The EU and Animal Welfare

Peter Stevenson
Compassion in World Farming
Brexit may make little difference to UK animal welfare (AW)

- It is sometimes thought if we leave EU, the UK – freed from the constraints of EU free trade rules – will be able to raise its AW standards while protecting UK farmers by banning lower welfare imports
There is limited appetite in UK Government or industry to improve AW

- UK leading opposition to proposed EU bans on cloning of farm animals & the use of clones and their descendants in EU farming or food
- UK dairy sector is rapidly industrialising – moving to zero-grazing
- UK Government & industry oppose mandatory labelling of meat & dairy products as to farming method – despite paying lip service to the importance of the market in driving AW
- 13 years after it came into force, a proportion of UK pig farmers still breach EU law requiring provision of enrichment (e.g. straw) and prohibiting routine tail docking
Even with Brexit, trade considerations will impinge on AW

- if the UK left the EU, our trade with the EU Member States would be governed by the WTO rules which, though allowing more latitude than the EU’s rules, would still hamper the UK’s ability to restrict imports that do not meet UK AW standards.
How will Brexit affect EU AW?

• Brexit may make little difference to AW in EU
• UK, despite its claim to lead the way on AW in Europe, is rarely in the forefront of AW initiatives in EU
• In December 2014 Netherlands, Germany & Denmark produced a Joint Declaration call for substantial AW improvements at EU level. UK did not sign this.
• In November 2015 Netherlands, Germany & Denmark produced a joint document calling for a strengthening of EU law on AW during transport including an 8 hour limit on journeys to slaughter. UK did not sign this.
• AW improvements in EU are somewhat grinding to a halt but Brexit is unlikely to exacerbate this
What will shape the future of animal welfare?

• TTIP: its insistence on regulatory coherence with US – which has little Federal AW legislation - will make it very hard to introduce good new AW laws in UK or EU

• Now, more than ever, machines. Agri tech (funded by Innovate UK), cloning, GM animals & gene editing are poised to usher in a ruthless new generation of factory farming

• The self serving myth that we need to produce 70% more food & so must ramp up industrialisation

• Future of AW will be determined by degree to which EU and UK accept that fundamental changes are needed in our food system from point of view of health, food security, natural resources, climate change, resource-efficiency & AW
• Current food system in some cases has negative impact on health
• High levels of meat consumption made possible by factory farming are among the factors driving climate change
• Factory farming’s huge need for cereals and soy as animal feed leads to wide range of detrimental impacts on environment
• Factory farming produces very low AW standards
Little sign of willingness to change by UK or EU

- Defra proposed *25 year plan on food and farming* ignores public health, environmental impact & AW
- EU dropped its proposed *Communication on a Sustainable Food Policy* when it saw that it would be hard to justify EU’s reluctance to rethink EU’s industrial approach to food and farming