

# Animal welfare and international trade

A.B. Thiermann<sup>(1)</sup> & S. Babcock<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), 12, rue de Prony, 75017 Paris, France

(2) Veterinary and Animal Legal Services, 32750 South River Road, Harrison Township, Michigan 48045, United States of America

## Summary

Globalisation is becoming a force that is revolutionising international trade, particularly that of animals and animal products. There is increasing interest in animal welfare worldwide, and as part of its 2001-2005 Strategic Plan the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) identified the development of international standards on animal welfare as a priority. The OIE's scientific approach to standard-setting provides the foundation for the development, and acceptance by all OIE Member Countries, of these animal welfare guidelines.

The paper discusses how these guidelines on animal welfare can be implemented, both within the provisions of World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements and within the framework of voluntary codes of conduct. Even if animal welfare guidelines are not covered by any WTO agreements in the future, bi- and multilateral agreements, voluntary corporate codes, and transparent labelling of products should result in a progressive acceptance of OIE guidelines. Ultimately, consumer demands and demonstrable gains in animal production will result in an incremental evolution in animal welfare consciousness and adherence to international standards.

## Keywords

Animal welfare – General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade – Guidelines – Labelling – Trade – World Trade Organization.

## Introduction

There is increasing global concern for animal welfare, especially in the context of food-animal production (1, 7). Animal welfare is the responsibility of all society, but particularly of veterinarians, and encompasses all aspects of an animal's well-being, including housing, nutrition, disease prevention and treatment, transport, and humane slaughter (6). The rapid urbanisation of the human population and growing affluence have created a consumer that is further removed from food-animal production. This consumer desires food products which are not only safe but which also have quality characteristics (origin, environmental provenance, standards of animal welfare, etc.) and their purchase decisions are not made on the basis of price alone.

Globalisation is becoming a force that is revolutionising international trade, particularly trade in animal products (14). The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the

international organisation that deals with the rules of trade between nations through international agreements. Its goal is to help producers of goods and services, exporters, and importers to conduct their business fairly and safely. The WTO recognises the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) as the standard-setting organisation for animal health and zoonoses. There is an important link between animal health and animal welfare and the prevention and control of epizootic disease has a major impact on the welfare of animals. However, there is no specific mention of animal welfare in the WTO agreements. In response to the increasing scientific, political and public attention surrounding animal welfare, it was identified as a priority topic in the 2001-2005 OIE Strategic Plan and the OIE formally established a working group on animal welfare (15). The OIE recognises the difficulties in setting international standards on animal welfare due to the diversity of factors (scientific, religious, economic, cultural and societal) which play a key role in their establishment and acceptance. The OIE process of

using a scientific approach provides the foundation for the development, and acceptance by all OIE Member Countries, of animal welfare guidelines. These guidelines can be used to address animal welfare issues in the current international trade regime, through bi- and multilateral agreements, private sector initiatives, and voluntary market-driven labelling systems.

The overall goal of this paper is to illustrate areas in which OIE animal welfare standards and guidelines can be utilised. The first section of this paper will examine the legal implications of the current WTO regime and will look at the strengths and weaknesses of attempting to apply animal welfare standards and guidelines under this system. The second section will analyse how international animal welfare standards and guidelines can be utilised to achieve the common goal of promoting animal welfare in international trade, even in the absence of WTO obligations, through voluntary corporate compliance with codes of conduct, as well as through labelling and product advertisements.

## Application of animal welfare measures in accordance with the World Trade Organization

Science-based animal welfare standards and guidelines are not specifically mentioned in the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) or the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). The WTO-SPS Agreement is structured to base international animal health and zoonosis decisions on OIE standards for international trade (18), and although the OIE animal welfare standards and guidelines are not referred to in the SPS Agreement they could be used in certain conditions.

### Obstacles to enforcing the use of animal welfare guidelines

The WTO agreements are designed to prevent and eliminate trade barriers. These agreements promote the goals of non-discrimination, transparency, and a rules and science-based approach to the resolution of trade disputes (5). Implementing animal welfare guidelines (and requiring trading partners to do the same) may be viewed by some as a means of restricting trade. Currently, there are no clear indications as to how animal welfare guidelines could be used in the WTO agreements. The limitations to the potential use of animal welfare guidelines are found in Articles I and III of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) (8) and in sections of the TBT Agreement (19).

