

AT A GLANCE

Requested by the Committee of Inquiry on the Protection of Animals during Transport (ANIT)
Study in Focus

Patterns of livestock transport in the EU and to third countries



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Every year, millions of live animals are transported within and outside of the European Union (EU) for trade purposes. Animals can be traded for diverse reasons such as essential domestic transport (transport from the farm to a slaughterhouse, or transport of cattle-fattening farms), breeding, relocation of companion animals or trade of laboratory animals.

Intra-EU trade of livestock represents 85% of transports, while 15% of transport is headed to extra-EU destinations.

This paper

provides an analysis of the main drivers and key features of livestock transport within the EU and to third countries.

In 2019, about **1.4 billion bovines, swine, poultry, ovine, caprine and equines** were traded across the EU Member States.

Poultry is the most traded farm animal in Europe. 98% of intra-EU trade and 97% of extra-EU trade (as expressed in numbers of animals transported) are represented by this species.

Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations ("Transport Regulation") is the current EU legislative framework to ensure the welfare during movement of live animals.

Main observations

Livestock transport is a major animal welfare concern. Animals are exposed to the stress of loading and unloading, hunger, thirst, exhaustion, and lack of space and rest during transit. Furthermore, in case of **sea transport, the inadequacy of more than half of the operating vessels can pose a serious welfare risk.** For extra EU trade in live animals, these issues are compounded by a lack of regular feedback from third countries on the conditions of the animals during transport and at arrival.

The presence of veterinarians cannot always be guaranteed at the farm or at the point of loading.

Farmers, drivers and inspectors experience difficulties in recognising the unfitness of livestock to be transported.

While the Transport Regulation seeks to overcome these issues, there are a number of problems that remain to be solved, including in particular long-distance transports of unweaned calves, the need to ascertain the state of pregnancy, the extent to which the journey logs are checked, the relationship between infringements, enforcement and penalties, the 'mixed' impact of training, education and certification, border control and so on.



Drivers of livestock transport in the EU and third countries

The **EU's regulatory framework has influenced transport patterns in the past and will continue to do so in the future.** The Farm to Fork strategy, new welfare requirements and the new Common Agriculture Policy will shape the transport patterns and conditions in the following years.

The **decreasing number of slaughterhouses** in Europe in the past four decades has led to a centralization of livestock slaughter in fewer larger abattoirs, thus **increasing the distance that livestock has to travel.**

Open borders within the EU give farmers more negotiation flexibility, enabling them to take



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advantage of cost variations in different countries. **This provides an incentive for the transport of livestock to increase cost-benefits.**

Specific local patterns are another driver for transports of livestock to the **Middle East and North Africa.**

Meat consumption trends have also been changing in the EU and the world, **affecting the production and the destination of livestock.**

Environmental and health constraints related to livestock production are more prominent than before and have to be considered in the future: **greenhouse gas emissions, water shortage and the impact of animal diseases** will affect the conditions of livestock transport in the coming years.

Livestock transport in the EU and to third countries

The EU has an important population of livestock, the majority of which experiences transport during their life. **While almost all livestock transport occurs within the EU, extra-EU trade is nevertheless an important component of livestock transport.**

In 2019, about **1.4 billion** bovines, swine, poultry, ovine and equines **were traded across the EU Member States** while roughly **230 million** bovines, pigs, poultry and ovine **were exported from EU to non-EU countries.**

Intra-EU livestock trade accounted for **EUR 8.6 billion** in 2018 while **extra-EU trade** accounted for **EUR 3 billion** (this figure includes both exports and imports).

The number of animals transported within the EU has increased by 19 % from 2009 to 2015.

By and large, **the number of consignments increased in line with the increase in the number of transported animals.** The number of animals transported per

consignment decreased for all animal categories except swine, which has increased by 56 % from 2005 to 2015.

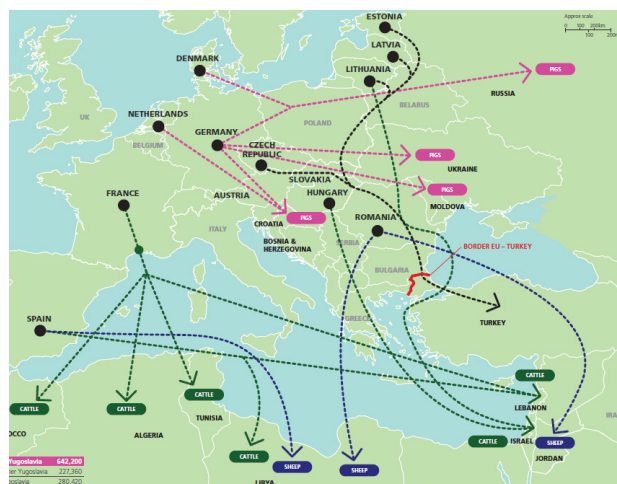
Exports to third countries have increased between 2005 and 2015, driven mainly **by a threefold increase in cattle exports.**

The duration of journeys for extra-EU consignments are generally longer given the transport routes, border procedures, waiting times and the fact that a large number of exports is carried out by sea.

Conclusions

Despite the adoption and entry into force of Council **Regulation (EC) N° 1/2005** on the protection of animals during transport, the **degree of progress** in the **implementation** of many of its provisions **by Member States** has been **insufficient** to meet the regulation's objectives. As a result, **weaknesses still persist in certain areas related to welfare issues during transport.**

Figure: Main transport routes for extra-EU live animal transport



Source: Animal welfare Foundation, 2021. Figures from Eurostat (except where otherwise indicated, the numbers of animals exported have been averaged from 2010 and 2011 and have been rounded up or down).