

EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare

WORK PROGRAMME for

European Union Reference Centre for Animal Welfare

For Poultry and other small farmed animals

PERIOD: 2020

Version 2.1.
date: 20/12/2019

CONTACT DETAILS

Agence Nationale de Sécurité Sanitaire de l'Alimentation, de l'Environnement et du Travail / French
Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety
(ANSES)
France

EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare

TABLE OF CONTENT

INTRODUCTION.....	3
ACTIVITIES.....	5
1. COORDINATED ASSISTANCE.....	5
2. ANIMAL WELFARE INDICATORS, METHODS FOR THE ASSESSMENT AND METHODS OF IMPROVEMENT	9
3. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL STUDIES	11
4. TRAINING COURSES.....	13
5. DISSEMINATION RESEARCH FINDINGS AND INNOVATIONS	14

ABBREVIATIONS

ANIS: Department of ANImal Science

ANIWHA: Animal Healthand Welfare ERA-Net (European Research Area Network)

ANSES : Agence Nationale de Sécurité Sanitaire de l'Alimentation, de l'Environnement et du Travail (French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety)

DG SANTE: Directorate General for Health and Food Safety of the European Commission

EAAP: European federation of animal science

EFSA: European Food Safety Authority

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

IRTA: Institut de Recerca I Tecnologia Agroalimentàries (Institute of Agrifood Research and Technology)

IZSLER: Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale della Lombardia e dell'Emilia Romagna (Zooprohylactic Experimental Institute of Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna)

SOP: Standard Operating Procedure

WPSA: World Poultry Science Association

EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare

INTRODUCTION

The activities will take into account the provision of Article 20 of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing which defines the role of "scientific support" at national level.

In the context of this work programme:

The "Centre" means the European Union Reference Centre for Animal Welfare for Poultry and other small farmed animals.

"Open norm" means a requirement (or a set of requirements) for which there is no unequivocal compliance criteria either qualitative ("yes/no") or quantitative (maximum or/and minimum values).

"Animal welfare indicator" means a method to measure the level of the welfare of animals based upon performance criteria, i.e. which includes unequivocal compliance criteria either qualitative ("yes/no") or quantitative (maximum or/and minimum values).

During the first year, the activities of this second Centre will focus on the welfare of poultry. Rabbits and other small-farmed animals will be dealt only under Activity 1 (coordinated assistance), if specific queries on these productions arise. The EU Commission together with the Centre has identified five priority areas:

1. Welfare of broilers on farm.
2. Alternative rearing systems for laying hens.
3. Electrical waterbath stunning for broilers and turkeys.
4. Transport to slaughter of broilers, turkeys and spent hens (i.e. laying hens at the end of their production cycle).
5. On farm killing of spent hens.

The activities described in the work programme will be targeted initially (year 2020) around the three first priority areas (figure 2).

Functioning of the Centre

The Centre will be working for the EU Commission and member state competent authorities, policy workers and their supporting bodies (science, training, communication). Figure 1 shows the proposed organisation of The Centre:

EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare

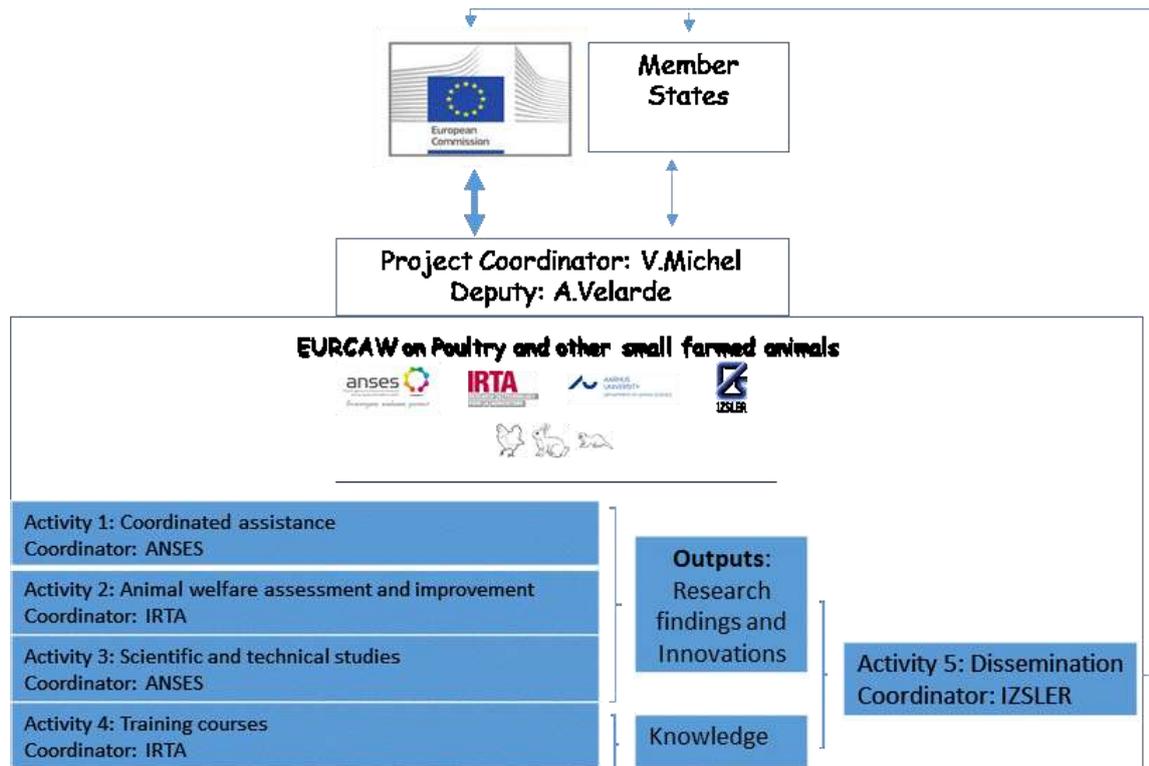


Figure 1: The Centre organisation

The Centre has five main areas of activity: 1) Coordinated assistance, 2) Animal welfare indicators, 3) Scientific and technical studies, 4) training courses and 5) dissemination of research findings and innovations. During the first year the following sub-activities will be carried out within in each activity. Each activity includes one to three sub-activities (in the next 2-years period each activity will contain three distinct sub-activities).

1. COORDINATED ASSISTANCE
 - 1.1. Network building
 - 1.2. Central contact point for technical assistance
 - 1.3. Development of 2021-22 work programme
2. ANIMAL WELFARE INDICATORS
 - 2.1. Identification of relevant welfare indicators
 - 2.2. Methods to improve the welfare assessment of animals
3. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL STUDIES
 - 3.1. Existing scientific and technical knowledge
 - 3.2. Scientific and technical studies
4. TRAINING COURSES
 - 4.1. Evaluation of existing training courses
5. DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND INNOVATIONS
 - 5.1. Development of the 'The centre' website

EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare

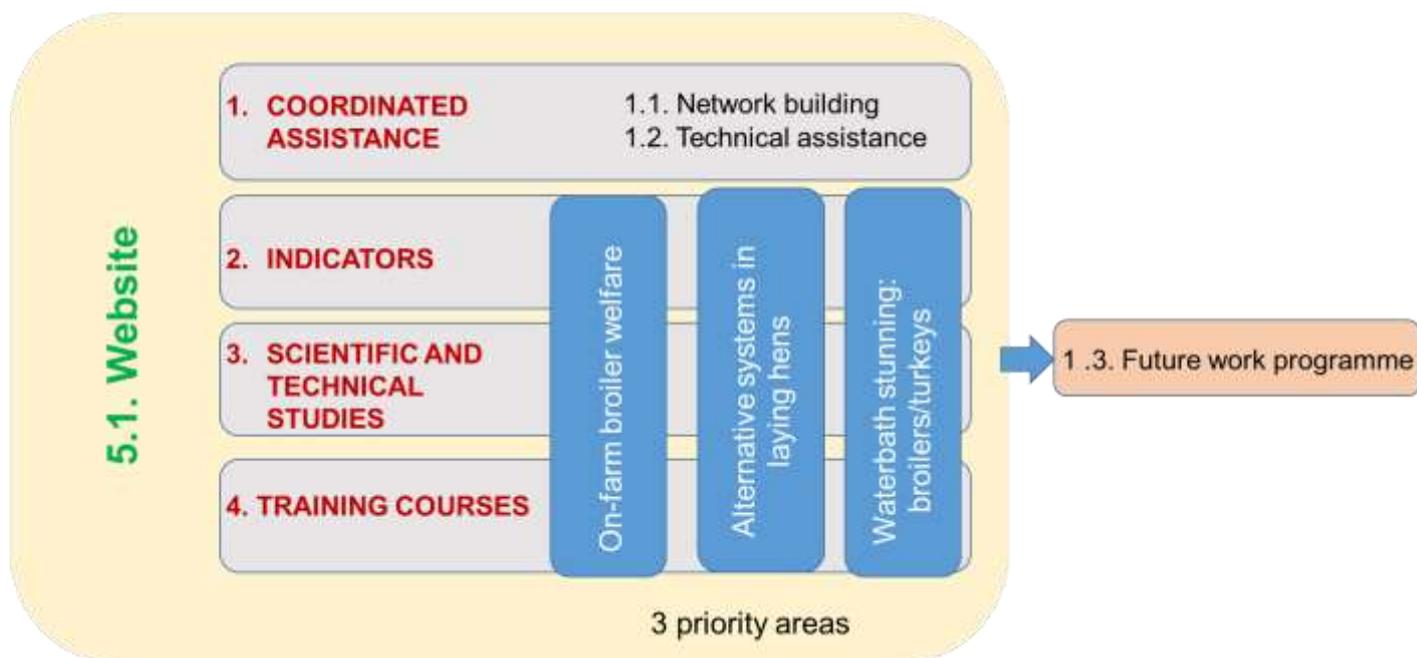


Figure 2: The Centre's organisation to address the three priority areas.

Definition of staff categories:

	Staff category	Definition
1	Administrative Assistant	Secretary and administrative staff
2	IT project manager	Master in information technology
3	Research assistant	Master of veterinarian degree or engineering degree
4	Junior Scientist	PhD with less than 10 years' experience
5	Senior Scientist	PhD with more than 10 years' experience (associate professor)

EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare

ACTIVITIES

Regulation (EU) 2017/625 - Article 96:

The European Union reference centre for animal welfare shall be responsible for the following supporting tasks insofar as they are included in the reference centres' annual or multiannual work programme that have been established in conformity with the objectives and priorities of the relevant work programme adopted by the Commission in accordance with Article 36 of Regulation (EU) No 652/2014:

1

COORDINATED ASSISTANCE

Article 96 (a): Providing scientific and technical expertise within the scope of their mission including, where appropriate in the form of coordinated assistance, to relevant national support networks and bodies in the area governed by the rules on the welfare requirements for animals.

Sub-activity 1.1: Network building (ANSES)

Objectives:

1. To develop collaboration with Competent Authorities, National Reference Centres, other supporting bodies and existing welfare networks.
2. To identify, across Competent Authorities, main needs and expectations regarding the Centre.

Description:

Three main tasks will be conducted:

- 1) Identification of interlocutors within Member States, the Commission, National Reference Centres, other supporting bodies and already existing EU networks in order to create a dialogue and collaboration system. The centre related to pigs welfare and DG SANTE will be approached in order to identify competent authorities and their supporting bodies. This will assist the establishment of the list of bodies allowed to request technical assistance from the Centre.

The Centre will contact the competent authorities of each member state to present the Centre, the objectives and the first year activity programme. The Centre will also liaise with existing national reference centres for animal welfare or similar bodies. It will first contact the four existing national reference centres for animal welfare (FR, SE, FI, IT) with the aim of presenting the objectives, organisation and work programme, discuss the organisation and areas of work, and identify collaboration and tasks already performed at national level. Through the EU network meetings, the Centre will identify other bodies acting as national reference centre in other countries and will liaise with them for the same purpose.

- 2) Organisation of an EU network meeting in France (Autumn 2020)

The priority is given to gather all competent authorities in one single meeting in order to help exchange between member states, collaboration, sharing of experience and common views about future implementation of welfare legislation.

The main topics of the first meeting will be the presentation of the Centre activities under the current work programme and its functioning; poultry welfare legislation implementation at national levels; the

EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare

functioning of the coordinated network, the work plan of the Centre, problems encountered in each country during welfare inspections, animal welfare improvement, etc. The discussions exchanged at these meetings will be useful for: 1) collaboration on the ongoing work programme and 2) the elaboration of the work programme for the following period (2021-2022).

