

## REPORTS AND COMMENTS

### **European Commission review of farmed-animal welfare legislation in non-EU countries and implications for the EU**

The EU Member States recently asked the Commission to undertake a review of standards of animal welfare in non-EU countries. Their concern for this stemmed from recognition that (i) there is a trend towards increasing legislation for the welfare of farmed animals in the EU; (ii) this can result in extra costs to producers, and (iii) this may put EU producers at a competitive disadvantage compared to non-EU producers if the latter are free of legal obligations for comparable animal welfare standards. The report of this enquiry is an interesting read. This subject is of critical importance to developments in animal welfare standards around the world.

Despite admitting that the study was “largely inconclusive”, the Commission indicates that it believes it to be important to pursue these concerns since competitive distortions arising from differing national standards “have the clear potential to undermine higher animal welfare standards”. Although “the means to address these distortions are nonetheless not immediately apparent”, the Commission considers that they can be addressed in several ways. These include:

- the freedom of consumers to press for higher standards by purchasing only products from animals kept to high welfare standards;
- development of labelling schemes to facilitate the above;
- international dialogue (including at the Office International des Epizooties and the Council of Europe) aimed at persuading non-EU countries to afford greater recognition to animal welfare; and
- the need to explore mechanisms to address any deficiencies in how animal welfare considerations are properly recognised in the prices paid to producers.

As part of the study, Directorate Generale SANCO contacted the main countries which export livestock produce to the EU to request information about livestock welfare legislation. The results are summarised as an Appendix and these show, among other things, that Chile, India and the Philippines have no legislation or official codes of conduct regulating the slaughter of animals, and that there are neither laws nor codes of conduct regulating livestock transport in Botswana, Bulgaria, Hong Kong, India and the Philippines.

It is recognised in the report that the level of animal welfare legislation in the EU (even if compliance is often lacking) compares well with that in non-EU countries and that the EU legislation has often had an ‘inspiring’ effect and served as an example for many other countries to follow. It is important that the ways forward identified by the Commission in this report are pursued vigorously. In the long run, moves towards international standards are likely to come about through better shared agreement about the needs of animals, and animal welfare science has a key role to play in this.

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*Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on Animal Welfare Legislation on farmed animals in Third Countries and the Implications for the EU* (November 2002) Published by the Commission of the European Communities. COM(2002)626 final. 44 pp A4. Available at [http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2002/com2002\\_0626en01.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2002/com2002_0626en01.pdf).

### **Amendment to zoo legislation in England and Wales**

The zoo licensing legislation has been amended to bring it into line with the requirements of the European Directive on zoos. One of the main changes is the inclusion of provisions requiring zoos to implement the following conservation measures:

- (i) participating in at least one of the following: research for the conservation benefit of wild animals, provision of training in relevant conservation skills, exchange of information relevant to wildlife conservation, captive breeding and reintroduction where appropriate;