

## MANIFESTO ON ANIMAL WELFARE LABELLING

### INTRODUCTION

Across the EU member states, more and more consumers and politicians value animal welfare<sup>1</sup>. Yet, information on the animal welfare status under which a certain product is produced are rare. Labels are unevenly distributed across the EU and largely depend on voluntary private initiatives following various approaches and using different interpretations of the term animal welfare.

As part of the EU 'Farm to Fork Strategy,' the European Commission (EC) announced that it will "consider options for animal welfare labelling to better transmit value through the food chain"<sup>2</sup>. According to a recent study of the EC<sup>3</sup>, 2/3 of European citizens feel like they have insufficient information on the conditions farm animals are kept and treated. The study confirms that Europeans are looking for more transparency and clarity on animal welfare and would appreciate a clear labelling system that aids them in making conscious choices.

An EU-wide transparent labelling of the conditions under which animal-derived food is produced is urgently required. This label shall provide useful and understandable information for consumers but must also proof reliability. The establishment of an effective control system is therefore a prerequisite to guarantee compliance with the labelling scheme.

This way an EU-wide labelling system can help to shift agriculture towards a higher quality, lower volume production that meets environmental, animal welfare and nutritional concerns.

### THE WORKING GROUP ON EU LABELLING CALLS FOR:

- a **mandatory multi-tier labelling** scheme for all animal-derived food products<sup>4</sup>, including processed food, retail, and out-of-home consumption

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<sup>1</sup> Special Eurobarometer 442 (2016): Attitudes of Europeans towards Animal Welfare

<sup>2</sup> European Commission (2020): [Farm to fork strategy. For a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system](#)

<sup>3</sup> European Commission (2022): [European Commission, Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, Maestre, M., Campbell, L., Etienne, J., et al., Study on animal welfare labelling : final report, 2022, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2875/676603](#)

<sup>4</sup> The working group is mainly considering terrestrial farm animals. Nevertheless, aquatic animals should also be addressed in future.

### WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

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Sarah Wiener MEP

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This classification system works like the mandatory marketing standard for table eggs<sup>5</sup> and informs consumers on all animal-based products on the market. The classification system should incorporate the entire life cycle of farm animals. However, transport and slaughter should be regulated equally as strong for all farm animals on a mandatory basis.

- labelling all husbandry systems **from minimum EU legislation to premium levels**

Voluntary labels commonly inform consumers only about products that are presumed to have higher standards than the EU minimum. A transparent, mandatory classification system allows consumers to clearly differentiate between all production systems on the market. This system further allows to distinguish between EU and non-EU products produced under lower or even unknown standards.

- a design, which is **simple and easy to understand for consumers**

A label needs to be simple and easy to understand to enable consumers to make informed shopping choices. A transparent and honest communication is needed to clearly distinguish between low-quality factory farming and premium standards caring for animal welfare and the environment. Traffic-light rating systems and/or pictures of farm husbandry systems are possible tools to give consumers an immediate idea as to whether a system is good or bad. Labelling can only be effective if it is easy for consumers to understand, harmonised for an integrated internal market and supported by a coherent EU trade policy.

- including **animal welfare indicators when defining tiers** (incorporating the “Five domains”<sup>6</sup>)

In a classical method-of-production (MOP) scheme, key issues such as non-curative mutilations, genetics, or monitoring antibiotics and health status are missing. Labels which integrate additional features beside the housing system are called method-of-production-plus (MOP+). The MOP+ labels are more complex and more difficult to consolidate, yet they are more convincing for consumers and better suited to address welfare aspects of farmed animals.

- incorporating an independent and reliable **control and certification system**

Compliance needs to be proven regularly to keep the label reliable. Annual third-party control and the establishment of a common database for evaluation are prerequisites of a successful label implementation.

<sup>5</sup> Commission Regulation (EC) No 589/2008 of 23 June 2008 laying down detailed rules for implementing Council Regulation (EC) No 1234/2007 as regards marketing standards for eggs

<sup>6</sup> Mellor DJ (2017) Operational details of the Five Domains Models and its key applications to the assessment and management of animal welfare. *Animals* 7(8):60. [doi:10.3390/ani7080060](https://doi.org/10.3390/ani7080060)

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