



Craig Whittaker MP

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Factory Farming (Compassion In World Farming)

Thank you for contacting me about factory farming.

I understand the strength of feeling about the issue and I am committed to the highest standards of animal welfare, including on farms.

I am glad that the UK has made good progress in protecting animals. World Animal Protection's Animal Protection Index, which ranks 50 countries on their policy and legislation for animals, placed the UK joint top alongside New Zealand, Austria and Switzerland. Recent changes to legislation regulating the quality of cages for hens shows that action continues to be taken. Of course, we must not be complacent.

I believe animals should be slaughtered locally wherever possible. I am pleased the Government has announced plans to make CCTV mandatory in slaughterhouses. On the transport of animals, you are right that UK withdrawal from the EU will create opportunities for reviewing the relevant legislative and regulatory structures. At present, under European Union single market rules, it is illegal to ban the export of animals to other EU countries; there are instead EU and UK laws to protect the welfare of live animals during transport.

Mandatory labelling regarding method of production has to be weighed against the costs involved for businesses, which could be significant. Legislation already provides scope for producers to label their products voluntarily with information about farming methods, and several assurance schemes are also in place. Consequently, consumers who wish to know the farming methods used to produce their meat can readily find meat products labelled so as to help them make an informed choice.

Ministers are fully committed to ensuring that antibiotics are used responsibly. In September 2016 further plans were announced to tackle the issue, including a commitment to reduce antibiotic use in animals significantly. In the long term, sector-specific reduction targets are being set that will bring sustainable change across the agricultural industry.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP