



The Benefits of Addressing Animal Welfare in Trade Policy

Our contribution to the consultation on the Trade Policy Review

Key asks

- One of the ways EU trade policy could help build up the EU's resilience is by better addressing animal welfare, as this would contribute to lessen the risks of future pandemics, and help fight the rise of antimicrobial resistance and the climate crisis.
- Better addressing animal welfare in trade policy could be achieved by (1) generalising conditional liberalisation, which means only lowering tariffs for products respecting animal welfare standards equivalent to those applied in the EU; (2) introducing stronger standalone animal welfare chapters, with concrete objectives, and ensuring proper means to implement them; (3) strengthening the enforcement mechanisms of Trade and Sustainable Development chapters, as well as making their language more actionable; (4) clarifying the link between animal welfare and Sustainable Development/Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), avoiding thus any trade off that would be detrimental to animals.
- At WTO level, the EU should raise again the issue of animal welfare, as well as the importance of trade contributing to sustainable development. The EU should not shy away from imposing its animal welfare standards to imports.
- The EU should allocate sufficient resources, materially and politically, to cooperation mechanisms included in FTAs, notably on animal welfare. It should also increase the transparency of such mechanisms by better involving relevant stakeholders.
- Even if animal welfare is not explicitly mentioned in the SDGs, it is positively linked with all of them, to various degrees. The EU can thus have a positive impact on SDGs by using trade policy to promote higher animal welfare standards.
- Trade policy could help promote transparent, responsible and sustainable supply chains by defending the application of a future EU method-of-production labelling scheme (reflecting product sustainability) to imported products.

Introduction

Djurens Rätt cooperate on trade issues with Eurogroup for Animals. We participate in the group Trade & Animal Welfare Project. From this group, we try to influence current trade policy issues.

Djurens Rätt believes the EU has the tools to develop – and implement – a trade policy fit for the 21st century, adapted to face all the challenges of our times, such as the spread of zoonoses, climate change and antimicrobial resistance. As animal welfare is closely linked to these challenges, part of the solution is to better address the impact of EU trade policy on animal welfare, as one dimension of sustainable development. The UN SDGs will remain out of reach if animal welfare is not improved, trade policy could, by contributing to the promotion of higher animal welfare standards, help deliver on this key objective of the European Commission. We agree with the European Parliament who acknowledged this progress and called on the Commission *“to expressly include animal welfare in its next trade policy strategy (...); to ensure trade preferences are conditional upon compliance with EU animal welfare standards, guaranteeing a more level playing field and respecting the wishes of most EU citizens;”* and *“to recognise the important role higher animal welfare standards can play in achieving several SDGs, notably on health in connection with antimicrobial resistance, and on climate change”*¹.

The Trade Policy Review is welcome, as it provides the EU with the opportunity to upgrade its trade strategy, taking into account all the recent developments and research that are relevant. This review should be used to design, for the first time, a clear strategic thinking on how the EU aims to address animal welfare.

Question 1: How can trade policy help to improve the EU’s resilience and build a model of open strategic autonomy?

From a Swedish point of view who both know that we are as a country independent of good trade possibilities on one hand and on the other hand need an ethical and sustainable food production. The rules of animal welfare cannot be lower than what we set out in the EU or in Sweden. In that case we would undermine domestic work with sustainability. It have to pay off that we are taking animal welfare into account. We want to stress that we want to open up for market in other countries but at the same time be clear with the animal welfare standard that we demand.

As we see it the liberalisation of the free trade agreement tend to increase and intensify the dairy and meat sector. EU need to be clear what we mean by animal welfare and not only measure the free trade agreement by economical parameters. Animal welfare isn’t only something that is better for the animal or an ethical question. It’s also interlinked with some of the threats that humans face.

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0439_EN.html

Animal husbandry is linked to future pandemics, and help fight the rise of antimicrobial resistance and the climate crisis.²

How can the EU do better?

1. As long as our standards are not all applied to imported products, it is important to not favour the entry into the EU market of more imports produced under lower animal welfare standards. This can be done by applying conditional liberalisation, which means by only granting trade preferences to products respecting animal welfare standards that are applied in the EU in relevant sectors. Conditional liberation based on animal welfare standards is in line with the most recent Eurobarometer study on animal welfare³ which showed that over 90% of Europeans want such a requirement.
2. It would be beneficial to group all of the considerations of animal welfare together in a separate chapter that would recognise that all animals are sentient beings and cover all issues related to animal welfare and trade comprehensively: farm animals, animals used in research, fish welfare and wildlife.
3. The TSD chapters in EU FTAs should contain a recognition of the link between sustainable development and animal welfare. While protecting animal welfare is essential to sustainable development in its own right (and is recognised as a dimension of a sustainable agriculture),⁴ it is also complementary to a number of other aspects of sustainable development. Among the UN SDGs, several are either directly connected to animals or cannot be achieved without addressing animal welfare related issues.⁵ The challenges we are facing will require compromised solutions and it is important to clarify that animal welfare cannot be traded off, to the contrary.

Question 3: How should the multilateral trade framework (WTO) be strengthened to ensure stability, predictability and a rules-based environment for fair and sustainable trade and investment?

