



ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH UNIT

Network on Animal Health and Welfare

Minutes of the 6th meeting of Network of the scientific National Contact Points (NCPs) for scientific support established under Art 20 of Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009

**Held on 05-06 October 2021, WEB-conference
(Agreed on 27 October 2021)**

Participants

- **Network Representatives of Member States (including EFTA Countries):**

Country	Name
Austria	Katrina Eder
Belgium	Ester Peeters/Anneleen Watteyn
Bulgaria	Madlen Vasileva
Cyprus	Elias Pantechis
Croatia	Branka Buković Šošić
Czech Republic	Simona Kinclova/ Simona Nincakova
Denmark	Ane Katrine Rasmussen
Finland	Satu Raussi
France	Sarah Bourguine/ Frederic Daniel Bernard Pronnier
Germany	Isa Adriana Kernberger-Fischer
Greece	Katerina Marinou
Ireland	Stephanie Ronan
Italy	Sara Rota Nodari
Latvia	Iveta Kocina
Netherlands	Marien Gerritzen
Portugal	Maria Jorge Correia/ Maria De Conceicao Blasques De Oliveira
Slovakia	Apologies
Spain	Antonio Velarde
Sweden	Charlotte Berg
Iceland	Kristin Silja Guðlaugsdóttir
Norway	Cecilie Marie Mejdell

- **Hearing Experts**

Virginie Michel - Member of the AHAW Panel

- **European Commission:**

Angel Miguelez (DG Sante, Unit F2-Animals) on 05/10

Denis Simonin (DG Sante, Unit G2- Animal Health and Welfare) on 05/10

- **EFSA:**

ALPHA Unit: Chiara Fabris (Chair), Yves Van der Stede, Michele Ardizzone, Denise Candiani, Raquel Garcia Matas, Maria Vaeret Veggeland, Marika Vitali, Mimi Kalcheva, Mariana Geffroy, Eliana Lima, Lukas Pantenburg, Cristina Rapagnà, Martina Capelli, Emanuela Tacci

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

Apologies were received from Slovakia.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Agreement of the minutes of the 5th meeting of the Network of the scientific NCPs for Art 20 held on 15 October 2020, via web

The minutes were agreed by written procedure on 04 November 2020 and published on the EFSA website.

4. Topics for discussion

4.1 Update on the 2021 activities of EFSA on animal welfare

Two presentations were given about the most recent activities carried over by EFSA in the field of Animal Welfare.

4.1.1. F2F mandates

Network representatives were given an overview and update on the F2F scientific opinions (SOs) that EFSA is producing:

- Denise Candiani provided a general overview of the EC mandates received under the framework of the Farm to Fork (F2F) strategy and on their timelines. The F2F Strategy foresees a comprehensive evaluation of the current EU animal welfare legislation with the view to its possible revision. In preparation to that, in June 2020 EFSA received five mandates from the EC, requesting a comprehensive and updated assessment of the scientific knowledge related to protection of calves, laying hens, pigs, broiler chickens and terrestrial animals during transport. Due to the complexity of the mandate on the protection of animals during transport (i.e. six animal categories to be considered, six group of practices to be described and seven specific scenarios to be further assessed), EFSA is addressing it by delivering two different

SOs, one on free moving animals and the second on animals transported in containers. Recently, in June 2021 and July 2021 respectively, EFSA has received two additional mandates: a) on the protection of ducks, geese quail and ducks, and b) on the protection of dairy cows. The eight SOs will be produced with different deadlines starting from June 2022 to March 2023. The mandate on the protection of pigs, calves, laying hens and broiler chickens present a similar specific scenario which relates to the collection and assessment of animal-based measures (ABMs) at slaughter, to monitor the level of AW on-farm.

