

Farm to Fork: The opportunity to reform EU food and farming

Priorities for the Farm to Fork strategy, March 2020

The Farm to Fork Strategy presents an ideal opportunity for the EU to lead the transition to food and farming systems which emphasise healthy plant-based nutrition, and which respect animal welfare, the health and boundaries of the planet and its ecosystems.

Crucially we need a 70% reduction in consumption of land animal products and a 50% reduction in fish by 2030, and to end the use of cages in animal farming by 2027.

1. By 2030: Binding target of 70% reduction in consumption of land animal products and 50% reduction in consumption of fish in the EU

The majority of the nine billion sentient farmed animals and the hundreds of millions of farmed fish slaughtered in the EU each year endure bleak lives in industrial farms. Millions will suffer during transport and slaughter. Billions of wild fish suffer during capture and slaughter. In addition, industrial animal farming contributes to multiple harms to the planet and human health.

As well as the binding reduction targets, the F2F process should include the development of sustainable dietary guidelines, with supporting policy making it easy and affordable for citizens to enjoy plant-rich diets.

Animals and fish slaughtered in the EU ¹

Animals	No. slaughtered 2018
Chickens and male chicks	7.7 billion
Pigs	261 million
Turkeys	219 million
Ducks	172 million
Rabbits	147 million
Sheep	53 million
Goats	6 million
Cattle	26 million
Geese & guinea fowl	14 million
Total slaughtered	Approx. 9 billion

Fish farming and capture of wild fish

In 2017 the EU farmed between **560 million - 1.3 billion** fish.

Member states also catch somewhere between **58 - 91 billion** wild fish in EU waters annually.

2. Legislation on land animal and fish welfare

End the Cage Age in Europe by 2027

Animal and fish welfare: Industrial animal farming of land animals causes immense physical and psychological animal suffering, due to selective breeding for unnaturally fast growth and high yield, the confinement of animals in tens or hundreds of thousands in systems using extremely restrictive cages and crates, and/or often barren, dark sheds. Hundreds of millions of fish endure a bleak existence in underwater factory farms.

End the Cage Age in Europe by 2027: Over 350 million land animals in the EU are caged for part or all of their lives, unable to carry out most, if any, basic natural behaviours. By 2021, the Commission should present legislative proposals for a phase-out of the use of cages in EU animal

agriculture, and require that imports meet the same standards. This could be included in a revision of Directive 98/58/EC on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes. **The use of cages should be ended by 2027.**

Existing legislation: It is essential to strengthen and rigorously enforce existing legislation in member states, including the Transport Regulation and the Pigs Directive.

Need for species-specific legislation: The F2F process should also introduce new species-specific legislation for farmed animal species who are not currently protected, including fish, and incorporating stringent enforcement measures with meaningful penalties for non-compliance.

An immediate end to live animal exports to third countries: Repeated investigations over many years show systematic breaches of the EU Transport Regulation, and that handling and slaughter in importing countries cause immense animal suffering.

Limit journey times of live animal transport: There should be a limit on maximum journey time for transport of animals for slaughter or fattening of 8 hours and 4 hours for poultry, and strict enforcement of the Transport Regulation by member states.

Pre-slaughter stunning and slaughter:

- The EU should prohibit slaughter without effective, humane methods of pre-stunning.
- Urgent attention must be paid to the suffering caused by inappropriate methods of stunning before slaughter, outlawing the use of high levels of CO₂ in pig stunning and slaughter, and addressing the ineffective stunning of chickens in electrical waterbaths which causes severe animal welfare problems.
- Catching, handling and slaughter techniques are in general very poor for fish welfare, and humane methods must be urgently implemented.

Information on the origin of food: Method of production labelling on animal products, as is currently the case for shell eggs (Reg .589/2008), is the most meaningful label for animal welfare and by 2027 should be mandatory EU-wide on all animal products.

