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Designing animal welfare policies and monitoring progress

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Abstract

A single solution to promote higher animal welfare across the whole EU is unlikely due to significant regional differences and because what is most appropriate for each region depends on many factors. Based on analyses of eight member and candidate EU countries, this paper provides a conceptual framework, an 'animal welfare roadmap', which can be used to assess the stage of maturity of a country in farm animal welfare policy development and identify appropriate policy instruments and indicators to monitor progress towards higher animal welfare. The 'roadmap' consists of five sequential stages: increasing compliance with legislation; raising awareness; product development; mainstreaming; and integration of animal welfare with other issues. For each stage, specific policy instruments are identified alongside the category of stakeholders most likely to be influential in the implementation of each instrument. The policy instruments used to achieve these stages are those used by government departments/agencies, private enterprises, academic bodies or non-governmental organisations who formulate standards for animal welfare. These are supported by indicators best suited to document their effectiveness. Although we have emphasised how different situations and contexts within the EU mean that there is no single optimal policy instrument for the EU as a whole, but rather appropriate policy instruments should be selected according to the stage of development of a country or sector, we do propose a harmonised choice of indicators to allow benchmarking of changes at the EU level with regard to progress towards animal welfare.

Keywords: animal-based measures, animal welfare, animal welfare assessment, policy, policy indicators, policy instruments