



TEXTS ADOPTED

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A new animal welfare strategy for 2016-2020

European Parliament resolution of 26 November 2015 on a new animal welfare strategy for 2016-2020 (2015/2957(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
 - having regard to Article 43 of the TFEU on the functioning of the common agricultural policy and the common fisheries policy,
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 15 February 2012 on the European Union Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012-2015 (COM(2012)0006),
 - having regard to its resolution of 4 July 2012 on the European Union Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012-2015¹,
 - having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas EU legislation in the field of animal welfare contributes to a level playing field within the Union and thereby to a well-functioning internal market;
- B. whereas European citizens have a strong interest in animal welfare and wish to be able to make more informed choices as consumers;
- C. whereas national rules on animal welfare must not be contrary to the principles of the EU single market;
- D. whereas animal welfare is interrelated with animal and public health;
- E. whereas, owing to their complexity and differing interpretations, EU and national rules on animal welfare create legal uncertainty and can put producers in certain Member States at a serious competitive disadvantage;
- F. whereas the level of animal welfare in the Union is one of the highest in the world;

¹ OJ C 349 E, 29.11.2013, p. 62.

- G. whereas animal welfare should be further improved on the basis of prevailing scientific findings and with due regard for the efficiency and competitiveness of agricultural livestock husbandry; whereas coherent animal welfare standards across the EU would benefit from a definition of good animal husbandry;
- H. whereas a high level of animal welfare is important to ensure sustainability, although it entails investments and additional operating costs that are not distributed proportionately throughout the food chain;
1. Urges the Commission to implement, without delay, the points outstanding from the European Union Strategy on the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012-2015;
 2. Urges the Commission to evaluate the existing strategy and to draw up a new and ambitious strategy for the protection and welfare of animals for the 2016-2020 period in order to build on the work of the previous strategy and ensure the continuation of a framework for delivering high animal welfare standards across the Member States;
 3. Calls on the Commission to ensure an updated, comprehensive and clear legislative framework which fully implements the requirements of Article 13 of the TFEU; reiterates, however, that under no circumstances must animal welfare levels be lowered on account of administrative simplification; stresses that these objectives are not mutually exclusive;
 4. Stresses that Article 13 of the TFEU is of general application and horizontal, and as such is as important as the provisions on agriculture, the environment or consumer protection;
 5. Recalls that Parliament is engaged in ongoing negotiations, and has adopted pieces of legislation addressing issues related to animal welfare, such as animal health, zootechnical conditions, organic production and official controls;
 6. Recognises the efforts already made by farmers on animal welfare in the various Member States;
 7. Urges the Commission, where there is clear scientific evidence demonstrating animal welfare problems, to adapt policy instruments or introduce new ones to resolve these problems; asks the Commission to monitor closely the implementation in the Member States of the EU legislation relating to animal welfare;
 8. Expresses its concern about the effective implementation and enforcement of current EU legislation relating to the welfare of animals, given the complexity and large number of relevant legislative acts; stresses that improving the enforcement of, and compliance with, existing legislation should be the key goal of all animal health and welfare rules;
 9. Urges the Commission, at the same time, to be more ambitious in including and prioritising reciprocity of animal welfare standards as a non-trade concern in its trade policy and when negotiating international trade agreements, and to promote animal welfare in third countries by requiring equivalent welfare standards for imported animals and products, accompanied by strict controls;
 10. Underlines the importance of funding for the common agricultural policy which is adequate and compatible with the level of our ambitions, in order to prevent the relocation of production and trade to countries and continents with lower animal welfare standards;

11. Calls on the Commission to develop, exchange and disseminate scientifically based best practices and to support innovation and research on the development of new animal welfare techniques and technologies;
12. Recalls that there are imbalances in the food chain that place the primary producer at a disadvantage, and that this situation limits the scope for animal welfare investments at farm level;
13. Recalls that producers are overburdened with administrative requirements and that, in the continued search for administrative simplification, this European strategy should not further increase the existing burden; stresses the need to ensure stability and predictability of investments in the sector, while ensuring fair competition internationally;
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.