- Michele Ardizzone detailed the state of art of the draft SO on the protection of laying hens in relation to the description of the animal categories and husbandry systems (including those management practices common across husbandry systems and categories), the identification and description of the most relevant welfare consequences and of the related ABMs that can be assessed on farm. Mandate specific scenarios were also presented.
- Raquel Garcia Matas, provided a similar overview detailing the state of development of the SO on the protection of broiler chickens, on the description of the animal categories and husbandry systems, the most relevant welfare consequences and the related ABMs. It was specified that brooders cocks, double purpose lines, great grandparents and pure lines will be included in the SO as breeder categories, that some investigation on the broilers kept in cages is being carried out, and that promising husbandry systems (e.g. hutch hatcheries) will be also considered in the draft SO. Mandate specific scenarios were also presented.
- Maria Vaeret Veggeland described in detail the recently received mandate on the protection of ducks, geese and quail: background, terms of reference and target populations. This mandate stems from the European Citizen Initiative (ECI) which calls for the banning of the use of cages and it refers to animals used for farming purposes only. It was also specified that the process of collecting feathers and downs and the process of force-feeding for fatty liver production are not part of this request. Information on the approach to the mandate were also provided with special emphasis to an online survey that was promoted and disseminated with the support of the EC. The survey consists on a set of questions to gather data across Europe on the populations and transport of these animal species, including the husbandry and farming conditions. Deadline for submitting data is 31 October 2021.

Chiara Fabris presented the EFSA ongoing Public Consultation on the draft SO on the protection of pigs, which contains the description of pig categories, husbandry systems, most relevant welfare consequences and related ABMs. EFSA is interested in stakeholders' opinion also on its interpretation of the specific scenarios and on the exposure variables that were identified as the most relevant for further assessment. Network representatives were invited to disseminate the information and the link to the Public Consultation; deadline for submitting comments to the draft SO is 13 October 2021.

4.1.2 EFSA's Scientific opinions on Slaughter & Killing

Denise Candiani updated Network members on the EFSA SOs on slaughter of animals and on killing for purposes other than human consumption (on-farm killing). An overview of the EC mandates that EFSA received in 2018 on these topics, with background, terms of reference, scenarios and target populations was provided. Meeting participants were informed that EFSA Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW) Panel had just adopted (during the September Plenary meeting) the SO on the slaughter of sheep and goats and that next SOs are scheduled for adoption by December 2024.

4.2 Possible approaches for future legislation on the protection of animals at the time of killing

Denis Simonin, senior expert from SANTE G5 Unit – Animal welfare and Antimicrobial Resistance, presented this topic in the framework of a possible revision/update of the EU legislation on the protection of animals at the time of killing.

Background and general context were explained: the Farm to Fork Strategy, the EC Roadmap Evaluation/Fitness check of the EU legislation on the welfare of farmed animals, including Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009, recent (from 2019) EFSA's SOs on slaughter of animals and on-farm killing, and the Inception Impact Assessment that was published in July 2021.

Future legislation on the protection of animals at the time of killing might include provisions on farmed fish, phasing out of some restraining/stunning methods and of electric prods, and provisions on the approval process of restraining and stunning equipment, with a pre-approval step either at EU-wide level (by AW Reference Centres) or at Member State level. In particular, the use of waterbath stunning for poultry and of carbon dioxide with high concentration for pigs are currently under evaluation; electrical prods could also be phased out, either limiting their use to cattle, or prohibiting their use to all species.

Meeting participants were also informed about further activities of the EC on this field, i.e. the upcoming (Mid of October 2021) launch of a Public consultation on the revision of the EU legislation, an upcoming stakeholders conference (9th of December 2021) which will have a session dedicated to the protection of animals at the time of killing, and a specific impact assessment on slaughter/killing that will start in 2022. It was specified that the overall aim is to have legislative proposal(s) on the protection of animals at the time of killing by 2023.

The link to the EC initiatives was also provided: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12950-Revision-of-the-EU-legislation-on-animal-welfare_en

During the Questions & Answers session it was specified that:

- the topic of 'religious slaughter' (slaughter without stunning) is not in the agenda and the Inception Impact Assessment does not include religious slaughter.
- the legislative proposals will be based on the scientific evidence, e.g. on the welfare consequences affecting the animals, and will take also into account economical aspects and impact on food business operators.

It was also reported that approximately 1000 feedbacks were received on the Inception Impact assessment activity, pertinent feedbacks will be evaluated and taken into consideration.

4.3 Update on current activities from EURCAW-Poultry-SFA on AW at slaughter

Antonio Velarde, Head of the Animal Welfare Program at IRTA, and deputy coordinator of the European Reference Centre for animal welfare (EURCAW) for poultry and other small farmed animals (SFA), presented the activities of the Centre in the field of animal welfare at slaughter.

According to Art 96 of Council Regulation (EU) 625/2017, on the Official Controls, main tasks of EURCAWs include coordinated assistance to the EU Member States (MSs), AW indicators, scientific and technical studies, training courses and dissemination activities. The centre works for the EC MSs Competent Authorities (CAs), and their Supporting Bodies.