Article I of the GATT contains the core most-favoured-nation (MFN) obligation. The unconditional MFN obligation requires that a country treat all imports from another WTO Member on an equal, non-discriminatory basis. If imports from two WTO Members are identical or very similar ('like-products'), the imports are entitled to identical treatment regardless of their country of origin. (The WTO does not define 'like products' and therefore there is a case by case basis determination of what constitutes 'like products'.) To overcome an Article I violation, a Member needs to demonstrate that the products are not 'like products' or that their own products are also treated in the same manner and that therefore the measure is non-discriminatory.

Article III sets forth the principle of 'national treatment'. This is a non-discrimination obligation imposed at the national level and provides that countries must not 'afford protection to domestic production'. Article III: 4 states that imported products must be treated no less favourably than 'like products' of domestic origin. To demonstrate that a Member country complies with this obligation it must show that its products are treated equally internally or that the two products are not 'like products' and therefore not in violation of Article III: 4.

Any decision to prevent the import of a product must be based on the characteristics of the product itself and not on the process or production methods (PPMs) by which the product was manufactured. However, in the TBT Agreement there is a distinction made between product-related (those that affect the characteristics of the final product) and non-product-related PPMs (those which have a negligible impact on the final product). For purposes of a 'like product' analysis, non-product-related PPMs are not considered in differentiating a final product. Animal production methods are classified as non-product-related process methods and, since in most situations the way an animal is cared for does not directly alter the physical characteristics of the final product, most animal welfare guidelines would also be classified as non-product-related PPMs.

### How animal welfare guidelines could be used under the current trade rules

The WTO trade regime is equipped to address animal welfare issues (if they relate to animal health) in both the SPS and TBT Agreements and under several GATT Article XX exceptions. Animal health is a legitimate objective for enacting a measure under the SPS Agreement, and the TBT Agreement recognises that none of its provisions should prevent a country from taking any measures necessary to protect animal health.

Enacting a measure to protect animal health does not require the presence of an infectious disease but there must be a demonstrable risk that there is the threat of disease.

While poor animal welfare can affect animal health in a variety of ways it does not always pose a risk of disease. Similarly, there are occasions when the link between animal welfare and animal health is not direct, and in such cases the WTO agreements would not allow for any trade restriction to be implemented. Improvements in the health of animals on farms where animal welfare standards have been improved are not enough to link animal welfare and animal health and to withstand a WTO challenge. Nevertheless, such improvements can often improve productivity and hence lead to economic benefits.

There are several steps one must go through to decide if a measure addressing animal welfare is consistent with the SPS or TBT agreements or qualifies for an Article XX exception. The next section will examine these agreements and exceptions.

### **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade Article XX: general exceptions**

Article XX of the GATT provides exceptions that modify the unconditional principles of 'MFN treatment' and 'national treatment' contained in the original GATT (1947) and GATT (1994) (16).

There are 10 exceptions listed in Article XX (*a-j*) that allow trade restrictive measures to be taken in certain circumstances. The invocation of any of these exceptions requires that the measure be consistent with the preamble to the Article which states that measures should not 'constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination between countries where the same conditions prevail, or a disguised restriction on international trade'. An objective analysis is required on whether the measure could be applied in a manner that does not conflict with the exceptions in this Article.

There are three Article XX exceptions that may be applicable to animal welfare, namely, (*a*), (*b*), and (*g*) (4). Article XX (*a*) states that a measure can be implemented if it is 'necessary to protect public morals'; it could therefore be utilised to implement an animal welfare measure when a direct connection between the measure and animal health is missing. While this is potentially an exception that a country could use to justify a measure based on a real moral concern for animals, it has not been utilised.

Exception (*a*) relates to measures that are necessary to protect public morals, and exception (*b*), which will be discussed further in the next paragraph, allows measures that are necessary to protect human, animal or plant life or health. However, exception (*g*) allows measures that are 'related to the conservation of exhaustible natural resources'. This language allows for additional measures to

be enacted that are not solely based on the necessity to protect animal health. On giving their final decision on the Shrimp – Turtle dispute (in which the United States of America wanted to prohibit the import of shrimp from some countries in Asia on the grounds that endangered sea turtles were also caught in the shrimp nets), the Appellate Body (a board of seven people which hears appeals in disputes brought by WTO Members) agreed that the words 'exhaustible natural resources' are not limited to resources that are susceptible to exhaustion or extinction. In their report, the Appellate Body stated that the WTO agreement recognises the goal of sustainable development in its preamble and they noted that the 'generic term "natural resources"...is not "static" in its content or reference but is rather "by definition, evolutionary"' (20), thus leading to the conclusion that a possibility exists for certain animals to fall under the current interpretation of 'exhaustible natural resources'.

