

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: EFSA Evaluates EU Animal Welfare Situation in Farm To Fork REFIT Effort

Country: European Union

Post: Brussels USEU

Report Category: Livestock and Products

Prepared By: Yvan Polet

Approved By: Lisa Allen

Report Highlights:

The European Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy includes a review of EU animal welfare (AW) legislation and requirements in European animal production. In December 2020, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) announced a slew of scientific reviews of EU AW regulations for 2022 that may serve as the basis for new legislative initiatives. Because farmers view new AW requirements as costly, the idea of potential AW labeling as a tool for consumers to justify price differentiation is also being discussed.

On May 20, 2020, the European Commission (EC) published the EU's [Farm To Fork \(F2F\) Strategy](#) as part of the [Green Deal](#). One of the action items of F2F is the “evaluation and revision of the existing animal welfare legislation, including on animal transport and slaughter of animals.” This [evaluation](#) of existing legislation, also called REFIT or a Fitness Check, was launched on May 20, 2020 as well. This Fitness Check aims to help the Commission to assess the relevance of its current legislative framework, covering animal welfare on farms, during transport and at killing.

The Commission had already been working on the evaluation of its AW legislation. In 2019, upon request from the EC, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) already published updated scientific opinions on the European practices for slaughtering [poultry](#), [pigs](#), [cattle](#) and [rabbits](#).

In June 2020, the Commission requested EFSA to provide updated scientific evaluations of EU AW situation under existing EU legislation on the transport of animals and farming conditions of broilers, laying hens, calves and pigs. The EFSA opinions are promised for the second half of 2022. EFSA will also provide “an updated guidance on risk assessment for animal welfare and a technical report on the public consultation of the updated guidance”.

The latest EFSA work schedule on AW will only cover existing legislation¹ that was introduced and implemented under the Community Action Plan on the protection and welfare of animals (2006-2010). While there is also the Animal Welfare Strategy 2012-2015, this work has not finished and thus will not be the current focus of the EFSA work. It is still unclear if or if and how the EC intends to broaden the scope of its AW policies.

Farmers in various Member States (MS) argue that increased AW requirements are costly and put them at a competitive disadvantage with imports agreed under various free trade agreements. To respond to those arguments, as part of the F2F, the Commission is also proposing to develop a voluntary EU-wide animal welfare labeling scheme. AW labeling is perceived as a potential communication tool towards consumers to justify price differentiation between animal products. On December 15, European Ministers of Agriculture adopted Council Conclusions on an EU-wide animal welfare label. Member States think an EU-wide animal welfare label for food produced under animal welfare standards higher than those provided by EU legislation could respond to the consumer demand to easily recognize such food. Therefore, Member States invited the Commission to consider developing criteria that would have to be fulfilled in order to be able to use the EU animal welfare label and to consider the creation of a standardized EU logo for this label.

Attachments:

No Attachments.

¹ See 2011 GAIN report: [Implementation of Animal Welfare Directives in the EU](#)