

## Press release

# Improving farm animal welfare at the heart of - new Europe-wide project AWARE launched today

Göttingen, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2015: European consumers are becoming increasingly interested in the husbandry and welfare of farm animals, and are demonstrating strong preferences for food produced by animals living under the best conditions.

Throughout Europe organic farmers, processors, traders and importers are inspected according to the EU-Regulations on organic production, and in some cases additional private standards which go beyond the EU Regulations.

The AWARE project aims to address the fact that the organic Regulations mainly take a resource-based approach to welfare (e.g. space per animal in housing, type of housing, type of feed), rather than a welfare-outcomes based approach.

During the kick-off-meeting in Göttingen, Chris Atkinson from Soil Association said: “Experience and recent scientific knowledge indicates that the resource-based approach alone is insufficient. A new scientifically informed evaluation of the animals to determine their ‘welfare outcomes’ is more meaningful in underpinning the inspection process and aiding communication of any deficiencies to farmers in a way that they can understand and act upon”.

“Organic management aims to deliver excellent animal welfare and independent inspection and certification aims to confirm this and provide a guarantee that animals have a ‘good life’ that meets the high expectations of consumers who buy organic animal products”, stated Steffen Reese of Naturland, one of the largest German organic farmer’s associations.

The use of ‘welfare outcomes’ is a new and emerging approach that each of the project partners has been developing in their own standards and inspection systems. “The time is now right to come together to share experience, evaluate current work and develop a common and coherent concept” said Jochen Neuendorff of GfRS, the lead partner of AWARE.

With the support of the University of Göttingen, an accessible and easily disseminated training and learning package will be made available for organic inspectors to support an optimum training approach. The project partners aim to add this to the widely accepted inspection toolkit that has already been successfully initiated under a previous project IRM ORGANIC by the lead partner organisation GfRS.

The Erasmus+ project will be carried out by a consortium of English, Italian, German and Polish organisations. The lead partner is GfRS Resource Protection Ltd. from Germany. All European certification bodies are most welcome to join the project.

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