Evaluation of EU Policy on Animal Welfare & Possible Options for the Future

and

Commission Consultation on Future EU Animal Welfare Strategy

Submission by Compassion in World Farming

1. Evaluation Report

Compassion in World Farming welcomes the Evaluation Report and agrees with the vast majority of its recommendations regarding the EU’s future strategy. We particularly support the following recommendations:

- Steps must be taken to improve enforcement
- Consideration should be given to introducing welfare legislation at EU level for dairy cows
- Greater emphasis should be given to EFSA scientific opinions in the development of policy and legislation
- Work should be continued to examine options for the development of animal welfare labelling and consumer information.
- All the recommendations regarding international initiatives
- All the recommendations regarding economic sustainability

2. Policy Options presented by Commission at stakeholder meeting on 31 January 2011

2.1 Key objectives

We agree that key objectives for future EU policy in this area include:

- Improved enforcement
- Optimisation of both animal welfare and the economic sustainability of farmers.

2.2 Policy Options

2.2.1 No action option

We are opposed to this as it would bring progress in this field to an end.

2.2.2 Option A: Non-legislative option
We would be concerned about the use of this Option on its own as we believe that new legislation has an important role to play in the EU’s future strategy for improving animal welfare.

However, we recognise that non-legislative actions are already playing a constructive part – and will increasing continue to so – in advancing animal welfare outcomes. Helpful non-legislative actions include:

**Stakeholders working together to achieve clearly defined objectives**

Examples of this include:

**Austria’s phase out of the beak trimming of laying hens**

Beak trimming was largely phased out in Austria between 2001-05 following an agreement between egg producers, pullet rearers and certification bodies. This agreement was reached following a mediation process involving the key stakeholders.

The mediation process came up with the following agreement. Beak trimming was to be phased out, with an agreed timetable of reduction, but steps were to be put in place to deal with the problem of feather pecking and cannibalism and to give farmers and rearers the confidence to manage hens without beak trimming.

The farmers agreed that:

- Those who continued to beak trim in the first years after the agreement was signed would pay an additional certification fee which would increase annually (this started at 14.5 cents per hen in 2002, rising to 36.3 cents in 2004)
- This would create a fund which would provide an insurance scheme which compensated any farmer who lost birds to cannibalism as a result of keeping birds with intact beaks.

Approximately €85 000 were collected from farmers who continued to beak trim in the interim period and redistributed. However, by now injurious feather pecking that results in mortality is rare.

A project was set up and funded by the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, which provided a helpline which any farmer with injurious pecking problems could phone for emergency help and advice. This advisor was often Dr Niebuhr of the University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna who with his team visited 309 laying and 240 rearing flocks on approximately 400 farms during the course of the project. During the phase-out, the combination of financial incentive, insurance and emergency help was crucial to providing farmers with the confidence to attempt to manage hens with intact beaks.

Dr Niebuhr reports that the phase out of beak trimming was achieved without a long-term increase in feather pecking. Indeed, the measures taken to improve management and environments in order to avoid beak trimming have seen a simultaneous reduction in injurious pecking at the same time as beak-trimming was phased out.


**Calf Stakeholder Forum: UK**

Traditionally many male dairy calves in the UK have been shot soon after birth or sent on excessively long journeys to be reared for veal in other Member States. Compassion in
World Farming and the RSPCA have been successfully working with beef and dairy industry bodies, retailers, the government and academics since 2006 to find humane and economically viable uses for UK male dairy calves. This has led to an increase in the number of these calves being reared for beef in the UK and a fall in the number being exported for veal production. Further details can be found at: http://www.calforum.org.uk/

**Phasing out of surgical castration of pigs**

The European Commission and the Belgian Presidency acting as facilitators brought together representatives of European farmers, meat industry, retailers, scientists, veterinarians and animal welfare NGOs. These stakeholders have drawn up the *European Declaration on alternatives to surgical castration of pigs*. This agrees a two stage phase out of surgical castration. As a first step, from 1 January 2012, surgical castration of pigs, if carried out, shall be performed with prolonged analgesia and/or anaesthesia. As a second step and in the long term, surgical castration of pigs should be abandoned by 1 January 2018.

**The role of food businesses**

Some European food businesses are already playing an important role. Many multiple retailers have stopped selling cage eggs and are raising welfare standards for meat. Crucially, leading foodservice operators such as McDonald’s and food manufacturers such as Unilever are also adopting good standards of animal welfare.

A broader range of retailers, foodservice operators and food manufacturers must now be encouraged to extend their corporate social responsibility policies to animal welfare. There is a strong business case for so doing. Companies that play their part in advancing animal welfare will benefit from an enhanced reputation and may be able to win new customers.

Compassion in World Farming works in partnership with European food businesses encouraging products and initiatives which represent tangible benefits for farm animals. We have run our flagship scheme, the Good Egg Awards, since 2007 and have now launched the brand new Good Farm Animal Welfare Awards. They build on the success of the Good Egg Awards to celebrate a wider range of the positive work being done by leading food retailers, suppliers and producers to ensure that farm animals are reared more humanely.

**Dissemination of best practice**

A fresh approach should be developed to enhance the sharing of best practice between farmers, retailers and food industries. Throughout the EU there are forward looking farmers who are operating to high welfare standards and who have found practical solutions to welfare problems such as the prevention of tail biting in pigs. It is vital that such experience is disseminated widely.

