



European Animal Welfare Platform

Progressing animal welfare
through the food chain



IMPROVING FARM ANIMAL WELFARE

E-Newsletter of the European Animal Welfare Platform (EAWP)

Mid-programme update

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Issue No. 1

Right on track

Looking back on our project in early 2010, the European Animal Welfare Platform (EAWP) appears to be well on track to reach



its objectives by the set deadline of May next year. For this newsletter, Prof. Harry Blokhuis (pictured) presents a brief 'state of the art' description of the projects, its background, objectives

and progress. He also reminds us of the basic philosophy behind what he calls "a unique project." Harry Blokhuis is Professor of Ethology at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala and the co-ordinator of the EAWP. As a scientist he has been at the helm of animal welfare research for over thirty years, and has actively participated in and led several EU projects in this field.

What is your assessment of the first 18 months of EAWP activities and how would you describe the current state of the project?

The European Animal Welfare Platform started on 1 May 2008 and we are now halfway through this 36 month project. It took us a while to gather pace, but this is not unusual given the different backgrounds of our members and the variety of countries

they come from. We also needed to reach a consensus on the best approach to take. However, we have succeeded in setting up a very efficient and effective management structure and an operational framework of product cluster groups that focus on welfare issues in specific types of farm animals. The supply chain has been mapped out in detail in each cluster, a comprehensive list of potential welfare issues has been compiled, and an extensive round of consultations is currently underway. The EAWP has now gained momentum and we are on course to meet the 1 May 2011 project deadline.

You have been the co-ordinator of six different European projects since 1997. How does the EAWP compare to the work you carried out in previous years?

It is important to note that the EAWP brings together very different interest groups, from producers and retailers to scientists and NGOs. In the ongoing consultation process, we are requesting input from an even broader range of stakeholders. The EAWP works to find a consensus on animal welfare issues among all these participants – and all the signs are pointing in the direction of an astonishing success. This in itself is already a tremendous achievement.

Several projects seeking to improve animal welfare are also ongoing. How can we differentiate between them and the EAWP?

Our multi-stakeholder approach is the truly unique feature of EAWP. Let me put this in perspective: when I started my career as a young scientist some thirty years ago, you would not have been able to get representatives of our stakeholder groups in the same room; Farmers rejected any comments on animal welfare, large companies felt as though their ways of working were being challenged and attacked; and while NGOs were blamed for their lack of knowledge and understanding, academics were accused of preaching to stakeholders from their ivory tower. Not only do they now respect each others' views, but everybody agrees that the promotion of animal welfare is a common interest that will benefit all parties.

Is it realistic to expect farmers and retailers to sing from the same hymn sheet as far as animal welfare conditions in the supply chain are concerned?

There is less controversy and common ground does exist. Agreement on the need for promoting animal welfare is also growing. Farmers are increasingly realising that better animal welfare conditions also result in economic benefits – e.g. a reduction in animal disease and the improvement of product quality. They want to participate in a process that will define good practice, and they are

aware that projects like the EAWP may influence future EU policy. As for the major retail chains, they have been confronted with and have responded to consumer concerns and selective purchase patterns. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been included in their mission statements. As important market players, they can impose quality and welfare conditions in the supply chain. As such, they have the potential to take the lead in improving animal welfare.

What is the reasoning behind the European Commission's financial support for the EAWP?

Twenty years ago, legislation was created at the say-so of policy-makers. Nowadays, governments and the European Union prefer to define their ultimate objectives and they look to market participants for their support and help to shape and to facilitate the implementation of welfare legislation. As such, producers, retailers and other interest groups are given the responsibility to define policy steps and their application – as long as the ultimate policy objectives are met. They have to come up with practical solutions. Against this background, the EAWP seeks a consensus on animal welfare issues, on good practice and its assessment, and on subjects that are still controversial and need further scientific research. Additionally, the EAWP can be instrumental in disseminating good practice and enhancing awareness of animal welfare in the new Member States.

In the spotlight:

Your opinion will shape the outcome

The product cluster groups have been hard at work for more than a year. The groups have so far mapped the different steps in the food chain and made up a list of potential welfare issues at each stage. This has been done for beef, dairy, eggs, farmed salmon, pork and poultry meat sectors, and a total of 114 welfare issues has been identified so far. As cluster group members do not represent the complete spectrum of interested parties, their initial findings are now being compared with the views and priorities of a wider group of stakeholders and this is where the EAWP's consultation process comes into play.

The EAWP's consultation process is directed at a wide audience of stakeholders and it is currently in full swing. The aim of this consultation is to gain invaluable insight into how stakeholders rank the

importance of some of the main welfare issues in all the relevant sectors. The stakeholders who have been asked to list their main welfare issues are fully representative of all 27 Member States and represent very different interests: farmers, breeders, the processing industry, retail companies, academics and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) all participated in the consultation.

The results of this consultation will be collated and a list of the top five priority welfare issues in each product cluster will be published in June. The EAWP will subsequently identify and define good practices for dealing with each of these issues and, following further consultation, will then communicate these findings to the European Commission.

