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## JOINT POSITION STATEMENT OF ANIMAL PROTECTION NGOS ON FARM ANIMAL WELFARE

The Brooke, Compassion in World Farming, Eurogroup for Animals, the Humane Society of the United States and Humane Society International, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and the World Society for the Protection of Animals, on behalf of our millions of supporters worldwide, thank the FAO for arranging this open forum and convening an expert consultation on animal welfare. We welcome the FAO's initiative in addressing the increasing concerns about the welfare of farm animals, particularly in developing countries, which comes at an opportune time as public interest in meat, eggs, and milk produced to higher welfare standards is growing globally.

**Our organisations recognise that improving the health and welfare of animals directly and positively impacts the lives of farmers, helps protect the environment, and supports trade, particularly for the growing markets of higher welfare products.**

The increasing recognition of the importance of farm animal welfare has been demonstrated by international legal and policy initiatives, including:

- The Protocol on Improved Protection and Respect for the Welfare of Animals, adopted by the European Union in 1997<sup>1</sup>
- The Guidelines on the welfare of animals in transport and at slaughter, adopted by the OIE (the World Organisation for Animal Health) in 2005 (the first part of an ongoing programme developing welfare guidelines)<sup>2</sup>
- The Good Practice Note on Animal Welfare, adopted by the International Finance Corporation in 2006<sup>3</sup>
- The OIE Resolution in support of the development of a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare, passed in 2007<sup>4</sup>

With 70% of the world's poor economically dependent on farm animals, it is essential that the health and welfare of their animals be maintained and improved. Animals who are not afforded adequate care and appropriate living conditions that enable them to fulfill their natural behaviors can suffer from reduced productivity and, in extreme cases, die as a result of ill health, neglect, lack of veterinary care, and poor treatment. In these conditions, animals can also suffer from frustration, deprivation, and physiological and behavioral disorders. By supporting higher welfare agricultural practices, the FAO can take a leading role in helping to raise the health and welfare of farm animals, which will improve the livelihoods of farmers, contribute to nutritional goals, and support trade in animal products.

In order to meet growing markets for meat, eggs, and milk in transforming economies, out-dated western models of industrial agriculture are currently being adopted. Such systems are already being phased out by legislation within the European Union and other developed countries such

<sup>1</sup> Treaty Of Amsterdam Amending The Treaty on European Union, the Treaties Establishing the European Communities and Related Acts. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/11997D/htm/11997D.html#0110010013>

<sup>2</sup> OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health). [www.oie.int/Eng/bien\\_etre/en\\_introduction.htm](http://www.oie.int/Eng/bien_etre/en_introduction.htm)

<sup>3</sup> International Finance Corporation, 2006. Good Practice Note: Animal Welfare in Livestock Operations. [www.ifc.org/ifcext/sustainability.nsf/Content/Publications\\_GoodPractice\\_AnimalWelfare](http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/sustainability.nsf/Content/Publications_GoodPractice_AnimalWelfare)

<sup>4</sup> Farm Animal Welfare Council. *Five Freedoms*. [www.fawc.org.uk/freedoms.htm](http://www.fawc.org.uk/freedoms.htm)

as Australia and New Zealand, and in North America, these systems are beginning to be phased out by state legislation, supported by agribusiness and retail policy decisions.

As industrial animal agriculture practices are being reformed in favor of systems with higher health and welfare potential for the animals throughout the west, it is economically disadvantageous for developing countries to embrace the same intensive systems being rejected by developed countries. It is likely that the food service and retail industry in the west will in the future only import animal products produced to health and welfare standards that are equivalent to their own. Rather than being seen as a possible trade barrier, this can be viewed as a trading opportunity, as long as transforming country producers have not become locked into using outdated industrial rearing systems.

