

Brussels, 31 August 2005  
CAB24/RN/rmg D(05) 1332

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European Parliament  
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*Dear Caroline,*

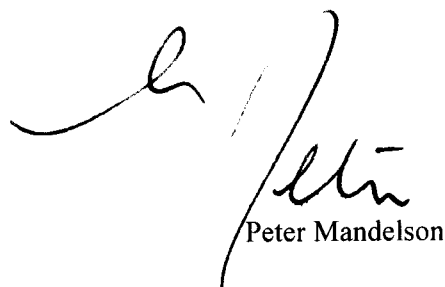
Thank you for your letter of 26 June, on the issue of animal welfare in the context of WTO rules.

Firstly, I can confirm that I fully support the development of EU rules in this sector. Although it has never been tested in Geneva, I also do not believe that WTO rules prevent us from taking the measures necessary, including appropriate labelling, to protect the welfare of our livestock, as long as we do it in a non-discriminatory way. However, I do note your concerns.

I recognise that animal welfare standards can increase production costs, and that farmers should be compensated in some way. The best means to do so would be, as you say, in the framework of the Green Box mechanism. In fact, most of our concerns already form part of the current Green Box payments, and we have a strong interest in using these possibilities to the fullest extent. We should avoid reopening a substantial discussion on the definition of the Green Box, which contains more than just animal welfare elements. The impact an opening of the Green Box could have on other sectors is regarded by WTO Members as too risky.

I do agree that we should do our utmost to encourage developing countries to apply high welfare standards. The first step is to develop the standards at international level. This is currently under way in the OIE, which is the international organisation in Paris charged with this task. Regarding trade-related assistance and development cooperation, we need to bear in mind the fact that the EU assistance is provided according to the demands made by the beneficiaries. The EU will therefore not impose any specific programmes. However, the EU supports on-farm welfare standards indirectly, through various programmes (for example: programmes for animal disease control, development of mixed farming systems). My services have also had discussions with leading NGOs with a view to encouraging high welfare standards in developing countries, and to capitalising on these standards to sell to the EU at premium prices.

I think you are already aware of the recently-presented proposal for welfare of broilers. This is part of the continuing EU programme to improve farm animal welfare. My services will continue to work with DG SANCO to achieve welfare objectives and, at the same time, maintain our measures in compliance with WTO rules.

  
Peter Mandelson