One such initiative is the European Farmers Network (EFN). This is an association of farmers across Europe who believe that higher animal welfare is an essential part of sustainable agriculture. The focus of the EFN is to bring together farmers who are willing to lead by example, demonstrating solutions to a wide audience. For further details see: http://www.europeanfarmersnetwork.org/

**2.2.3 Option B: Legislative option – Framework Law & co-regulation**

We have the following serious reservations about this Option:
• As regards farm animals, it is not clear what a Framework law would add to Council Directive 98/58.

• A Framework law may be written in such broad generalised language that it may neither be enforceable nor communicate clearly to farmers what is expected of them.

• For a Framework law to be effective, implementing rules will need to be made under the Framework law. There is danger that the Parliament will not be properly involved in the making of such implementing rules.

• It is difficult to believe that co-regulation will lead to rules and/or codes that are sufficiently strong to produce welfare outcomes that respond to animals' welfare needs as identified by scientific research. It is, for example, hard to believe that co-regulation would have produced the EU bans on battery cages, sow stalls and veal crates nor the requirements for pigs to be given effective enrichment materials, calves to be given a minimum daily ration of fibrous food and animals to be given rest, food and water during long journeys.

• The adoption of a Framework law may encourage some to call for the existing Directives and Regulations on the protection of animals to be dismantled or diluted. We would be totally opposed to this as these Directives and Regulations make an important contribution to the safeguarding of animal welfare.

2.2.4 Option C: Legislative option – prescriptive legislation

Legislation should be adopted for species – such as dairy cows and farmed fish – that are not currently covered by species specific legislation. The scientific basis for such legislation is available. EFSA has in recent years produced Opinions and Reports on four areas of dairy welfare as well as on the welfare of many farmed fish species.

2.2.5 Option D: Policy mix

We believe that a mix of Options C (prescriptive legislation) and A (non-legislative initiatives) would be best able to deliver the objectives of high standards of welfare combined with economic viability for farmers.

3. Economic sustainability

For the foreseeable future third country producers will be able to out-compete EU livestock farmers on cost, not because their animal welfare standards are poorer (which in many cases they are not) but because they benefit from lower labour, land and feed costs. The Evaluation Report points out that “lower production costs in third countries generally owe more to differences in labour, feed and other costs, than to different animal welfare standards”.

The future for EU farmers lies in competing on the basis of quality. Good animal welfare will increasingly become a marketing advantage rather than an economic burden as the demand by European consumers for animal welfare-friendly products is continuing to grow. Some consumers specifically want high welfare products; others look for quality, viewing good standards of animal welfare – along with provenance, taste, wider sustainability attributes and health – as an important component of food quality.
It is widely assumed that higher welfare farming is inherently less productive and more costly than low welfare industrial production. This assumption should be questioned as it is impeding the introduction of higher welfare systems.

Analysis of industry data shows that in certain cases, such as changing from battery to free range eggs or from sow stalls to group housing, higher welfare farming adds little to the costs of production.

In addition high welfare farming practices can achieve economic benefits as compared with intensive production. In better welfare systems, animals will tend to be healthier. This can lead to savings in terms of reduced expenditure on veterinary medicines and lower mortality rates. The provision of straw and/or additional space for finishing pigs can result in better feed conversion ratios and improved growth rates.

To take another example, it is generally assumed that the route to profitability in the dairy sector lies in the use of high yielding cows despite the health and welfare problems experienced by such herds. However, a recent study shows that that a single-minded focus on high milk yields with insufficient attention being paid to other important economic factors such as fertility, longevity and calf value can undermine dairy herd profitability. This study found that ‘robust’ herds – bred to have lower milk yields but to be healthier - produce higher net margins for farmers than high yielding herds due to lower culling rates, lower heifer replacement costs and higher sale prices for their calves and cull cows.1

Further research is needed to establish win-win scenarios where better welfare can also produce economic benefits.

**Shape of the Common Agricultural Policy after 2013**

The CAP provides a limited degree of support to animal welfare through the cross-compliance provisions, certain of the measures in the Rural Development Regulation (RDR) and Article 68 of the main CAP Regulation (73/2009) which permits support to be given to farmers for practising enhanced animal welfare standards. However, the Member States make only limited use of these provisions. Wider and more ambitious use should be made of the RDR measures and Article 68 to develop higher standards of welfare.

At present the cross-compliance mechanism is insufficiently rigorous. For example, a 2010 FVO report on France found that reduction of payments for cross-compliance was not being successfully used to promote compliance with animal welfare legislation. One pig farm had its CAP payment reduced by just 1% in respect of breaches of the welfare legislation. Another farm incurred no reduction in its payments despite breaches of the legislation. On both farms the breaches in question were still present during the visit of the FVO.

We believe that:

- reductions in payments in the event of breaches of cross-compliance rules must be sufficient to be dissuasive.
- the animal welfare legal standards covered by cross-compliance should be extended to all existing animal welfare legislation (at present cross-compliance only applies to certain aspects of the welfare legislation).

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• for animal species for which there are as yet no EU legal standards (e.g. cattle, sheep, ducks, geese), cross-compliance should be required with the Council of Europe recommendations.

**Public procurement**

Public procurement should play a bigger role in advancing standards of farm animal welfare. The public sector is responsible for the provision of food and meals in schools, hospitals, care homes, prisons, the armed forces and staff canteens. Public sector bodies should, when procuring food and meals, use their buying power to help deliver good standards of animal welfare.

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