3) Involvement and participation in existing networks and reference centres where relevant, such as:

- the centre for pigs. A strong relationship will be established to harmonise the functioning of both centres.
- The network of contact points for Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 (on stunning and killing of animals), coordinated by EFSA: Participations in the meetings (where relevant).
- The network of National Contact Points for Animal Welfare coordinated by EFSA: Participations in the meetings (where relevant).
- The network of contact points for Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 (on transport of animals), coordinated by unit F2 of DG SANTEs: Participations in the meetings (where relevant).
- The EU platform on animal welfare: Participations in the meetings.
- COST actions: Participation in the Cost action related to poultry and small animals' welfare.
- Scientific societies such as the working group IX "Poultry welfare and management" of WPSA, EAAP,....

The centre will present its activities and results, answer technical questions if requested and exchange information to prioritise the work. Technical questions raised in several member states can be identified via this channel as well as scientific work areas for the Centre.

Expected Output and timing:

1. Report with the list of competent authorities, national reference centres, supporting bodies allowed to ask for technical expertise: M6
2. One EU network meeting with at least one representative of each Member State, the organizing person; the coordinator and deputy from the Centre: M10
3. Reporting of the EU network meeting available one month after the meeting: M11.

Sub-activity 1.2: Central contact point for technical assistance (ANSES)

Objectives:

1. To open an e-mail account, available from the website, for scientific and technical questions asked by competent authorities of member states, commission and supporting bodies and to respond to queries.
2. To define a method and organisation for the coordinated assistance of the queries addressed to the Centre in order that questions from competent authorities can be treated correctly and efficiently.
3. To produce a FAQ-section on the website ensuring public access, where frequently asked questions and replies are stored.

Description:

The main task will be to organise a technical and scientific coordinated assistance service for the competent authorities, national reference centres (or equivalent) and the Commission Directorate-General for health and food safety (DG SANTE) in a way to reach the maximum efficiency rapidly.

A website will be developed in strict collaboration with the reference centre on the welfare of pigs, with a specific contact point and an institutional e-mail address where queries can be sent.

Procedures and quality SOP will be created to define the rules for submitting a query to the Centre: eligible institutes or bodies that can send a query, information to provide, deadline, format of the answer. When these procedures will be disseminated to target bodies and will be available on the website, the technical

EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare

assistance will start. When a query will be sent, the manager of the activity will:

- Open a dossier with date of receipt and identity of the requester
- Register the original query with related information
- Assess the admissibility of the request:
- Identify, if the request is admissible, the experts within the Centre with the best capacities (knowledge and expertise) to answer.

Next step will be to contact the relevant experts of the Centre. Once they agree to answer the query and a deadline, an e-mail will be sent to the requestor with the expected deadline to answer the query. In the case of a non-admissible query, the requestor will be informed by email with the reasons.

The requestor will be informed on the status of the query (accepted/ rejected and for what reasons) within five working days. If the query is accepted, the requestor will be informed on the deadline to receive the answer within maximum five working days where no other specialist outside the Centre needs to be contacted.

The queries and answers will be assessed and when pertinent put on the FAQ section so that they can be available to all members states. No information of the requestor nor the experts will be provided, since the answer will be delivered on behalf of the Centre.

At the end of a one-year period, there will be an internal review of the functioning of the service based on the experience of the first queries. Re-adjustment will be performed in order to improve efficiency.

Interaction with the centre for the welfare of pigs will ensure synergy and similar functioning to make the submission process easier for end-users.

Expected Output and timing:

1. A specific email contact point for queries accessible from the website: M6
2. Procedures for work-flow of the coordinated assistance available for competent authorities and on the website: M6
3. List of queries/answers available on the website: M11
4. Quality scheme and internal review short report on the performance of the system: number of queries treated/queries submitted; average time for answering submissions, average time for sending the answer to the requestors: M11

Sub-activity 1.3: Development of 2021-2022 work programme (IRTA)

Objectives:

1. To identify the priority areas for the 2021-2022 work programme.
2. To develop a work programme for the period 2021-2022.

Description:

The current programme covers the year 2020. During this period, the work programme for the following two-years period (2021-2022) will be developed. The first objective will be to identify the priority areas and target species. This involves missions to organise meetings with the Commission, competent authorities, national reference centres, supporting bodies and existing networks. Some of these meetings can be carried out in the framework of sub-activity 1.1, but others might require additional interviews. Other aspects such as the questions for technical assistances and the outcomes of the first work programme will be also considered.

