

## PM+: EU disregarding its own rules on animal exports

Written by Olga Kikou on 31 March 2015 in Opinion Plus  
Opinion Plus

Live animals export trade is marring the EU's reputation as a leader in animal protection, says Olga Kikou.



While the TTIP negotiations have been at the centre of the political debate in Europe, a lesser known trade activity has managed to avoid public scrutiny.

Exports of live farm animals from the EU to third countries are booming, with the trend expected to continue over the current year.

Over two million farm animals were exported live from the EU to third countries in north Africa, the Middle East and Turkey in 2014.

"Conditions in third countries are vastly different from those in the EU and exported animals are not protected by EU welfare laws"

This trade involves animals being transported over long distances from Europe to third countries for breeding, fattening or immediate slaughter, in journeys lasting up to 14 days, in cramped conditions, in trucks or ships, without proper rest, feed or water.

Those involved in the trade, including farmers and EU member states, have seen their profits grow, but the ugly side of these activities has been carefully overlooked as exports have continued unabated.

A recent exhibition in the European parliament entitled, "Live animal exports: the EU's cruellest trade", highlighted the extreme suffering involved in long distance live animal transport and the inhumane treatment and slaughter that animals often face at their journey's end.

Cruel handling and methods of slaughter cause animals severe pain, leaving them conscious and suffering for several minutes before they bleed to death.

Cattle, whose throats are slashed repeatedly, are beaten on the head with poles to force them to the ground while their leg tendons are sometimes severed to make them easier to control.

Sheep dragged by their rear legs, fleeces and horns, are thrown onto their backs or sides for throat cutting.

Often animals are pulled off trucks and chased down streets before they are slaughtered on the pavement.

Such slaughter practices are in breach of the international standards of the world organisation for animal health (OIE) on welfare of animals at slaughter.

Conditions in third countries are vastly different from those in the EU and exported animals are not protected by EU welfare laws.

European animals are even exported to war zones such as Libya and Syria, while a recent investigation found Hungarian and Romanian animals in Gaza.

Short-sighted economic arguments have been employed by the commission to allow this trade to continue in complete disregard of the EU's own obligations to pay "full regard to the welfare requirements of animals" in formulating and implementing EU agriculture policy - as stated in article 13 of the treaty on the functioning of the EU.

"The continuing export of live animals reveals a lack of any ethical consideration on the part of the commission and member states in trade policy"

The end result is that animals, regarded as sentient beings in the EU, are sent abroad as commodities and treated accordingly at final destinations, all in the name of trade.

Serious concerns regarding food safety and the overall approach to food trade have not been addressed either.

Carcasses from overstressed animals having travelled for days and slaughtered in unsanitary conditions are not a good source of food the EU should be promoting in third countries.

Replacing the trade in live animals with exports in meat and assisting third countries by improving refrigeration systems where possible, is the best alternative solution to live animal exports.

The continuing export of live animals reveals a lack of any ethical consideration on the part of the commission and member states in trade policy.

Irresponsible trade policies and perpetuating violence towards animals in the name of profit have marred the EU's reputation as a leader in animal protection.

As long as the commission refuses to address this thorny trade issue by bringing an end to the live animal export trade for good, it is certain that the suffering will continue and criticism will persist about the EU's denial of responsibility for the welfare of its animals.

## About the author

Olga Kikou is European affairs manager for the animal welfare NGO, Compassion in World Farming (CIWF)

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