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VETER 1

NOTE

Origine:	Secrétariat général du Conseil
Destinataire:	Délégations
Objet:	Conférence de haut niveau des parties prenantes sur le thème « Le bien-être animal dans l'UE, aujourd'hui et demain » du 9 décembre 2021 – <i>Informations communiquées par la Commission</i>

Les délégations trouveront en annexe une note d'information de la Commission sur le sujet visé en objet, qui sera abordé sous le point «Divers» lors de la session du Conseil «Agriculture et pêche» du 17 janvier 2022.

**High-level stakeholder conference on
“EU animal welfare – today & tomorrow” of 9 December 2021**

Information from the European Commission

The Farm to Fork Strategy announced that the European Commission will, in 2023, **revise the EU animal welfare legislation** to align it with the latest available scientific evidence, broaden its scope and make it easier to enforce in order to ensure a higher level of animal welfare. To this end, the Commission has been carrying out an evaluation (“**fitness check**”) of the current EU animal welfare legislation and has launched an **impact assessment** to evaluate the economic, social and environmental consequences of the envisaged changes to these EU rules. In addition, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is working on a series of scientific opinions to provide **updated scientific evidence** to support this legislative revision.

In this context, the Commission organised on 9 December 2021 a **high-level stakeholder conference on “EU animal welfare – today & tomorrow”**. This conference was one of the several steps undertaken to collect views of all stakeholders in order to feed both the fitness check and the impact assessment that will support the legislative proposal.

The conference took place in hybrid format with 45 participants on-site, and around 700 participants connected online. The event was opened by **Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides**, and the Slovenian Council Presidency represented by **Mr Jože Podgoršek**, Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Food. Other keynote speakers included **Commissioner for Agriculture Janusz Wojciechowski** and **MEP Norbert Lins, Chair of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development**. In addition, **Dr Jane Goodall, world-renowned ethologist and environmentalist, delivered a speech and stressed the health related, environmental and ethical impacts of intensive farming at global level**. Dr Goodall and Commissioner Kyriakides also held an exchange on the above issues. During the conference, the preliminary findings of the fitness check were discussed and most participants confirmed their accuracy. It was highlighted that while the current EU rules have improved animal welfare in Europe, they are outdated and do not sufficiently meet current expectations and future challenges.

Policy options were debated in five panels – on animal welfare labelling, the phasing out of cages, transport, slaughter and on-farm welfare – with 27 high-level speakers, including Member States’ representatives, Members of the European Parliament, representatives of professional associations and NGOs, of the Commission, of non-EU countries as well as scientific and technical experts.

The panel discussion on labelling was the occasion to highlight that there is currently a plethora of different **animal welfare labelling** schemes and that there might be a need to rationalise and simplify this landscape to increase transparency. Some stakeholders stressed that a multi-tier system with scores would make it easier for consumers to compare and choose products with higher animal welfare premium. Others insisted that any animal welfare label needs to be accompanied by a powerful information campaign for it to have an impact.

The panel discussions on **on-farm welfare** and the **phasing out of cages** were the occasions to highlight the key role of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to foster better conditions for farmed animals and the need for Member States to reap the opportunities provided by the new CAP in this area, notably by using eco-schemes for such measures. Most participants were in favour of requiring equivalent welfare rules at import into the EU. The need to provide education to farmers on how best to handle animals and to better evaluate animal welfare, in particular in intensive systems, were noted.

In the panel discussion on welfare at the time of **slaughter/killing**, speakers considered that certain stunning methods have negative welfare consequences and that there is a need to assess whether commercially viable alternatives with better welfare outcomes are available. Several agreed that slaughter equipment should be approved at EU level and considered that banning the use of electric prods might have implications on workers’ safety when handling large animals. Most participants were in favour of specific rules for the killing of fish.

Finally, the panel discussion on welfare during **transport** revealed different views on the extent to which long-distance transport should be restricted. Most participants agreed that the welfare conditions during such transport were difficult to control, especially in exports to non-EU countries. A discussion took place on whether transporting meat and genetic material was a real alternative to transporting live animals.

In summary, the conference touched on a wide-range of topics and provided useful insights that will help the Commission to better shape its proposal for a revised EU animal welfare legislation.

Other stakeholder consultation activities will provide additional input, including the ongoing **Open Public Consultation** (which runs until 21 January 2022)¹, discussions in the **EU Animal Welfare Platform** and its subgroups, targeted surveys and interviews, as well as **discussions in the Council**.

In terms of next steps, the Commission aims to publish the fitness check mid-2022, the relevant EFSA opinions are expected between mid-2022 and early 2023, and the impact assessment should be finalised at the beginning of 2023, with the objective to adopt the legislative proposals during the same year.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12950-Revision-of-the-EU-legislation-on-animal-welfare/public-consultation_en