

PROTECTION OF ANIMALS AT THE TIME OF KILLING

The Council reached political agreement on a regulation improving the welfare of animals at slaughter ([13312/08](#)).

The regulation aims at revising the legislation in force - Council Directive 93/119/EC on the protection of animals at the time of killing or slaughter - in the light of new technical and scientific elements. It also introduces a new approach - mirroring the one followed in the food safety field - increasing operator's responsibilities concerning welfare.

Directive 93/119/EC had not been substantially amended since its adoption although Community food safety legislation applicable to slaughterhouses, as well as hygiene rules for food of animal origin had meanwhile been extensively amended by the adoption of several regulations in this field¹, including animal welfare requirements and checks for conformity.

The approved regulation aims therefore at reviewing the legislation with the following main objectives:

- to address new animal welfare concerns about avoiding pain and minimising distress or suffering for animals, in particular establishing more humane killing practices in the event of eradication of contagious diseases;
- to update the stunning/killing requirements taking into account the most recent scientific data;
- to simplify the legislative framework in line with the food safety regulations by increasing operators' responsibilities.

¹ Regulations (EC) No 852/2004, 853/2004, 854/2004 and 882/2004 respectively.

Specific differences introduced by the new regulation:

- changing from a directive to a regulation: it provides for uniform and simultaneous application, avoiding administrative burdens and inequalities sometimes due to national transpositions and allowing faster implementation. It also establishes a single set of rules that will be clearer and easier to apply both for EU operators and trading partners;
- better integration of animal welfare concerns into the production process through the requirement of Standard Operating Procedures for operators and the appointment of Animal Welfare Officers in certain slaughterhouses to assist them in ensuring compliance with the rules laid down in the regulation;
- increasing the level of competence of the operators and officials concerned, proper training and issue of certificates of competence for personnel involved in killing and related operations;
- updating of a number of technical standards in view of scientific progress;
- regular monitoring of the efficiency of stunning techniques;
- Animal welfare to be taken on board in the design, construction and equipment of slaughterhouses;
- promotion of innovation and a common approach in relation to stunning and killing techniques;
- improving protection of animals during mass killing operations;
- in the case of meat imported from third countries, an attestation accompanying the health certificate will be required, certifying that requirements at least equivalent to those laid down in Chapters II and III of the regulation have been met.

Community rules on animal welfare are among the strictest worldwide: the present text intends to minimise distress and avoid pain for animals throughout the slaughtering/killing process.

In 2004 and 2006 the European Food Safety Authority produced two scientific opinions suggesting a review of the legislation in force, to take into account the new technologies which had been developed. In addition, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) adopted in 2007 the Terrestrial Animal Health Code, which includes guidelines for the slaughter of animals and for the killing of animals for disease control purposes.

Every year, nearly 360 million pigs, sheep, goats and cattle as well as several billion poultry are slaughtered in the EU for their meat. In addition, about 25 million animals are killed for their fur. The control of contagious diseases may also require the killing of thousands or millions of other animals.