3. Industrial animal farming: Environmental damage, resource waste, human health, antimicrobials and avoiding unintended consequences for farm animal welfare

Environment damage, food waste, and impaired human health: As well as being a major cause of animal suffering, industrial animal farming has significant harmful impacts:

- It is a major GHG and nitrogen polluter; the huge demand for cereals for concentrate feed has fuelled the intensification of crop production. This, with its monocultures and chemical pesticides and fertilisers, has led to soil degradation, overuse and pollution of water, biodiversity loss, and air pollution.² In addition, feeding concentrates to farmed animals and carnivorous farmed fish is a form of food waste.
- It contributes to impaired human health from heart diseases, obesity, diabetes type 2, certain cancers from overconsumption of red and processed meat, respiratory diseases from air pollution, and health problems due to exposure to pesticides. Widespread inappropriate use of antimicrobials in animal production contributes to the rising threat of antibiotic resistance.

Antimicrobials: Regulation 2019/6 entering into force in 2022 prohibits the routine preventive use of antimicrobials in farm animals. Regular antimicrobial use has allowed animals to be kept in industrial animal production, a system which restricts natural behaviour. The animals experience poor welfare and, due to stress, reduced immune competence. Rethinking animal production systems and improving animal welfare will be essential in reducing farm use of antimicrobials.

Avoiding unintended consequences for farm animal welfare: We support policy for reduction of harmful chemicals and those which seek to reduce the environmental impacts of food and farming systems as long as they do not inadvertently promote industrial, indoor confinement systems for animals. All food and farming policies that affect animals must place full regard for animal sentience at the centre.

For example, while seeking to reduce GHG emissions from animal production, we should not switch from cattle, sheep and goats (ruminants) to either pigs and poultry (monogastrics) or fish. The vast majority of pigs and poultry are farmed in industrial systems, with their multiple detrimental impacts. Fish farming and the capture of wild fish also have severe welfare issues.

4. Supporting higher welfare producers

The price of animal products from industrial operations needs to internalise the hidden environmental, human health and animal welfare costs. The CAP must stop subsidising inhumane and unsustainable industrial animal agriculture. Marketing measures promoting the consumption of animal products should be ended in favour of healthy plant-based foods.

F2F, the CAP, and public procurement bodies should support producers who farm to the best animal welfare and environmental standards, benefitting the economic and social health of rural and coastal communities. Imports should be required to meet similarly stringent standards.

Indicative timetable for animal welfare reform in F2F

Year	Factor	% Decrease ▼ or Increase ▲ from current levels
Immediate	End to live animal exports to third countries	▼ 100% DECREASE
2021	Presentation of legislative measures to phase out the use of cages in EU animal agriculture by 2027	
2021	Limit on maximum journey time for transport of animals for slaughter or fattening of 8 hours and 4 hours for poultry.	▲ Potentially significant increase in animal welfare
2022	Entry into force of Regulation (EU) 2019/6 on veterinary medicinal products	▼ END to routine preventive use of antimicrobials
2022	Strengthening and strict enforcement of existing legislation; presentation of new legislation for farmed animal species not currently protected, to come into force in 2027.	▲ Potentially significant increase in animal welfare
2025	End to use of high concentrations of CO ₂ in stunning of pigs and significant reduction in use of electrical waterbath for stunning poultry	▲ Significant increase in animal welfare
2027 or earlier	Mandatory method of production labelling on all food items containing animal products.	▲ 100% INCREASE in transparent labelling
2027	End use of cages in animal farming across EU and entry into force of strengthened Dir. 98/58 and species-specific animal welfare legislation	▲ 100% INCREASE of cage-free farm animals
2030	Reduced consumption of animal products	▼ 70% DECREASE
2030	Reduced consumption of fish	▼ 50% DECREASE
2030	Increase consumption of plant-rich foods	▲ 50% INCREASE

References

¹ Data sources: Land animals excluding rabbits - FAOSTAT; Rabbit data - European Commission; Fish - Mood, A., & Brooke, P. (2019). Fish number estimates based on FAO 2016 data, according to methods published on fishcount.org

² Reduced consumption of meat and dairy is needed if the EU is to meet its target of achieving a climate-neutral EU by 2050. A 50% reduction in EU meat and dairy consumption would lead to reduced heart disease, a 23% reduction in cropland use, a 20% decrease in the use and pollution of surface- and ground-water, a 37-42% fall in nitrogen emissions from agriculture, and a 75% decrease in soy imports for animal feed.