Open letter FEBEV: Horse meat deserves better

17 JUL 2015

Brussels, July 14th 2015 – As so often, GAIA started a new short-sighted campaign against the consumption of horse meat, while FEBEV is developing horse welfare guidelines (HoMeFe guidelines) to assure that the European animal welfare legislation is implemented in countries that export horse meat to Europe. FEBEV's goal is to reduce animal and horse suffering around the globe!

Once again, GAIA uses old, out of context footage to start a new campaign against horse meat. Nevertheless, GAIA (among other NGOs) is involved in the development of new animal welfare guidelines for the horse meat industry. The development of these guidelines is on schedule, and all the set deadlines are being respected. Mid-June 2015, FEBEV and the Mexican Ministry of Agriculture met to recognise the HoMeFe guidelines and to organise the inspections together. For this reason, FEBEV is very surprised by the action undertaken by GAIA. When negotiations aren't concluded yet, it's not right to move into action. For FEBEV, it is clear that GAIA doesn't want to negotiate and doesn't care about horse welfare, but only wants to raise donations by using emotional images, aiming for a world without meat. It's clear that FEBEV doesn't share this point of view. Meat is tasty and healthy, and certainly has its place in a balanced food pattern. As a federation, we consider animal welfare as very important!

False allegations and rumours spread by GAIA:

RUMOUR: The phenylbutazone story: GAIA spread the rumour that horse meat contains phenylbutazone (an anti-inflammatory agent) and insisted that the EU investigated this.

TRUTH: After thousands of tests, the EU decided to stop the tests, because it was confirmed that there was no reason to panic about the purity of the horse meat.

RUMOUR: in Argentina, the control organism SGS would have withdrawn its certificate because animal welfare conditions were poor.

TRUTH: SGS only wanted to audit MORE places to obtain a complete overview of the sector. GAIA was aware of this!

RUMOUR: the images of Argentina shown by GAIA give the impression that animal abuse is common practice.

TRUTH: there is enough proof coming from official instances, control organisms and visits in the country that the situation in Argentina is equal to the one in Europe.

RUMOUR: in Argentina, stolen horses are slaughtered on a large scale.

TRUTH: de sanitary controls in Argentina are equal to the ones in Europe and there is no indication that these practices are applied systematically.

RUMOUR: in the United States, horses are transported in double deck trucks.

TRUTH: this transportation method is NOT allowed and used in the USA.

Next to these false allegations and rumours, GAIA's bad intentions are also made clear by the following:

GAIA refuses consultation and prefers to end negotiations quickly

All initiatives taken by the sector (creating guidelines, installing cameras, etc.) are ignored completely

Abusing the media by spreading expensive campaigns under the label of "public service announcement".

Re-using the same videos and images over and over again and switching the sources.

File complaints against companies just to create sensation.

Efforts of the sector

At all production levels (slaughterhouses and their suppliers, processing industry), the professional associations and Governments have been working on transparency to guarantee animal welfare systematically.

Evidence of this are the controls by many independent parties (EU, Government, customers, international recognized audit agencies...) that have been carried out the past months. These audits have shown that the situation in Argentina is equal to the one in Europe, and sometimes even additional measures are taken: several slaughterhouses took the initiative to place cameras in the company to ensure total transparency.

During the next months, the following subjects will be treated:

Sector visit to Argentina and the first test audits according to the HoMeFe guidelines (approved by the Belgian distribution sector and all other constructive participants). FEBEV invites the entire wholesale distribution to participate.

End this year: HoMeFe audit of all slaughterhouses worldwide that export meat to the EU.

Presentation of the HoMeFe guidelines to different governments to obtain recognition and organising controls with these governments.

Evaluation of these audits and modification of the guidelines.

2016: further adaptation of the guidelines and expanding the traceability.

For more information: we refer to the press release of the 24th of June 2015:

http://www.febev.be/nl/persinfo/3740/press-release-febev-gaia-again-looking-for-sensation-and-gifts-let-animal-welfare-go-and-misleads-the-consumer-

About FEBEV

FEBEV is the Federation of the Belgian Meat. FEBEV counts 160 members from the three regions and is the federal representative of the Belgian fresh meat sector. The FEBEV office is led by Managing Director Thierry Smagghe.

For more information about this open letter: contact Thierry Smagghe (0473950795)

Bijlage:

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