


16TH OCTOBER 2018

NEW REPORT DEMONSTRATES DETRIMENTAL IMPACTS OF INTENSIVE BROILER CHICKEN FARMING ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT, BESIDES ANIMAL WELFARE



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A new report of AgriBusiness Consulting makes a compelling case for a complete rethinking of the industrial intensive chicken production model that predominates in the EU and that threatens public health, pollutes the environment, and does little to respect animal welfare.

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A new report of AgriBusiness Consulting makes a compelling case for a complete rethinking of the industrial intensive chicken production model that predominates in the EU and that threatens public health, pollutes the environment, and does little to respect animal welfare.

The report, published less than a week after the [European Parliament urged the European Commission](#) to address the major societal challenges caused by intensive broiler farming, focuses on the main issues arising from EU poultry production practices. After describing these practices and gathering evidence on their impact, the report concludes intensive broiler farming contributes to the current increase in antimicrobial resistance and causes environmental degradation, while also being intrinsically linked to poor animal welfare.

According to this new report, intensive broiler rearing practices are contributing to the [increase in antimicrobial resistance](#) (AMR) in bacteria of zoonotic importance, such as *Campylobacter* spp., *Salmonella* spp., and *E.coli* (EFSA/ECDC, 2016). Fighting against AMR remains a key priority for the EU, but no actions have been set so far by the Commission to concretely support the uptake of higher animal welfare standards in broiler farming as an important means to reduce the sector's still high dependency on antimicrobial treatments. Zoonotic bacteria that are typically found in intensive poultry production are [developing resistance to multiple antibiotic substances](#) that are important for human health, and Commission action is therefore urgently needed across the industry.

Antimicrobials used in intensive broiler systems are also polluting the environment, through water and soil contamination. Indeed, recent scientific [studies show that up to 90% of antimicrobial agents used for livestock, including intensively reared broilers, may be excreted into the environment, causing changes in the physiology of water life and constituting another potential route for AMR.](#)

Additionally, intensive broiler farming is responsible for **high ammonia emissions**, with negative effects on animals and humans, as ammonia is absorbed by land, water, and vegetation. As highlighted in the report, soil and water acidification, eutrophication and subsequent loss in biodiversity and greenhouse (GHG) emissions are major problems associated with ammonia deposition.

Clearly poor animal welfare – primarily due to selection for extremely fast growth – goes hand in hand with harmful consequences for public and environmental health. Factors such as high stocking densities, the deprivation of any possibility to express natural behaviours, and high concentrations of noxious gases, contribute to making intensively reared broiler chickens extremely vulnerable to disease. Consequently these animals still require a significant amount of antimicrobials just to stay alive.

"Despite available evidence on the detrimental effects of such farming practices, intensive broiler systems account for over 90% of the whole production in the EU, and the sector is in constant expansion" says



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"Despite available evidence on the detrimental effects of such farming practices, intensive broiler systems account for over 90% of the whole production in the EU, and the sector is in constant expansion" says Reineke Hamelers, Director at Eurogroup for Animals. "Given the animal welfare, environmental and public health implications highlighted by this report, the EU institutions have a duty to discourage intensive rearing. Raising the bar for animal welfare and supporting the shift to alternative systems are pivotal to tackle the problems at their roots."

The EU's legislation on broiler welfare is currently no guarantee for the welfare of broiler chickens, a fact that clearly emerges from the [European Commission's own implementation report](#). In an attempt to overturn this situation and urgently address the legislation's shortcomings, the European Parliament will vote on a Motion for Resolution on this matter next week.

We hope this text will send a strong message to the Commission, urging it to support alternative, and less harmful, broiler farming systems. To keep animals healthier, Eurogroup for Animals is advocating for a shift towards rearing systems that offer animals more space, enrichment materials and clean air. Higher welfare breeds should be favoured, in order to have more robust flocks that are less susceptible to disease and consequently require fewer antimicrobials.

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