Examples of scientific and technical assistance to MSs CAs in the field of AW at slaughter and killing were presented; they related to: i) on farm-killing for poultry and rabbits with captive bolt, ii) head-only stunning and decapitation, and iii) traumatism assessment protocols for broilers. In particular, the results of a questionnaire that the Centre sent out to the MSs about on-farm killing of poultry and rabbits were presented in detail: e.g., four MSs (out of 17) use captive bolt device during on-farm killing of poultry and rabbit. In most of the Countries (15 out of 16) cervical dislocation is the most common method for this purpose.

It was specified that questions to EURCAW can be submitted on its website; the questions to the Centre and their thorough responses can be found at <https://www.eurcaw-poultry-sfa.eu/en/minisite/sfawc/questions-eurcaw-q2e>. Once a year the Centre meets MSs CAs to present and discuss the outcomes of its activities.

A list of relevant welfare indicators for the assessment of consciousness after waterbath stunning and a list of improved methods for the assessment of welfare were also produced by the Centre. A webinar on how to assess the state of consciousness in broilers after electrical waterbath is available on the Centre website.

The Centre also carried out a review about the main welfare aspects of stunning chickens by exposure to controlled atmosphere. A report on a study in six slaughterhouses on inter-observer repeatability of indicators of consciousness in broiler chicken and turkeys after WBS and the effectiveness of different combination of electrical key parameters will also be soon available.

Network meeting attendees were also informed/reminded about the trainings provided by the EURCAW that are accessible via web, the development of its website and the logo of the EURCAW-poultry-SFA.

4.4 Exchange of information among scientific NCPs

4.4.1 Presentation from Sweden

Topics for network discussion:

- Reg. (EC) 1099/2009, Annex I Chapter I, Table 3: the absence of the requirement for a stun-stick interval for carbon dioxide in two phases and how 'two phases' can be interpreted

-Reg. (EC) 1099/2009, Art 13: the development and dissemination of national guides to good practice: what do the national authorities require these guides to cover?

Lotta Berg (representative from Sweden) pointed out that the current legislation on the protection of animals at the time of killing doesn't request to indicate a maximum stun-to-stick interval when stunning poultry with carbon dioxide in two phases. However, if the interval is too long, birds may recover consciousness. Swedish government wants to give an indication on the maximum interval and Network members were invited to bring the experience of their countries on this field. The definition of 'two phases' is also missing in the EU legislation and it would be interesting to know if any country has included it in the national legislation.

Similarly, Network representatives were asked to provide information on the application at national level of the requirement related to the development and dissemination of national guides to good practice. *What do these guidelines include? How are they disseminated and used? (e.g., do Food Business Operators use the national guidelines and have included them inside their manuals of Standard operating procedures?). Are they considered legal requirements?*

During the Questions & Answers session it was specified that although there are no figures on the % of birds that recover consciousness when subjected to carbon dioxide in two phases, considering the very high amount of birds that are currently slaughtered, one could assume that the number of birds recovering consciousness due to too long stun to stick interval is high.

The German representative reported on a handbook for official controls produced at national level, where the maximum stun-to-stick interval for carbon dioxide in two phases is of 20 seconds.

Presentation of the Swedish approach to the assessment of ABMs at slaughterhouses to monitor poultry on-farm welfare

Lotta Berg explained that, following the meat inspection protocols, carcasses are routinely inspected right after bleeding. In this context additional aspects linked to the welfare of the animals are checked, e.g. foot pad dermatitis, systemic illness and parasitism. Important indicators include skin and lung lesions, leg weakness, plumage cleanliness, severe pecking wounds, and runts. It was further explained that in Sweden foot-pad dermatitis is recorded and reported centrally, with a threshold for a "warning" and for a reduction of stocking density at a higher threshold.

4.4.2 Presentation from Germany

The German National Animal Welfare Monitoring (Nationales Tierwohl-Monitoring) project – focus on laying hens and broilers

Isa Adriana Kernberger-Fischer presented the German National Animal Welfare Monitoring project, which is carried out by several institutions, includes several species (pigs, poultry, small ruminants, cattle and fish), and covers all the production phases. This project is based on a regular collection of environmental data and animal-based indicators. It was specified that currently in Germany a broad range of environmental data is already being collected, analysed and published. On the contrary, recording of data on animal-based measures is not systematic nor enough standardised yet; it mainly belongs to the scientific literature. The main goal of the project consists in building up the basic structures for a regular and indicator-based AW monitoring system in Germany. It implies the active involvement of all stakeholders: food business operators, Competent Authorities, scientific experts, and citizens. The outcomes of this system will support political and administrative decisions, provide a knowledge base for consumers and citizens, and provide a basis for benchmarking.

