

**Question for written answer E-011890/2011  
to the Commission  
Rule 117  
Michail Tremopoulos (Verts/ALE)**

**Subject:** Need for a directive on the welfare of dairy cows

The EU has species-specific legislation on the welfare of pigs, laying hens, chickens reared for meat and calves, but not of dairy cows. Cows are covered by the General Farm Animals Directive (98/58/EC) but its provisions are broad and of limited value, as they do not establish enforceable standards. An evaluation of EU policy on animal welfare prepared for the Commission in 2010 recommended that the priorities for future policy should include considering introducing EU legislation on dairy cow welfare to achieve harmonization and 'to address the range of welfare issues that affect the millions of dairy cows in Europe'.

There is considerable relevant scientific evidence on which to base legislative proposals. In 2009 the EFSA produced a scientific report on cows and five scientific opinions on different aspects of dairy cow welfare. In addition, the EFSA is currently preparing a report on the use of animal-based measures to assess the welfare of dairy cows.

Based on the above, the Commission is asked:

1. Will it consider proposing a species-specific directive on dairy cows to address a number of serious welfare concerns, including those arising from the increasing industrialisation of dairy farming in some Member States?
2. More specifically, will the Commission examine the following main problems that should be addressed by a directive, i.e.:
  - heath problems associated with high milk yields (including lameness, reduced fertility and disease, especially mastitis, all of which result in cows being prematurely culled because they are worn out);
  - zero grazing (high-yielding cows are increasingly kept indoors for all, or the vast majority of, the year; this prevents them from grazing, which is a core aspect of their behaviour, and increases the risk of poor welfare resulting from potential problems such as lameness, hoof problems, teat tramp, mastitis, metritis, dystocia, ketosis, retained placenta and some bacterial infections);
  - year-round tethering (dairy cows should not be routinely kept in tie-stalls)?