The International Finance Corporation concurs:

“Businesses that address or enhance animal welfare are likely to win or retain a competitive advantage in the global marketplace in a variety of ways, such as:

- costs savings due to more efficient production processes that enhance animal welfare
- realizing growing market opportunities for food produced in animal welfare friendly systems

becoming the producer of choice for retailers and consumers concerned with animal health and welfare, food safety and quality, human health, and the environment.”<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, the relationships between humans and animals—and the ways in which we treat animals—are critically important. Recent tragedies such as the devastation caused by the Myanmar cyclone and Pakistan earthquake have shown the importance of maximising assistance to humans and animals in disaster response, and new global challenges, such as climate change, further demand innovative strategies to mitigate their harmful impacts on people, animals and our world. Due in large part to the FAO’s leadership, the role of animal agriculture in global warming has been identified and, increasingly, the promotion of extensive, higher welfare farming systems are being promoted by NGOs, policy makers and scientific experts, among others.

We encourage the FAO to adopt the following recommended actions to assist its mission to improve levels of nutrition, standards of living and agricultural productivity, to better the conditions of rural populations and contribute to the growth of the world economy.

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<sup>5</sup> International Finance Corporation, 2006. Good Practice Note: Animal Welfare in Livestock Operations. [www.ifc.org/ifcext/sustainability.nsf/Content/Publications\\_GoodPractice\\_AnimalWelfare](http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/sustainability.nsf/Content/Publications_GoodPractice_AnimalWelfare)



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## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR THE FAO EXPERT GROUP ON ANIMAL WELFARE

### Recommendation 1

As animals are sentient beings, the importance of their welfare should be acknowledged.

### Recommendation 2

Agree that animal welfare can be scientifically measured and that new systems of assessment can compare standards of welfare.

### Recommendation 3

The FAO should adopt a clear position on the positive benefits of developing systems of higher welfare farming, transport and slaughter in developing countries.

### Recommendation 4

The FAO should agree that good welfare of animals can have direct impacts on their health, productivity and yield, which positively benefits farmers and communities.

### Recommendation 5

Relevant aid and development work undertaken by the FAO, as well as international and non-governmental agencies, should assess the risks to animal welfare when developing and executing any initiatives. Programmes should minimise the negative impact and maximise the positive impact of programmes involving animals.

### Recommendation 6

The FAO should support the widely accepted “Five Freedoms”<sup>6</sup>, which are globally acknowledged as the foundation of good farm animal welfare standards:

1. **Freedom from Hunger and Thirst** - by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
2. **Freedom from Discomfort** - by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
3. **Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease** - by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. **Freedom to Express Normal Behaviour** - by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
5. **Freedom from Fear and Distress** - by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

### Recommendation 7

The FAO should establish an *Animal Welfare in Development Group* involving experts from all relevant organisations and parties to promote the action points from this meeting and raise awareness of animal welfare as a key pillar of community development.

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<sup>6</sup> Farm Animal Welfare Council. *Five Freedoms*. [www.fawc.org.uk/freedoms.htm](http://www.fawc.org.uk/freedoms.htm)

**Recommendation 8**

A proactive programme should be established by the FAO to encourage support for systems of higher welfare farming, transport and slaughter in developing countries and thereby disallow support for industrial production models and practices being phased out by western countries. This would, in particular, be an incentive to maximise trade export opportunities to developed countries where there is already established consumer demand and market for such goods. The programme should include the development of welfare guidelines, training protocols, and identification of practices and systems that provide for high welfare and health.

**Recommendation 9**

A new funding stream should be established from governmental, non-governmental and corporate sources to deliver technology transfer and capacity building into developing countries to enable them to meet standards of higher welfare assurance schemes and so realise the trade potential from such schemes.

**Recommendation 10**

The report and recommendations from the Expert Group should be forwarded to COAG, and animal welfare should be included as an agenda item for its April 2009 meeting. As well, animal welfare should be included as part of the debate in the November 2009 FAO conference, written and included into disaster management policies, and part of FAO's recommendations towards more humane and sustainable farming systems.