



Council of the
European Union

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

Subject: Ban on Fur Farming

*- Information from the Austrian, German and Netherlands delegations,
supported by the Belgian, Cyprus, Czech, Estonian, Lithuanian,
Luxembourg and Slovak delegations*

Delegations will find in the Annex a note from the Austrian, German and Netherlands delegations on the above mentioned subject to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council meeting "Agriculture and Fisheries" on 26 June 2023.

Ban on Fur Farming

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Slovak delegations*

Introduction

Recalling the exchange of views at the meeting of the Council ("Agriculture and Fisheries") on 28-29 June 2021 on fur farming also in light of several cases of COVID-19 in humans associated with SARS-CoV-2 infections in mink which have led to a closer examination of this practice, not least in terms of animal welfare, and considering the European citizens' initiative entitled 'Fur Free Europe' which has been supported by approximately 1.5 million citizens from all parts of the EU, we see to this date no harmonisation, whilst clearly public concern about animal welfare as well as health risk in relation to fur farming is growing.

The need to ban fur farming

The fact that many Member States have effectively banned fur farming demonstrates that this area has not been the subject of a full harmonisation. The current Union law¹ can, at most, be considered a minimally harmonising measure in relation to fur farming. This, in effect, potentially outsources the very practices that many Member States have sought to end to other countries within the European Union. As a result, this situation undermines the measures of those Member States that have introduced a ban on fur farming and prevents the effective protection of fur animals in the EU.

In order to ensure effective protection of fur animals in the EU and to reduce the health risks they pose to the most possible extend, the only effective remedy is an EU-wide outright ban. This would not only do justice to the clear expression of participatory democracy embodied by the citizens' initiative when it comes to animal welfare, but would also best fit with the precautionary approach for an industry that has been shown to pose significant public health risks during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

¹ Council Directive 98/58/EC

Fur farming in the European Union

1. We note the speed and hence success of the European citizens' initiative 'Fur Free Europe' in collecting approximately 1.5 million validated signatures throughout all Member States. It demonstrates the strong support of the civil society for a common EU action to end both fur farming within the EU and the marketing and sale of farmed fur products within the European market.
2. We recall the duty that is placed on the EU institutions to pay 'full regard to the welfare of animals' in line with Article 13 TFEU and we emphasise that that the EU should live up to its global leadership role in animal welfare.
3. We note that the animals kept on commercial fur farms are inherently wild and that under the conditions and management under which these animals are kept there is no feasible way to achieve a satisfying level of animal welfare.
4. We take note of the Commission's existing commitment to end caged farming systems for other commonly farmed animals and we believe that maintaining fur farming through production systems that are reliant on keeping animals in caged confinement, would be incongruous and at odds with this existing decision.
5. We note that several human cases of COVID-19 were subsequently linked with SARS-CoV-2 infections in mink, and hence the public health risks posed by the fur industry.

Conclusion

We, the signing Member States, therefore ask the European Commission to include provisions to ban fur farming and breeding in the EU into its forthcoming legislative proposals based on Articles 43(2) and 114 TFEU. In addition, we call on the Commission to examine the possibility to introduce a ban on the sale and marketing of products derived from fur animals in the Single Market.