



Bundesministerium  
für Ernährung  
und Landwirtschaft

# Pathways to a socially accepted livestock husbandry in Germany

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Scientific Advisory Board on Agricultural Policy at the  
Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture**

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**Information on the Advisory Board**

The Scientific Advisory Board advises the BMEL on agricultural policies. It is an independent and interdisciplinary body of up to 15 researchers drawing up scientific opinions and statements. The Advisory Board's main tasks include reviewing objectives and main principles of agricultural policy, assessing the demands of society at large addressed at the agricultural sector, and the preparation of recommendations for agricultural policy as well as sustainable rural development. For further information see [http://www.bmel.de/EN/Ministry/Scientific-Advisory-Boards/\\_Texte/AgriculturalPolicy.html](http://www.bmel.de/EN/Ministry/Scientific-Advisory-Boards/_Texte/AgriculturalPolicy.html)

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## Summary

In recent decades the livestock industry in Germany has developed into a successful economic sector. Major progress has been made in resource efficiency. At the same time, there are considerable **shortcomings, particularly in the areas of animal welfare and environmental protection**. Combined with changing attitudes with respect to the relationship between humans and animals, this has led to a reduced societal acceptance of livestock husbandry.

Against this background, the Scientific Advisory Board on Agricultural Policy (WBA) of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture is of the opinion that the current husbandry conditions for most livestock will not be viable in the future and has therefore developed **guidelines and recommendations** for socially acceptable livestock husbandry. In order to more readily reconcile the societal demands regarding livestock husbandry with the reality of agricultural production, the WBA recommends not only a comprehensive package of measures, but also a comprehensive debate between the agri and food business community, civil society, political circles and scientists. In this context, the strong focus of the current societal debate on the role of farm size ("mass animal farming") in animal welfare and environmental protection could also be countered. According to current knowledge, farm size has comparatively little impact on animal welfare compared to other contributing factors, such as the quality of management.

Besides synergies, there are several conflicts between the relevant societal goals for livestock husbandry, such as between environmental protection, animal and consumer welfare, and competitiveness. These conflicts hinder targeted policies. In many areas, however, these conflicting goals are less serious than often presumed, for instance in the case of ammonia emissions and outdoor climate contact. In principle, the conflicting goals of competitiveness and animal welfare can be overcome, for instance through a combination of state payments, voluntary initiatives by the sector and the seizing of market opportunities that result from the basically positive attitudes held by most parts of the population towards animal welfare. The very high price mark-ups for those meat products with animal welfare labels currently on sale on the market, labelling gaps and the limited offering are the main reasons why this market potential is far from being fully exploited at the present. In contrast, meat products are currently being sold in most cases as standard goods via the price.

Given the global ecological footprint and the negative health effects of very high meat consumption, the WBA advocates a strategy of more animal friendly and environmentally compatible production coupled with a parallel reduction of the amounts consumed. This is about grasping the economic opportunities for the necessary changes in livestock husbandry and introducing a new culture for the production and consumption of animal products.

In the field of **animal welfare**, the WBA sees the following important points as **guidelines for the development of viable livestock husbandry accepted by large parts of the population**:

- (1) access of all livestock to various climate zones, preferably including outdoor climate;
- (2) provision of different functional areas with various floor coverings;
- (3) provision of installations, substances and incentives for species-specific activities, feed intake and grooming activities;
- (4) provision of sufficient space;
- (5) a halt to amputations;
- (6) routine farm self-inspections based on animal-related animal welfare indicators;
- (7) a clear reduction in the use of medicinal products;
- (8) improved level of education, knowledge and motivation of people working in the livestock sector;
- (9) and greater consideration of functional characteristics in breeding.

Depending on their actual content, the implementation of these guidelines will entail considerable adjustments in the sector, some of which can be started immediately, some of which will take more time. It will be very difficult for farms with special operating and site preconditions, e.g. pig fattening farms in a confined village location, to implement these guidelines. For other farms, this will be less complicated.

The concrete implementation of the guidelines will lead to additional costs on a roughly estimated scale of 13 to 23 % (in total, around 3 to 5 billion Euro a year) for most livestock farms. The additional costs would lead—given a value-added share of agriculture in the consumer end price of around 25 % and the simple passing on of these costs—to an increase in consumer prices of around 3 to 6 %. This equals the declared willingness to pay of a large share of the population. However, because of a lack of both concepts and international market integration, this willingness to pay is not currently realised. Without accompanying policy measures, a cost increase of this kind would lead to the relocation of some production to countries with lower animal welfare standards due to the competitive pressure in the meat and milk industry, which is characterised by cost leadership. This would then thwart animal welfare goals.

In the face of these major challenges, the WBA believes that the set goals can only be achieved through joint efforts by the government, the food- and agribusiness community and civil society. To this end, the WBA proposes a strategy that encompasses state, private industry and civil society governance. This governance includes policy measures such as clearer and additional statutory minimum standards, a multi-stage state animal welfare label, premiums and compensatory payments within the framework of the Second or First Pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), as well as private sector measures such as the branch initiative animal welfare and self-restraint agreements. These measures should be aligned as far as possible. Both the develop-

ment of underlying guidelines and their concrete implementation require extensive societal discussions on various levels (deliberative processes) in order to promote mutual understanding and consensus.

