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EU hosts Global Conference on Trade and Farm Animal Welfare

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Report Highlights:

On January 20-21, 2009, the European Commission hosted a Conference on Global Trade and Farm Animal Welfare. The aim of the conference was to raise international support for introducing animal welfare in international trade standard setting bodies, including the OIE and the WTO. NGOs made presentations on private initiatives along side of scientific perspectives on how to better achieve welfare for animals with outcome based measures. Governments also presented information on how their countries are engaging internationally in multilateral and bilateral agreements. NGOs made presentations on private initiatives along side of scientific perspectives on how to better achieve welfare for animals with outcome based measures. Governments also presented information on how their countries are engaging internationally in multilateral and bilateral agreements.

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Executive summary

On January 20-21, 2009, the European Commission co-hosted with various international animal welfare NGOs a Conference on Global Trade and Farm Animal Welfare. International organizations, including OIE, FAO, World Bank and the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) were represented and addressed the conference. Also, representatives from all continents were present, including many academics and national governments. The aim of the conference was to raise international support for introducing animal welfare in international trade standard setting bodies, including the OIE and the WTO.

While NGOs involved with animal welfare offered abundant presentations, surprisingly, no presentations from the livestock production and meat processing industries were in the program. However, presentations on scientific evaluations of animal welfare programs concluded that outcome based standards lead to improved animal welfare, not prescriptive animal management measures.

This report highlights presentations of major themes of interest presented at the conference in the ongoing discussion of animal welfare.

Welcome by **Androulla Vassiliou**, European Commissioner for Health and Czech Minister for Agriculture **Mr. Petr Gandalovic**, Presidency of the European Union.

Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou began with the statement that animal welfare should be addressed in bilateral and multilateral agreements. The principles of animal welfare should be based on sound science while respecting the cultural differences. The Commissioner also highlighted the growing importance of animal welfare issues as live animals and animal produce is traded across the world, arguing for their inclusion as a 'non-trade concern' in WTO agreements. She said: "Animal welfare is gaining rapid momentum, not only in the EU but worldwide". The Czech presidency announced that they will be addressing animal welfare at slaughter, animal production and processing and lab animals during their presidency, which runs until the end of June 2009.

Introduction by **Adolfo Sansolini**, Trade Policy Advisor RSPCA, Compassion In World Farming, WSPA, Eurogroup for Animals -
http://www.animalwelfareandtrade.com/media/pdfs/Presentation_Sansolini.pdf

The RSPCA discussed their opinion of recent initiatives in animal welfare. These included Colorado's phasing out of pig stalls, Unilever's phase out of battery cage eggs and the EU Parliament's resolution to have a ban on cloning.

The outcomes of the Second OIE Global Conference on Animal Welfare

Bernard Vallat, Director General, OIE -
http://www.animalwelfareandtrade.com/media/pdfs/Presentation_Vallat.pdf

OIE remarks mentioned that animal welfare is not in the SPS agreement, but the view is that this is a handicap - the dialog with the WTO should be opened. Even though it is not in the WTO SPS agreement, when OIE standards are adopted, they must be adhered to. All countries see that they need international standards to make trade deals these days and science is the common denominator for international standards; those standards should be built upon scientific principles. Animal welfare is not only the domain of the wealthy and more work needs to be done in developing countries. OIE proposed that animal welfare should become part of all veterinary school programs.

Session 1: Animals and Production – Chaired by **Per Olsen**, Chairman of the Working Group of Animal Health and Welfare, COPA-COGECA

The State of Farm Animal Welfare 2009: Farming systems and standards worldwide

Michael Appleby, Welfare Policy Adviser, WSPA -

http://www.animalwelfareandtrade.com/media/pdfs/Presentation_Appleby.pdf

WSPA made several references to initiatives in the United States, such as Smithfield's phasing out of gestation crates due to customer preferences. They said that change in the developed world is led by public concern and governments. For example, the EU saw that there was a broader majority of interest in this topic and subsequently decided to legislate. NGOs are still concerned about intensive production systems; WSPA raised examples of broiler chickens, cloning and live transport conditions for all animals. Several NGOs mentioned cloning. Cloning is linked to animal welfare due to concerns about abnormal fetal development.

Potential implications of animal welfare policies for livestock development -

Daniela Battaglia, Livestock Production Officer, Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department, FAO

Mainly, FAO linked animal welfare to practices that will improve the lives of people. FAO intends to spread knowledge of scientific information on animal welfare. They have developed a database on animal welfare legislation (<http://faolex.fao.org/>).

The European Community approach towards imports of animal products, including animal welfare - Michael Scannell, Adviser to the Animal Health and Welfare Director, European Commission, DG SANCO.

DG SANCO remarked that the EU internal market is of first importance to the EU. It is a very competitive market internally and very sensitive to animal welfare issues. Animal welfare is covered extensively in EU legislation and agriculture payments are requiring strict compliance.

It is difficult, but not impossible, to defend animal welfare concerns in the WTO. Trade partners have a desire to meet EU requirements and want to improve conditions. Animal welfare conditions that are science based contribute to lower production costs. The EU is looking for equivalent measures from exporting countries, not the same measures, and imports are not rejected on the basis of animal welfare concerns. Cloning has been a sensitive issue to the public in terms of animal welfare as well.

