

## Subgroup on Animal Welfare labelling

### – MINUTES –

#### Fifth meeting

Wednesday, 10 March 2021, 09.30 – 12.30 CET, Brussels time

#### Attendance

<b>Independent expert</b>	Jarkko Niemi (JN)
<b>Civil society organisations</b>	Inês Grenho Ajuda (IGA) Alexandra Joos (AJ)
<b>Business and professional organisations</b>	Marcin Sokołowski (MS) Miguel Angel Higuera (MAH) Marie Guyot (MG) Trine Vig Tamstorf (TVT)
<b>Member States</b>	Christina M. Nygaard (CN) Léon Arnts (LA) Maria Teresa Villalba (MTV)
<b>European Commission</b>	Denis Simonin (DS) - Chair Margot Kuzma Aude Luyckx Sandra Sanmartin Françoise Divanach
<b>Guest</b>	Alois Vuillermet

#### 1. Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting will be submitted for approval by e-mail as some factual comments were sent by two members just before this meeting.

The agenda was adopted.

#### 2. Case study 1: “Etiquette bien-être animal (France)” by Alois Vuillermet

The speaker presented the French labelling system for animal welfare products put in place in 2018/2019 (with work on it started already in 2017) by three NGOs and one retailer. This first French national standardised labelling was created following a strong consumer demand for clear and reliable information on animal welfare.

The work has started with establishing standards for broilers only. The first labelled products were bought end 2018. Last year, the work on pig standards was launched as well as well as the refinement of traceability, controls and requirements.

The label is composed of 5 levels going from ‘A’ (the highest animal welfare level) to ‘E’ (the lowest).

Main characteristics of the label:

- The score is linked to the method of production and can be used for any type of farming method;
- Covers the whole life of animals and goes beyond the current regulations;

- Is voluntary but allowed only through the membership of the label association; members get the right to use the logo after validation, within one year;
- Standards are different for each species (e.g. for broilers assessment is based on 230 criteria, each specific to a life phase / method of production);
- Requirements are based on scientific evidence and existing AW-assessment protocols and tools;
- Auditors use 140 observations criteria (at farm and slaughterhouse) and 90 documentary evidence criteria.

Key principles for broilers standards:

- Outdoor access for A and B
- Natural light in the barn for A until D
- Expression of natural behaviour(perches/pecking) for A until C
- Stocking density
- Min. age at slaughter
- Growth rate (breed)
- Max. transport duration
- Commitment on animal welfare during transport
- Stunning at slaughter for A until D
- Video monitoring of live animals at the slaughterhouse.

They use different colours for criteria in the scheme: red for critical ones which are mandatory, orange or yellow for the others.

The Association of the label, EBEA, created in 2019, is functioning as a classic association: general assembly, presidency, members (currently 4 NGOs, 5 retailers and 7 producers), annual fee; technical working groups per species, including scientists and technical advisors, create and update requirements. New working groups will be created this year for other species.

Currently, about 1100 poultry farms, 8 slaughterhouses and 15 hatcheries are involved. Last year, the initiative was covering about 10% of the French broilers production.

Audits are performed at all operators once a year (A, B and C). The auditors must have experience in farm auditing and follow qualifying sessions for this label.

Challenges are the broadening of the product lines (getting more C chickens), completing the pig requirements to sell products in 2022, a more active communication towards consumers and expansion in member states without animal welfare labelling.

A general public website was put in place very early for the initiative:

<http://www.etiquettebienetreanimal.fr/>

### 3. Questions and Answers on case study 1

Questions and considerations were raised during the discussion which followed the presentation:

- On overall costs, for instance of investments made by farmers and slaughterhouses: no estimation available.
- For the lowest level (E), no audits are required. The cost for audit of individual farms are covered by farmers' organizations or via an arrangement with the 'user member' (e.g. retailer). There are not yet products with E logo.

- On the requirement for stunning at slaughter, is labelling (level E) possible in the case of slaughter without stunning? The question has been raised by a slaughterhouse performing “light” and regular stunning, this is currently in discussion.

