

BEUC-X-2024-114

17 December 2024

Subject: Plenary debate on the revision of animal welfare legislation

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

Ahead of this week's plenary discussion on animal welfare, we are writing on behalf of BEUC, the European Consumer Organisation, to share with you insights from [our recent survey](#) on EU consumers' attitudes towards farm animal welfare. This report confirms widespread public support for higher welfare standards and reveals actionable steps for EU policymakers to align legislation with consumer expectations and scientific evidence.

Key findings include:

- **Broad support for stronger welfare standards:** Animal welfare is an important issue to EU consumers. Our survey showed that a strong majority, 9 in 10, want new laws to improve farmed animal welfare by increasing living space, banning cages, and ending mutilations.
- **Consumer willingness to pay more:** 7 in 10 consumers are willing to pay for better welfare, to varying levels. While a quarter (24%) of survey respondents say that they can easily afford meat, 17% have serious difficulties buying meat. While ensuring that farmers adopting higher welfare systems are rewarded for their efforts, EU and national governments should pay attention to how the impact of moving towards higher welfare systems is distributed – consumers should not bear a disproportionate part of the costs compared to the rest of the value chain.



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- **Consumers want and need more and better animal welfare labelling:** Over 6 in 10 consumers feel they have a low level of knowledge on animal welfare practices. Unsurprisingly therefore, a large majority of consumers, 7 in 10, want method-of-production labelling extended to all animal products, not just eggs as is currently the case. At the same time, egg labelling could already be improved as most egg-buying consumers have not noticed it (22%) or do not understand it well (33%).



- **Low trust in voluntary claims and labels:** In the absence of mandatory animal welfare labels, there are now a significant number of voluntary animal welfare claims across the EU. However, only 23% of consumers who have noticed these claims trust them. Our survey highlights the reputational (and financial) risks companies run should consumers discover that an animal welfare claim is misleading or false: the most common reaction for consumers would be to stop buying from that company.

Despite the European Commission's commitment to revising animal welfare legislation by 2023, most planned initiatives have not been fulfilled. Notably, crucial proposals on farm-level welfare and comprehensive labeling remain unpublished.

Furthermore, we urge you to support an ambitious revision of the recently introduced animal transport proposal to align with consumer expectations and EFSA's scientific recommendations. These recommendations emphasize minimizing transport duration, providing adequate space, and ensuring proper ventilation and monitoring to improve animal welfare during transport. Any transport reform must reflect these principles to meet consumer expectations and reflect scientific evidence.

The recommendations of the Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture, endorsed by the 29 participating stakeholders from across the agri-food chain including BEUC, further underlined the importance of improvements in welfare standards. The final report called for the European Commission to come forward with a proposal to revise animal welfare legislation by 2026 as well as a 'comprehensive, multi-tiered animal welfare labelling system' for all primary and processed EU meat and dairy products.

We urge you to champion these concerns and ensure the EU delivers on its commitments to farm animal welfare.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Calvert
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