



TEXTS ADOPTED

Provisional edition

P8_TA-PROV(2018)0429

Animal welfare, antimicrobial use and the environmental impact of industrial broiler farming

European Parliament resolution of 25 October 2018 on animal welfare, antimicrobial use and the environmental impact of industrial broiler farming (2018/2858(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Council Directive 2007/43/EC of 28 June 2007 laying down minimum rules for the protection of chickens kept for meat production¹ (the Broiler Directive),
- having regard to its resolution of 26 November 2015 on a new animal welfare strategy for 2016-2020²,
- having regard to the 2017 EU One Health Action Plan against Antimicrobial Resistance,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 19 January 2012 on the European Union Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012-2015 (COM (2012)0006),
- having regard to the Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council of 13 April 2018 on the application of Directive 2007/43/EC and its influence on the welfare of chickens kept for meat production, as well as the development of welfare indicators (COM(2018)0181),
- having regard to the study by the Commission of 21 November 2017 on the application of Council Directive 2007/43/EC and development of welfare indicators,
- having regard to the agreement³ on the Veterinary Medicinal Products Regulation reached on 5 June 2018,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health ('Animal Health Law')⁴,

¹ OJ L 182, 12.7.2007, p. 19.

² OJ C 366, 27.10.2017, p. 149.

³ Texts adopted, P8_TA-PROV(2018)0421.

⁴ OJ L 84, 31.3.2016, p. 1.

- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2017 on official controls and other official activities performed to ensure the application of food and feed law, rules on animal health and welfare, plant health and plant protection products¹,
 - having regard to the European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes and to Council Directive 98/58/EC of 20 July 1998 on the same topic²,
 - having regard to Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2017/302 of 15 February 2017 establishing best available techniques (BAT) conclusions, under Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, for the intensive rearing of poultry or pigs³,
 - having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the EU is a major global producer of broiler chickens, with approximately 7 billion of them slaughtered for food purposes; whereas the poultry sector, which produces in accordance with the European ‘Farm to Fork’ principle, employs over a quarter of a million people, with 23 000 large broiler farms in Europe;
 - B. whereas Directive 2007/43/EC (the Broiler Directive) lays down minimum standards for the protection of chickens kept for meat production; whereas it is important that the Commission, the Member States and producers respect these rules and pursue regular inspections in this field;
 - C. whereas according to the Commission study of 21 November 2017 on the application of Council Directive 2007/43/EC, 34 % of broiler chickens are kept at stocking densities of 33 kg/m² in accordance with the general rule, 40 % at densities of between 34-39 kg/m² and 26 % at the highest density (up to 42 kg/m²) permitted by the directive;
 - D. whereas enforcement of the Broiler Directive is not uniform and the Commission’s recent implementation report showed that enforcement is at best inconsistent across Member States;
 - E. whereas overuse of antimicrobial veterinary medicines, especially as growth promoters and for metaphylaxis and prophylaxis, has been one of the major factors influencing the development of antimicrobial resistance bacteria globally; whereas poor welfare caused by high stocking densities or heat stress can induce immunological deficits and make broiler chickens more susceptible to disease;
 - F. whereas the presence of multi-drug resistant zoonotic strains of *Campylobacter spp.* and *Salmonella spp.* in broiler farms and on broiler meat poses an increasing threat to public health, as reported by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC);
 - G. whereas animal welfare rules should be updated on the basis of new scientific findings and with due regard for the long-term competitiveness of agricultural livestock

¹ OJ L 95, 7.4.2017, p. 1.

² OJ L 221, 8.8.1998, p. 23.

³ OJ L 43, 21.2.2017, p. 231.

husbandry; whereas the use of farming systems with higher welfare can improve animal health and welfare outcomes, thus contributing to a reduction in the need for antimicrobials, while continuing to deliver high product quality;

