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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: Animal welfare–next steps
- Presentation of a position paper of the German, Swedish, Danish and the Netherlands delegations
- Exchange of views

In view of the session of the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council of 15 February 2016, delegations will find in Annex, a position paper from the German, Swedish, Danish and the Netherlands delegations on an EU Animal Welfare Platform.

Animal welfare – next steps:**Presentation of the position paper of DE, SE, DK & NL (on an EU Platform on Animal Welfare)**

At the conference on pig welfare in Copenhagen 29 - 30 April 2015 it became apparent that dialogue and the exchange of ideas is one of the keys for better animal welfare. Fruitful dialogues require a platform. Thus, after having called upon the European Commission in the Declaration on Animal Welfare of 'Vught', Germany, Denmark, Sweden and The Netherlands formulated suggestions for the Commission on the establishment of such a platform. The idea is based on the already existing EU platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. The position paper with suggestions and the accompanying letter to the Commission are attached to this note.

The establishment of an EU Animal Welfare Platform would contribute to further increasing recognition and awareness of animal welfare in the EU. We believe that it is necessary to also find new ways forward for animal welfare in the EU. An EU Platform on animal welfare could be a powerful tool to maintain a strong commitment to this issue within the EU.

More specifically, and as mentioned in the position paper, the suggested goals of the Platform are:

- To provide coordinated action by different parts of society that will encourage union, national, regional or local initiatives across Europe;
- To facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices and make visible initiatives taken to promote animal welfare by the Commission, Member States and organizations, as well as to ensure a more uniform and transparent regulation;
- To strengthen partnership and commitment from stakeholders to contribute to the promotion of animal welfare;
- Identifying (national) legislation, including best practices in the Member States;
- Networking, including sharing of knowledge and information on research & developments;
- Discussion to strengthen animal welfare standards and on improvement of legislation.

We invite the Commission and the Member States to share their views on the proposal for an EU Platform on Animal Welfare, more specifically on the

- mentioned and presented objectives and scope of activities for a EU platform;
- structure and participants of such a platform.

Position Paper
from
The Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and Denmark

Establishment of an EU Platform on Animal Welfare

Background

In December 2014 the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark signed a joint declaration in Vught in the Netherlands. In the declaration the European Commission is called upon to establish an EU platform for animal welfare for stakeholders and competent authorities with the purpose to generate momentum and focus on the animal welfare challenges faced by the EU. The initiative was supported by a number of Member States at the AGRIFISH Council 15-16 December, 2014.

The conference on pig welfare in Copenhagen 29 - 30 April, 2015, emphasizes the importance of the establishment of such a platform. Over 300 participants representing government authorities, NGO's and international experts discussed various issues with regard to pig welfare. It is important to establish a platform/forum within the European Union which facilitates stakeholders coming together not only to follow up on the discussion (from the conference) regarding pig welfare but to continue discussions on animal welfare in general. We are facing a number of challenges when it comes to animal welfare, thus action is needed.

The joint proposal from the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and Denmark shows how an animal welfare platform could be established and organised in the EU.

Aim

There must be a greater recognition within the EU-system, Member States included, of animal welfare as an important element in EU policies, cf. article 13 in TFEU. The establishment of a joint European Animal Welfare Platform - based in DG SANTE - would serve as a common forum for respectively the Commission, Member States, animal welfare organisations, agriculture organisations, veterinary associations, consumers etc. to discuss matters concerning animal welfare.

A platform would be able to facilitate the exchanging of experiences and best practices regarding initiatives on animal welfare, hereunder in regards to implementation, controls and enforcement of existing legislation within the EU, thus being a valuable tool in the efforts towards more uniform and transparent regulation. These are all measures that are imperative in securing a level playing field in the internal market. In order to increase productivity, promote jobs and growth, the EU needs to be at the forefront of the sustainable development, this is especially true in the husbandry sector. A platform would support the Member States in these efforts.

In addition, a joint European Animal Welfare Platform will contribute positively to the development towards higher standards of animal welfare based on scientific results and gained experience, while serving the following purposes:

- The platform will provide an example of coordinated action on this issue by different parts of society that will encourage union, national, regional or local initiatives across Europe.
- Facilitate the exchange of experiences and make visible initiatives taken to promote animal welfare by the Commission, Member States or organisations.
- Development of partnerships among stakeholders.
- Identifying (national) legislation Including best practices in the Member States.
- Networking, including sharing of knowledge and information on research.
- Commitment from stakeholders to contribute to promoting animal welfare.

Organisation

In view of this, the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and Denmark suggest a two-tiered approach for the establishment of an EU Platform on Animal Welfare. The platform would thus consist of a larger forum including all relevant stakeholders and a smaller "high level" group of Member States, run by the Commission. The role of the high level group should for example be to draw up plans and mutual agreements, follow up on current policies and strengthening cooperation between Member States.

The platform could be established and organised similar to the model for the EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, which is also facilitated by the Commission. If the high level group could be hosted in any of the already existing forums it might be preferable providing it can be organised to assure that enough time are set aside for platform issues.

Perspective

It is foreseen that a joint European platform, based in the Commission, could be the starting point for a dialogue to strengthen animal welfare standards in the EU and might eventually lead to new legislation in the area of animal welfare. The platform will be able to facilitate the Initial discussions among Member States at an informal level, and at the same time be a valuable contribution in promoting joint initiatives. The platform would be a useful tool for the Commission and the Member States to provide better and more uniform legislation, interpretation and implementation. Future reference centres for animal welfare will have the potential to make valuable contribution to the work of the platform.

Considering the above mentioned proposal the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and Denmark encourage the Commission to take steps to establish an EU Platform on Animal Welfare, and we encourage all Member States to join this initiative and thus take part in the future cooperation to improve animal welfare in the EU.



Martijn van Dam
Minister for Agriculture, The Netherlands Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture, Germany



Christian Schmidt



Eva Kjer Hansen



Sven-Erik Bucht

Minister for Environment and Food, Denmark Minister for Rural Affairs, Sweden



**Ministry of
Economic Affairs**



Federal Ministry
of Food
and Agriculture

Ministry of Environment and
Food of Denmark

Government Offices of Sweden
Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation

Mr Vytenis Andriukaitis Commissioner for
Health and Food Safety European
Commission
Brussels

Date " 7 JAN. 2016

Dear Commissioner Andriukaitis,

As announced in our letter of 11 May, 2015, please find enclosed our position paper with suggestions concerning the establishment of an ELI Platform on Animal Welfare.

While the Commission's continued strong commitment to animal welfare, currently embodied in DG SANTE's Animal Welfare Unit, is of vital importance, we also believe that an EU Platform on Animal Welfare could play a key role in enabling the sharing of best practices and new developments and finding new ways forward. The platform would also offer scope for networking.

We wish to emphasize the need to work towards a higher level of animal welfare across the EU, not least to create a level playing field for our farmers, who have taken the lead in improving several aspects of animal welfare.

We would appreciate a further exchange of views with you in the coming months on establishing an EU Platform on Animal Welfare.

Christian Schmidt
Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture, Germany

Yours sincerely,

Eva Kjer Hansen

Minister for Environment and Food,
Denmark, van Dam
Minister for Agriculture, The
Netherlands

Cc: First Vice-President and Commissioner Timmermans
Vice-President and Commissioner Katainen

Sven-Erik Bucht
Minister for Rural Affairs, Sweden