

Evaluation of the Animal Health Law

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Report from the Commission on the evaluation of Regulation (EU) 2016/429 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health ('Animal Health Law')

What is changing and why?

The European Commission has reviewed the EU Animal Health Law (AHL) 5 years after its implementation. Key outcomes are:

- Import conditions are now fully harmonised at European Union (EU) level. Import requirements are as stringent as those applied within the EU, and in line with the international World Organisation of Animal Health (WOAH) standards.
- Disease listing and categorisation now drive import requirements. The EU now uses a unified list of diseases (categories A–E). The eligibility of non-EU countries to export to the EU depends on the country's status for these diseases.
- Regionalisation: the EU recognises disease-free zones rather than imposing bans on entire countries, providing opportunities for non-EU countries to continue exports.
- Vaccination: the EU now allows broader use of vaccination internally (e.g. highly pathogenic avian influenza, HPAI; foot-and-mouth disease, FMD; lumpy skin disease, LSD). However, vaccination can still affect export eligibility unless surveillance and certification demonstrate freedom from infection.
- Digital systems (Trade Control and Expert System, TRACES; Animal Disease Information System, ADIS) are mandatory for all imports.
- Audits of non-EU country veterinary systems have increased.

Areas for future action include:

- Need for further simplification of rules to help navigate complex animal health requirements, and for better explanations (websites, guidance documents, etc.).
- Categorisation of diseases: consider whether categorisation criteria should be adapted, and whether animal diseases should be (re)assessed for their listing according to disease risk (categories A–E).
- Improve the recognition of regionalisation by non-EU countries.
- Better enforce and continue to invest in disease prevention, surveillance, control, and contingency plans.

- Optimise the use of vaccination. The Commission will continue to engage with WOA, trading partners, and other international stakeholders to promote science-based approaches to vaccination, contribute to the development of international standards and new vaccines, and reduce unjustified trade-related barriers.
- Revise and simplify rules on transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) and zoonosis.

The Commission's evaluation concludes that no fundamental reform is needed, but continued consolidation, clarification, and consistent implementation of the AHL will be needed to deliver its full potential.

Actions

In cases of disease outbreaks, regionalisation can potentially reduce damage to exports if the exporting country can demonstrate a rapid detection system, transparent reporting, and effective containment in the zone of the disease.

Timeline

The European Commission will continue to monitor progress and implement follow-up actions across all priority areas.

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