



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Crisis preparedness in food, animals and plants
The Director

Brussels,
SANTE G3/MK/iv(2023) 11772118

Subject: End of cage age and revision of the Animal Welfare acquis

Dear Petitioners,

President von der Leyen has asked me to thank you for your letters of October 2023 presenting a petition¹ calling on the Commission to deliver on your commitment to end caged farming and give farmed animals lives worth living. You also call on the Commission to present the legislative proposals to reform animal welfare as soon as possible and End the Cage Age for hundreds of millions of animals.

The Commission has been acting to improve animal welfare for over 40 years, progressively improving the lives of animals. Animal welfare is and will remain a priority for the Commission.

I am happy to share with you that, on 7 December 2023, the Commission adopted two legislative proposals and a Communication on animal welfare.

The first proposal aims to revise and improve existing EU rules on the protection of animals during transport². The second, proposing a new Regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability³, will introduce animal welfare requirements for breeders, shelters, and pet shops in the EU or exporting to the EU, as well as traceability provisions for all dogs and cats supplied in the EU. A Commission Communication in response to the successful ECI "Fur Free Europe"⁴, was also presented. In the Communication, the Commission refers to the need for more scientific evidence before a decision is taken on whether to propose a ban fur farming in the EU and on the marketing of farmed fur and fur products in the EU.

The two legislative proposals on transport and dogs and cats represent major steps that will considerably improve the welfare of billions of animals across the EU.

The work on the other animal welfare legislative proposals planned under the Farm to Fork Strategy, covering the welfare of animals at farm level, at the time of killing, and establishing new rules for animal welfare labelling, is still ongoing.

¹ Your e-mail refers to a "petition", which in the framework of EU Law is used for petitions addressed to the European Parliament pursuant to Article 227 TFEU. Your letter is dealt with by the Commission according to the rules for correspondence with citizens.

² https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/animal-welfare-practice/animal-welfare-during-transport_en

³ https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/animal-welfare-practice/welfare-dogs-and-cats_en

⁴ https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/eci/eci-fur-free-europe_en

This includes in particular the preparatory work to propose provisions to phase out cages for the main species and categories of farmed animals, as announced by the Commission in its answer to the European citizens' initiative "End of Cage Age"⁵. The Commission is now carefully assessing important aspects to ensure that the transition to cage-free farming is sustainable for the agricultural sector and for our food systems, including food security. The preliminary results of the ongoing impact assessment show that the transition to cage-free systems demands the adaptation of several farming parameters, such as enriching the environment of the animals, and providing them with more space, to secure improved welfare conditions for the animals. Further consultations are needed concerning the costs, the appropriate length of the transitional period and the relevant measures at import. To ensure a proper balance between animal welfare and socio-economic impacts, the phasing out of cages has to come with other animal welfare measures at farm level. Preparatory work will therefore continue, including in the context of the strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture in the EU.

The Commission also continues to work on improving animal welfare in the EU through a series of other activities, such as the meetings of the EU Animal Welfare Platform and its sub-groups, the work of the four EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare, the mandates sent to EFSA to produce new scientific opinions for different species of animals, and the work done on enforcement of existing rules, notably through audits and analyses.

Thank you very much for your commitment to our work to improve animal welfare.

Yours sincerely,

[e-signed]

Bernard Van Goethem

⁵ https://food.ec.europa.eu/animals/animal-welfare/eci-end-cage-age_en