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Brussels,

Dear Ms Vancic,

Thank you for your letter of 30 October 2023 to President von der Leyen and Commissioner Jourova.

The Commission has been acting to improve animal welfare for over 40 years, progressively improving the lives of animals. In this regard I would like to reiterate that animal welfare is and will remain a priority for the Commission.

As you are aware, on 7 December 2023, the Commission adopted two legislative proposals and a Communication on animal welfare.

The first proposal aims to revise and improve existing EU rules on the protection of animals during transport. The second, proposing a new Regulation, for the first time, on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability, will introduce animal welfare requirements for breeders, shelters, and pet-shops in the EU as well as traceability provisions for all dogs and cats supplied in the EU. A Commission Communication in response to the successful ECI “Fur Free Europe” was also presented. In the Communication, the Commission refers to the need for more scientific evidence before a decision is taken on whether to propose a ban on fur farming in the EU and on the marketing of farmed fur and fur products in the EU.

The two legislative proposals represent major steps that will considerably improve the welfare of billions of animals across the EU.

The work on the other animal welfare legislative proposals planned under the Farm to Fork Strategy, covering the welfare of animals at farm level, at the time of killing, and establishing new rules for animal welfare labelling, is ongoing.

Ms Daniela Vancic
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This includes in particular the preparatory work to propose provisions to phase out cages for the main species and categories of farmed animals. The Commission is now carefully assessing important aspects to ensure that the transition to cage-free farming is sustainable for the agricultural sector and for our food systems, including food security. The preliminary results of the ongoing impact assessment show that the transition to cage-free systems demands the adaptation of several farming parameters, such as enriching the environment of the animals, and providing them with more space, to secure improved welfare conditions for the animals. Further consultations are needed concerning the costs, the appropriate length of the transitional period and the relevant measures at import. To ensure a proper balance between animal welfare and socio-economic impacts, the phasing out of cages has to come with other animal welfare measures at farm level. Preparatory work will therefore continue, including in the context of the strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture in the EU.

We also continue to work on improving animal welfare in the EU through a series of other activities, such as the work done on enforcement of existing rules, notably through audits, the meetings of the EU Animal Welfare Platform and its sub-groups, the work of the four EU Reference Centres for Animal Welfare and the mandates sent to the European Food Safety Authority to produce new scientific opinions for different species of animals.

Thank you very much for your strong support and commitment to our work to improve animal welfare.

Yours sincerely,