2

https://www.djurensratt.se/blogg/industriell-djuruppfodning-en-av-de-framsta-riskfaktorerna-pandemier?gclid=CjwKCAjw_NX7BRA1EiwA2dpg0gH6YzdJcjN_j_5BPbyQ67Mzz7VKsvS4-DUNf_Zv4PSIAbuVewORmxoCN_UQAvD_BwE

³ <https://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/eurobarometer>

⁴ Speech by Dacian Cioloş (then European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development), [Europe's path towards sustainable agriculture](#), G20/Rio De Janeiro, 21 June 2012

⁵ Eurogroup for Animals, [Animal Welfare, Trade and Sustainable Development Goals](#), October 2019 & Linda Keeling et al, ["Animal Welfare and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals"](#), *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 6:336, October 2019

The EU can thus have a positive impact on SDGs by using trade policy to promote higher animal welfare standards, and working on this topic at WTO level is crucial. Improving animal welfare standards is needed all around the world, and necessary to achieve the UN SDGs.

Animal Welfare is strongly linked to achieving the UN SDGs, which is now a key objective in all Commissioners' portfolio, including Trade. The first academic study on this topic, published in October 2019⁶, scored the interactions between SDGs and Animal Welfare, in both directions. The conclusion of this exercise was that, even if animal welfare is not explicitly mentioned in the SDGs, it is positively linked with all of them, to various degrees. Higher welfare does not impede any SDG. To the contrary, while, for some of them, the mutually beneficial effect is strong (SDG 12 "Sustainable Consumption and Production" and 14 "Life Below Water"), in some cases, higher welfare would have a direct positive impact on the SDGs (SDG 1 "End Poverty", SDG 2 " Zero Hunger", SDG 3 "Good Health and Wellbeing"). Our 2019 report on "Animal Welfare, Trade and SDGs" explains these interactions in depth⁷.

Question 8: How can trade policy facilitate the transition to a greener, fairer and more responsible economy at home and abroad? How can trade policy further promote the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? How should implementation and enforcement support these objectives?

Animal Welfare is strongly linked to achieving the UN SDGs, which is now a key objective in all Commissioners' portfolio, including Trade. The first academic study on this topic, published in October 2019⁸, scored the interactions between SDGs and Animal Welfare, in both directions. The conclusion of the exercise - since then reiterated with roughly the same results - was that, even if animal welfare is not explicitly mentioned in the SDGs, it is positively linked with all of them, to various degrees. Higher welfare does not impede any SDG. To the contrary, while, for some of them, the mutually beneficial effect is strong (SDG 12 "Sustainable Consumption and Production" and 14 "Life Below Water"), in some cases, higher welfare would have a direct positive impact on the SDGs (SDG 1 "End Poverty", SDG 2 " Zero Hunger", SDG 3 "Good Health and Wellbeing"). Our 2019 report on "Animal Welfare, Trade and SDGs" explains these interactions in depth⁹.

Question 9: How can trade policy help to foster more responsible business conduct? What role should trade policy play in promoting transparent, responsible and sustainable supply chains?

⁶ Linda Keeling et al, ["Animal Welfare and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals"](#)

⁷ Eurogroup for Animals, [Animal Welfare, Trade and SDGs](#), October 2019

⁸ Linda Keeling et al, ["Animal Welfare and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals"](#)

⁹ Eurogroup for Animals, [Animal Welfare, Trade and SDGs](#), October 2019

Trade policy could help promote transparent, responsible and sustainable supply chains by defending the application of a future EU method-of-production labelling scheme (reflecting product sustainability) to imported products.

As a result of the proliferation of industrial farm animal production on the one hand and growing global crises such as climate change and antimicrobial resistance on the other, food sustainability - including animal welfare - has become an increasingly important item on a long list of pressing concerns for people around the world. However, consumers may find it hard to act on these concerns due to the lack of information on the methods of production for animal products.

With over half of EU citizens expressing willingness to pay more for high welfare, and therefore more sustainable products,¹⁰ a mandatory 'method-of-production' label on the farming of animals used for food could enable consumers to make informed purchasing decisions. Such a label could also eventually lead to farmers favouring methods of production that are the least detrimental to the planet, the animals and consumers, thereby hastening a transition towards more sustainable and humane farming systems. Given the correlation between farm animal welfare standards and higher food safety levels, the use of fewer antibiotics, a lower carbon footprint, and even the quality of labour conditions of workers involved in the food production chain, mandatory method-of-production labelling would also contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹¹ Last but not least, mandatory method-of-production labelling for animal products would contribute to leveling the EU market's playing field. However, to be fully effective, this label needs to be applied to imported products.



Djurens Rätt, Box 17132, 104 62 Stockholm

Tel: 08 - 555 914 00, info@djurensratt.se

Email: sebastian.wiklund@djurensratt.se

¹⁰ European Commission, Special Eurobarometer 442: Attitudes of Europeans towards Animal Welfare, 48, 2015

¹¹ Eurogroup for Animals (et al.), Achieving the sustainable development goals: the role of animal welfare in trade policy, October 2018, available at:
https://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/wp-content/uploads/549070_R0090_Animal_welfare_in_trade_report_A4_8PP.pdf
https://www.eurogroupforanimals.org/wp-content/uploads/549070_R0090_Animal_welfare_in_trade_report_A4_8PP.pdf