

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

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Global Agricultural Information Network

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## EU-28

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### **Commission Boasts EU International Animal Welfare Policy Successes**

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**Report Highlights:**

The European Commission (EC) has an active policy of exporting its standards on animal welfare, which are anchored in the European Treaties. A published EC report offers a rare direct acknowledgement of this policy and elaborates in detail on the EC's fifteen-year effort and success in moving the international standards on animal welfare at the multilateral level, as well as in bilateral agreements.

## **General Information:**

On January 26, 2018 the European Commission (EC) published a [report](#) [1] with the subtitle “On the impact of animal welfare international activities on the competitiveness of European livestock producers in a globalized world.” It takes account of the international activities that the EU has conducted in the last 15 years in the area of animal welfare (AW). The report describes the objective of these international activities as “*promoting animal welfare standards globally*” with the goal to “*contribute to ensuring a level playing field between EU and non-EU operators.*”

The report documents the EC’s policy and standard setting activities at the multilateral level as well as bilaterally as follows (*text copied from the report in italics*):

- **MULTILATERAL ACTIVITIES**

*These activities are aimed at supporting the development and adoption of international standards by the OIE and cooperating with the FAO.*

*The main objectives of the activities with the OIE are to:*

- 1. Ensure that OIE animal welfare standards reflect to the extent possible the EU principles and model;*
- 2. Build consensus with non-EU countries to adopt these standards;*
- 3. Promote and support the implementation of the OIE standards in non-EU countries;*
- 4. Use the OIE standards as the basis to reach common understanding on animal welfare with non-EU countries.*

*Since 2002, the Commission and the EU Member States have been working with the OIE at each step of the standards setting process as well as during their implementation by the OIE Member countries.*

*The main contributions by the Commission are:*

- 1. Involvement in the standard setting process through its participation to working groups and by providing EU coordinated positions;*
- 2. Provision of financial support and co-organization of OIE training events to facilitate the implementation of international standards;*
- 3. Supporting the development and implementation of OIE regional strategies on animal welfare.*

- **BILATERAL ACTIVITIES**

*The main objectives of the bilateral cooperation are to:*

- 1. Raise awareness and establish a common understanding on animal welfare;*
- 2. Share technical knowledge;*
- 3. Support the partner country in developing and implementing animal welfare legislation and standards based on the EU or OIE model and principles;*

4. *Discuss topics on animal welfare with impact in trade between the parties.*

*The main instruments used by the Commission to reach such objectives are:*

- 1. Conferences and international events;*
- 2. Training workshops or experts missions;*
- 3. Common research programs, targeted to the local context;*
- 4. Technical assistance.*

## **Results**

### Multilaterally

- Since 2002, 14 international standards on animal welfare as well as guiding principles were adopted (see Annex I). Furthermore, the EU managed to achieve a notable degree of alignment between OIE and EU animal welfare standards in most areas.*
- In 2017, the OIE adopted its first global strategy on animal welfare.*

### Bilaterally

- The first bilateral trade agreement with an explicit reference to animal welfare was signed with Chile in 2002.*
- Since then, cooperation on animal welfare has been included in most of EU bilateral trade agreements and has been consistently proposed in all ongoing trade negotiations.*

### Competitiveness

- Growing consumer perception of the EU's sustainable production methods – including high animal welfare standards – can and does improve the market position of EU products.*
- Non-EU operators report a higher productivity resulting from compliance with animal welfare legislation, while EU operators reported the opposite. Both considered that compliance with animal welfare legislation has a positive impact on product quality.*
- The majority of both EU and non-EU operators indicated that compliance with animal welfare legislation and standards helped accessing new market outlets.*

## **Conclusion**

The report conclusion states, “*The Commission is strongly committed to international trade based on values.*” Provisions for AW in the EU go back as far as 1974 and the legislative groundwork for AW in the EU was anchored in the 1978 [European Convention for the protection of animals kept for farming purposes](#) [2]. AW provisions are anchored in the European Treaties and were reemphasized in Article 13 of the Lisbon Treaty, which came into force on December 1, 2009. As a result, animal welfare is not optional, but a core duty for EU legislators.

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the EU is actively pursuing to export its AW standards to the rest of the world. In 2002, the International Animal Health organization's ([OIE](#) [3]) mandate was broadened to AW and the first international standards for AW made it into the OIE Terrestrial Code in 2005. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) features an online [Gateway to Farm Animal Welfare](#) [4] with the aim to bring stakeholders, including the EU and the OIE, together to work in AW in developing countries. In 2010, the EU and the United States signed the Washington Declaration on Animal Welfare, setting up a Transatlantic Animal Welfare Council as a platform for cooperation in forwarding the cause of AW.

The EU is working hard on exporting its AW agenda at the multilateral and bilateral level. This EU report not only summarizes the EU's successes from the past fifteen years, but offers also good indications of the goals of its AW policy for future multilateral and bilateral negotiations and collaborations.

[1] [https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/welfare/international\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/welfare/international_en)

[2] [http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/references/farmspc/jour323\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/references/farmspc/jour323_en.pdf)

[3] <http://www.oie.int/en/animal-welfare/animal-welfare-at-a-glance/>

[4] <http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/themes/animal-welfare/en/>