The project is formed by seven work packages, starting from the setting-up of a virtual library with the relevant scientific publications on animal-based indicators and their attributes (e.g., validity, reliability, and feasibility).

The second work package consists in a stakeholders' analysis and management, to select the animal welfare indicators. It was explained that, in the case of poultry, animal-based indicators providing information on AW on-farm can be assessed and even better recorded at the slaughterhouse. In fact, the conditions at the slaughterhouse allow to assess many animals in a relatively short period of time, under similar environmental factors. In this respect the reliability of the data is likely to increase. Examples of selected indicators for poultry to be assessed at slaughter were: abscesses, ascites, emaciation, keel bone fractures (not for broiler chickens), breast blisters, dermatitis, footpad dermatitis (not for laying hens). Some example of scoring systems and assessment of the indicators were also provided.

During the Questions & Answers session it was further explained that the project includes herds of carps and rainbow trout. Several Network representatives expressed their interest on the use of animal-based indicators to monitor AW in aquaculture and exchanged information and contacts on this topic.

4.4.3 Presentation from Belgium

Development of a monitoring system for measuring the welfare of laying hens at the slaughterhouse

Anneleen Watteyn presented the Belgium project called 'Legmoni' on a monitoring system for measuring the welfare of laying hens at the slaughterhouse. The project is currently ongoing with many pilot studies. The project involves monitoring all the phases of production

starting from the hatchery (rearing, production farms, slaughterhouse and transport). Those measures are taken in laying hens reared in enriched cages and in non-caged systems (with/without ranging). The selection of the indicators was based on the scientific literature and the discussion of a multi-actor panel of experts. Selection criteria were validity and reliability, as well as practical feasibility. The main goal is to obtain an objective assessment system.

The project website is www.Legmoni.be. An app has been also developed to facilitate the collection of data. The app works online although questionnaire, can be filled also offline after downloading it. This should provide a database to monitor the welfare of laying hens and inform the sector on the results of the monitoring. Each farmer can access the database and see the statistics of his/her own herds, in comparison to the ones of the entire sector.

During the Questions & Answers session it was clarified that the monitoring protocol is the same in the case of enriched cages and no-cage systems. Most of the herds included in the project are no-cage systems and only a limited number of herds has enriched cages; however, the project allows to classify and benchmark herds within the same kind of system.

4.5 Exercises on 'Assessment of ABMs at slaughterhouses to monitor the welfare of poultry on-farm'

The second part of the meeting was dedicated to use of ABMs collected in slaughterhouses to monitor the animal welfare in the farms of laying hens and broiler chickens.

Specific exercises were carried out on this topic. In particular, prior to the meeting, Network members were invited to submit online questionnaires with information on the ABMs used at slaughterhouses to monitor the welfare of laying hens and broiler chickens on-farm in their countries. Main results from the questionnaires were presented at the meeting: meeting participants discussed the data submitted, clarified specific issues, and provided additional information on the topic. Subsequently, online-polls on specific questions related to fitness for purpose, feasibility and prioritisation of the ABMs were organised. A separate report will be published on EFSA's website with details on the exercises, including the results. The outcomes of the exercises will be taken into consideration by EFSA working groups on the protection of laying hens and broilers as basis for their scientific assessment, when addressing the specific scenarios of the F2F mandates.

5. Any Other Business

Network members asked practical questions on the assessment of ABMs at slaughter to assess the welfare on farm of other animal species (e.g. turkeys) and on the use of specific indicators (e.g. FPD). Meeting participants shared their knowledge and experiences in the specific topics; national legislative acts, guidelines and other pertinent documents were proactively disseminated during

the meeting. Network members emphasised the utility of having such possibility of exchange of information.

It was agreed that EFSA will update and actively promote the use of the EFSA 'Scientific NCPs Art 20 1099/2009' group in Teams. This group was set-up last year for facilitating communication and informal exchange of information among scientific NCPs; it can be used also as a repository of the documents that Network members would like to share. Access to this group will be given to the Network meeting participants.

6. Date for next meeting

Next meeting will be held in fall 2022 (date to be fixed).