



The ongoing discussions on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy reached a new milestone this month. Member States' National Strategy Plans (NSPs), to be submitted for approval by the end of 2022, are being given incentives for new targets to be met to ensure better protection of animal welfare.

In parallel, a strong mobilisation of citizens, stakeholders and MEPs has led to the registration of a new European Citizens' Initiative calling for the end of the slaughter age and a request to the European Commission for the designation of a EU Commissioner for Animal Welfare. All these actions, if confirmed, could have an impact on our profession.

Finally, the work on the EU strategy on vaccination of poultry to limit the spread of avian influenza is still ongoing in the Council of the European Union, a subject and exchange that we will actively participate and continue to follow closely.

Piotr KWIECIŃSKI, UEVP President

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PRIORITY ISSUES

Latest EU institutional news

Latest developments on the CAP reform

In the framework of the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the ongoing discussions concerning the approval of the National Strategic Plans (NSP) of the Member States, **the European Commission has published on 28 April the content of the letters of observations to several countries on their respective NSP.** These are the following 19 countries: Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

As a reminder, all Member States were required to submit their respective NSP to the European Commission by January 2022. The purpose of these letters of observations is to identify elements of the plans that require further explanation, clarification or adjustment before the approval of the European Commission.

The publication of all the European Commission's letters of observation are accompanied by comments from the Member States, providing a first overview of their reactions, with the exception of Italy, Portugal, Cyprus and Malta.

As regards the issue of animal welfare, all the European Commission's observation letters contain requests for clarification to increase the level of ambition in this field. Indeed, while it should be noted that some Member States attach more importance to animal welfare than others, none of them are achieving the objectives of the CAP. In addition, the European Commission has asked Member States to consider issues such as tail docking (which is currently not respected by a number of Member States, although it is illegal under EU law), and the promotion of keeping laying hens and sows in non-confined living systems to facilitate the transition to the end of the cage age.

The aim now is to find a compromise in order to have a finalised version of the NSP **before 2023**, when the CAP reform comes into force.

The latest developments in the Farm to Fork negotiations at EU level

At a [hearing](#) on the war in Ukraine in the European Parliament on 28 April, the European Commission's Executive Vice-President in charge of the Green Deal, Frans TIMMERMANS, regretted the use of the "*pretext of the war in Ukraine*" by some actors and stakeholders to "*stop the implementation of the Farm to Fork strategy*". He was annoyed, and stated that this argument was "*irresponsible and, frankly, incredibly dishonest*".

While there is a need to carefully monitor European food supplies to avoid shortages, the problem is not the amount of maize or wheat available, but the logistical and financial difficulties of transporting and buying food, he explained.

In response to these statements, Copa-Cogeca [expressed](#) its total disagreement to the press on 29 April that it disagreed completely and contested these claims. However, Copa-Cogeca welcomed the measures already adopted by EU co-legislators to help EU farmers (including the €500 million aid and the return to cultivation of set-aside land in 2022).

Update on EMA activities

Decisions of the Committee for Medicinal Products for Veterinary Use (CVMP)

The Committee for Medicinal Products for Veterinary Use (CVMP) held a [meeting](#) from 11 to 13 April 2022.

The Committee adopted a positive opinions for an application for a variation requiring assessment concerning quality-related changes for **Purevax RC, Purevax RCP FeLV, Purevax RCPCh FeLV, Purevax RCPCh, Purevax RCP**.

The Committee adopted a positive opinion for a type II variation application concerning the reduction of the minimum protective dose for **Gumbohatch** together with other quality-related changes.

The Committee adopted fourth positive opinions for a type II variation applications concerning quality-related changes for: **Bonqat** (grouped), **NexGard Spectra**, **Rabitec** (grouped) and **Suprelorin**.

The Committee adopted five scientific advice reports further to requests for initial advice concerned two biological products and three pharmaceutical products. The respective target species were dogs, horses (two products), pigs, and chickens.

Regarding pharmacovigilance, the Committee reviewed the Periodic Safety Update Reports (PSURs) for **Gumbohatch, HorStem, SevoFlo, and Virbagen Omega**, and concluded that no further action was required. The Committee reviewed the Marketing authorisation holder's appeals of the January 2022 Periodic Safety Update Report (PSUR) outcome for **Stelfonta** and confirmed its previous recommendation for changes to the summary of product characteristics. In addition, the Committee adopted a recommendation for changes to the summary of product characteristics for **BTVPUR** as an outcome of signal detection activities.

