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“2020 Strategy”

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COMPASSION IN WORLD FARMING - IRELAND: SUBMISSION TO THE “2020 STRATEGY”

1.0 Summary of Compassion in World Farming - Ireland’s submission

Compassion in World Farming - Ireland is part of the leading international farm animal welfare organisation, Compassion in World Farming. Our submission relates to the future direction for farm animal production in Ireland.

Compassion in World Farming - Ireland believes that the way forward for Ireland is to produce high quality farm animal products from sustainable farming systems that have high animal welfare and environmental standards.

Climate change concerns must be addressed. Ireland is well-suited to sustainable farm animal production systems. In particular, Irish cattle are grass-fed and reared extensively, which is a good basis for sustainable farming. However, pig and poultry production in Ireland is predominantly intensive and we advocate a move to sustainable, animal welfare-friendly systems for these animals.

EU consumer interest in animal welfare-friendly produce is growing. We believe that farmers should be rewarded for applying higher animal welfare standards. We have proposed that CAP funds should be used to help farmers change to high animal welfare production systems.

Exports should be in the form of meat, not live animals. This best protects animals’ welfare and also keeps jobs in Ireland. In particular, humane alternatives to the export of young calves should be sought, as they are particularly poor travellers.

The agreed 3 year phase-out of fur farming should be put in place without delay because fur farming is totally incompatible with an image of high quality farming.

Finally, we draw attention to an Article in the Lisbon Treaty that recognises animals as sentient beings and says that full regard must be paid to the welfare requirements of animals

2.0 About Compassion in World Farming - Ireland

Compassion in World Farming - Ireland is part of the leading international farm animal welfare organisation, Compassion in World Farming.

We advocate farming methods that benefit people and the environment as well as animal welfare. Our arguments for good animal welfare standards are based on scientific evidence, sound research, and practical application of scientific findings to farm systems.

As we are a farm animal welfare organisation, this submission is concerned only with aspects of agri-food production that relate to farm animals.

3.0 High quality production with high animal welfare standards

Regarding farm animal production, it is difficult for EU farmers to compete with third country producers on cost. This is not because of differences in animal welfare standards, but because third country producers have lower animal feed, labour and land costs. Even when third country producers operate to the same welfare standards as EU farmers, they are able to out-compete EU producers because of their lower basic costs.

Therefore, instead of trying to compete on cost, Compassion in World Farming believes that the future for EU farmers lies in competing on the basis of quality.

With regard to quality-based production, Ireland has many advantages over other EU countries, for example:

- Ireland already has a "green" image;
- Ireland's environment is clean;
- The geographical location of Ireland, as an island to the west of continental Europe, means that it is not subject to air, soil or water pollution from other countries;
- Ireland has plentiful clean water;
- The quality of grass for grazing farm animals is good;
- As an island, there is a greater degree of control regarding animal disease protection;
- Ireland has a long history of farming, giving it recognised expertise in the production of farm animals;
- Ireland's location on the periphery of Europe provides good access to export markets on the Continent.
- Ireland's low population density means that there is suitable land for less intensive, more sustainable methods of farming.

Compassion in World Farming believes that good farm animal welfare standards are seen by consumers as an integral component of food quality. Produce cannot be marketed as high quality if it is from animals that are kept in systems that do not meet their welfare needs.

We believe that Ireland should market itself - to the home market and, in particular, to export markets - as a country that produces high quality food from a clean environment where all farm animals are protected by high animal welfare standards.

Most of the pig and poultry production in the Republic of Ireland is intensive. In order to meet the higher animal welfare standards required for high quality production, we advocate that pig and poultry farmers are encouraged to change to less intensive, more animal welfare-friendly production systems. (This is discussed in more detail in Section 6.0.)

3.1 Rewarding farmers for higher animal welfare standards

Compassion in World Farming believes that farmers should get financial assistance for changing to systems with high animal welfare standards. There is evidence that consumers support this principle. For example, an EU survey¹ on “Attitudes of EU citizens towards Animal Welfare”, carried out by the European Commission, found that:

“Europeans have very clear opinions on whether producers should be rewarded for applying higher standards. Over 7 out of 10 (72%) agree with the principle that financial compensation should be used to alleviate any higher costs associated with improving such welfare standards.”

Compassion in World Farming - Ireland, in its “Submission on CAP after 2013” for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food’s consultation process in 2009, proposed that farmers should be assisted by the CAP to adopt high animal welfare standards.

4.0 Sustainable farming of animals

It is important for Ireland to move to sustainable farming systems that will help to combat climate change. High standards of animal welfare can support farming’s climate change and environmental goals, and we predict that demand for food from sustainable farming systems will grow.

