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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB item for the meeting of the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council of 26 May 2025: The challenges of the livestock sector connected to the revision of the European legislation on transport of live animals <i>- Information from Italy with the support of Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and Romania</i>

Livestock production is an important part of the economy in many regions including some marginal rural areas. Livestock is present in almost all regions of the European Union and its social importance extends beyond employment; many of the valued landscapes and cuisines of the EU have evolved along with livestock production¹.

As indicated also in the Communication from the Commission “A Vision for Agriculture and Food”² published in February 2025, “*livestock is and will remain an essential part of EU agriculture, competitiveness and cohesion. Sustainable livestock is crucial for the EU economy, viability of rural areas and preservation of the environment and of rural landscapes*”.

¹ European Commission: Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, Peyraud, J.-L. and MacLeod, M., Future of EU livestock – How to contribute to a sustainable agricultural sector? – Executive summary, Publications Office, 2020.

² COM (2025) 75 final.

The sector has suffered over the last years the consequences of the growing costs of agriculture inputs and energy and the damages of re-emerging transmissible animal diseases. For these reasons it remains vulnerable. At the same time, European farmers and other operators of the supply chain are required to stick to high animal welfare standards - superior than those applied by most of other global competitors.

In this framework, the transport of live animal is essential for the good functioning of the livestock sector and good animal welfare is an integral part of sustainable animal production. For this reason, we appreciate the efforts made by the Commission with the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of animals during transport and related operations³, presented in December 2023.

Without prejudice to the ongoing work in the Council to amend this proposal, while welcoming the general objective of improving animal welfare, we would like to draw the attention to the negative socio-economic impact of some of the measures proposed on animal productions and, as a consequence, on food security and food sovereignty in the European Union. In particular, some essential elements shall be secured during the legislative process:

- i) **Equal access to the single market.** The proposal leaves some member States at a clear disadvantage, on the basis of their geography, such as islands, mountain or remote areas, or their specific climatic conditions, like in the northernmost and southernmost regions of the European continent.
- ii) **Smooth functioning of European livestock market and international trade.** The new parameters and limitations for journeys can actually jeopardize the continuity of breeding and trade of live animals, as well as increase the costs, the number of circulating vehicles and emissions. In addition, they can hamper the capacity of some member States to maintain the current export to third Countries, with detrimental effects on the global supply chain, food security and trade partnership.

³ COM (2023) 770 final.

- iii) **Proportionality with the actual benefits for animal welfare.** Only measures based on robust scientific evidence, carefully assessed in terms of proportionality and feasibility, shall be considered. Administrative burden for both competent authorities and operators shall be kept to a minimum. In general, a level playing field with operators based in third Countries shall be pursued.

We welcome the work done to find viable solutions under the lead of former and current Presidencies, recognizing that their progresses are going in the right direction. We call on the Council to maintain the current work pace and to pursue, in the ongoing legislative process, the objective of a regulatory framework supporting a productive, competitive and profitable EU livestock sector, also attractive for young generations. In particular, it is important to avoid burdening farmers and other operators with unjustified additional costs and unsustainable measures.

In this regard, it is also necessary to assess the consistency of this legislative proposal with the new political guidelines of the Commission, as stated in the Vision, to strengthen the future role of the livestock sector in the European Union.
