

Animal health law

The proposal for a regulation on animal health, presented by the European Commission in May 2013 as part of a wider package of initiatives on the agri-food chain, aims at integrating and simplifying EU legislation related to the control of transmissible animal diseases. Following trilogue negotiations in view of an early second reading agreement, a compromise has been reached and a vote in plenary is scheduled for the March session.

Context

Transmissible diseases in animals (for instance foot-and-mouth disease or avian influenza) can have a significant impact on the economy, food safety and also (if transmissible to humans) public health. As they can spread regardless of borders, coordinated action beyond national level is necessary. EU legislation regulating this area developed over decades and has grown into a very large number of acts. In an [evaluation](#) of EU policy actions on animal health it was assessed that the current system functions well, but lacks a comprehensive approach and a coherent strategy for preventing and controlling diseases. The subsequently developed 2007-2013 [Animal Health Strategy](#) set the objective of adopting a 'single regulatory framework for animal health'.

Commission proposal

In line with this objective, the Commission presented in May 2013 a [proposal](#) for a regulation on animal health. Intended as the 'single regulatory framework', the regulation would lay down basic rules and general principles; detailed provisions are to be set out at a later stage, by Commission delegated and implementing acts. Most of the current rules would be taken over and adapted, and most of the existing acts repealed.

What will change

Among other things, the new regulation introduces the listing, prioritisation and categorisation of diseases. The diseases to be covered will be listed in an annex (five being named in the basic text) and categorised into groups according to the measures that should be applied to them. Measures for emerging diseases are also provided for. The responsibilities and tasks of all actors dealing with animal health will be set out clearly. Stronger focus is placed on disease prevention, with more emphasis on biosecurity on farms and a framework for using vaccination. Other rules, such as on registration, approval, traceability, movements or notification, will not change substantially, but will be consolidated.

Title of the proposal

One of the changes proposed by the Parliament and supported by the Council was to amend the title of the Regulation to reflect more precisely its scope and content. The title agreed during trilogue negotiations reads: 'Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health ("Animal Health Law")'.

[Parliament's position](#) at first reading was adopted on 15 April 2014. After trilogue negotiations, [Council's position](#) at first reading was formally confirmed on 14 December 2015. At its meeting on 23 February, the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development adopted its [recommendation for second reading](#) unanimously. The second-reading vote by Parliament is due to take place during the March plenary session. Adoption by the Parliament of the Council's position at first reading without amendments will complete the legislative procedure.



Further details on the proposal and on the legislative process can be found in the EPRS 'EU Legislation in progress' [briefing](#).