In the first-year programme described here, the effort is targeted mainly on organisation and functioning of technical assistance (activity 1) and development of activities 2 and 3, mainly in the field of poultry. The

EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare

next period will be more dedicated to refine and optimise functioning of activity 1 and further development of activities 4 and 5 on training and dissemination.

Regarding the topics of interest gathered during meetings and discussion with national reference centres and other supporting bodies, some work topics concerning other poultry besides chickens and turkeys, rabbits or fur animals might be prioritised for the next period.

Expected Output and timing:

1. Final work programme delivered to DG SANTE: M11

Great effort will be put on **activity 1** from the beginning with an important involvement of the budget mainly used for staff, travelling and the organisation of meetings (competent authority representatives' expenses to attend will be covered by the Centre).

EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare

2

ANIMAL WELFARE INDICATORS, METHODS FOR THE ASSESSMENT AND METHODS OF IMPROVEMENT

Article 96 (b): Providing scientific and technical expertise for the development and application of the animal welfare indicators referred to in point (e) of Article 21(8);

The Article 21 (8) (e) refers to possible rules on the cases and conditions where official controls to verify compliance with animal welfare requirements may include the use of specific animal welfare indicators based on measurable performance criteria, and the design of such indicators on the basis of scientific and technical evidence.

Article 96 (c): Developing or coordinating the development of methods for the assessment of the level of welfare of animals and of methods for the improvement of the welfare of animals.

Sub-activity 2.1: Relevant animal welfare indicators (IRTA)

Objectives:

1. To list and validate relevant animal welfare indicators.
2. To identify gaps of knowledge regarding relevant animal welfare indicators.

Description:

In order to harmonise the interpretation of animal welfare requirements and to verify compliance with EU poultry welfare legislation, there is a need for standardised relevant welfare indicators. The Centre will compile a list of existing indicators for the assessment of welfare in the context of the three priority areas:

1. Assessment of broiler welfare on farm and systems for automatic collection of data.
2. Assessment of laying hen welfare in all systems but with a focus on alternative rearing systems, providing specific indicators to quantify the impact of different alternative rearing systems on hens welfare.
3. Assessment of consciousness after water bath stunning of broilers and turkeys: development of methods compatible with the existing systems, including automatic recording systems.

Indicators will be obtained from indicator schemes, checklists and guidelines already used by official inspectors in different member states, publications from support bodies and other sources such as scientific studies. The compiled overview will include animal-based (i.e. health and behaviour) and resource-based (e.g. management and facilities) indicators. The indicators proposed will be measurable performance criteria either qualitative (e.g. presence/absence) or quantitative (e.g. percentage of animals present in an area, having a specific lesion or performing a specific behaviour).

In order to better understand difficulties and constraints in the application of checklists and guidelines already used by official inspectors in different member states, where required, missions will be carried out to perform field testing. The results will be shared and discussed with official inspectors to ascertain if they meet their expectations.

The Centre will:

1. Compile and assess the validity and reliability of these indicators (based upon measurable performance criteria). Evaluation will be done based on scientific publications and practical experience. The indicators will be evaluated with respect to their relevance regarding animal welfare assessment and compliance with EU legislation.

EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare

2. Assess feasibility and identify constraints in the on-field use of these selected indicators based on practical experience of personnel and organisations concerned (i.e. time consumption)

Where indicators cannot be validated or are missing, The Centre will propose in the following work programmes scientific and technical studies (see activity 3) to develop or validate these indicators (based upon measurable performance criteria) for policy purposes (i.e. collecting data to estimate the level of compliance).

Expected Output and timing:

Regarding the three priority areas:

1. List of relevant welfare indicators: M6
2. Description of the considered validated indicators among the identified ones and associated methodology: M11

About other priority areas:

3. Identification of gap of knowledge regarding missing/not validated indicators and prioritisation of future topics to work on during the next period: M11

Sub-activity 2.2: Methods to improve animal welfare assessment (ANIS)

Objectives:

Develop and/or coordinate the development and improvement of methods for the assessment of the level of animal welfare.