The most plausible exception for an animal welfare measure is an Article XX (*b*) exception. This exception can be applied to animal welfare measures designed to protect animal life or health; it must be 'necessary' to protect human, animal or plant life or health (11). A measure is not necessary under Article XX (*b*) if 'an alternative measure which [the party] could reasonably be expected to employ and which is not inconsistent with other GATT provisions is available to it' (8). Article XX (*b*) also has a jurisdictional limitation requiring the measure enacted to protect the health or life of the animal in the enacting countries territory or jurisdiction. This is similar to the provision in both the SPS and TBT agreements (see sections below). If a measure was designed for the objective of protecting animal life or health an Article XX (*b*) exception would be unnecessary as the measure enacted would most likely also meet the requirements of the SPS Agreement.

A few scholars have broadly interpreted Article XX (*b*) as currently providing for animal health and therefore animal welfare (20). However, this section does not explicitly include the term 'animal welfare'. It is a logical conclusion that under an Article XX (*b*) exception animal health and life can be inclusive of animal welfare, but this will require a scientifically established direct link between the two. If scientific research can confirm that there is a connection between animal health and a specific animal welfare guideline and that improving animal welfare is a method of protecting animal health, then the animal welfare guideline should be acceptable within Article XX (*b*).

### **Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

This agreement sets out the legal framework for international trade that is safe for the health of the public,

animals and plants. The SPS agreement provides that Members have the right to take any SPS measures necessary for the protection of human, animal or plant life and health, provided that such measures are not inconsistent with the provisions of this agreement. These measures are to be applied only if they are necessary to protect health and are based on scientific principles. The agreement requires that where the same conditions prevail the measures be applied consistently and in a non-discriminatory manner.

If a measure is enacted with the objective of preventing the spread and risk of disease in a territory, the measure can be considered a legitimate objective. If a Member has this legitimate objective, a measure to address this objective can only be applied to the extent necessary to protect human, animal or plant life or health within its territory.

A measure taken to address animal welfare which at the same time protects animal health could be considered a legitimate measure under SPS if:

- a) there is scientific evidence to justify the imposition of welfare standards as a means to protect animal health in the territory
- b) the measure taken is necessary
- c) there is no less-restrictive measure available.

### Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade

If a measure is determined to fall under the SPS Agreement, then by definition, the TBT agreement is not applicable. The TBT Agreement applies to regulations and standards which regulate the production, processes, packaging, labelling, etc., of both agricultural and industrial products. In order to comply with the TBT Agreement the measure must be a legitimate objective, non-discriminatory based on 'like products', and not a disguised trade restriction.

The TBT Agreement allows technical regulations to be prepared, adopted or applied to fulfil a legitimate objective. Some of the legitimate objectives listed in the agreement include the protection of human health or safety, animal or plant life or health, or the environment. The list is not exhaustive and, in the light of contemporary concern for animal well-being, it could perhaps now be interpreted to include the protection of animal welfare. The decision of the Appellate Body in the Shrimp – Turtle dispute supports the argument that old texts can be interpreted differently in the light of contemporary concerns. For example, they recognised that the words of Article XX (g), 'exhaustible natural resources' (first used in the original GATT in 1947) were drafted over 50 years before the Appellate Body decision and must therefore be

read 'by a treaty interpreter in the light of contemporary concerns of the community of nations about the protection and conservation of the environment' (5). The Appellate Body also noted that from the perspective embodied in the preamble of the WTO Agreement, the generic term 'natural resources' in Article XX (g) should not be considered a static term but be interpreted in light of its evolutionary meaning. This acknowledgement supports the argument that a contemporary understanding of the term 'animal health' should now include the concept of animal welfare, and that animal welfare could therefore be considered a 'legitimate objective' for the purposes of the TBT Agreement.

The Appellate Body noted that the tastes and habits of consumers are one of the key elements in the competitive relationship between products in the marketplace. Greater consideration of consumer tastes and habits (which increasingly favour 'animal-friendly' products) could be of benefit in a future animal welfare measure.

Under WTO rules Governments cannot prohibit the import of a product based its non-product-related PPMs, but producers could include information about production and processing methods (which could include animal production methods which meet high standards of welfare) during the marketing of the product, which would enable private markets, consumers and investors to make informed choices.

