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**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION**

**of the European Union Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012-2015**

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## 1. Context

Animal welfare is an issue of growing importance for EU citizens<sup>1</sup>. The first EU legislation on the welfare of animals<sup>2</sup> was adopted in 1974. Since then, the legislation in this area has developed and expanded its coverage in response to political, market and citizens' demands as well as scientific developments. In recent years, and in particular with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the “[One Health](#)” approach has gained more prominence, putting focus on the important interlinks between animal welfare, animal health and public health. The Commission adopted in 2012 an [EU strategy for protection and welfare of animals \(2012-2015\)](#) (“*the strategy*”) which defined key strategic objectives and actions with the ultimate aim to enhance the welfare of animals in the EU, while ensuring fair competition and empowering EU consumers in making animal welfare friendly choices.

## 2. Evaluation

This evaluation covers the period 2012-2018 (going slightly beyond the 2012-2015 animal welfare strategy timespan as some actions were delivered up to 2018) and encompasses all stages of the strategy. It assesses the strategy's effectiveness, efficiency, EU added value, as well as its relevance and coherence until today, taking into account developments in the area of animal welfare.

An [external study](#) provided the main evidence base for the evaluation. Due to limitations in gathering quantitative data, the study relied on extensive desk research and several consultation activities, which allowed incorporating the opinions of a broad range of stakeholders. A number of case studies supported the analysis.

The findings of the evaluation will feed into the ongoing evaluation of the EU animal welfare legislation<sup>3</sup> and inform possible future initiatives in the animal welfare area, as announced by the [Farm to Fork strategy](#).

## 3. Key findings

The evaluation found that the majority of problems and drivers identified by the strategy as relevant in 2012 remain to be relevant today. A remaining challenge is the need to improve compliance across Member States in some risk areas (i.e. animal transport, routine tail docking of pigs, some stunning methods and other). In this respect, the new [Official Controls Regulation](#) offers the tools to address some issues, regarding control requirements and verification of compliance with animal welfare legislation.

Considering the increasing interest among EU citizens towards animal welfare, the objective to provide consumers and the public with appropriate information has become even more relevant today than it was in 2012. The same applies to the need to strengthen international

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<sup>1</sup> Special Eurobarometer 442, Attitudes of Europeans towards Animal Welfare of March 2016: <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/71348>

<sup>2</sup> Council Directive 74/577/EEC of 18 November 1974 on stunning of animals before slaughter

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/animals/docs/aw\\_fitness-check\\_roadmap.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/animals/docs/aw_fitness-check_roadmap.pdf)

cooperation overcoming the reluctance of some third countries to adopt animal welfare standards comparable to the ones applicable in the EU.

There is a need to further optimise synergies with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for the period 2021-27 and to make better use of the instruments offered by it to improve animal welfare standards in animal husbandry and to increase CAP beneficiaries' awareness of animal welfare requirements<sup>4</sup>. The CAP supports voluntary animal welfare commitments, as well as other relevant interventions – such as investments, under its second pillar (and will continue do so during the period 2021-2027<sup>5</sup>). These tools are aimed to achieve higher animal welfare outcomes than the legally prescribed standards. As to the regulatory framework, the gaps that existed in 2012 remain, notably for the protection of certain farmed species for which no rule exists at EU level. In addition, the need to simplify existing rules and to improve their enforceability continues to be relevant. In both cases, the strategy did not contribute to address these issues significantly.

While the strategy was overall coherent with food safety and research policies, there is room for improving coherence not only with the CAP, but also with fisheries, trade, environmental and transport policies, in line with the goals of the Farm to Fork strategy.

At an international level, the strategy contributed to promoting animal welfare standards with one voice in international fora and establishing synergies with activities on animal welfare of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and to build cooperation with trading partners. The future work needs to build further on these synergies with a view to consolidate the EU's leading role in the global transition to sustainable and thus animal welfare friendly food systems.

The strategy contributed to setting common priorities that led to improvements on animal welfare across the EU. It also contributed to improve knowledge and sharing of best practices, as well as to enforcement of EU legislation in specific areas (i.e. group housing of sows and protection of laying hens). However, none of the strategy's objectives has been fully achieved. Notably, the strategy failed to deliver on the objective of introducing a simplified EU legislative framework on animal welfare. As regards information to consumers on animal welfare and optimisation of synergies with the CAP, the strategy had a limited contribution. Informing consumers on animal welfare has become an objective even more important today than at the time of adoption of the strategy.

It was not possible to assess whether the strategy has been overall cost-efficient, nor to quantify the opportunity costs, which may have been incurred because of the lack of actions taken to develop a simplified animal welfare legislation. Available evidence seems to suggest that the benefits of the strategy may have been higher than the costs in areas such as

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<sup>4</sup> Cross-compliance links direct payments under the CAP support to farmers respecting a set of basic standards (Statutory Management Requirements), including animal welfare standards. The respect of this set of standards is not checked systematically prior to the payment but a posteriori cross-compliance on-the-spot checks are obligatory for a minimum of 1% of the beneficiaries. It is effective as a tool to increase beneficiaries' awareness of the mandatory animal welfare requirement.

<sup>5</sup> Post-2020, the newly designed eco-schemes can also address animal welfare objectives.

enforcement. In general, among stakeholders there is a wide perception that those costs were unevenly distributed.

The forthcoming review of the animal welfare legislation will look at the legislative gaps identified in 2012 and at any new gaps that could emerge from the ongoing evaluation of the rules in force. This will support further reflections on the options available to make the animal welfare acquis fit for purpose. As regards enforcement, special attention will be given to compliance risk areas identified by this evaluation.

In addition to the above, in the Farm to Fork strategy, the Commission has committed to explore options for animal welfare labelling to address the increasing demand of today's consumers. Further actions in this area will elaborate on the findings of this evaluation in terms of consumers' awareness and demand for information.