THE NEXT STEPS

The report has presented for the first time a range of issues concerning animal welfare labelling and communication, and the possible establishment of a European Network of Reference Centres for the protection and welfare of animals. Based on the report, the inter-institutional discussion will provide the basis for the future Commission’s reflections in shaping policy options in this area and to react to people’s concerns.

SPECIFIC INTERNET WEBSITES

- Q-Porkchains project: http://www.q-porkchains.org
- Welfare Quality project: http://www.welfarequality.net
- Farmland, the interactive game for children on farmed animals: www.farmland-thegame.eu

The Commission Report on options for animal welfare labelling and the establishment of a European Network of Reference Centres for the protection and welfare of animals. On 28 October 2009, the European Commission adopted a Report in which it outlines a series of options for animal welfare labelling, to facilitate an in-depth political debate with the other institutions. The overall policy goal in this area is to make it easier for consumers to identify and choose welfare-friendly products, and thereby give an economic incentive to producers and EU citizens to improve the welfare of animals.

WHY THE COMMISSION REPORT? - THE NEED FOR MORE INFORMATION

- In 2007, the European Commission launched a Study to determine the best options for animal welfare information. A number of 110 representative organisations of producers, consumers and farmers from all over Europe replied to a comprehensive questionnaire.
- In order to support animal welfare labelling, facilitate the development of indicators for animal welfare and coordinate research in the area of good husbandry practices, the Commission looked at different options for the possible establishment of a European Network of Reference Centres for Animal Protection and Welfare.
- The results of the feasibility study showed a need to deepen the discussion on how to improve information on animal welfare and fine-tune the most appropriate tools. With this Report, the Commission seeks to facilitate an in-depth political discussion, notably with the European Parliament and the Council, in light of the feasibility study, and to obtain clear views on the next steps.
- Although the report does not endorse any of the options outlined, it identifies those which are considered to be the most feasible today. Harmonised requirements for voluntary animal welfare claims, for example, constitute one such option to support transparent information to consumers. Another is a voluntary Community Animal Welfare Label open for all to use, provided they meet the criteria.

1 The Commission adopted a Report addressed to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 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 final).

2 The Commission launched a “Study to assess the feasibility of different options for indicating animal welfare-related information on products of animal origin and for establishing a Community Reference Centre for Animal Protection and Welfare” in December 2007.
**People’s opinion on animal welfare-related information available today:**

- there are problems to understand animal welfare standards/claims
- there is a lack of consumer awareness of logos/labels

Currently, the three main drivers of animal welfare-relevant labelling schemes are:

- food law has been undergoing major changes in the EU in recent years;
- certification has become a widely accepted instrument for regulating food markets;
- consumer demands support animal welfare labelling.

There is a common understanding that organic labelling can be considered a good example of how a harmonised scheme contributed to develop a former niche market into a mass market.

The report points out that there is no harmonised system of animal welfare standards for labelling purposes. Consumers are unable to understand and differentiate the welfare standards promoted under existing voluntary schemes.