## Alternatives to the World Trade Organization system

While the WTO system may allow for the consideration of animal welfare from a policy standpoint, attempting to resolve animal welfare concerns under the WTO may not be the best place to address these issues. It certainly has not proved to be the most efficient approach to resolving differences in disputes concerning animal health issues. The creation of bilateral and multilateral treaties or trade agreements using established international animal welfare guidelines would be an alternative means to achieve the same goal. There are currently international treaties and free trade agreements that have been ratified and proposed and that address the need for animal welfare standards.

Bilateral and multilateral agreements can be reached by private parties through voluntary codes of conduct and management systems. These agreements can achieve the goal of promoting animal welfare in response to market demands.

There is research that indicates that international consumers are concerned about the animal products they purchase and are willing to pay more for a product that

was produced in a manner consistent with international guidelines on animal welfare. For example, a 2000 Zogby international poll of consumers in the United States of America (USA) showed that 75.4% of respondents found it unacceptable to induce molting in laying hens by feed withdrawal, and 80.7% said they would be willing to pay more money for eggs from hens that were raised in a 'humane manner' (J. Matheny, personal communication). A survey in the United Kingdom revealed that 79% of those questioned supported legislation to phase out battery cages in the European Union by 2005 and 87% indicated that they were willing to accept additional expense for non-battery cage eggs (2). These are just two specific examples that illustrate the need to address consumer concerns.

The purpose of creating animal welfare guidelines is not to penalise producers, but rather to encourage better treatment of animals to address the increased public concern and negative economic consequences that lack of compliance with minimum standards of care causes. This goal could in some instances be achieved by the inclusion of international animal welfare standards in bilateral and multilateral treaties. The inclusion of animal welfare guidelines in these treaties would encourage the application of these guidelines and facilitate negotiations between parties.

### **Voluntary corporate standards**

The financial influence of corporations at a global level, and the transnational nature of their operations are essential to the implementation of international agreements (10). There has been increasing focus on the idea of self-regulation by transnational corporations in regards to environmental, health, and safety issues. A recent advancement in corporate behaviour has been the adoption of self-imposed corporate standards that are designed to address environmental management. The development, implementation, and success of corporate compliance with voluntary corporate standards can serve as a framework for the creation of a similar system to address animal welfare concerns.

Voluntary corporate compliance with codes of conduct and environmental management systems (EMS) serve as a means for consumers to compare competing products and companies. In addition to their use as consumer measuring tools, voluntary codes of compliance and EMS have also become a marketplace requirement in certain industries for companies to preserve company reputation and remain competitive. For example, EMS have spread rapidly through multinational corporations and corporations operating in international markets. The EMS implementation or certification is becoming a *de facto* requirement for engaging in certain areas of business, for example the automotive industry (17).

Similar initiatives can be applied to food animal production. For example, grocery store chains may eventually require that all of its suppliers comply with international science-based animal welfare standards established by the OIE. In order to remain competitive a supplier would have to certify that his production practices are in compliance with these set standards.

First, a code must establish clear guiding principles for corporations to follow. The guidelines need to be specific enough to be meaningful but flexible enough to be adopted by a wide range of producers, e.g. both large poultry operations in the USA and small rural farmers in the villages of a developing country. Ideally, a science-based standard set by the OIE, can serve as a guide to the most important principles to incorporate into the processes of producing, transporting, and slaughtering animals. There needs to be a mechanism established to help corporations incorporate these principles into their practices and a means to evaluate their effectiveness.

In late 2000, in response to consumer demands in the USA, five supermarkets, all members of the Food Market Institute (FMI), requested that the FMI develop a voluntary policy and programme to address animal welfare. The FMI began qualitative consumer research and initiated meetings with the producer community. The unpublished results of the consumer focus groups indicated that the consumers want to be certain that animals in food production are treated humanely. As a result of this study, by the FMI and the National Council of Chain Restaurants (NCCR), the food retail, wholesale, and chain restaurant industries in the USA began to develop an animal welfare programme.

The FMI and the NCCR, independent expert advisors, and the producer/processor community have been working together to ensure animal well-being by promoting 'best practices' for each species in food animal production. To achieve their objective of having one common audit format and process that is acceptable to the entire retail food sector, the supermarkets and chain restaurant members of the FMI and the NCCR requested the two organisations to develop a voluntary, independent verification programme based on third party audits. This is designed to help ensure that suppliers are following the animal welfare guidelines endorsed by the FMI-NCCR expert advisory council. Achieving acceptance by suppliers of the independent verification programme has been a significant challenge.

