



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 10 MARS 2010
C/2010/ 1313

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the French Senate for the opinion on the report on options for animal welfare labelling and the establishment of a European Network of Reference Centres for the protection and welfare of animals {COM(2009)584}.

Concerning the specific observations raised in the opinion of the Senate, the Commission would like to provide the following comments:

- In relation to the potential confusion that could be created to the consumers by the possible establishment of an EU animal welfare label it should be noted that the report was based on a feasibility study conducted independently by an external contractor. The study examined several European quality labels including the French Label Rouge and several national and private organic labels. The conclusions suggest that the added value of a possible EU animal welfare labelling scheme in view of existing schemes needs further analyses. The Commission is aware of the added-value of existing labelling schemes and the need to avoid their disruption. This is why it is stated in the Report that "the added value of a possible EU animal welfare labelling scheme in view of existing schemes will need to be carefully assessed".
- With reference to the comments on the European Network of Reference Centres for the protection and welfare of animals (ENRC), many stakeholders have raised concerns about the need for improved coordination and use of existing scientific expertise, to better serve policy-making on animal welfare. These concerns led the Commission to assess the feasibility of different options for establishing an ENRC. The report was based on an external feasibility study and a wide stakeholder consultation which included the European scientific community. The conclusions of the study and the report highlight the advantages of considering a European integrated approach in developing scientific research in this area. This dimension is more relevant today than 35 years ago because of the important developments in international trade in food due to the phenomenon of globalisation.

Monsieur Hubert HAENEL
Président de la Délégation pour l'Union européenne
Sénat de la République de France

The ongoing discussion in the European Parliament and the Council is intended to provide the basis for the Commission's reflections in shaping possible future policy options, and all your comments will be thoroughly considered in these reflections. Any possible future proposals will be followed by an Impact Assessment which will fully consider the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.

I look forward to continuing this fruitful exchange of information.

Yours sincerely,

Maroš Šefčovič

Vice-President of the European Commission