

Meeting of the sub-group on poultry

Eleventh meeting, 10 May 2023

Twelfth meeting, 26 July 2023

(Videoconference)

– MINUTES –

Attendance

Independent expert

Leonardo James Vinco
Evangelia N. Sossidou

Civil society organisations

Eurogroup for animals (EfA)

Business and professional organisations

AVEC
COPA
FVE

Member States

Czech Republic
Denmark
Spain
Norway

European Commission

SANTE G3

Guest(s)

TOPIC:

1. Recommendations given in the EFSA opinions on the welfare of laying hens and on the welfare of broilers as published on 21 February 2023
2. Recommendations given in the EFSA opinion on welfare of ducks, geese and quail on farm as adopted on 29 March 2023

1. Welcome to the meeting.

The Chair welcomed all participants and introduced the topic.

2. Context of the topic by the Commission

The Chair introduced the EFSA opinions on the welfare of laying hens, broilers and ducks, geese and quail on farm and summarised the recommendations given by EFSA.

3. Discussion

The subgroup dedicated the eleventh and twelfth meetings to discuss the recommendations in the three EFSA opinions referred above.

The main issue in the opinions considered by the subgroup was the stock density. The stock density recommended in the EFSA opinion for broilers to move, express normal behaviour and avoid injuries, was considered a big change compared to the current requirements in the EU legislation and standards. Most of the members of the subgroups judged the recommendation on stock density for broilers very difficult to implement by farmers due to financial implications. The subgroup was of the opinion that other elements in addition to the purely animal welfare consequences must be taken into account (environmental, economic implications, climate, sustainability) when dealing with stock density in the legislation. Support during transition and consequences on imports were pointed as important elements to be tackled in the context of the revision. Having the EFSA recommendation as a top level in a voluntary label scheme was suggested by one of the members as a possibility.

The subgroup discussed the pertinence of using foot pad dermatitis (FPD) as an animal-based measure (ABM) for sufficient space allowance, as it could be linked to many other factors (e.g., environmental conditions) and not only space allowance. Some members of the subgroup considered useful to have indicators at slaughter for a uniform monitoring but pointed out that indicators at slaughter are mainly health indicators, miss the behavioural part, and need to be interpreted carefully when related to welfare on farm (e.g., wounds are most likely caused during transport not on farm).

The subgroup discussed the use of platforms and verandas and how they could influence the calculation of space allowance/stock density (total area, usable area, etc.). The difference between using those platforms and verandas for increasing space allowance or for enrichment was also debated. The difficulties for farmers to receive an environmental permit for verandas was stressed. The lack of definition of the term 'veranda' was also highlighted, and the possibility that the subgroup provides a definition was suggested. One of the members underlined the significant amount of available scientific evidence on enrichment and recalled the information provided to the subgroup in previous meetings.

The subgroup discussed the recommendations given in the EFSA opinion on welfare of ducks, geese and quail on farm. Some members of the subgroup provided links to publications on the influence of housing systems on duck behavior and welfare¹ and on the benefits and challenges of providing water for domestic ducks in commercial production².

4. Next meetings

13th Platform meeting: 15-16 June 2023

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7521810/#>

² <https://doi.org/10.3389/fanim.2022.782507>

5. Closing

The Chair thanked all participants for their constructive contributions during the twelve meetings of the subgroup.