



Health & Consumer Voice

Now interactive! Click on the web links for further information...

January/February 2012

Headlines

Commission proposes new Animal Welfare Strategy for 2012-2015 1

Top stories

Commission to tackle an ambitious policy agenda in 2012 2

New EU action plans aims to double the share of e-commerce by 2015 3

EU investigates online loan facilities 3

Dalli proposes better protection from cross-border health threats 4

EU moves towards more accurate and reliable health claims on food 4

In brief

EU issues warnings on illegal hen cages 2

EU Cosmetics Portal launched 2

EU Scientific Committee examines safety of PIP breast implants 2

3rd EU Health Prize for Journalists 2

EP News

EP elects Committee chairpersons 3

Vote on Bluetongue vaccine 3

Coming up

Health & Consumer Agenda 4

Follow us on Twitter!



http://twitter.com/#!/EU_Consumer

Commission proposes new Animal Welfare Strategy for 2012-2015



Commissioner Dalli discusses proposals for the new Animal Welfare Strategy at Berlin's «Green Week» in January

On 19 January, the European Commission adopted a new strategy paper for the protection and welfare of animals for 2012-2015. John Dalli, EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, said the priority would be «to work on significantly improving enforcement» of the existing rules.

The new strategy proposes clear and simple principles for animal welfare, accompanied by better information and education for consumers and animal handlers. It contains a list of actions that will gradually come into effect from 2012 to 2015 to tackle sector specific issues as well as general welfare requirements.

These include:

- 2012: enforcement actions for the protection of laying hens & an implementing plan for the slaughter regulation;

- 2013: a study on the welfare of farmed fish & guidelines for the protection of pigs;
- 2014: the possible proposal of a new legal framework for animal welfare.

For producers and animal handlers, the strategy calls for better training, more technical support and greater flexibility. It also proposes assessing animal stress levels.

Other priorities include better links between animal welfare and other EU policies, notably the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and a new EU network of reference centres for animal welfare to support research, training and technical innovation.

The strategy will be combined with targeted communication activities to provide consumers with better information on animal welfare. Dalli underlined that animal welfare concerns were now an integral part of the overall concept of food quality.

The Commission's proposal is now up for discussion in the European Parliament and Council.

Improve Health & Consumer Voice!

We want your views to help us improve the Health & Consumer Voice. Please take a couple of minutes to answer 5 questions:

<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=hcv&lang=en>



In brief

EU issues warnings on illegal hen cages

13 EU countries have been issued letters of formal notice by the European Commission for failing to implement the ban on un-enriched hen cages which came into force on 1 January. Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Romania now have two months to provide a «satisfactory response» to the Commission under EU rules for infringement procedures.

EU Cosmetics Portal launched

A new Cosmetics Products Notification Portal (CPNP) was launched on 11 January. It will act as a «one stop shop» for the cosmetics industry to submit information about products placed on the EU market. It will also help poison centres, improve market surveillance and reduce the administrative burden for the industry. Use of the CPNP will be mandatory from 11 July 2013.

EU Scientific Committee examines safety of PIP breast implants

The EU Commission has requested urgent advice from the Scientific Committee on Emerging & Newly Identified Health Risks (SCENIHR) on the safety of Poly Implant Prothese (PIP) breast implants, following the discovery of fraudulent use of non-medical grade silicone in France in December. SCENIHR's opinion will be shared with Member States and the European Commission will take further action.

3rd EU Health Prize for Journalists

Ben Hirschler & Kate Kelland have won the EU's Health Prize for Journalists 2011 for their article on antimicrobial resistance. Monika Cetera won the special prize on smoking cessation.

Health & Consumer Policy

Commission to tackle an ambitious policy agenda in 2012



Director-General for Health & Consumers, Paola Testori-Coggi

The European Commission will tackle a range of key health and consumer concerns in 2012. As well as animal welfare, other major dossiers coming up in the next 12 months include:

Medical Devices Directive

The legal framework for medical devices – used to diagnose and treat EU citizens every day - will be strengthened and improved to meet new challenges and growing expectations. The main objectives are increased safety, more transparency, a clear legal framework and a smooth functioning of the internal market for medical devices. Concrete proposals will be presented in mid-2012.

http://ec.europa.eu/health/medical-devices/index_en.htm

Tobacco Products Directive

Commission proposals for a major review of the Tobacco Products' Directive (TPD) are due to be adopted in Spring. Dating back to 2001, the Directive has two main objectives: ensuring a high level of public health and a smooth functioning of the internal market for tobacco products.

http://ec.europa.eu/health/tobacco/policy/index_en.htm

Consumer Agenda

Commission proposals for a new European Consumer Agenda will be adopted in Spring to address consumer safety, information, rights and redress, including the development of alternative and online dispute resolution mechanisms. The role of consumer organisations and market monitoring will also be reinforced.

http://ec.europa.eu/governance/impact/planned_ia/docs/2012_sanco_005_consumer_agenda_en.pdf

European Year of Active Ageing

60 is the new 40, they say, and 2012 is the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. With Europe's population getting older, this year provides the chance to assess the challenges and opportunities presented by increasing life expectancy.

Politicians and stakeholders will look at how to manage this demographic shift better to guarantee that older people live healthy, fulfilling and independent lives for longer.

Linked to this initiative is the pilot project, the European Innovation Partnership on Active & Healthy Ageing, which also starts this year. One of its targets is to increase the average healthy life span by two years by 2020.

<http://europa.eu/ey2012>

Did you know?