- H. whereas the 2010 EFSA scientific opinion on the influence of genetic parameters on the welfare and the resistance to stress of commercial broilers showed that genetic selection based on the growth rates of broiler chickens can compromise the health and welfare of these animals;
 - I. whereas European citizens have a strong interest in animal welfare and wish to be able to make more informed choices as consumers;
 - J. whereas the latest special Eurobarometer on animal welfare shows that more than 50 % of European citizens look for information on the method of production when buying animal products and may be willing to pay more for higher animal welfare; whereas more than 80 % of European citizens want the welfare of farmed animals to be enhanced in the EU;
 - K. whereas 25 % of the breast poultry meat consumed in the EU is imported from third countries with less strict legislation on animal welfare; whereas most of the imported poultry meat is used in food services or food processing, where information on the origin and labelling of the meat is not mandatory;
 - L. whereas Thailand, Brazil and Ukraine, accounting altogether for 90 % of the imports from third countries, have all been subjected to audits by the Commission's DG SANTE, which have highlighted significant deficiencies in the production process and in respect for EU legislation; whereas EU farmers, as well as NGOs, have expressed concerns over the economic, social and environmental impacts of imports of cheaply produced chicken meat and misleading labelling of chicken meat processed in the European Union, but originating from third countries;
1. Acknowledges the outcomes of the Commission report on the application of Directive 2007/43/EC and its influence on the welfare of chickens kept for meat production indicating that only two thirds of Member States have properly implemented the directive; is concerned about the predominance, as demonstrated in the report, of higher stocking densities in many places than the general rule of 33 kg/m²;
 2. Is concerned about the increase in multi-drug resistant zoonotic agents typically encountered in broiler farming, such as *Campylobacter spp.*, *Salmonella spp.* and *E. coli*;
 3. Recognises the efforts already made by farmers on broiler welfare in the various Member States in implementing the Broiler Directive and particularly by those partaking in voluntary schemes;
 4. Calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure a harmonised implementation and full enforcement of Directive 2007/43/EC in terms of building specifications and safety to ensure the objectives of the directive;
 5. Stresses that unfair competition leads to an uneven playing field, as those who are non-compliant undercut those who comply with the rules;

6. Calls on the Commission to ensure robust and measurable harmonised animal welfare indicators for broiler chickens and parent stock, including guidance for best available practices for hatcheries;
7. Calls on the Commission and Member States to tackle poultry housing fires by promoting best practices; calls on the Member States to make full provision for appropriate and sufficient training courses for keepers, as set out in Directive 2007/43/EC;
8. Calls for EFSA to produce an opinion on the prevalence and risk factors for antimicrobial-resistant *Campylobacter spp.*, *Salmonella spp.* and *E. coli* with zoonotic potential;
9. Welcomes the agreement on the Veterinary Medicinal Products Regulation reached on 5 June 2018; welcomes the provisions laid down to restrict the use of antibiotics for meta- and prophylaxis; recalls its position on preventive measures and the EMA/EFSA joint scientific opinion¹ calling for: the use of breeding stock that grows more healthily and slowly, stocking densities that do not increase the risk of disease, smaller groups, isolation of sick animals (Article 10 of Regulation (EU) 2016/429), and implementation of existing welfare laws; trusts that the regulation will facilitate the much-needed action on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and stimulate innovation in the field of veterinary medicine; considers that the European poultry sector and national authorities are undertaking initiatives to reduce the use of antibiotics through the modernisation of poultry farms;
10. Stresses that improved animal husbandry techniques lead to a better quality of life for poultry and reduce the need to use antimicrobials, examples of such improvements being providing natural light, clean air and more space, and reducing ammonia; reminds the Commission of the statement set out in the Animal Health Strategy and the significant promotion that prevention is better than cure;
11. Stresses that animal welfare serves as a preventive measure in itself, contributing to reducing the risk of the animal becoming ill and thereby lowering the use of antimicrobials and delivering production results that are often higher; notes that the incorrect use of antimicrobials could render them ineffective, which would consequently be a danger for human health;
12. Calls on the Commission to enhance AMR research and best practices and to ensure that preventive measures such as disease surveillance and controls are carried out effectively by Member States;
13. Calls on the Commission to promote policies encouraging the uptake of alternative rearing systems for broiler chickens, as well as of traditional and/or broiler breeds that allow for higher welfare;
14. Calls on the Commission to draw up a roadmap to support competitive and sustainable poultry meat production and breeding which ensures higher welfare for broiler

¹ EMA Committee for Medicinal Products for Veterinary Use (CVMP) and EFSA Panel on Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ), 2016. *EMA and EFSA Joint Scientific Opinion on measures to reduce the need to use antimicrobial agents in animal husbandry in the European Union, and the resulting impacts on food safety.*

chickens;

15. Calls on the Commission to reinforce controls performed at borders on imported poultry meat from third countries to make sure these imports comply with EU legislation on animal welfare, food safety and the environment;
16. Stresses that imports of chicken meat from countries with lower environmental, social, food safety and animal welfare standards have increased; calls on the Commission to ensure that imported chicken meat, meat products and preparations have been produced in line with the environmental, social, food safety and animal welfare standards of the Union in order to guarantee a fair and level playing field for EU producers;
17. Calls on the Commission to propose legislation on mandatory labelling of the origin of imported meat in EU processed products in the retail, catering and food services so that consumers can make an informed choice;
18. Calls on the Commission to establish an EU method of production marking for broiler chickens similar to the existing EU method for eggs, in order to improve transparency and communication to consumers on animal welfare in agricultural production;
19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Member States.