To **achieve animal welfare goals**, the WBA proposes first immediate action and second medium- to long-term activities on the level of the federal government, federal Laender, the EU and the business community.

The **immediate action on the federal government level** includes (1) the establishment of national animal welfare monitoring, (2) the promotion of innovative forms of civic involvement, (3) proof of qualifications and a commitment to further training for livestock farmers and animal keepers, (4) an information programme for consumers including a state animal welfare label, and (5) a research and innovation programme for animal welfare. Ideally, points 1 to 5 should be co-ordinated and implemented as part of a federal animal welfare programme. Other proposed measures are (6) supplements to animal protection legislation, (7) testing methods and approval procedures for animal housing, slaughter and stunning facilities, (8) reallocation of First Pillar CAP funds to the Second Pillar in order to increase the financial scope for animal welfare measures, (9) (together with the federal Laender) the adding of further animal welfare measures to the range of action of the Joint Scheme 'Improving agricultural structures and coastal protection,' and (10) widening the public procurement regulations to include animal welfare. With regard to **medium-term action, the federal government should** forge alliances early on with other EU Member States and select topics in order to already now prepare the next CAP reform and an animal welfare strategy for the WTO negotiations.

The **immediate action on the federal Land level** will involve the systematic implementation of already valid animal protection regulations in the future. The federal Laender should clearly communicate the fact that they will issue orders to enforce a halt to regularly conducted non-curative intervention. This announcement should be coupled with a realistic deadline for compliance of around 3 years (for turkeys around 5 years). Furthermore, the enforcement shortcomings in animal protection can only be reduced by a combination of statutory and organisational measures seeking to achieve improved inspection techniques and structures, higher inspection densities and stiffer sanctions. Furthermore, the WBA recommends the promotion of initial and further training for all people who work with livestock and the extension of economic incentives for more animal welfare in the Second Pillar of agricultural support.

The **action to be taken immediately on the EU level** includes, for instance, the launch of a German initiative to raise EU-wide minimum standards and to enter into multilateral agreements between the main north-west European animal husbandry countries with comparable animal protection ambitions. Furthermore, detailed animal protection provisions should be issued on the EU level for animal species that are not yet covered and greater EU-wide alignment of enforcement practice should be initiated. The WBA sees joint action of the main production countries as a signal that would have a major impact on future developments. **In the medium term,**



**EU agricultural policy is to be revised** to enable it to offer major financial stimuli and innovation incentives to improve animal welfare. This includes (1) a reallocation of funds from the First to the Second Pillar of EU agricultural policy, (2) changes in the conditions for animal welfare payments under the Second Pillar, and (3) the introduction of the option of animal protection payments in the First CAP Pillar.

**The business community** (in particular commerce, large-scale consumers and industry) can contribute to the improvement of societal acceptance of livestock husbandry through committed implementation and far better funding of the branch initiative animal welfare, delisting decisions and market differentiations. The agri-food industry should input not only its economic arguments, but also more of its own ethical positions into the standard-setting process.

To achieve the goals in the fields of **environmental protection** (nature conservation, water and climate protection) in foreseeable future, the WBA believes there is an urgent need for, amongst other things, adjustments in fertiliser legislation that go beyond the present officials' draft for a reform of the Fertiliser Ordinance. Attention is again drawn here to the joint opinion of the Scientific Advisory Boards on Agricultural Policy and Fertiliser Issues and the German Advisory Council on the Environment regarding the 2013 amendment to the Fertiliser Ordinance. The WBA is of the opinion that the negative environmental impact of livestock husbandry, which is mainly observed in regions with a high livestock density, stems from the inadequate implementation of emission-reducing strategies. Attempts to achieve a more even spatial distribution have proved difficult because of the positive economic cluster effects on the one hand and residents' protests in regions with a low livestock density up to now on the other. If the environmental protection measures recommended in this Opinion do not lead to the desired results, the WBA does not see any other alternative in the medium-term than to reduce the size of livestock populations in the current "agglomerations" of animal husbandry. In line with the Dutch model, regional upper limits for livestock numbers would then be introduced. Given their major importance for biodiversity, the WBA recommends continuing or stepping up measures that ensure the societally desirable use of low-yield grassland locations.

In the field of **consumer protection**, the WBA believes there is a particular need for major improvements to the use of veterinary medicinal products because of the antibiotic resistance problem. The chosen path of antibiotic reduction in the 16th amendment to the Medicinal Products Act involving monitoring and benchmarking is promising in the opinion of WBA when combined with an optimisation of husbandry methods, and should be consistently implemented and refined.

The WBA is aware that the implementation of the proposed measures will entail sweeping changes in livestock husbandry. This will require major efforts by the government, the food- and agribusiness community and society which are essential for the achievement of more societally acceptable livestock husbandry.