1. To identify the legislative requirements which are the most difficult to implement.
2. To propose better methods of animal welfare assessment (better validity, reliability and/or feasibility for measurable performance criteria), for those most difficult to implement.

Description:

Competent authorities and policy makers will be visited and asked for bottlenecks in the implementation of legislation, with specific emphasis on the three first priority areas:

- Assessment of welfare of broiler chickens on farm (through indicators used on farm or at slaughterhouse).
- Assessment of welfare of laying hens in non-cage systems.
- Improvement of turkey and broiler chicken protection at the slaughterhouse by validating parameters that allow all animals to be unconscious before neck cutting and assessing the state of consciousness of animals.

Strategies developed to improve the welfare assessment of these categories of animals will be reviewed in literature, guidelines and recommendations already in use in some member states. Farm and slaughterhouse visits will be required for this purpose.

Indicators developed in sub-activity 2.1 will be used in the proposed method to assess the improvement of animal welfare. For example, the Centre will provide tools and methods to assess the impact of different housing systems alternative to cages on the welfare of layers. Toolboxes for inspectors will be provided with the key points to check specifically in these systems.

Where no methods of improvement are available, proposals for scientific and technical studies will be made for the following work programmes (see activity 3).

Expected Output and timing:

EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare

1. List and description of improved methods for the assessment of welfare: M11
2. A list of topics for scientific and technical studies in the next work programme (activity 3): M11

3

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL STUDIES

Article 96 (d): Carrying out scientific and technical studies on the welfare of animals used for commercial or scientific purposes;

Sub-activity 3.1: Existing scientific and technical knowledge (IRTA)

Objectives

1. To provide scientific and technical expertise on the official controls and the implementation of the legislation related to poultry.
2. To identify the gaps of knowledge and the bottlenecks-regarding legislation and formulate different topics for scientific and technical studies.

Description:

For efficient official controls, inspectors should acquire the scientific and technical knowledge to understand the rationale behind the requirements of the legislation. This will allow inspectors to better monitor implementation of the legal requirements and support them in front of farmers, drivers and slaughterhouse staff. This is particularly important when dealing with 'open norms' in the legislation. A review document on the scientific and technical knowledge related to the EU welfare legislation will help them to better understand the required outcomes and provide arguments in discussions with those whose operation is inspected.

This sub-activity will review scientific and technical knowledge in following the three priority welfare areas.

1. Welfare of broilers on farm. Scientific knowledge to support compliance through indicators on farm and at slaughter in broilers. State of the art of the automation in data collection, recording and analysis.
2. Assessment of alternative systems in laying hens. Description of alternative systems, main technical aspects, and welfare parameters to allow objective assessment.
3. Water bath stunning for broilers and turkeys: i) monitoring effect of electrical parameters on bird consciousness before and after neck cutting; ii) exploring the possibility of an automatic systems for the monitoring of consciousness and way to avoid conscious animals being kept on the processing line.

Expected Output and timing:

1. Three review reports about the gaps of knowledge and the identification of the most critical "open norms" regarding the three priority areas: M11.

Sub-activity 3.2: Scientific and technical studies (IZLER)

Objectives

To develop in the framework of the Centre, some studies related to the assessment of broiler welfare on farm and water-bath stunning systems for broilers.

Description:

EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare

In this sub-activity, the partners are carrying out studies related to areas of concern described below after having checked that these issues have not been already investigated at member states level. The budget of the Centre will be used to complement the funding of these technical studies (from EU and national sources) but the work will be held in the frame of the Centre and therefore the results available for the targeted bodies.

The reference centre will carry out projects in:

Welfare of broilers:

Farm level

- Identify and validate welfare indicators in broilers to use for inspection in different range of housing system (like transect method, which is a global method of inspection without touching the animal, walking through the barn). For that, ANSES will provide experiments on broiler chicken with experimental facility of large (commercial) scale to compare welfare of broilers on different housing systems (comparing indoor with/without access to winter garden (e.g. with different genetics and densities).
- Adapt to broilers an integrated informatic system named Classyfarm, created by IZSLER (so far for swine and cattle). The Classyfarm system has been developed for data collection acquisition, recording and analyzing of indicators relative to the following areas; animal welfare on farm, lesion scores collected at slaughter, antimicrobial use (AMU) and biosecurity. The Classyfarm system provides a final score for each of the above mentioned areas, allowing a comparison of the farms results with average results at national, regional and local level.