The lack of sustainability of intensive farm animal production stems in a large part from its dependence on feeding substantial quantities of cereals and soya to animals. Several kilograms of cereals and soya have to be fed to animals in order to produce 1 kilogram of intensively produced meat. This represents a wasteful use of these crops and of the increasingly scarce resources of land, water and energy used to grow them. It results in much more arable land, water and energy being needed to produce a unit of food energy from intensively produced meat than from cattle raised on grass (or from plant crops).²

It should be taken into account that intensive farming systems in the EU can have an impact outside Europe as the growing of feed crops in South America for intensive farm animal production in the EU is responsible for deforestation which leads to biodiversity losses and substantial greenhouse

gas emissions. The growing of soya as feed for intensively produced animals is one of the main drivers behind the destruction of the Amazon rainforest and the savannah lands of South America. Such land-use change releases considerable amounts of stored carbon into the atmosphere.²

In order for Irish farming to become more sustainable, Compassion in World Farming - Ireland believes that the “2020 Strategy” should encourage pig and poultry farmers to move from intensive to more extensive forms of animal husbandry with high standards of animal welfare. This would lead not just to improved welfare of pigs and poultry but to healthier animals with reduced vulnerability to disease, reduced environmental pollution and to a less wasteful use of global resources of land, water and energy.

With regard to cattle, recent research shows that the carbon sequestering benefits of cattle kept on temperate unfertilised grassland, without being given additional feed inputs, outweigh their methane and nitrous oxide emissions.³

Cattle in the Republic of Ireland are produced extensively and grass-fed, which is a good basis for sustainability. Minimising the use of fertilizer on pasture (synthetic fertilisers are responsible for emissions of carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide²) and minimising the use of cereal feed is better for the environment and climate change. We believe that cattle production in Ireland should aim to be as environmentally-friendly as possible, with full advantage taken of the marketing opportunity for this type of produce.

5.0 Consumer interest in higher animal welfare standards

European consumers are increasingly becoming interested in farm animal welfare. For example, the Eurobarometer survey of attitudes of EU citizens to animal welfare¹, mentioned earlier, found that:

- “there is a considerable interest in animal welfare standards”;
- “A majority (63%) (*of EU citizens*) show some willingness to change their usual place of shopping in order to be able to purchase more animal welfare-friendly products.”

Another indication of growing interest in animal welfare-friendly food production is the move away from eggs produced from hens in battery cages. Figures show that the share of the EU laying hen flock kept in non-cage systems rose between 1993 and 2003 from 3.56% to 11.93%.⁴

Further evidence of consumers’ interest in improving farm animal welfare standards is the changes in EU farm animal welfare legislation that have resulted, in part, from public pressure, e.g.:

- the veal crate has now been prohibited throughout the EU;
- barren battery cages for egg-laying hens will be illegal in the EU from 2012;
- from 2013, it will be illegal in the EU to confine pregnant sows in individual stalls after the first 4 weeks of pregnancy.

Compassion in World Farming believes that good welfare will increasingly become a marketing advantage as demand by European consumers for animal welfare-friendly products continues to grow.

6.0 Animal welfare standards

As mentioned earlier, the majority of pigs and poultry in the Republic of Ireland are reared in intensive systems. This type of production is not in line with high quality or sustainable farming. Compassion in World Farming - Ireland is of the view that these systems should be replaced by less intensive systems that provide a good environment for pigs and poultry and have high animal welfare standards.

Below is a summary of some key improvements for egg-laying hens, broiler (meat) chickens, and pigs that would result in higher animal welfare standards.

6.1 Egg-laying hens

It is Compassion in World Farming - Ireland's view that, when the ban on conventional battery cages comes into force in 2012, producers in Ireland should be encouraged to change to high welfare non-cage systems, i.e. either free-range outdoor production or well-designed indoor barn systems.

6.2 Broiler chickens (meat chickens)

Well-designed and well-managed free-range systems offer high standards of welfare for broiler chicken production. However, improvements can also be made to the welfare standard in indoor systems by providing chickens with more space and environmental enrichment. In particular, the use of slower-growing breeds would benefit the welfare of broiler chickens substantially by lowering the incidence of leg and heart problems.

6.3 Pigs

Where practical, outdoor free-range systems offer a high standard of welfare. There are also high welfare indoor systems where pigs are provided with sufficient quantities of effective enrichment materials, such as straw, and where conditions are such that tail docking is unlikely to be necessary. In any case, EU law requires pigs to be provided with effective enrichment material, and prohibits routine tail-docking.

The use of stalls for pregnant sows is not compatible with high welfare production, even for the first 4 weeks of pregnancy (which will be permitted after the EU sow stall ban comes into effect in 2013).

Humane alternatives to farrowing crates should be used, where sows have freedom of movement and can carry out their natural nest-building behaviour, and piglets are protected from injury.

