



MEPs Call for a EU Ban on Force-Feeding of Birds for Foie Gras Production

BRUSSELS (17 Oct. 2012) - MEPs from across the political spectrum and five leading animal welfare organisations joined forces today at a European Parliament event to call for an EU legislative ban on force-feeding of ducks and geese for the production of foie gras. The call for a ban comes at the same time as a formal complaint filed by the animal groups against France and Hungary – the world's first and third largest foie gras producers respectively - for failing to comply with current EU regulations on the protection of animals.

Hosting the Parliament event were MEPs Nadja Hirsch (ALDE, Germany), Andrea Zanoni (ALDE, Italy), Yves Cochet (Greens/EFA, France), Carl Schlyter (Greens/EFA, Sweden), Sirpa Pietikäinen (EPP, Finland), Kartika Liotard (GUE/NGL, Netherlands), David Martin (S&D, UK) and Keith Taylor (Greens/EFA, UK).

They were joined by the five animal protection organisations taking action against France and Hungary - Compassion in World Farming (CIWF), Four Paws International, Humane Society International (HSI), L214, and the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA). The event was also attended by the President of the Parliament's Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals, MEP Dan Jørgensen (S&D, Denmark), who spoke out against the animal cruelty involved in foie gras production. The seminar comes just a day after French MEP Françoise Castex held an event at the Parliament promoting foie gras.

MEP Nadja Hirsch said: *"Twenty-two Member States pretend to have understood the extreme cruelty to which animals are subjected in order to produce what we call a 'delicacy' and do not force-feed geese and ducks. Yet, they still continue selling the product, which is produced in other EU countries. We must put an end to the double standards applied in the EU and which aim at deceiving the consumers. We therefore call for an EU-wide ban of force-feeding and better and more transparent information for consumers about the products they eat."*

Concerns raised by the MEPs echo the conclusions of a report by the European Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare (1). The report establishes that, amongst other pathologies, force-feeding results in diarrhoea, panting, walking difficulties, lesions and inflammation of the neck. The study also found that 10 to 20 times more ducks die during the force-feeding period than compared with normally fed ducks. The report states: *"Continued feeding would almost certainly result in an early death"*.

Production of foie gras is problematic under several EU regulations, which state that *"No animal shall be provided with food or liquid in a manner (...) which may cause unnecessary suffering or injury."* (2) and that *"methods of feeding and feed additives which cause distress, injury or disease to the ducks [and geese] or may result in development of physical or physiological conditions detrimental to their health and welfare shall not be permitted."* (3)

Although keeping ducks in individual cages has been prohibited across the EU since 1st January 2011, such cages are still being widely used in both France and Hungary, with the complicity of national authorities.

The formal complaint against both countries was supported by recent undercover footage taken in foie gras farms in France by L214 and in Hungary by Four Paws.

Peter Stevenson, Chief Policy Advisor at Compassion in World Farming, said: *"Force feeding of birds is clearly a violation of EU regulations on the protection of animals. The Commission has now waited too many years to take its own laws and its own scientific evidence seriously. We call on the Commission to now make it clear that the force feeding of ducks and geese to produce foie gras is illegal and must urgently be brought to an end."*

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Notes :

(1) [Welfare Aspects of the Production of Foie Gras in Ducks and Geese](#), Report of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare, adopted 16 December 1998

(2) "No animal shall be provided with food or liquid in a manner (...) which may cause unnecessary suffering or injury." [Council Directive 98/58 EC of 20 July 1998](#)

(3) [Recommendation concerning Muscovy ducks \(*Cairina moschata*\) and hybrids of Muscovy and domestic ducks \(*Anas platyrhynchos*\)](#) adopted by the Standing Committee of the European Convention for the protection of animals kept for farming purposes on 22 June 1999

What MEPs say about foie gras :

Keith Taylor (Greens/EFA, UK) said : " It is unacceptable that current legislation is not protecting Europe's geese and ducks that sadly have to endure this cruel and barbaric farming practice. It's time we bring an end to this unnecessary suffering. I will continue to do all I can in European Parliament to support the campaign."

Yves Cochet (Greens/EFA, France) said : "I urge France to enforce the EU legislation on animal welfare and to make a true commitment to develop alternative methods to force-feeding for foie gras production."

Andrea Zanoni (ALDE, Italy) said : "This is a vile and barbaric practice, a torture for millions of poor geese and ducks that undergo nameless suffering to produce the famous foie gras. Most people buying this product do so in good faith, ignoring the process involved. With this conference in the European Parliament, we want to help European consumers to open their eyes, and ask the European Commission for a law banning this aberration."

Speaking about Françoise Castex MEP's event to promote foie gras, **Kartika Tamara Liotard (GUE/NGL, Netherlands) said :** "Promotion of animal cruelty in the European Parliament is totally unacceptable. It is contrary to spirit of the EU-treaties."