It was asked: "Why is there a problem to support animal welfare in the WTO?" It is perceived as a luxury; meanwhile developed countries are too busy working on other issues. It is also believed by some that animal welfare would be used to create technical barriers to trade. Ignoring animal welfare on an international level will not make it go away. The gap is filled by private standards. The question then becomes, "is it OK to leave this to private standards?" The WTO can not ignore this if it wants to address civil society concerns. The WTO has promoted this issue and knows it needs to work harder to win consumer confidence.

The EU will continue to elaborate and insist on including animal welfare in trade agreements (bilateral and regional). The OIE is equipped to address this issue. The EU knows it needs to explain its approach. The EU is calling on trade partners to reconsider their standards.

Session 2: Animals and International Trade - Chaired by: **Ditte Juul-Joergensen**, Head of Unit C1- Sustainable Development and SPS Issues, DG TRADE, European Commission

Best practice on animal welfare: broiler chicken integration industry in Thailand - **Payungsak S. Tanagul**, Representative of the Thai Broiler Processing Exporters Association

Mr. Tanagul indicated that the Thai poultry industry was adopting the 5 freedoms of the EU Amsterdam Treaty.

Brazilian GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) in Livestock - "To Improve the Farm Animal Welfare Standards" - **Márcio Portocarrero**, Secretary of Agricultural Development and Cooperatives, Ministry Of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply, Brazil

Brazil has actually had animal welfare standards since 1934, so basic parameters have been in place for some time. Good management practices are specific to beef production. Organic production regulations cover transport, pre-slaughter, handling, and slaughter. Their integrated production system has traceability and became public policy in 2001, with pilot programs for sheep, goats, beef, dairy and beekeeping. A permanent Ministerial Animal Welfare Technical Commission was established in 2008.

Approaches to Implementing Animal Welfare Programs - **Michael David**, Director of the National Center for Import and Export, Sanitary International Standards Team, USDA – See the presentation at:

http://www.animalwelfareandtrade.com/media/pdfs/Presentation_David.pdf

Session 3: Measuring Animal Welfare – Chaired by **Michel Courat**, Policy Officer/Farm Animals, Eurogroup for Animals

Measuring farm animal welfare objectively and its implications for trade - **Linda Keeling**, Professor of Animal Welfare, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) - http://www.animalwelfareandtrade.com/media/pdfs/Presentation_Keeling.pdf

Prof. Keeling is looking at animal welfare quality to create objective measures with a focus on output-based measures, which she called design and performance. She is researching improving the reliability of those measures and seeking standards that are repeatable by different people and that which can be used by 3rd parties and inspection bodies for verification and certification. (See their site: www.welfarequality.net)

Prof. Keeling stated that appropriate behavior with regard to animal welfare can also be measured - it is just new to our culture. [For example, most are already familiar with agreed good management practices (GMPs) to yield good animal health that are science based, but GMPs for animal welfare are not yet wholly agreed upon.] How to implement it is the more challenging part. She noted that CODEX elaborates standards and codes to facilitate trade. Criteria are the output measures which could be used to get safe food - "appropriate level of welfare". Another example of output based thinking is in measures of food safety, which are primarily output based measures. This thinking is opposed to a more prescriptive viewpoint where animal welfare is legislated, for example specific types of shelter are required. As long as the criteria are output based, there could be flexibility in how the output measures are achieved, which could lend it to use in different countries and cultures.

Session 4: Case studies – Chaired by **David Bowles**, Head of External Affairs, RSPCA

Session 5: Raising standards through voluntary and multilateral means -

Chaired by: **Paola Testori Coggi**, Deputy Director General, DG SANCO

Ms. Testori-Coggi asked how to put animal welfare at the center or core of international agreements.

Provisions for animal welfare in Free Trade Agreements - **Soledad Macarena Vidal Ogueta**, Director of the Veterinary Medicine School, Universidad Mayor, Chile - http://www.animalwelfareandtrade.com/media/pdfs/Presentation_Vidal.pdf

Chile elaborated on how it has developed animal welfare in light of their Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the EU. The discussion was about how there are cultural and regional differences and how societies see animal welfare differently and will need to balance costs and needs. For example, there were many issues with transportation to address.

Chile wants sound, internationally recognized, science based standards. When developing the FTA, they looked at established animal welfare standards and wealth, society and economic concerns. They also got input from OIE.

Farm animal reforms - corporate, consumer, and other non-legislative means - **Miyun Park**, Vice President Farm Animal Welfare, The Humane Society of the United States, USA (HSUS)

HSUS presented their position as seeing a common goal of improving farm animal welfare. HS mentioned Prop 2 in California and called it the single most important animal welfare legislation in U.S. history. HS gave statistics on U.S. views on animal welfare and discussed several initiatives by U.S. companies to improve conditions. They discussed good management practices and how animal welfare can improve meat quality and called animal waste from intensive production is one of the top 2-3 pollutants in the world. HS proposed looking at animal welfare as part of our social improvement goals.

