

Factual summary report of the public consultation on the modernisation of EU's on-farm animal welfare rules for certain animals

Disclaimer: *This document should be regarded solely as a summary of the contributions made by stakeholders in the context of the public consultation on the modernisation of the EU on-farm animal welfare legislation. It cannot in any circumstances be regarded as the official position of the Commission or its services. Responses to the consultation activities cannot be considered as a representative sample of the views of the EU population.*

Introduction

Under the Vision for Agriculture and Food of 19 February 2025, the Commission has announced its intention to closely exchange with farmers, the food supply chain and civil society and on that basis to present legislative proposals on the revision of the existing EU animal welfare legislation, including to follow-up on its earlier commitment to phase out cages for certain species and categories of animals.

As a follow-up, the Commission launched an impact assessment process for the revision of EU's on-farm animal welfare rules, which started with a call for evidence that was open for public feedback between 18 June and 16 July 2025.

In parallel with other stakeholder consultation steps (including meetings, targeted surveys and interviews), a public consultation, which ran from 19 September 2025 to 17 December 2025, was carried out with the objective of gathering feedback from a wide range of stakeholders – including citizens, economic operators, trade and consumer associations, NGOs, research institutes, academia, and non-EU stakeholders.

This document summarises the outcome of this public consultation. It does not represent a comprehensive overview of all consultation activities that are taking place in the context of the ongoing impact assessment.

Overview of respondents

The public consultation initially received a total of 236 524 responses. The responses were screened in line with the Better Regulation Guidelines to identify duplicates, erroneous entries, as well as potential Artificial Intelligence generated responses and campaigns.

After this process, the total number of valid responses is 236 523, of which 46 461 originate from a unique campaign¹ (and will consequently count as one single response in the analysis, in accordance with the rules on Better Regulation) and 190 062 are individual responses of which many may be suspected to have been mobilised by politically motivated NGOs. Hence, the current **total number of responses is 190 063**. However, the process of moderating the replies received (which may affect the number of responses eventually published) is still ongoing due to the very high number of contributions.

These 190 063 responses were received from **159 countries** (see Table 1), including all 27 EU Member States and 132 non-EU countries². The large majority of respondents (75%) are from Germany, followed by Austria (6%) and France (4%).

Country	Number of respondents
Germany	148113
Austria	11618
France	8316
Italy	3416
United Kingdom	2456
Spain	1565
Netherlands	1520

Table 1: Distribution of responses by country.

Regarding the **breakdown of stakeholder categories**, 96.5% of respondents indicated they are EU citizens (183 441 replies), 2.2% are non-EU citizens (4 187 replies), 0.5% fall under ‘Other’ (987 replies), 0.25% are companies (489 replies), 0.17% academic or research institutions (337 replies), 0.15% NGOs (289 replies) and 0.06% business associations (109 replies). The remaining stakeholder categories (i.e. consumer organisations, environmental organisations, public authorities and trade unions) make up the remaining 0.13%. In other words, around **99% of replies to the public consultation were provided by citizens**.

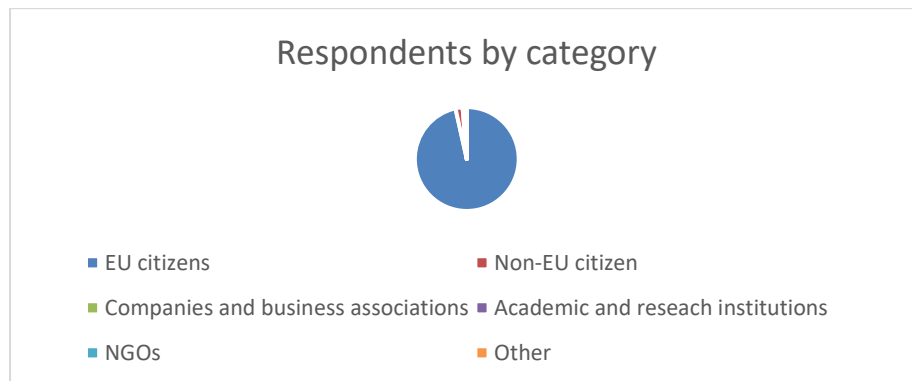


Table 2: Distribution of responses by category of respondent

¹ The campaign included 46 461 participants from 87 countries. The participants are mainly from Poland with 18 748 replies and United Kingdom with 5 931 replies. As indicated above, all these 46 461 responses will count as one single response in the analysis.

² Responses from non-EU countries will be reviewed separately from the views of EU citizens and organisations in the in-depth analysis of responses received.

