

# Meeting of the sub-group on Transport

## Export to third countries by livestock vessels

Second meeting, 25 April 2022  
(Videoconference)

### - MINUTES -

#### Attendance

<b>Independent expert</b>	Michael Marahrens
<b>Civil society organisations</b>	Animal Welfare Foundation Animals' Angels
<b>Business and professional organisations</b>	UECBV Copa
<b>Member States</b>	Portugal The Netherlands Spain Czech Republic
<b>European Commission</b>	DG SANTE G5
<b>Guest(s)</b>	Millieu/Ecorys Consortium

#### Discussion

##### 1. Welcome and short introduction on the topic

The Commission presented briefly the topic of the meeting, export of animals by sea, which raised particular attention in the last few years. The Commission presented as well an update on the tertiary legislation (an implementing act and a delegate act) currently in preparation aiming at addressing challenges identified during Commission audits in order to strengthen the way official controls are performed on export of animals by livestock vessels.

On the tertiary legislation, the following issues were raised:

- These are welcomed but Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 still needs to be improved
- The Network Document on which the delegated act draws inspiration identifies best practices that are put in place by some competent authorities, the usefulness of which was recognised (e.g.

identify transporters, having import permits, addressing contingency plans, improved communication with the vessel and authorities at destination...)

## 2. Export of small and large ruminants by livestock vessel

### a) Would a ban on export by sea be an option/solution?

While some members expressed their opinion in favour or against a ban, the discussion versed mostly on the difficulties exporting livestock by sea entails:

- OIE codes do not work as legislative tools: they are not respected by some countries and this poses a challenge when addressing exports
- Some third countries do not have standards or rules on animal welfare
- The current transport regulation is difficult to enforce beyond EU borders. (EU law protects animals until they reach their final destination, as was confirmed by the ECJ C-424/13 resulting in underreporting of injured/sick animals and mortalities. However, there is no system to inspect welfare of EU animals in third countries, and no routine feedback is sought on their condition after a sea journey and arrival at destination
- Lack of common approval standards for livestock vessels across MS
- No harmonisation of competent authorities' approach to approving vessels blacklisted under the Paris Memorandum of Understanding
- Transporters are often authorised while missing contingency plans
- Unclear responsibility of transporters and organisers makes it difficult to enforce rules on them
- Lack of trained staff on board
- Not enough pharmaceutical products/equipment for euthanasia/slaughtering on board
- Delays on unloading at port of destination due to documents addressed to the competent authorities of the third country not arriving on time
- Vessels carrying animals for slaughtering are often in worse condition than those carrying animals for breeding
- Difficult for competent authorities to know whether the journey is realistic on the basis of the declarations on the journey log
- Environmental impact of livestock sea-trade (discharges of carcasses in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, discharge of manure - very few ports have carcass and /or manure reception facilities).

### b) What are the current alternatives? (i.e. export of meat/carcasses, export of semen, embryos etc.)

The Commission invited members to express their views with regards to alternatives to the transport of live animals by sea, while stressing that the study supporting the impact assessment for the revision of Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 will also address alternatives. The following aspects were discussed:

- Alternatives to transport of animals for slaughter could be the export of meat/carcasses
- Some alternatives are difficult to implement:
  - Some third countries already import meat/carcasses yet they also want live animals
  - Ritual slaughters in MS would have to take place to supply some third countries with meat/carcasses
  - Breeding programmes are very costly and not all countries can afford it, and export of breeding animals play an important role in ensuring food security in many countries, and as part of building up a national food production
  - Stopping the exports from the EU would only shift the market to other third countries with lower welfare standards and that would transport their animals in longer journeys
- Disagreement on whether the majority of third countries count on the necessary infrastructure to cool meat when importing it
- Often semen and embryos are mentioned as solutions that can substitute the export of live breeding animals. However, neither the technologies nor the know-how is sufficient developed as well as the farm structure is not in place to replace the export of live breeding animals.

- Some members considered that the transport should be stopped altogether given the difficulties in enforcing current rules at the moment. Others argued against a ban and for the importance of improving the existing rules to ensure quality in the transport and secure better compliance

c) Which stricter conditions have the potential to improve and guarantee better welfare of exported animals by livestock vessel?

The main conditions proposed were:

- A team of qualified experts (consisting of at least one marine surveyor, one marine technician, one veterinarian, and one behaviourist) assist MS when approving a livestock vessel
- Common standards for a uniform approval of livestock vessels across MS (i.e. Standard technical catalogue for approval of livestock vessels)
- Granting approvals for livestock vessels with a shorter validity (e.g. valid for no more than 3 years instead of current 5 years)
- Constant maintenance of the vessels (i.e. water supplies, ventilation, etc.)
- Only vessels on the list of white/grey flags should be allowed
- Improve requirements on board (ventilation, space allowances, bedding, feed...)
- Journey log should be updated as it is not conceived for sea journeys and to include info for the destination/establishments in case of export of breeding animals
- Condition the loading to having a favourable recorded weather forecast
- Common register of organisers and putting the responsibility to only one organiser
- Contingency plans to be presented by organisers for a specific journey
- Transporter and organiser must be clearly identified, responsibilities should be properly defined and divided between farmer, driver, transporter and organisers as well as the consequences for not complying with their obligations
- Withdrawal of the approval of companies with poor performance
- Training of crew on welfare issues: possibility to suspend crew who do not operate properly
- Presence of a veterinarian/animal welfare officer/stockman with appropriate training and expertise at all times with authority enough to take adequate action Presence of a veterinarian/animal welfare officer/stockman with appropriate training and expertise at all times with authority enough to take adequate action (eg. to treat or humanely kill injured or sick animals, and to ensure the ongoing monitoring of animal welfare and compliance with EU animal welfare and related law)
- Enough medication and devices for euthanasia/slaughtering on board
- Bilateral agreements with third countries of destination should include provisions on welfare
- Ensure timely arrival of documents at destination so as to avoid delays when unloading
- Use of CCTV cameras during unloading at place of destination
- Better communication with competent authorities of destination (e.g. by having the contact of the responsible competent authority in the third country)
- Retrospective checks should be carried out more frequently
- Ensure consistency with other pieces of legislation (e.g. Animal Health Law)
- Reduce/replace the paper work with digital tools
- Lay down max. time limit for journeys when several collection points and more means of transport (e.g. road plus sea) are involved
- Ensure concise implementation of recommendations from FVO audits
- Clear responsibilities regarding the fitness for transport (i.e. between farmers, drivers and transporters)
- The preparation by veterinary competent authorities at the exit port of a report containing information about the animals loaded and their status, such as: (a) animals' characteristics (number, species, age and sex of the animals loaded), (b) individual animals' status (defined as general physical and psychological conditions to be assessed), (c) the number of animals refused at loading and reasons for refusal, and (d) the number of animals identified as unfit to continue the journey. This document could be checked on arrival in the third country by the official veterinarian and completed with the number of animals injured and/or dead. Within one month after completion of the journey such a report could be sent to the EU Commission and made publicly available on the DG SANTE website;

- A compulsory 24-hour rest of animals in ports' stables to enable the competent authorities conduct thorough inspection of animals' health and welfare as well as fitness to travel;
- Mandatory measuring system and reporting on temperature and humidity in all the pens and decks of the livestock vessel where animals are located during the whole sea leg of the journey.

### **3. Reminder of date of next meetings**

The Commission encouraged members to upload reports, documents, papers, supporting their views and informed them that the next meeting is scheduled for the 30 May 2022. The topic will be exports by road.