

OIE STANDARDS AS A PLATFORM FOR DEVELOPING EUROPEAN UNION LEGISLATION AND BILATERAL AGREEMENT WITH TRADING PARTNERS

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In the EU animal welfare is a main issue. Therefore, in negotiations with third countries, the Commission promotes animal welfare by integrating it within an approach that also encompasses sustainability and environmental impact. Animal welfare and animal health are linked, inasmuch as by ensuring good welfare the animals are less stressed, not constantly under pressure to adapt to an environment or circumstances to which they are ill suited and thus more robust and less susceptible to disease. Against this backdrop, by including animal welfare in negotiations, bilateral agreements have the potential to improve the lives of both people and animals. Additionally, better knowledge of animal welfare facilitates market access opportunities.

The OIE standards form a technical platform where central specifications are outlined, for example on the transport of animals, and they provide a good framework for and facilitate discussions between the EU and major EU trade partners (e.g. Chile, New Zealand).

So far, the EU has little experience in using the OIE standards as a basis for developing new EU legislation. Be that as it may, the recently adopted Council Regulation (EC) no. 1099/2009 did build on some elements of the OIE standards and contains a specific reference to the Terrestrial Animal Health Code. This EU Regulation only contains one general provision applicable to fish and no specific requirements. Consequently, the Commission is now preparing a study on the welfare of farmed fish at the time of killing. In this context, it will be natural to use the current OIE standards (see Aquatic Animal Health Code Section 7) on this topic as a key source for the assessment of the current situation and for the development of possible legislative or non-legislative measures.

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