New Zealand provides another example of a successful approach to codifying animal welfare practice. Between 1989 and 1999, the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee led the development of 21 voluntary codes of recommendations and minimum standards for the welfare of animals. Under the Animal Welfare Act (1999) codes of welfare supersede the previous voluntary codes and the minimum standards outlined in these codes now have legal standing within New Zealand.

In order for a voluntary corporate code to be successful, there must be a motivating force that will unify all of the stakeholders (2). Economically driven business leaders and managers are more likely to accept corporate responsibility when they are faced with the social and political concerns of investors, employees, consumers, and customers. One of the key benefits and motivating factors for corporations which participate in a voluntary code of conduct or animal production management system is that they can include that information in their advertising and product labelling.

However, it is essential that international animal welfare standards and guidelines set by the OIE be utilised as a foundation for such voluntary programmes. Voluntary standards set by industry on its own could become just another tool to gain markets among competitors, rather than to address legitimate animal welfare concerns.

### **Use of labelling and product advertisement**

In Europe and the USA consumers have requested more information and transparency on animal products. If consumers consider products derived from animals that are not produced according to high standards of welfare to be inferior, they may place less value on those products (9) and if they are unable to identify products from animals raised according to acceptable animal welfare standards then the market may suffer and the demand for all animal-derived food products may fall. Labelling can satisfy this consumer demand, but for customers to have confidence in labels that indicate adherence to high welfare standards they must be assured that there is a system of independent monitoring that ensures that producers entitled to use a certain logo or slogan do in fact comply with the required standards. Animal products would need to be traced through the food supply chain in order to create a credible label to address animal welfare standards. There are several provisions in the WTO Agreements that regulate labelling. In certain agricultural sectors there are already several initiatives in the private sector that utilise product labelling to give consumers comprehensive information, e.g. genetically modified foods, forestry products, and coffee.

Animal welfare labelling would be classified as a technical regulation under the TBT Agreement. Labels containing other types of information have been regulated under this system, e.g. labels indicating the country of origin, the environmentally-friendly practices of the producer, and the religious practices adhered to, e.g. kosher or halal slaughter. A product label or symbol can be used to clearly identify to a consumer that a product or company is in compliance with a code of conduct or internationally recognised standard. Animal welfare labelling should be based on positive labels that indicate which products were produced in accordance with high standards of animal welfare.

Another example of a labelling used in the agriculture sector is the coffee industry. Coffee is the second most profitable legal export commodity in the world (3). Currently the coffee market is suffering from an increase in coffee production that is creating a global abundance, declining coffee demand, and poor coffee bean quality. Concerned activist groups have tried to promote labour-friendly and environmentally-friendly products by providing information to consumers about the PPMs utilised to reach the final product.

For example, there are many different kinds of sustainable coffee and corresponding labels that indicate the conditions under which the coffee was made, e.g. 'shade-grown', 'organic', 'bird-friendly', and 'fair trade'. The problem is that the presence of so many different labels makes it difficult to achieve consumer recognition, and if consumers do not easily recognise a label and are unaware of what it means they are less likely to buy the product, even though it has been produced in compliance with criteria that they approve of. Harmonising product labelling would enable consumers to easily recognise products and would therefore encourage lasting consumer fidelity.

The example above serves as an example of the commonly encountered problems faced in creating a label which attracts socially-conscious consumers, i.e. labels which they can easily identify but which they also feel they can rely upon. A study conducted by the Center for Food Economics Research, indicates that consumers prefer logos to text labels to indicate a specific characteristic regarding a product. The credibility associated with a label or symbol is related to the education and knowledge consumers have regarding the origin and implications of the label.

The credibility of the standard-setting organisation or certifying body is crucial. The consumer needs to be able to readily understand what the certification indicates. If consumers are properly informed they can then look for the symbol or label of the product of their choice in the marketplace.

The adherence to animal welfare guidelines set by the OIE will eliminate the problem of competing for the wrong reasons, and not for animal welfare reasons, as has been commonly encountered in other areas of voluntary labelling. Standards created by the industry or private organisations lack the independence and science-based foundation that the OIE provides. It is necessary to isolate the standard-setting process from both the user industry and animal advocates while allowing input from all interested stakeholders to help create guidelines that unify and achieve a common goal.

International guidelines on animal welfare will eventually become a value-added feature for animal products in trade.

Product labelling and advertising can identify animal products that comply with international standards and therefore create the demand for the availability of these products in the marketplace.

