

Farm Animal Welfare Forum

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Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon George Eustice MP

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

29th May 2022

Dear Secretary of State

The Farm Animal Welfare Forum (FAWF) warmly welcomes the species-specific priorities for the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway. As you may be aware we produced a report in February 2020 that outlined some suggestions for the pathway and we are very glad to see that several have been included in your recent announcements. We are also pleased to see the ongoing consultation with stakeholders on the detailed implementation of financial support for farmers. We suggest that further research may help stakeholders understand how best to support farmers and the supply chain deliver on these priorities. Later in the year we hope to provide specific ideas on these research requirements to the Animal Welfare team at Defra and to the Agricultural Universities Council which as you know is currently developing an agricultural research strategy.

We understand that you are shortly due to provide a response to the Food Strategy and this may include an update on the work on animal welfare labelling. Several of our members responded to the Defra call for evidence and have commented on issues such as method of production labelling, use of welfare outcomes and the importance of mandatory labels.

In addition to the policy positions of our members, we would like to bring to your attention a **specific opportunity in the short term for Government to support industry and NGO efforts for animal welfare and environmental labelling.**

Our observation is that emerging environmental impact labelling / information initiatives appear to be focussed on farm level metrics (e.g. Global Farm Metric) or global average-based product labels (e.g. Foundation Earth). As with animal welfare labelling there may be justification for Government involvement to help the food supply chain develop the optimal approach.

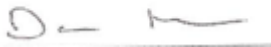
Animal welfare labelling is well embedded into many UK products. An important feature of labelling for some sectors (laying hens & pork) is a combination of method of production descriptors with additional options for independently certified farm assurance (Red Tractor, RSPCA Assured & Organic).

We suggest here that there is **an opportunity for Government to signal their support for standardised method of production descriptors in all livestock sectors that could be used as a foundation for both animal welfare and environmental product information.** Agreeing a common descriptor framework after consultation with industry, animal welfare and environmental groups could be a practical mechanism to deliver stated government aims with respect to consumer information and awareness. Furthermore standardised descriptors would facilitate business to business market requirements and data capture that will be essential for future Environmental, Social and Governance reporting.

Several FAWF members have extensive experience of these issues and, working with environmental organisations and industry groups, we believe that we would help agree a common framework for these method of production descriptors across all livestock sectors.

Finally, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you another area of potential common interest between industry, animal welfare and environmental groups namely **intergovernmental collaboration on role of animals in agriculture**. We believe that there is an opportunity to work collaboratively with government and industry to navigate the policy goals of minimising the environmental impact of animal production systems and maximising the economic value of higher animal welfare.

Yours sincerely



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