As for the **respondents' level of knowledge**, 49% indicated they have basic knowledge of EU and national legislation related to the welfare of farmed animals (93 662 replies), 33% reported having sufficient knowledge (63 447 replies), 10% stated they have no knowledge (19 515 replies) and 7% indicated they have very good knowledge (13 438 replies).

The **majority of responding companies employ fewer than 10 employees** (62%, 305 replies), followed by companies with 250 or more employees (16%, 79 replies). For medium-sized companies (<250 employees), there were 47 replies, and for small companies (10 to 49 employees), 58 replies were collected.

Overview of contributions received

Regarding the current situation of animal welfare in the EU, there is a broad consensus among respondents, as 89% of overall respondents (169 337 replies) fully agreed that **the current EU legislation regulating animal welfare at farm level does not ensure that farmed animals can express normal behaviour**. Among businesses and associations, 32% fully agreed that current legislation does not allow animals to express normal behaviour. Among NGOs, 85% (247 replies) fully agreed to this statement, while 52% (36 replies) of public authorities fully agreed.

Respondents also largely considered that **the coexistence of EU regulation, national rules and private standards brings unnecessary administrative burdens for EU farmers and business operators**: 39% of overall respondents fully agreed (4 302 replies), and 23% partly agreed (44 441 replies), while 21% had no opinion or did not know (39 669 replies). Among companies, businesses and associations, 83% (499 replies) fully agreed or partly agreed to this statement, while 67% (46 replies) of public authorities fully or partly agreed.

A similar pattern was observed for the statement that the **broad or unspecific nature of some EU requirements leads to differences in how Member States enforce them**: 52% of overall respondents fully agreed (98 840 replies), 26% partly agreed (49 625 replies), and 16% had no opinion or did not know (30 378 replies). Here, 87% (518 replies) of companies, businesses and associations fully agreed or partially agreed, while 85% (59 replies) of public authorities fully agreed or partially agreed to this.

Most respondents agreed that it is very important (34%; 64 197 replies) or important (31%; 59 891 replies) to have **an agri-food sector that is competitive and resilient**. A similar level of importance was attributed to having **an attractive and predictable agri-food sector**: Overall, 70% of the respondents (132 268 replies) indicated this to be very important or important, while 79% (473 replies) of companies, businesses and associations considered it to be important or very important).

Regarding the question of having **a future-proof agri-food sector that is functioning within planetary boundaries**, there was a strong consensus (95% of overall respondents considered this to be very important or important (180 518 replies), while 93% of academic and research institutions shared this view (313 replies). A similar consensus was expressed for having **an**

agri-food sector that values food, fosters fair working and living conditions, with 94% of overall respondents considering this to be very important or important, a view that was shared by 89% of companies, businesses and associations (531 replies)

Phasing-out of cages for certain animals:

Phasing out cages for **laying hens** is considered very important or important by 99% of citizens (186 723 replies), by 94 % of NGOs (273 replies) and by 54 % of companies, businesses and associations (324 replies). It is considered not important or not very important by less than 0,5% of citizens (708 replies), by 3% of NGO's (9 replies) and by 29% of companies, businesses and associations (173 replies).

For **pigs**, the phasing out of cages is considered to be very important or important by 99% of citizens (186 286 replies), 93% of NGOs (270 replies), and 46% of companies, businesses and associations (274 replies). It is considered not important or not very important by less than 0,5% of citizens (888 replies), by 4% of NGOs (12 replies) and by 30% of companies, businesses and associations (182 replies).

For **calves, pullets, broiler breeders, layer breeders, rabbits, ducks and geese**, the picture is similar: Around 98-99% of citizens, 91-94 % of NGOs and 44-51% of companies, businesses and associations considered the phasing out of cages to be very important or important. It is considered as not important or not very important by less than 0,5% of citizens, by 2-5% of NGOs and by 22-26% of companies, businesses and associations

The main barriers to moving away from cages brought forward by respondents overall are the high investments costs (55%; 105 103 replies), the lack of consumers' willingness to pay (50%; 96 562 replies - compared to 63% among businesses and associations, i.e. 398 replies, and 67% among public authorities, i.e. 46 replies), the space and infrastructure limitations (43%; 82 050 replies) and the lack of technical knowledge and support for alternative production methods (38%; 73 782 replies).. Among academic and research institutions, 46% raised the lack of ethics and empathy as a barrier (155 replies), while businesses and associations put forward risks related to animal health and biosecurity (49%; 306 replies).

For businesses and associations, the **main supporting measures that could enable the transition to a cage-free system** are EU public funding, e.g. through the Common Agricultural Policy (65%; 410 replies) and national public funding (41%; 257 replies).

