



Livestock Husbandry Strategy

Summary

In recent decades agriculture in Germany has developed into a strong and innovative business sector. Yet it faces major challenges. The Livestock Husbandry Strategy's aim is to markedly improve animal wellbeing in livestock husbandry and to reduce negative effects on the environment. Simultaneously what must be secured is the economic foundation for agricultural enterprises and the supply of sustainably-produced meat to consumers. At the heart of society, a broader-based consensus needs to be reached again, giving the farmers a reliable framework for rearing livestock in Germany in a competitive and accepted way.

Livestock husbandry undergoes permanent structural change. This change has defining characteristics, similar in all industrial countries: larger average sizes of animal stocks, higher output per animal, an increasing use of technology and, in many cases also, a greater degree of regional concentration in animal rearing. In international competition Germany's livestock sector has asserted itself successfully in recent years. For milk and meat it recorded higher production levels overall; with domestic consumption stagnating, this led to an expansion of the foreign-trade surplus.

Over recent years, with a comprehensive package of measures, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture has achieved substantial improvements both to livestock-husbandry conditions and to the environment. The amendment of the Fertiliser Act (*Düngegesetz*) and the Fertiliser Application Ordinance (*Düngeverordnung*) in the spring of 2017 brought into force a new law on fertiliser. There was also progress on animal protection (e.g. ban on non-furnished cages for laying-hens, an end to beak-clipping of laying-hen chicks, introduction of rearing of sows in groups in the waiting area, ban on castration of piglets without anaesthetic (starting in 2019), with priority being placed on economically sustainable solutions for the livestock farmers (4th path), a decrease in the tethering of milk cows). Simultaneously, since 2012 the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture has made available around EUR 132 m. for research and innovation, also making animal wellbeing the orientation point for investment-promotion aimed at individual businesses. This foundation is being built upon.

It will cost time and money to implement the livestock strategy and to change conditions of rearing. The central challenge for a Livestock Husbandry Strategy is to provide, on a lasting basis, the necessary resources for progress on animal wellbeing and on environmental protection in livestock rearing, while at the same time securing economic sustainability for the agricultural enterprises. In principle this brings three points of approach into consideration: consumers' payments, costs saved by innovation, and payments from the state budget.

Through a Federal Programme on Sustainable Livestock Husbandry, the aim is to develop innovations and introduce them to broad-based agricultural practice. One point of emphasis is to reduce the conflict of goals between animal wellbeing and environment protection. Many farmers are highly motivated and willing to introduce improvements in animal husbandry. Accordingly, the 'livestock housing of the future' will be developed in the years to come.

The structure of investment support is already strongly directed towards addressing animal-protection issues. This is the basis on which that support will be further developed as an important supporting pillar in the Livestock Husbandry Strategy for animal-housing, both new-build and refurbishment.

A more attractive structure is to be given to the measures directed at agriculture adapted to the market, to the given location, and to environmental concerns.

The launch of a state label denoting animal wellbeing will foster transparency of humane livestock-husbandry practices, also enabling the consumer to make purchase decisions that favour animal wellbeing.

These central points of approach will be supplemented by a package of measures from the realm of animal rearing and the adaptation of legal frameworks. Health and robustness must be given a higher priority level in livestock husbandry. This is to be achieved through voluntary but binding agreements with individual sectors of business. Livestock farmers have a high level of vocational qualification and are using the improved vocational training on offer. Checks are being made on requirements regarding approval of new-builds and refurbishments of livestock housing – especially in connection with improvements on animal wellbeing and environmental effects. Jointly with the Federal Ministry for the Environment and with Germany's Federal States, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture is reviewing possible simplifications in the law governing approvals; their aim is to enable improvements to be made through refurbishment of livestock housing. If this does not successfully resolve conflicts of goals, animal wellbeing has to get priority.

Animal husbandry and physical areas are closely linked factors. Henceforth funding will be given only to agricultural enterprises that have a well-balanced relationship between livestock density and area used.

Antibiotics are only to be approved for use in livestock husbandry after a prior risk assessment. The Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture continues to pursue its health-oriented food policy, providing information on a scientifically secure basis about livestock husbandry's environmental effects, thereby fostering sustainable consumption of animal products.

For export of animal products the aim is to attain a premium market position. The need is for optimum use of increasingly scarce resources for the factors of production (land) and environmental resources (water, air), by adding value and by high quality of processes and products. The effects of export of animal products and of imports of feed are to be analysed in the recipient countries and countries of origin respectively and, where appropriate, measures introduced.

To secure the competitiveness of sustainable animal husbandry, financial resources from the CAP are to be deployed in a targeted way. The aim is for the CAP to contribute to the agricultural enterprises being able to master the increasing requirements presented by higher animal-protection standards and by environment and climate protection. Alongside the CAP second-pillar measures, the intention is that the direct payments are to be concentrated more strongly on small and medium-sized enterprises and thereby on livestock businesses, so that they can overcome the increasing challenges faced.

The value of grassland is enhanced as a resource for animal feed in livestock husbandry and due to its ecological functions. The Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture is developing a Grassland Strategy for this.

Lastly, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture's research specific to its remit will make a comprehensive assessment of consequences of the Livestock Husbandry Strategy; a Council for Sustainable Livestock Husbandry will be set up, consisting of representatives of all groups in society. The Council makes proposals for the further development of the Livestock Husbandry Strategy.

The Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture is using the Livestock Husbandry Strategy to address the challenges presented by necessary further development of livestock husbandry in Germany. The Ministry wants a strategy directed at quality-based, not quantity-based competition. The strategy described and the measures derived from it will succeed in improving animal wellbeing substantially and in reducing effects on the environment. The Livestock Husbandry Strategy proposed is the outcome of a discussion process within the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture. This process was given support by a high-calibre external circle of advisors from the realms of science, politics and technology transfer. The result of the discussions describes the policy position of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture. With the proposals submitted, the Federal Ministry now engages in discussion with politicians and interest groups.