[The Chair informed about the sentence of the EU Court of Justice saying that slaughter without stunning is not compatible with organic farming]

- The label covers only fresh meat, not yet the processed one (being studied).
- The animal welfare level in slaughterhouse and hatchery is also assessed; an insufficient result can lead to a downgrade of the label at farm level.
- The feedback from consumers concerning the level of understanding of the label checked by 5 retailers seems good, a broader survey is missing for the moment, but is a priority for the coming time.
- Auditors are independent but trained by the Association.

#### **4. Case study 2: “Free range eggs and animal welfare labelling” by Maria Teresa Villalba Rodriguez**

The presentation was focused on the animal welfare certificate for two labels for free-range eggs in Spain: *ANDA- Avialter* and *WELFAIR*.

On eggs packaging, there are a lot of information for consumers, e.g. free range laying hens raised in open air; nutrition value, egg codes explanation. Good information for consumers is crucial. There is a big variation in prices on the market.

**A-** *ANDA* is member of Eurogroup for animals and one of the oldest organisation in Spain for the welfare of farm animals.

*ANDA- Avialter* has only two levels of animal welfare labelling for eggs: 1-free range eggs and 0-organic eggs.

Main requirements for this label:

- Natural light
- Animals on the floor (no multi-levels)
- No mutilations at all
- Maximum 40.000 animals in free range farm
- Specific requirements for the parks
- All the production under label “*ANDA*”
- Specific packing stations: control of traceability.

In addition, there are sustainability requirements:

- Environment conditions:
  - Very important, the management of the parks: no erosion, no pollution;
  - No need of special environment authorisation (because of the size);
  - Buildings with low impact: no artificial cooling systems, natural light.
- Rural development:
  - Small farms – affordable investment
  - The producers keep they own brand name on the packaging

**B-** *WELFAIR*

The label for *WELFAIR* eggs concerns hens free from cage. The requirements (document of 70 pages) are based on the “Welfare Quality Protocol” of 2019. The auditors have to take a written and practical exam. A compliance of the farms with the legislation is as pre-requisite for this label. Then, there are special requirements for traceability in case of not all the eggs from the multisite farm are certified.

## **5. Questions and Answers on case study 2**

Questions and considerations were raised during the discussion which followed the presentation:

- A harmonisation of information for consumers is necessary at the EU level.
- The link of the eggs labelling with sustainability aspects is very interesting.
- Eggs are the easiest product for assessing “who pays the price”? As the same product which leaves the farm is sold. Communication is the key to let consumers pay the additional costs.
- Branding issues prevent a transparent communication on eggs packages.
- The sustainability discussion might even more confuse the consumers than only animal welfare, and the retailers don’t want more labelling; but this issue is addressed by the Farm to Fork Strategy.
- Talking about sustainability is also talking about the combination of animal welfare and environment, which can be contrary.
- Spanish eggs animal welfare labelling focuses on the welfare of every single animal: this is more difficult to communicate to consumers.
- Might not be a good idea to have the name of the farm on the package in an EU system.
- EU: go for some clear/ important criteria with a view to communication, system should be valid for small and big farms.
- Wish of setting up an EU umbrella (MOP+)system in which existing labels could be classified.

## **6. Discussion on possible conclusions based on the cases**

It came out in the discussion that additional meetings might be necessary to come out with the conclusions of the subgroup in order to be ready for the Animal Welfare Platform meeting on 22 June.

Therefore, it was agreed that two more meetings will be held:

- on 22 April (afternoon) to discuss on the draft conclusions point by point
- on 4 June (morning) with a possible discussion on final conclusions.

## **7. Tasks for the next meeting (7 April 2021)**

The chair will send to the Members a working document (not a position of the Commission) with the main outlines of the future conclusions of the group with the aim to discuss it at the next meeting (7 April). When finalised, the conclusions we will be provided to the contractor in charge of the study (contract to be signed in April).

At the next meeting, Christina will present the Danish labelling scheme, a representative of DG AGRI will make a presentation on organic farming (to be confirmed) and draft conclusions (as mentioned above) will be presented.

If time allows, Marie will do a short presentation on comparison between different labels. If not, she will just send it to the group.

The meeting of 5 May (morning) will be also devoted to the discussion on the draft conclusions point by point.