The Committee adopted a [revised procedure](#) for **nomination and appointment of co-opted members**.

Latest news on animal health

Debate on vaccination of poultry against avian influenza in the Council of the European Union

At the Agriculture Council on 7 April, the implementation of a **vaccination strategy for poultry against avian influenza** was discussed by the Member States' agriculture ministers.

French Minister Julien DENORMANDIE, who chaired the debate, presented this vaccination campaign as *"complementing current biosecurity measures and not replacing them"*. According to him, vaccination would reduce the number of healthy poultry that have to be slaughtered to limit the spread of avian flu. While national authorities are required to carry out official controls on the compliance of the level of health protection against risks, the European Commission services monitor EU countries in the implementation of these controls and enforcement activities.

However, several countries, including Denmark, Spain, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Belgium, the Netherlands and Hungary, expressed concern about the potentially negative effects of such a strategy on the poultry trade. The elements highlighted were the following:

- **With regard to international trade:** The risk of third countries banning imports of EU poultry from countries or regions where vaccination has been implemented.
- **In relation to vaccination:** The vaccine is considered by some as "not yet mature", with persistent technical and scientific problems.

In response, the European Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz WOJCIECHOWSKI, highlighted the high number of cases of avian influenza in Europe and stated that *"as soon as the vaccines are available, the European Commission will support EU Member States in the deployment of vaccination strategies"*, adding that he would

like to “encourage non-European countries to accept vaccination as a complementary tool to limit the spread of the virus, in accordance with the rules of the World Organisation for Animal Health”.

Following this, the French Presidency of the Council of the EU (PFUE) transmitted on 12 April, [draft conclusions](#) on the need to launch a European strategy for vaccination against avian influenza. The draft conclusions call on the European Commission and Member States to “intensify their efforts to develop and implement vaccination for the prevention and control of avian influenza”, and invite written comments on the draft.

In its presentation, the draft conclusions emphasise the following points:

- The creation of “safe and effective” vaccines that provide sufficient immunity against circulating strains of the virus, that are easy to administer and that are compatible with the farming practices present in the EU, allowing infected animals to be distinguished from vaccinated animals.
- On the trade aspect, the PFUE advises to initiate a dialogue with the EU's trading partners and to promote discussions within the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) with a view to developing international standards to “facilitate safe trade, building on the concepts of regionalisation and compartmentalisation”.

The Agriculture Council will return to this issue in June.

Answer of the European Commission to a written parliamentary question on the establishment of a review system based on the active substance (and other alternatives) for an environmental risk assessment of veterinary medicinal products

Following the [written parliamentary question](#) by MEP Martin HÄUSLING (Greens/EFA, Germany) on the publication of a report requested by the European Commission asking for the launch of a feasibility study on the introduction of a review system based on the active substance (so-called "monograph") and other alternatives in the environmental risk assessment of veterinary medicines, the European Commission has given its [response](#).

The European Commission confirms that a feasibility study under [Regulation 2019/6](#) on veterinary medicinal products will have to be carried out. The European Commission explains its delay by the fact that it has been focusing on the finalisation of the delegated and implementing acts necessary for the implementation of this regulation.

While several secondary acts have already been adopted, several acts related to the fight against antimicrobial resistance have yet to be approved. The European Commission states that following their publication - considered a priority as part of the EU's overall approach to the fight against antimicrobial resistance - it will proceed to launch the feasibility study. Once the results have been obtained and published, the European Commission will assess the need for a legislative proposal.

OTHER ISSUES

Latest news on animal welfare

Registration of a new citizens' initiative to improve the welfare of livestock by the European Commission

As an echo to the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) “End the cage age”, the European Commission [announced](#) on 27 April the registration of a [new ECI](#) entitled “End the slaughter age”.

This new initiative proposes to exclude livestock farming from the activities eligible for agricultural subsidies, and instead to promote support for alternatives to meat, such as cellular agriculture and the cultivation of plant proteins, through incentives for the production and marketing of such products.

