

**Question for oral answer O-000095/2018
to the Commission**

Rule 128

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Subject: Animal welfare, antimicrobial use, and the environmental impact of industrial broiler farming

Directive 2007/43/EC lays down minimum standards for the protection of chickens kept for meat production. However, the Commission's report on the impact of this Directive on animal welfare failed to demonstrate any significant improvements, and showed that enforcement is at best inconsistent across Member States. The harsh reality is that broiler chickens are reared by the tens of thousands in barren sheds, on wet litter, and without any possibility of expressing natural behaviours such as perching, pecking enrichment substrates, or enjoying natural light. Moreover, the Directive does not address the negative consequences on animal welfare that directly derive from selection for fast growth, a problem that has been stressed by several European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) opinions as well as by a Commission report. These poor conditions often call for mass treatments with antibiotics to prevent or contain disease outbreaks, which is of serious concern for public health. Several strains of poultry pathogens capable of causing serious illness in humans are now showing resistance to antibiotics used in poultry production, as is the case for *Campylobacter* spp. and *Salmonella* spp. Multi-drug resistance in strains of *E. coli* found in poultry and poultry meat were recently defined as extremely worrying by the EFSA.

At the same time, a very recent report by Greenpeace identifies industrial poultry production as being a major contributor to ammonia pollution of air, soil and water, and calls on the Commission to stop subsidising mega-farms in favour of more sustainable systems and practices. Efforts are under way on the part of the poultry industry to reduce antimicrobial use and environmental impact, but if we look at the sector from a One Health and One Welfare perspective, it is clear that a comprehensive approach is urgently required to make the poultry industry more sustainable and animal-welfare friendly, while also maintaining its economic viability.

In this context, we would welcome answers from the Commission to the following questions:

1. Will the Commission take decisive action to improve enforcement of the Broilers Directive, specifically as regards the systematic and consistent use of harmonised animal-based indicators to improve animal welfare on farm?
2. What actions does the Commission envisage in order to support alternative chicken production systems – for instance those that use higher welfare breeds, lower stocking densities, environmental enrichments, access to natural light and/or outdoor enclosures, and better air quality – given that these systems that can help decrease ammonia emissions and reduce the need for the indiscriminate use of antimicrobials, as well as improving animal welfare?
3. When will the Commission publish the report on the socio-economic effects of mandatory method of production labelling for chicken meat stipulated by Article 5 of Directive 2007/43/EC?

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