How legislation, consumers and the food industry are working together to end battery cages in the EU - **Peter Stevenson**, Chief Policy Advisor, Compassion In World Farming - http://www.animalwelfareandtrade.com/media/pdfs/Presentation_Stevenson.pdf

Compassion in World Farming's presentation summarized various bans on some production techniques, new legislation on animal welfare, food company initiatives in making improvements, and proposed that margins for farmers are higher on barn and cage free eggs than on battery eggs.

Session 6: Effectiveness of assistance programs - Chaired by: **Samuel Jutzi**, Director, Animal Production and Health Division, Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department, FAO

Animal welfare as a challenge and opportunity for urban public live markets and slaughterhouses - **Sandra Cointreau**, Solid Waste Management Advisor, World Bank - http://www.animalwelfareandtrade.com/media/pdfs/Presentation_Cointreau.pdf

World Bank gave a contextual description of the current livestock slaughter situation, human and animal conditions, and child labor in developing countries. There has been no lending to improve slaughter houses in the multi-lateral community as they are seen as private goods. Developing countries with live markets and slaughterhouses need regulatory reform, best practices guidelines, stakeholder awareness, increased veterinary capacity, awareness of food safety, animal welfare standards and improved hygiene.

The Development of Animal Welfare Strategies for Asia, the Far East and Oceania - Gardner Murray, President of the Regional Commission for OIE Asia, the Far East and Oceania, Australia (Presented by Allen Bryce, Australia Agricultural Attaché)

The presentation focused on the need for an international plan for all stakeholders. However, countries should have national plans which are tailored to meet individual nations' needs. The presentation reviewed OIE guiding principles and the Regional Animal Welfare Strategy for Asia, the Far East and Oceania (RAWS) vision – respect animal welfare but include socioeconomic concerns, which vary by region. The RAWS strategy will need endorsement by OIE, to show stakeholders the benefits and get political support.

Animal welfare as a challenge and opportunity for family farmers worldwide - Ajay Vashee, President, International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), Zambia

IFAP made the point that many farmers in the developing world do not have knowledge of animal welfare principles. International demands have to stay reasonable: Livestock are not pets and consumers are more and more separated from production of their food. Additionally, animal welfare is contingent on farmer welfare. IFAP supports OIE, but depending on the structure of the market, farmers may not get compensated for increased production costs.

OIE needs to: 1) ensure that animal welfare is not an unfair barrier to trade and 2) raise animal welfare practices to an agreed acceptable level in countries where standards are lower.

IFAP remarked that there is no mention of animal welfare in WTO as there are more pressing societal issues to address. The WTO SPS agreement recognizes OIE, but at this stage OIE animal welfare guidelines can not be referenced in WTO SPS disputes.

Session 7: Working groups – Chaired by **Stella Maris Huertas**, Faculty of Veterinary, University of Uruguay

Three working groups were organized in parallel sessions. Third countries were mostly included in the third working group.

3rd working group: Responses, challenges and opportunities from farmers in applying higher welfare standards as a result of new laws and policies - Chaired by **Mr. Neil Parish**, Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development European Parliament

Key speaker: **Leigh Grant**, Chief Executive, Freedom Food, UK: **Delivering positive change and providing added value for producers**

Freedom Food explained their marketing position in the UK. Freedom Food does marketing and some inspection of participant farms, and those farms pay to be part of the marketing

scheme. The focus of the presentation seemed to be on egg sales, even though beef, pork and poultry meat are also in the program. The speaker was unable to expand on what kinds of profit margins farmers were able to realize, even though farmers are paying to be part of the program and for some inspection.

Conclusions as made by **Mr. Neil Parish**: There are many multi-lateral forums for animal welfare. There needs to be rapid implementation, but religion and culture have to be accounted for. Governments have to ensure that standards respond to the science that is available, especially in developing countries. This can not become a burden on developing countries. International organizations have resources that need to be made available to these countries.

Conclusions - Paola Testori Coggi, Deputy Director General, DG SANCO and **David O'Sullivan**, Director General, DG Trade

Conclusion from **Ms. Paola Testori Coggi**

She discussed how to define standards: discussions in the conference seemed to converge towards OUTCOME based approaches using science based indicators. Equivalency could also be discussed in terms of animal welfare.

With respect to the WTO, Ms. Testori-Coggi believed that the EU should work to integrate animal welfare into the rule of law. In the EC, it took six years to incorporate animal welfare into bilateral and multilateral agreements. This encourages the EU and it helps third countries implementing OIE standards. The EU creates new market opportunities with these animal welfare standards. Maybe there are too many private schemes, but the EU sees this as an opportunity to create opportunities for farmers. Consumers all over the world are ready to pay more for value-added.

Conclusions from **Mr. David Sullivan**

Mr. Sullivan saw open skepticism that animal welfare is an excuse for protectionism and remarked that it is a complex issue. Science based discussion in WTO could be engaged if those discussions are based on established international standards in trade policy. Animal welfare has an effect on the trade relationship in terms of economic benefits. The EC is working to increase interest in animal welfare in bilateral and multilateral agreements. Mr. Sullivan acknowledged that not all countries can address animal welfare in the same way.

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