

→ **Study on economic models to prevent the transport of unfit end-of career dairy cows**

June 2022

Prepared for the EU Platform on Animal Welfare
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Introduction

This study was commissioned by the European Commission (DG SANTE) in April 2021 to gather evidence that could support EU animal welfare legislation for farmed animals, including on animal transport.

Three research questions were set.

1. Gather information to assess **the magnitude of the problem and the reasons for any possible non-compliance**, including the associated costs and benefits for the concerned actors. Explain whether/to what extent the current business plan(s) have contributed to the problems.
2. **Identify measures put in place** by the dairy industry or by the competent authorities (in charge of animal welfare or/and slaughterhouses' inspection) in order to prevent any non compliance and identify best practices,.
3. Gather information and evidence on **alternative ways to address the problems** (e.g. programmes to increase longevity of dairy cows, programmes to increase resilience to diseases, private or public funding to kill and collect unfit animals, etc.)

Methodology

The study was based on research carried out between April 2021 and March 2022. It incorporated:



Preliminary desk and field research

- Scoping desk research (EU level) - documents, datasets, information sources.
- Exploratory stakeholder workshop



Mixed method research

- Desk research at a national level across 9 member states.
- 30 in-depth qualitative stakeholder interviews (2 interviews per country, plus EU level stakeholders).
- 2 surveys; one for competent authorities the other for business operators and veterinarians.
- Case studies (themes, sectors and countries).



Data analysis and reporting

- Triangulation of findings to address the research questions, and clarify gaps and uncertainties.
- Graphic scenarios supported with narrative
- Validation survey

ICF worked in collaboration with Laura Boyle (Teagasc University), Wilma Steeneveld (University of Utrecht), Heleen Van der Weerd (Cerebrus Associates Ltd), Jaap Boes (UniBrains) and Agnieszka Paczynska



Key findings: Magnitude of the problem and reasons for any non-compliance

Overview: Magnitude of the problem and reasons for non-compliance

Scale of the problem

- Scale remains relatively unclear

Reasons for non-compliance

Economic factors

- Cost of on-farm slaughter
- Lack of financial gain from selling the carcass.
- Economic model of dairy farms (low margins, focus on milk productivity).
- Lack of enforcement and inadequate sanctions (some MS).

Social factors

- Peer pressure along supply chain.
- Social acceptance of low level herd health and short lifespan.
- Understanding of the definition of “unfit for transport”.



Key findings: Measures put in place

Overview: Features of a labelling scheme preferred by consumers

Dairy industry measures focus on general health and wellbeing. Examples include:

- Best practice guidelines
- Decision tools
- Quality assurance schemes


Measures taken by **Competent Authorities** focus on general health and wellbeing, but also prevention of the transportation of unfit cows. These include:

- Cautions, warnings, fines
- Raising awareness

Joint measures included mobile slaughterhouse pilots.

COWS WITH GOOD BODY CONDITION

„Downer Cow“



LANDKREIS CLOPPENBURG
WIRTSCHAFT

Befund / Diagnose	Transport	Schlachtung	Maßnahme
Abmagerung, chronisch krank	●	●	Schlachtverbot Tierschutz- Anzeige



Key findings: Ways to address the problems

Overview: Ways to address the problems

- Focus on best practice.
- A mix of measures from both NCAs and the dairy industry.
- Opportunities for technology e.g.
 - CCTV in slaughterhouses.
 - Technology to identify low level illness.
- Best practice for assurance schemes.
- Which measures would be most effective (to decrease cows becoming unfit for transport and to decrease illegal transport of unfit end-of-career cows) is dependent on drivers in the particular MS

Scenarios can help us understand drivers and potential measures

	Driver(s) addressed	Potential mitigation measures	Focus
Scenario 0	All	Baseline: Provides context, core drivers.	Cows becoming unfit for transport and the illegal transport of unfit end-of-career cows.
Scenario 1	Purposeful illegal behaviour at a systems level.	Enforcement: checks and penalties, including on vet certificates.	Illegal transport of unfit end-of-career cows.
Scenario 2	Purposeful illegal behaviour at an individual farmer level. Economic gain.	Enforcement: checks and penalties. End of chain non-payment and feedback from across the supply chains.	Illegal transport of unfit end-of-career cows.
Scenario 3	Non-purposeful illegal behaviour at an individual level. Lack of understanding of the definition.	Information sharing/ gov and industry. (aimed at farmers, transporters).	Illegal transport of unfit end-of-career cows.
Scenario 4	Purposeful illegal behaviour due to a lack of infrastructure or social drivers, and a tightly defined emergency slaughter.	Infrastructure improvement/ supplemented (Mobile slaughterhouses, on farm slaughter)	Illegal transport of unfit end-of-career cows.
Scenario 5	Economics of production – system issue on the wider industry and economics of production.	Industry: producer cooperatives, assurance schemes, welfare labelling schemes. Government: subsidies for on-farm slaughter & disposal, better housing and/or other infrastructure.	Prevent end of career cows becoming unfit through improved economics of higher welfare milk production.

Conclusions

- There is a **deficit of data** on the magnitude of the problem and the effectiveness of mitigation measures in different contexts.
 - NCAs need to understand the key drivers for transport of unfit end of life cows and apply relevant mitigation measures (for different contexts).
 - Further research is needed to characterise the problem at MS level along with the establishment of robust systems for action and monitoring.
- Mitigation measures implemented (by NCAs and the dairy industry) represent an effective toolkit but **more effort is needed to resource implementation and share good practice.**
- **More systemic change** to the economic model within which the EU dairy sector operates is more difficult to address but must be recognised as a contributing factor and considered in wider forums on farm support, the role of producer organisations and consumer labelling, for example.



Questions and comments