



24.7.2019

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition No 0076/2019 by Manuela Giacomini (Italy), on behalf of Animal Welfare Foundation, on blood farms and Pregnant Mare's Serum Gonadotropin (PMSG)

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner calls on the Parliament to promote a ban on the import of Pregnant Mare's Serum Gonadotropin (PMSG) from South America following the results of investigations, evidencing inhuman treatment of mares in Uruguay and Argentina. PMSG is used to produce veterinary medicines to increase fertility of farm animals in the EU, particularly pigs. The petitioner claims that blood farms in South America do not respect the provisions of Regulation No. 142/2011 on animal by-products as regards import, transit and export of animal by-products and of derived products. Mares are not subject to veterinary controls and suffer from poor health condition. National authorities do not provide sufficient controls and audits of the farms. The petitioner also points out that use of PMSG causes deplorable effects on the health and welfare of European sows and piglets and that alternative means to induce pigs' fertility exist. The petitioner stresses that 2 million citizens signed an AVAAZ petition to ban the imports of cruelly produced PMSG.

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 7 May 2019. Information requested from Commission under Rule 227(6).

3. Commission reply, received on 24 July 2019

The Commission is aware of and concerned about the possible mistreatment of horses farmed for blood serum production in certain South American countries. The Commission has been in regular contact with the petitioner on this issue and has repeatedly replied to his correspondence.

As recalled in the petition, the Commission has expressed its position in its reply to written question E-0836/2017. In that reply, the Commission in particular highlighted that:

“For imports into the European Union, EU trade policy shall respect the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Any animal welfare standards imposed by the EU on trading partners would need to comply with WTO rules (e.g. requirements on non-discrimination between countries where the same conditions prevail, transparency and standards based on science) and would need to rely on controls or certification in the exporting third country.

The animal welfare standards ‘Use of animals in research and education’ of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) cover mares kept for the purpose of producing a medicinal product and provide reference guidance to OIE member countries”.

Since then, in October 2018, the Commissioner responsible for Health and Food Safety had a bilateral meeting with the Minister of Agriculture of Argentina in the margins of the G20 Health Ministerial meeting in Argentina. During this meeting, he reiterated the Commission’s concern and noted the necessity to take measures to ensure that horses involved in the blood serum production are spared any avoidable pain, distress and suffering. He also highlighted the importance of maintaining a regular exchange of information about the welfare of horses in Argentina.

EU animal welfare legislation applies only within the territory of the EU and there is no legal base to impose EU animal welfare provisions on third countries as conditions for imports of animal by-products or derived products.

Conclusion

While the Commission does not intend to ban imports of Pregnant Mares Serum Gonadotropin (PMSG), it believes that South American countries should ensure a satisfactory level of implementation of the internationally agreed animal welfare principles and standards of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).