

Ref. JA/TK/EU/3848

Commissioner Vassiliou
EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DG Health and Consumer Protection
B-1049 BRUSSELS
Belgium

07 August 2008

Dear Commissioner

Re. Consultation on Regulation (EC) No. 1/2005 on the Protection of Animals during transport

I write to express my concerns regarding the decision by the Commission to launch a review of the current legislation on maximum travelling times and stocking densities for transporting animals. This consultation comes just 18 months after new legislation on animal transport was introduced.

One of the recommendations of this latest consultation is to establish a maximum travelling time of 8 hours for animals going to slaughter, which is not repeatable. If adopted, this could have enormous financial implications for the Northern Ireland livestock industry, which is heavily reliant on supplying the Great Britain market. 8 hours would not give sufficient time for animals to be brought to abattoirs in parts of England which are currently utilised by the industry. Indeed, as Northern Ireland is separated by sea from the UK mainland, this adds to the time required to transport livestock.

The consultation refers to scientific evidence as the main reason behind the proposed introduction of even greater restrictions on time travelled, and stocking densities of animals being transported. These extremely onerous restrictions simply do not compare with the huge distances animals are frequently transported in North and South America, and will only serve to undermine the competitiveness of meat production in Europe.

Can you assure me that meat imports will have to satisfy similar requirements on travel time and stocking densities? Furthermore, will you agree with me that a maximum of 8 hours travel time to abattoirs is unworkable for a peripheral region such as Northern Ireland? Could you please elaborate on whether a derogation for Northern Ireland would be possible, should these recommendations be introduced. Please set out the requirements and timescale for such a derogation to be granted. I trust you will be assured of my genuine concern for sustainable livestock production in Northern Ireland under these proposals.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Allister'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

James H Allister QC MEP

ANDROULLA VASSILIOU
MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 17.09.2008
D(2008) 1400



Dear Mr. Allister,

Thank you for your letter of 7 August 2008 concerning the consultation on travelling times and space allowances related to a likely revision on Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport.

May I firstly highlight that travelling times and space allowances have been unchanged since 1995 because, in the current legislation, the new elements of the Commission proposal in this regard were not adopted by the Council.

Concerning the issues raised in your letter, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that before proposing any modification to legislation, the Commission develops an impact assessment in order to evaluate the economic, social and environmental impacts (including on animal welfare, but also their regional impacts) that any new legislation is likely to provoke.

Once all the relevant information is available, the Commission is prepared to examine the possibility of bringing forward by the end of this mandate a proposal on travelling times and spaces allowances based on the outcomes of the consultations performed.

The Commission is aware that requirements on the protection of animals during transport are not applicable to third countries exporting products of animal origin to the EU. However, please note that although animal welfare is not explicitly mentioned in the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) 1994 or in other WTO agreements, the Commission takes every opportunity to raise and to promote improved animal welfare standards at European and at international level.

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Mr. James H. Allister QC, MEP
139 Hollywood Road
Belfast
BT4 3BE
United Kingdom

Similarly, the Commission is conscious that new travelling times may affect more specifically peripheral regions of Europe. This is why the Commission is conducting an impact assessment where these aspects will be thoroughly examined. However, the Commission should take all the opinions into account, in particular, because limiting the transport of animals over long distances may also bring positive effects and the advantages and disadvantages of each option have to be evaluated from different perspectives.

For example, in the past the European Parliament voted in favour of limiting the transport of animals for slaughter to 9 hours with very few exceptions and many Ministers at the Council argued for similar limitations on animal transport.

As regards possible derogations, I think it is too premature to express a definitive opinion on this matter since the Commission has not yet taken a final line on this subject. However in the past, the introduction of restrictive measures has always been accompanied with transitional periods or derogation that would reflect particular situations, including the ones of peripheral regions of Europe.

I would like to thank you for your input on this matter and will certainly take your views into consideration.

Yours sincerely,