7.0 Live animal exports

Compassion in World Farming - Ireland is of the view that long distance transport of animals causes unnecessary stress and suffering, and that all exports should be in the form of meat. Not only do meat exports allow for the protection of animals' welfare, but if animals are reared and fattened in Ireland then this provides employment in the meat industry and adds value to the product being exported.

In 2009, a total of 196,291 live cattle were exported from the Republic of Ireland to continental Europe⁵; and approximately 100,000 sheep⁶, to all destinations.

Expert veterinary opinion recognises that animals should not be transported over long distances. For example, a Position Paper (2008) by the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe⁷ says:

“Animals should be reared as close as possible to the premises on which they are born and slaughtered as close as possible to the point of production.”

Exporting live animals, rather than rearing, fattening and slaughtering these animals in Ireland, leads to a loss of jobs in farming, slaughter plants, the meat processing industry and allied industries. Regarding the loss of jobs in meat plants, a recent report in the media⁸ quoted the director of Meat Industry Ireland as saying:

“every 100,000 animals going out as live export is the equivalent of two meat plants and 400 or 500 jobs”.

7.1 Calf exports

In 2009, 115,069 calves were exported from the Republic of Ireland to continental Europe⁵, many to intensive veal units in the Netherlands.

Scientific research indicates that young calves are particularly susceptible to transport stress. A report for Compassion in World Farming (UK) by Dr Claire Weeks, BSc, PhD⁹, concludes that:

“Recent evidence supports previous work (reviewed by Knowles in 1995) that young calves are not well adapted to cope with transport. Their immune system is not fully developed and they are not able to control their body temperature well, thus they are susceptible to both heat and cold stress. Weight loss following transit is indicative of exposure to a variety of stressors and is greater for longer journeys or greater stress, including cold or heat stress and exposure to vibration and acceleration. Therefore transport should be avoided where possible, particularly as morbidity and mortality following transport can be high (Knowles, 1995).”

Compassion in World Farming - Ireland advocates that young calves represent a resource not a waste product. We believe that there should be discussion amongst stakeholders in Ireland in an effort to find ways to profitably and humanely rear and finish these calves in Ireland for beef.

In the UK, Compassion in World Farming and the RSPCA jointly convened the “Beyond Calf Exports Stakeholders Forum”¹⁰ in 2006 to find humane alternatives to live calf exports. The Forum comprises UK beef and dairy industry bodies and organisations, retailers, DEFRA, leading academics and animal welfarists. The work of the forum is continuing and, to date, there are signs of success: between June 2008 and May 2009, 60,000 dairy bull calves have been retained for rearing and finishing in the UK rather than exported or shot at birth.

Whilst we are aware that the situation in the Republic of Ireland is not the same as in the UK, the experience of the UK Beyond Calf Exports Stakeholders Forum may be a useful starting point for discussions in Ireland. Further information on the UK Calf Forum can be found at:

www.calfforum.org.uk

8.0 Fur farming

The Government’s agreed 3 year phase-out of fur farming should be put in place without delay. Fur farming is totally incompatible with an image of high quality farming with good animal welfare standards.

9.0 Animal Sentience

In 1997, EU law recognised animals as “sentient beings” that are capable of feeling pain and suffering, or experiencing a sense of well-being. The animal sentience principal was given further strength when it was included as an Article in the Lisbon Treaty, in force from 1st December 2009. The Article in the Lisbon Treaty says:

“In formulating and implementing the Union's agriculture, fisheries, transport, internal market, research and technological development and space policies, the Union and the Member States shall, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the welfare

requirements of animals, while respecting the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage.”

Compassion in World Farming - Ireland urges the “2020 Strategy” committee to ensure that full regard is paid to the welfare requirements of farm animals in the policy for the future of the agri-food industry in Ireland.

10.0 References:

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2. For detailed information on farm animal production and sustainability, please see Compassion in World Farming’s comprehensive reports (all available from www.ciwf.org):

“Beyond Factory Farming: sustainable solutions for animals, people and the planet”, 2009.
http://www.ciwf.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2010/b/beyond_factory_farming_report_2009_exec_main_final.pdf

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8. Irish Examiner, *Farming* supplement, article entitled “Processors fear the effect live exports have on Irish jobs and income”, 25th March 2010.
9. Dr. Claire Weeks, BSc, PhD, “UK Calf Transport and Veal Rearing”, March 2007 (a report for Compassion in World Farming).
http://www.ciwf.org.uk/includes/documents/cm_docs/2008/u/uk_calf_transport_and_veal_rearing.pdf
10. The “Beyond Calf Exports Stakeholders Forum” is hosted by Compassion in World Farming and the RSPCA in the UK. For further information, see the Beyond Calf Exports Stakeholders Forum website at:
<http://www.calfforum.org.uk/>

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