



**IDF World Dairy Summit**  
**United Dairy World 2009**  
BERLIN 20-24 SEPTEMBER

## **Conference 03 – Animal Health & Animal Welfare**

### ***The global dimension of animal welfare: European policies and international trade opportunities***

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In the EU and behind its borders, animal welfare today is conceived by many citizens as an attribute of an overall "food quality concept". Animal farming is not seen just as a mean of food production but it is strictly related to the achievements of other key social goals such as animal health, food safety and quality, safeguarding environmental protection, sustainability and enhancing the quality of life in rural areas while ensuring that animals are properly treated.

Different surveys performed in the European Union show a positive trend in the consumers' perception regarding their will to pay more or to change their shopping habits in order to buy animal welfare friendly products, while vast majority also believes that similar animal welfare standards should be applied to food products all over the world.

The overall aim of the European Commission's initiative is to launch a broad public debate on animal welfare and establish a longstanding collaboration with stakeholders in order to shape a coherent, comprehensive and widely accepted policy in this field both in the EU and with its major trading partners, while taking into account the socio-economic implications. For this reasons, the Commission has launched the European research project EconWelfare, that aims to provide suggestions for national and European policy makers to further improve farm animal welfare, investigating in collaboration with stakeholders groups policy options and their impacts on the livestock production chain.

In particular, the European Commission has been at the frontline for supporting and introducing international initiatives on animal welfare in order to create greater consensus and to raise awareness on this issue as well as to promote scientific and technical partnerships. Working closely with other international organisations, such as the OIE and FAO, is today essential to develop capacity building programmes to implement internationally shared animal welfare standards and globally move forward more sustainable and responsible forms of animal production.

The growing consumer demand for ethically and sustainable produced food around the world represents an important incentive to develop a lasting alliance between all stakeholders concerned and to bridge farmers and consumers.