Its organisers now have six months to open the collection of signatures. If within a year they collect one million signatures from at least seven different Member States, the European Commission will have to take the initiative into account and decide whether or not to proceed with it, and justify its position.

MEPs mobilisation on the designation of a EU Commissioner for Animal Welfare

On 28 April, almost 130 MEPs issued a request for an [oral answer](#) to the European Commission on the designation of a European Commissioner for animal welfare.

Referring to Article 13 of the [Treaty](#) on the Functioning of the European Union (which recognises animals as sentient beings) as well as responses to Eurobarometer surveys, the signatories believe that a European Commissioner for Animal Welfare would *“bring more influence and power to the EU institutions on this issue, the importance of which has been clearly recognised by the current Commission”*.

Following the [#EUforAnimals](#) campaign, which attracted more than 160 000 EU citizens and nearly 170 MEPs from all political groups, the signatories of this oral question propose that this Commissioner should be given a portfolio entitled *“Health, Food Safety and Animal Welfare”*, along with the creation of a dedicated animal welfare directorate within the Commission's Health and Food Safety Directorate-General.

“This would be an important political decision that would make the EU institutions more accountable for their animal welfare performance and thus enhance the coherence, effectiveness and impact of animal welfare policies” they argue.

The European Commission now has **until 29 July 2022** to respond to this oral question.

Publication of a contribution from the European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC) on animal testing in research, regulatory testing and education

In response to the European Parliament's [resolution](#) (dated 16 September 2021) calling on the European Commission to accelerate the transition to animal-free innovation in research, regulatory testing and education, the European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC) published a [contribution](#) on 7 April outlining actions to support [Directive 2010/63](#) on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes. These include:

- New approaches in **biomedical research and chemical testing**
- **New test methods**, as mentioned in the OECD guidelines, to achieve a key milestone in the mutual acceptance of data and standardisation
- **Education and training initiatives** in schools and universities.

Publication of the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) report on Spain's control system for the welfare of laying hens

According to a [report](#) by the European Union's Food and Veterinary Office (FVO), published on 13 April, Spain has a 'satisfactory' system of official welfare controls on laying hens in the country. The report concludes that

the administrative and legal framework “adequately supports the system of official animal welfare controls in place”.

The implementation of these controls covers the entire production chain of laying hens (including farming, production and labelling) and includes actions in case of non-compliance with animal welfare requirements.

Exchange of views on the state of play of the Common Agricultural Policy regarding animal welfare in the Intergroup on Animal Welfare and Conservation of the European Parliament

On 7 April, the Intergroup on Animal Welfare and Conservation in the European Parliament organised a [conference](#) on “The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and animal welfare”.

On this occasion, the Deputy Director General, Pierre BASCOU, in charge of sustainability for the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) within the European Commission, presented the state of play of the 19 Member States that submitted their National Strategic Plans (NSP) under the CAP. While some clarifications are still needed to specify the level of ambition of the measures, all NSPs submitted have recognised the importance of animal welfare.

More specifically, in terms of allocation, all 19 Member States included animal welfare within the first pillar of their NSPs, while 16 also proposed related welfare interventions within the second pillar - including reduced stocking densities for cattle and pigs and more optimal protection for laying hens-.

On the basis of the European Commission's observation letters, Pierre BASCOU stressed the need for certain Member States to comply with the current regulations on the cutting of piglet tails, and encouraged a transition to non-cage farming. Lastly, while the new CAP objectives already allow for the application of new standards in this area, these will also be complemented by the ongoing review of EU animal welfare legislation due in the **4th quarter of 2023**.

Finally, on the same subject, [an exchange](#) with the European Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz WOJIECHOWSKI, was also organised by the Intergroup on 3 May in Strasbourg. This open discussion with MEPs allowed to consider the position of the European Commission on potential provisions that can be taken within the NSPs regarding the protection of animal welfare as well as within a set of key dossiers that are ongoing, such as:

- Implementation of the "farm to fork" strategy for sustainable, healthy and quality food.
- Implementation of the "zero pollution" initiative to avoid intensive farming and reduce the use of pesticides, fertilisers and chemicals
- The envisaged marketing standards for the production of foie gras
- The European Action Plan for Organic Farming.

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