Slaughter

- Testing the use of the Classyfarm system for data collection at slaughter and data analysis. If feasible the refinement of the system will take advantage of results already obtained by the ANIWHHA during the project “integrated EU Mobile Broiler Data –optimising broiler chicken Management, health and welfare through use of integrated EU data”.

Water-bath equipment and alternative stunning systems for broilers

- Studies of key parameters (frequency and current) to induce effective stunning of animals (high rate of efficacy). This study aims to identify, within the legal framework, optimal combinations of current and frequency to induce immediate unconsciousness until onset of death due to bleeding. IRTA will visit 5 slaughterhouses with water-bath equipment. Different combinations of current and frequency within the legislation will be assessed and the unconsciousness of the animals monitored before and after bleeding. These data will be integrated with other data already collected by the members of the consortium to provide global recommendations.

Expected Output and timing: M11.

1. Report with the view of producing practical guidelines for welfare assessment by the competent authorities during inspections.
2. Report on a prototype of an integrated informatic system for data collection acquisition, recording and analysing of indicators collected in broiler farms.
3. Report on a prototype of an integrated informatic system for data collection acquisition, recording and analysing of indicators collected at slaughterhouses related to broiler welfare on farm
4. Report on i) specification of key parameters for better water bath stunning efficiency in broiler and ii) animal based measure to assess consciousness state of broiler after water bath stunning.

EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare

Article 96 (e): conducting training courses for staff of the national scientific support networks or bodies, for staff of the competent authorities and for experts from third countries;

Sub-activity 4.1: Evaluation of existing training courses for poultry welfare assessment (IRTA)

Objectives:

1. To review and assess the existing training courses and materials in use at BTSF, member state or other levels (e.g. national and regional training courses)

Description:

At present, the BTSF (Better Training for Safer Food) courses funded by DG SANTE provide for training of member state representatives. There are specific BTSF for broilers and laying hens, which include on-farm, transport and slaughter. Other poultry species are not covered by BTSF activities up to now. The legal framework is also very different, the control activities and thus the needs of national competent authorities can be expected to be very different between countries. On the other hand, member states are also producing training courses for their official controls that might be also practical for others member states. The Centre will evaluate the objectives, content and methodology for these existing training courses and materials used at BTSF, member state or other levels. The evaluation will focus on welfare in the context of the three priority areas: broiler welfare assessment, laying hens welfare assessment and improvement in alternative systems and electrical waterbath stunning efficiency for broilers chicken and turkeys.

Expected Output and timing:

1. A description of existing courses and materials for poultry including information on objectives, content and training materials as well as an identification of the gaps that the Centre could possibly address in the future: M11

EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare

5

DISSEMINATION RESEARCH FINDINGS AND INNOVATIONS

Article 96(d): disseminating research findings and technical innovations and collaborating with Union research bodies in the fields within the scope of their mission.

Sub-activity 5.1 Development of the Centre website (ANSES)

Objectives:

1. To create a website with relevant information on poultry and welfare enforcement, with particular focus on the three priority areas, which enables sharing of information among the target groups (Competent Authorities, Welfare policy workers and supporting bodies).
2. To set up a dissemination framework (i.e. forums, newsletters, FAQ-section) based on the needs of the target groups.

Description:

Information on poultry welfare assessment from the Centre should be easily available from a website. This includes welfare indicators developed in activity 2, scientific knowledge developed in activity 3 and training activities proposed in activity 4. The website should enable as well the sharing of knowledge and interpretation of welfare requirements of legislations between member states.

A website prototype will be designed to structure this information fulfilling target groups expectations. The Centre will take profit of the experience of the centre on the welfare of pigs with the development and functioning of their own website for disseminating purposes. The Centre website will follow exactly the same structure as the one for the pigs in order that the use is easy for targeted bodies.

The website will ensure contacts to and from the Centre. It should contain:

- Information on the Centre
- Information on the key topic areas and implementation of the legislation.
- Open website for question and answers (FAQ).
- Information on tools to assess poultry welfare

Expected Output and timing:

1. An attractive and informative website fulfilling the needs for disseminating research findings and innovations: M11
2. FAQ area with available information such as public responses to queries and specific topics of interest identified during networking with competent authorities, their supporting bodies and different welfare groups.