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Joint statement by the Dierenbescherming (Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals) and LTO Nederland (Dutch Organisation for Agriculture en Horticulture) on animal welfare

The importance of considering animal welfare is growing. Experience in the Netherlands shows that initiatives via the market have a greater effect than merely enforcing them through legislation.

1. Allow the markets to steer, safeguard a minimum level with legislation

LTO Nederland and Dierenbescherming call upon the ministers to encourage and facilitate market initiatives which safeguard the improvement of animal welfare throughout the supply chain, rather than just enforcing animal welfare through legislation. Look at the Beter Leven (Better Life) quality mark issued by Dierenbescherming and private initiatives by supply chains (producers, processors, food industry and retail). Stipulating a minimum standard for animal welfare legislation is fine, but it does then need to be Europe-wide, Level Playing Field.

2. More understanding for sustainability in competition regulation

Initiatives to make supply chains more sustainable repeatedly run up against competition law and competition authorities. LTO Nederland and Dierenbescherming call upon ministers not to frustrate sustainability initiatives - of which improvements in animal welfare form an integral part - through competition regulation based on the fear that consumer prices will rise or that cartels are being formed. Consumers will also have to take their share of responsibility for improving animal welfare.

3. Basic requirements also apply to products to be imported

Within international trade animal welfare requirements must be included under non-trade concerns. It cannot be the case that products are imported from countries where use is made of production systems which are not permitted in Europe/the Netherlands on grounds of animal welfare, such as the importation of cage eggs from Ukraine.

4. Strengthen collaboration, also on animal health and combating animal diseases

Alongside animal welfare, combating animal diseases is also an important item. We therefore call upon ministers to encourage closer co-operation within Europe on this issue. This particularly involves a joint approach in combating disease, research into development and application possibilities for vaccines, and support for a vaccination strategy in combating disease.

5. Consistent European regulations for small scale livestock sectors

There have been regulations relating to accommodation for the small livestock sectors (rabbits, turkeys and broiler chicken parent birds) in the Netherlands for years. These have been incorporated into the Wet dieren (Animals Act) following the abolition of the product marketing boards. We would argue for EU regulation in this area, whereby the Dutch rules could serve as a model.