## Conclusion

Animal welfare issues require a holistic approach, one which balances the growing global demand for animal products with the increasing expectations for the welfare of animals. There has been an intensification of animal production industries over the last fifty years in an effort to meet the needs of the rapidly growing human population. There have also been great improvements in animal health and production. However, some of these improvements have been accompanied by a decline in animal welfare standards (12).

The world is becoming one marketplace and therefore producers in one country that want to export cannot afford to ignore the consumer concerns in another country if they wish to sustain their economic prosperity and trade. Adherence to science-based international animal welfare standards will help address this problem.

There is a need to increase overall animal production to meet the growing global demand. This need does not

outweigh the need to ensure that animals that are used in food production are properly cared for and that their welfare is not compromised. As noted by Bayvel, 'progress in the area of animal welfare will be a case of "evolution not revolution" based on the principles of incremental change management' (1, 13). It is crucial that all changes be validated and science-based, implemented over a realistic time period, and take into account economic, regional, and cultural dimensions. Even if animal welfare standards cannot be included under the WTO Agreements in the future, bi- and multilateral agreements, voluntary corporate codes, and positive labelling of products should have a positive effect.

Ultimately, it is going to be preferential consumer demands and demonstrable gains in animal production which will accelerate this incremental evolution in animal welfare consciousness and adherence to international standards.

## Bien-être animal et commerce international

A.B. Thiermann & S. Babcock

### Résumé

La mondialisation devient une composante qui révolutionne le commerce international, en particulier celui des animaux et des produits d'origine animale. Partout dans le monde, le bien-être animal suscite un intérêt croissant et, dans le cadre de son plan stratégique pour la période 2001-2005, l'Organisation mondiale de la santé animale (OIE) a qualifié de prioritaire l'élaboration des normes internationales sur le bien-être animal. Les critères scientifiques qui sous-tendent l'activité normative de l'OIE sont les éléments fondateurs de l'élaboration et de l'acceptation par tous les Pays Membres de ces lignes directrices en matière de bien-être animal.

Les modalités d'application de ces lignes directrices, tant en vertu des dispositions des accords de l'Organisation mondiale du commerce (OMC) que des codes volontaires de conduite, sont examinées dans l'article. Même si les lignes directrices en matière de bien-être animal n'étaient prises en compte par aucun accord de l'OMC dans l'avenir, les accord bilatéraux et multilatéraux, les codes volontaires des entreprises et l'étiquetage transparent des produits

devraient aboutir à l'acceptation progressive des lignes directrices de l'OIE. À terme, les exigences des consommateurs et l'amélioration démontrable de la production animale auront pour effet de faire progresser la prise de conscience sur le thème du bien-être animal et le respect des normes internationales.

**Mots-clés**

Accord général sur les tarifs douaniers et le commerce – Bien-être animal – Commerce – Étiquetage – Lignes directrices – Organisation mondiale du commerce.



## Bienestar animal y comercio internacional

A.B. Thiermann & S. Babcock

**Resumen**

La mundialización se está convirtiendo en un factor que revoluciona el comercio internacional, en particular el de animales y productos de origen animal. La cuestión del bienestar animal viene suscitando un interés creciente en todo el mundo, y ante semejante realidad la elaboración de normas internacionales sobre el tema fue una de las tareas prioritarias definidas en el Plan Estratégico para 2001-2005 de la Organización Mundial de Sanidad Animal (OIE). Los enfoques científicos desde los que la OIE aborda su labor normativa constituyen un buen punto de partida para la elaboración, y adopción por parte de todos los Países Miembros de la OIE, de directrices sobre bienestar animal.

Los autores explican el modo en que pueden aplicarse tales directrices, ya sea dentro de los acuerdos de la Organización Mundial del Comercio (OMC) o como parte de códigos voluntarios de conducta. Aunque en el futuro no hubiera ningún acuerdo de la OMC que comprendiera directrices sobre bienestar animal, la existencia de convenios bilaterales y multilaterales, códigos empresariales voluntarios y sistemas de etiquetado transparente de los productos debería resultar en una progresiva aceptación de las directrices de la OIE. A la larga, las demandas de los consumidores y la existencia de aumentos demostrables en la producción irán induciendo un mayor nivel de conciencia sobre el tema y una observancia más estricta de las normas internacionales.

**Palabras clave**

Acuerdo General sobre Aranceles Aduaneros y Comercio – Bienestar animal – Comercio – Directrices – Etiquetado – Organización Mundial del Comercio.





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