



Council of the  
European Union

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**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Council

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Subject: Angora wool and fur from maltreated rabbits and furred animals  
- *Information from the Netherlands delegation*

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Delegations will find attached a note from the Netherlands delegation on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Agriculture and Fisheries) on 16 March 2015.

## **Angora wool and fur from maltreated rabbits and furred animals**

In recent years we have witnessed several instances of extreme cruelty to animals involving plucking angora rabbits for wool and skinning raccoons and other furred animals. This footage was distributed online and shown on television, including Dutch television. It showed rabbits being plucked alive and raccoons and other furred animals being killed in extremely cruel ways, including being skinned alive. The animal rights organisation that recorded this footage (PETA) has indicated that these images were made in China. A report on cruel practices towards furred animals 'Fun fur? A report on the Chinese fur industry' was also published a few years ago (Care for the Wild International 2007). The Netherlands would like to address this maltreatment at Council level and discuss with EU Member States and the European Commission what can be done to stop these cruel practices.

The Netherlands wants to prevent products involving maltreated animals from entering the European market. The practices depicted are contrary to the 'guiding and general principles on animal welfare' of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the recommendations of the Council of Europe, the provisions in Council Directive (EC) No. 98/58 concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes, and public morality in the EU. Our standpoint is that the textile and clothing sector itself is primarily responsible for addressing the problems identified regarding animal products in its products. Businesses themselves should be able to guarantee that the angora wool or fur they use are not obtained from maltreated animals. In consultation with the Dutch government, the textile and clothing sector in the Netherlands has indicated that it wants to take on that responsibility. One of the sector's intended actions is to actively advocate the development and implementation of tracing and quality assurance schemes, with independent certification of animal products in the sector (an example of such a scheme is the responsible down standard). The sector has asked the Dutch government to assist in these efforts by putting the issue on the EU agenda as well, as the sector operates in an international market.

The Netherlands would like to call on the EU Member States and the European Commission to ensure the textile and clothing sector in the EU Member States develop and implement such systems. Considering the international nature of this sector, a wide commitment is required. The Netherlands would also like to call on the European Commission to start consultations with non-EU countries, including China (being the world's largest fur producer), to discuss the maltreatments and ways to combat them. The European Commission can engage in a dialogue with these countries to enter into agreements about effective regulation, supervision and enforcement in terms of animal welfare, for example during a high level meeting or summit, when discussing trade agreements or Memorandums of Understanding, or during trade missions.

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