require the culling of thousands to millions of other animals.***

Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou said: *“We have a duty to take care of animals. Their welfare is crucial, not only for ethical reasons but also to ensure animal health and the quality of food. The proposal adopted today by the Council will make a real difference to the way animals are treated at the time of slaughter. This includes minimising distress and avoiding pain throughout the slaughtering process. It also promotes innovation and it provides a level playing field for operators.”*

The new regulation provides that slaughterhouses will have to appoint a specific person responsible for animal welfare and ensure that their staff is properly trained and certified. Each operator will have to develop and implement standard operating procedures for ensuring proper welfare standards in a reliable way. Such a methodology is not new for slaughterhouses as it is already required and in place for food safety (the so-called Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point or HACCP system). Requiring standardized procedures for animal welfare is an innovation of this regulation, which will require operators to evaluate the efficiency of their stunning methods through animal based indicators. After stunning animals will have to be regularly monitored to ensure they do not regain consciousness before slaughter.

Manufacturers of stunning equipment will have to provide instructions for ensuring proper animal welfare and a number of technical standards are updated in view of scientific progress. And Member States will have to create scientific support to provide permanent and competent assistance to official inspectors. The authorities will also be more accountable to the public when they perform mass killings in case of contagious diseases.

**More information can be found at:**

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/slaughter/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/slaughter/index_en.htm)