Academic and research institutions (53%; 177 replies) and public authorities (58%; 40 replies) emphasise information campaigns as one of the most important supporting measures, while citizens stress the need for stronger enforcement of laws and sanctions through controls, penalties and inspections (40% of respondents, 75 051 replies).

Equivalent animal welfare requirements for imports from third countries:

The **need for equivalent animal welfare standards** for food of animal origin imported from non-EU countries is **strongly supported**:(96% of overall respondents fully agreed (181 913 replies) and 3% partly agreed (6 327 replies). Among companies, businesses and associations,

94% (563 replies) fully agreed to this and 3% partly agreed (19 replies). Among NGOs, 96% fully agreed (276 replies) and 2,5% partly agreed (7 replies).

Around 88 - 92 % of companies, businesses and associations (531 - 553 replies, depending on the product) considered that all EU animal welfare requirements should be required for imported poultry meat and meat products, eggs and egg products, pork and pork products, veal, beef meat and meat products and rabbit meat and meat products. Around 3-4% of companies, businesses and associations considered that most of the EU animal welfare requirements should apply to import (20 - 25 replies, depending on the product) and 0% considered that only few of these requirements should apply to imports.

Among academic and research institutions, the support for all animal welfare requirements to apply to import is 89% (300 replies), among NGOs more than 90% (372 replies) and among citizens between 77 - 97% (145 013 - 182 473 replies, depending on the product).

Regarding the **measures needed to facilitate the transition to equivalent animal welfare standards in third countries**, most respondents (84%; 160 089 replies) strongly emphasised the need for EU training and technical support, followed by species-specific technical guidance documents (68%; 129 539 replies) and product method information through marketing standards (65%; 122 658 replies). Among businesses and associations and public authorities, the measure ‘production method information, e.g. through marketing standards’, was supported by 52% (308 replies) and 39% (133 replies) respectively, while among NGO’s the support for such a measure was 74% (305 replies).

Animal welfare indicators:

Respondents generally agreed on the relevance of animal welfare indicators to improve animal welfare on farms:89% (168 264 replies) indicated that animal welfare indicators could help by **improving the enforcement of animal welfare rules on farms**. Among companies, businesses and associations, 53% (310 replies) considered this to be true to a very large or a large extent.

The respondents overall agreed that those indicators are useful **for benchmarking purposes**, 89% of respondents (169 539 replies) indicating this to be true to a very large extent or a large extent. Among companies, businesses and associations, a corresponding view is expressed by 53% (320 replies).

In addition, there is a strong consensus among overall respondents that animal welfare indicators could play a role in **supporting policy monitoring**: 82% considered this to be correct to a very large or a large extent (155 053 replies). Among companies, businesses and associations, such a view is shared by 53% (318 replies).

Academic and research institutions (58%; 194 replies) and public authorities (55%; 577 replies) put forward a further reliance on outcome-based animal welfare indicators as an element to simplify the overlapping of animal welfare rules.

Systematic killing of day-old male chicks:

Overall, almost 98% of respondents fully (180 557 replies) or partly (5 410 replies) agreed that the **systematic killing of day-old male chicks** in the laying hen's sector is **ethically problematic**. This view is shared by 56% (334 replies) of companies, businesses and associations.

Regarding the use of **alternatives to the systematic killing of male day-old chicks** in the egg production sector, 88% (165 304 replies) of the overall respondents answered that is very urgent and 8.5% that it is urgent (16 270 replies). Among companies, businesses and associations, 50% considered this to be an urgent or very urgent matter (298 replies), while 25% considered this to be not very urgent or not urgent at all (148 replies). Among NGOs, 91% (264 replies) considered this to be an urgent or very urgent matter, while around 2% considered it to be not very urgent or not urgent at all (7 replies).

Simplification:

Concerning which elements that could contribute most to simplify the overlapping of animal welfare rules applicable to farmers and reduce administrative burden, while ensuring improved animal welfare outcomes, the most widely chosen option is the introduction of **clearer and more operational legal provisions** (76%; 144 170 replies). Among companies, businesses and associations, 53% (318 replies) considered **more harmonised EU rules** or less freedom for stricter national rules to be the first measure, followed by the need for **clearer roles and responsibilities** (50%; 297 replies). The option of a further reliance on outcome-based **animal welfare indicators** was supported by 41% of companies, businesses and associations (246 replies), while a wider use of **digital monitoring tools** was supported by 21% of them (126 replies).

Furthermore, 66% (396 replies) of companies, businesses and associations considered that clearer and more consistent EU rules for on-farm animal welfare would help, to a large or very large extent, to **ensure fairer conditions for farmers across Member States**.