The way ahead: what's to come in 2010?



After having finalised all the preparatory work during the first half of the EAWP's lifespan, 2010 will be a crucial year for achieving the project's targets. In reviewing the tasks ahead, both cluster leaders and the Management Committee have decided to organise four additional workshops during in 2010. The editing and reviewing process of the Project's final report will begin in December, followed by the submission of

the report to the European Commission in April 2011, well within the project's May 2011 deadline.

The most recent cluster meetings were held in May 2010. At these meetings the results of the consultation process were discussed and the five priority welfare issues in each product cluster were identified. The lists of issues will soon be sent to experts who will be asked to define good practice for each welfare problem. At two meetings during the summer, the clusters will discuss the experts' reports; prepare a revised / collated version of good practices in a uniform format; and give the reasons for selecting the top five good practices for each product sector. In the autumn the revised list will be sent for a second stakeholder consultation, the results of which will then be analysed at the level of the product clusters. The final cluster meeting of 2010 will be held in December at which time we will seek to finalise the contents of the report.



“An exciting potential”

“It’s clear from my experience in the cattle cluster that the European Animal Welfare Platform has an exciting potential for promoting improved welfare across Europe. We have participated in many working groups and projects on animal welfare and I can affirm that the EAWP is really unique. All EAWP partners come from different backgrounds, different countries, and represent different interests. As an NGO we have our own history, our own focus. The same is true for the processors, retailers, and scientists that we meet in the EAWP. And yet, in this Platform we find common ground. In the past, even talking to each other was not always the case. Today all these different interest groups work together in the project. It is very encouraging to see that all participants in the EAWP express a common concern for animal welfare in the food chain; and that they all look for good practices and practical, pragmatic solutions.”

Peter Stevenson - Compassion in World Farming

“Hoping to reach a consensus on priority welfare issues”

"McDonald's is a founding member of the European Animal Welfare Platform. We recognise that our responsibility as a purchaser of food products includes working with our suppliers to ensure good animal health and welfare practices. The funding that the Platform receives under the EU's Seventh Framework Project has enabled the development of multi-stakeholder working groups. These groups will reach a consensus on the priority welfare issues in Europe and their related best practices - and perhaps even more importantly, help direct future research into areas where better scientific understanding is needed."

Keith Kenny - McDonald's Supply Chain Europe



Message from the Management Committee

The Management Committee is the decision-making body of the EAWP, consisting of six people including the leaders of the four Work Packages. The Management Committee supervises and, if needed, stimulates the overall process of the Platform – from mapping the food chain to listing and prioritising animal welfare issues, to the consultation of stakeholders and the definition of good practices. The Committee co-ordinates the activities of the cluster meetings, reviews interim and final reports, keeps an eye on the project schedule, overlooks the budget and financial commitments, and has the ultimate responsibility for delivering the proposed outcomes of the project to the European Commission.

The Committee has met five times so far, most recently in Amsterdam on 14 January 2010. After a presentation on the EU-funded *EconWelfare* (EW) project, potential collaborative efforts were explored. The Committee also discussed current financial issues and the likely costs of the project over the next 18 months. Progress in the different Work Packages (WPs) was then comprehensively reviewed. The committee focused on the current consultation process and proposed initiatives for soliciting more stakeholder responses. The next Management Committee meeting will be held in Uppsala (Sweden) on 29 June 2010.

Related projects

EconWelfare is a European research project aimed at providing suggestions to national and European policy-makers for further improvements in farm animal welfare. In collaboration with stakeholder groups it collates and investigates policy options and their impacts on the livestock production chain, the animals and European society.

<http://www.econwelfare.eu/>

The Dialrel project focuses on religious slaughter, and seeks to improve knowledge and expertise through dialogue and debate on issues of welfare, legislation and socio-economic aspects.

<http://www.dialrel.eu>



Link up with other programmes and events



EAWP is eager to link up with similar programmes and non-confrontational organisations that are committed to improving farm animal welfare conditions throughout the food chain. We invite you to let us know about your upcoming conferences and events in 2010 and 2011. The EAWP can assist you by disseminating information about your upcoming events. Our partners and cluster members come from very different backgrounds and many will be interested in hearing about your organisation's plans for the months to come.

Take a look at our updated website

For the benefit of its partners, cluster members and interested stakeholders, the EAWP has set up an informative website at www.animalwelfareplatform.eu. Apart from providing information regarding the project to the general public, the website also features a members only resource section – allowing for mutual discussion and exchange of information. Summarised versions of Management Committee and cluster meeting minutes can also be viewed there, as well as policy documents and consultation forms. The website offers opportunities for direct contact between members and partners, which go well beyond the scope of e-mailing.



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The Platform aims at improving farm animal welfare throughout the food chain. Detailed information on the platform, its objectives, activities and partners can be found on the EAWP website www.animalwelfareplatform.eu. This electronic newsletter reflects only the authors' views and does not necessarily represent a position of the European Commission. The European Community is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein. If you would like to subscribe to this newsletter, please visit the EAWP website at www.animalwelfareplatform.eu.

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