DG Health & Consumers produces videos to keep citizens up-to-date with key policy issues. This month, learn about what the EU does to ensure the quality and safety of medicines and how the system of authorisation works. Visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/videos/index_en.htm

Consumers

New EU action plan aims to double the share of e-commerce by 2015



Neelie Kroes, Commissioner responsible for the Digital Agenda, Michel Barnier, Commissioner for Internal Market and John Dalli present the new action plan

The European Commission adopted a new action plan to double the share of e-commerce in the EU by 2015 on 11 January. Consisting of 16 initiatives, it will foster a more dynamic digital single market with better cross-border access to online products, improved internet security and more consumer protection.

E-commerce and online services offer huge advantages, including better choice and lower prices. However, e-commerce currently accounts for just 3.4% of retail sales, with an

estimated value of €11.7 billion. Increase this figure to 15%, says the Commission, and the value could be as high as €204 billion. Improving consumer confidence, transparency and payment and delivery methods are vital.

The action plan is another boost to the single market. It «will create new opportunities for citizens and businesses and bring Europe much-needed growth and employment,» said Commissioners Kroes, Barnier and Dalli at a joint press conference.

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/e-commerce/communication_2012_en.htm

EU investigates online loan facilities

- 562 credit websites checked
- 30% complied with EU rules
- 46% did not include all the standard information required
- 43% did not give clear information about the different costs

70% of websites examined as part of an EU-wide investigation into online consumer credit facilities have been flagged for further checks because they do not comply with the relevant EU consumer rules.

The investigation into over 500 websites in the EU, Norway and

Iceland found much of the key information on websites was missing and/or misleading.

This included standard information in the credit advertisement, key information on the main elements of the offer, and an unclear presentation of the actual costs of the credit.

Results of the latest «sweep» were published in January. National enforcement authorities will now contact online credit operators about suspected irregularities to request corrections and clarifications. They must report back to the European Commission by Autumn 2012.

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/enforcement/sweeps_en.htm

EP News

EP elects Committee chairpersons

Following the election of the President, Vice-Presidents and Quaestors of the European Parliament in Strasbourg in January, EP committees convened in Brussels to elect their chairpersons for the remaining two and a half years of this EP's term (2009-2014).

MEPs chairing the key committees linked to Health & Consumer Policy are the following:

- Environment, Public Health & Food Safety: Matthias Grooten
- Internal Market & Consumer Protection: Malcolm Harbour
- Employment & Social Affairs: Pervenche Berès
- Economic & Monetary Affairs: Sharon Bowles
- Agriculture & Rural Development: Paolo de Castro
- Budgets: Alain Lamassoure
- Legal Affairs: Klaus-Heiner Lehne

Legislative work of the EP is carried out in a total of 20 standing committees and 2 sub-committees.

Vote on Bluetongue vaccine

The EP will vote on new rules to better control the spread of the bluetongue virus in February. Bluetongue is a mosquito borne disease that affects sheep, cattle and goats. It has become increasingly widespread with a significant impact on the EU's agricultural industry.

The new rules will allow the use of different types of vaccines which should lower the costs for farmers and facilitate the movement of vaccinated animals.

The EP has cited the adoption of a new bluetongue framework as one of the priorities for early 2012.

Health

Dalli proposes better protection from cross-border health threats



A new European Commission proposal to better protect citizens from a wide range of cross-border health threats was adopted in December, drawing on the lessons learned from the H1N1 pandemic in 2009 and the E.coli outbreak in 2011.

The main measures include an extension of the co-ordination mechanism for communicable

diseases, a new legal framework allowing national governments to purchase vaccines jointly and better crisis communication. The role of the EU's Health Security Committee would also be reinforced.

Speaking after the adoption of the proposal, EU Commissioner John Dalli underlined the importance of having a strong legal framework in place to tackle cross-border health threats. «In today's globalised society, illnesses can spread around Europe – and the globe – within hours. This is why the EU must be prepared to act together in a fully co-ordinated manner to stop disease from spreading.»

The proposal is likely to come into effect in late 2012.

http://ec.europa.eu/health/preparedness_response/policy/index_en.htm

EU moves towards more accurate and reliable health claims on food



EU Member States have endorsed a list of 222 permitted health claims for food in support of the EU's efforts to make consumer information more accurate and reliable. The decision – taken at December's meeting of the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health – will help consumers to make healthier choices.

Permitted health claims are based on a scientific assessment by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) that

validates the alleged health benefits of certain foods. EFSA has completed the authorisation process for over half of the 4 600 claims listed for assessment.

In a statement following the meeting, Commissioner Dalli recalled the Commission's objective of guaranteeing a higher level of consumer protection through the nutrition and health claims Regulation. "Consumers tend to over-estimate the value of food products on which claims are made. We now have the tools to clean up the market from unsubstantiated and misleading health claims."

The measure must now be endorsed by the European Parliament and Council before being published in the EU's Official Journal.

http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labellingnutrition/claims/health_claims_en.htm

Coming up in 2012

Health & Consumer Agenda:

February

- Results of a study on bank switching to be published
- Market study on electric and electronic goods
- EP hearing on the Consumer Agenda
- DG Health & Consumers at the Salon de l'Agriculture, Paris
- Conference on food related crime
- Conference on the new Animal Welfare Strategy
- Adoption of a Commission communication on Active & Healthy Ageing
- Biennial report on Cross-border enforcement & co-operation

March

- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) week
- Commissioner Dalli visits Beijing
- Conference on GMO Monitoring
- Scientific hearing on fragrance allergens in cosmetic products

April

- 7th Consumer Conditions Scoreboard
- Stakeholder Conference on European Innovation Partnerships
- European Patients' Rights Day

Follow DG Health & Consumers' work:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/index_en.htm



The views expressed in Health & Consumer Voice do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the European Commission.
© European Union, 2011. Reproduction of articles (excluding photographs) is authorised, except for commercial purposes, provided that the source is mentioned.
Edited by DG Health & Consumers.

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/index_en.htm
Email: sanco-newsletter@ec.europa.eu