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Why long-distance transport of live animals is needed

Key messages

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Why is there long-distance transport of live animals – intra-EU

1. Taking into account that a journey time includes time of loading and unloading, an eight-hour journey becomes more or less 5 hours. In 5 hours you can travel around 300 km. So it is very normal to see long-distance transport even within an EU MS;
2. Specialisation of regions in production systems (e.g. fattening of calves in the Netherlands), or travelling to slaughterhouses (as they are clustered around regions);
3. Pushing non-specialised areas to produce animals can have a big environmental impact as there is a reason why these areas are not specialised versus the others which are. Specialised areas have, in a lot of situations, become like this due to the conditions of the land and/or a symbiosis with other production systems or industries. Not respecting this could lead to an increased environmental impact and less efficient use of resources.

Why is there long-distance transport of live animals – export

It is a multi-factorial issue. However, the main one is demand. The industry in importing countries needs live animals not meat. They are two different industries and supply chains. Other factors are:

1. Religious slaughter procedures;
2. Problems in cold chain and supply chain for meat;
3. different use of carcasses and cuts;
4. easier market access for live animals than for beef;
5. Sometimes import taxes are bigger for meat than for live animals.

It is also important to remember that past situations showed that if EU bans the export of live animals, it will not be replaced by meat exports, but by exports of live animals by other countries (e.g. Brazil). By doing this we are not improving the situation but making it worse. EU's view should be global.