

Press release

EUROPEAN POULTRY FARMING: A TRADITION THAT KEEPS UP WITH THE TIMES

The positive evolution of the European poultry sector in concrete facts

Brussels, 9 December 2021 – European poultry farming is linked to long tradition led by passion and care. Equipped with state-of-the-art technology, it adds a guarantee for animal health and the environment. European poultry farming means, in fact, continuous innovations and improvements on-field, as well as compliance with the demanding European standards, which results in high-quality meat, animal welfare, environmental protection and food safety. Besides that, players are collaborating and challenging with the ambitious targets of the European Commission, that also plays a fundamental role in the development of the sector and the education of consumers. The European Campaign “This is European Poultry!”, led by AVEC, has been successfully raising awareness about the quality and the nutritional benefits of the poultry meat ensured by its European origin.

The European poultry sector embraces high technology

In Europe, passion, care and family businesses have always been key elements of poultry farming. Although livestock farmers cherish and protect these values, they also use and work with modern technology and the latest practices. Tradition and technology do not exclude one another. That is why the European Union takes both aspects into account to define its high-quality and strict standards to regulate each stage of production in its Member States. Having defined and strictly controlled standards stimulates European poultry farmers to challenge and continuously improve their production. This guarantees and improves animal welfare, food safety, consumer and environmental protection. Concrete examples, such as the implementation of photovoltaic systems, allow the use of renewable energy sources, which reduces the internal costs and the impact on the environment. Accurate monitoring systems enable farmers to know and regulate temperature conditions in real time, as well as feed management, animal weight and lighting, thus ensuring constant compliance with current regulations. Technology is not all; it must be supported by continuous specialist staff training, in order to keep up with the latest improvements and needs of the sector.

Outstanding European poultry farming practices

*“If you keep animals, you also bear the responsibility”¹. Livestock requires a full engagement. The passion is this job plays an essential role, ensuring continuous research for improvements. Thanks to farmers dedication and helped by high technology, remarkable results have already been reached on the field. For example, the women-led poultry farm *Vicentini* stands out for its engagement with sustainability. “We pay particular attention to the sustainability of our production process. With that in mind, a few years ago we invested in a state-of-the-art photovoltaic system that allows us to use renewable energy sources, i.e., clean energy”². This investment enables them to be completely independent, with surplus power fed into the grid. Innovative technologies are precious also for guaranteeing animals’ optimal care. “On my smartphone, wherever and whenever I want, I have a good idea of the situation in the barn and the business process as a whole”³. This statement underlines the advantages of having cameras and sensors, that are constantly monitoring his establishment. This allows farmers to always keep an eye on their barn in order to make instant adjustments, if necessary, thus*

¹ Stefan Teepker, poultry farmer in Emsland, Germany.

² Silvia, poultry farmer at Vicentini farm, in Italy.

³ Johan Leenders, poultry farmer in the Netherlands.

ensuring the health and well-being of his animals. The positive evolution also takes place in the use of antibiotics which the European Commission tries to reduce to its minimum: “Use as little as possible but as much as necessary”⁴. The two principles at the core of the European approach are the administration of antibiotics only in case of animals’ sickness and their strict dependence on veterinarians’ prescription. Several countries achieved impressive results. To mention one example, France accomplished five years in advance its objective to reduce by 60% the use of antibiotics. Stipulated and demanding standards are therefore crucial for the development of the European Poultry sector. “Full records of nutrition and welfare are kept at every stage, so we are fully able to trace all stages of production”⁵. Through strict controls at each step of the production, the European poultry meat sector respects its priorities: animal welfare, environmental protection and food safety in order to satisfy the consumers.

The European Union supports farmers initiatives

European poultry farming is continuously looking to improve and become a more sustainable and innovative sector. As part of its engagement, it is challenging the Commission with ambitious proposals, like the introduction of mandatory harmonized food origin labelling. The European Union does not remain passive in this process and has decided to act. For its part, it is encouraging sector improvements by setting regulations and ambitious targets. The reduction of sales of antimicrobials for farmed animals by 50% by 2030 and the phasing-out of cages are among its latest objectives. The European Union also supports the poultry sector with promotion campaigns. The two-year campaign “This is European Poultry!” headed by AVEC is the proof. With on-site events, informative leaflets and press releases about sector news, this European financial support allowed the AVEC - the voice of the European poultry sector, and five participating countries (Poland, Germany, the Netherlands, France and Italy) - to raise awareness amongst consumers and professionals about the sector’s innovations, the high quality of the European poultry and its nutritional benefits. In Belgium, this campaign has reached more than 1.340.000 people and has involved more than 20.400 professionals and consumers through workshops, physical events and webinars. Poultry meat is high in proteins and recommended as part of a healthy and balanced diet, alternately with fish, eggs and plant-based food⁶.

To discover more about the European poultry meat production, the nutritional benefits of poultry meat, or the many ways to prepare it: <https://en.eu-poultry.eu/>



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⁴ EURACTIV, [virtual conference](#), “Reducing the use of antibiotics in the meat sector”, 21st of April 2021.

⁵ Halina Bielińska, director of the Experimental Department of the National Research Institute of Animal Production in Kołuda Wielka, Poland.

⁶ These recommendations are part of the Food-Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDG) developed by Member States to provide advice on foods, food groups and dietary patterns, thus promoting overall health and preventing chronic diseases.