A report by Compassion in World Farming

STOP THE BULL SHIP

THE SUBSIDISED TRADE IN LIVE CATTLE FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION TO THE MIDDLE EAST

A report for Compassion in World Farming

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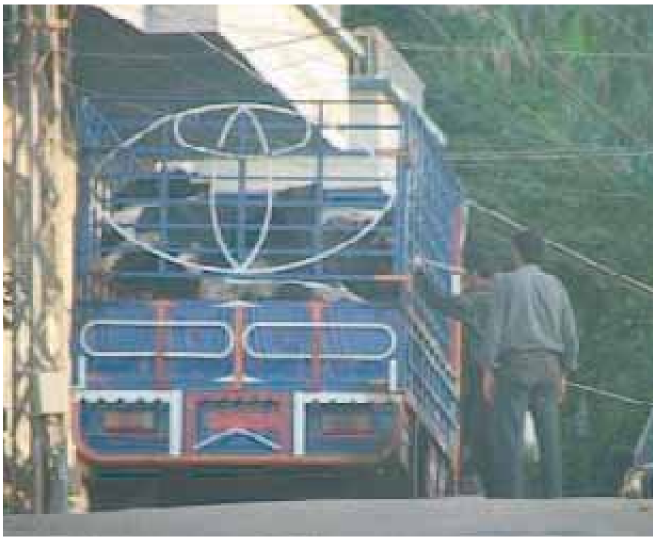
Executive summary

The European Union (EU) exports around 250 000 live cattle a year to third countries. Most are slaughtered shortly after reaching their destination. The majority of live cattle exported from the EU for slaughter are transported to Lebanon, on journeys lasting up to 10 days. Germany, France and the Republic of Ireland are the biggest exporters.

The trade inflicts great suffering on animals. EU legislation on animal transport is frequently not enforced and, even where it is enforced, it is insufficient to protect animal welfare during such long journeys. European authorities have no control over what happens to cattle once they are released into free circulation in a non-EU country and it is therefore impossible to protect their welfare. The animals are roughly handled and most are slaughtered without stunning – their throats are cut while they are fully conscious and they are left to bleed to death.



Investigation footage showing Spanish cattle transported in a severely overcrowded truck in Beirut. Some exhausted cattle lie down and are trampled by the others. They are prodded in the face with a metal bar in an attempt to make them stand.

The trade is made possible by subsidies amounting to around 60 million euros a year. In addition to the financial cost to EU taxpayers, the trade also has consequences in terms of the risk of spreading infectious animal diseases over great distances, the environmental impact of long distance animal transport, and the potential threat to food security in the importing countries.

The trade cannot be justified on the basis of cultural or religious objections to imports of beef in the Middle East. If required, Halal slaughter can be carried out within the EU, with the meat and carcasses then being exported rather than live animals.

The payment of export refunds to support the trade cannot be justified on the basis of the economies of the exporting countries. The economic impact of the removal of export refunds for live cattle is likely to be minor because export subsidies are already being phased out under World Trade Organisation agreements and live cattle exports from the EU have declined significantly over the past decade and account for a relatively small proportion of overall EU beef exports to third countries.

The payment of export refunds to promote the trade in live cattle is indefensible in view of the scale of animal suffering involved. If the EU wishes to maintain the export market to Lebanon, some of the expenditure currently funding the export refund scheme for live cattle could be redirected to assist in the development of the necessary infrastructure in Lebanon to facilitate EU beef exports in place of live exports.

The European Parliament has repeatedly voted for the deletion from the EU budget of export refunds for live cattle exported to third countries. Moreover, despite the fact that Germany is the major beneficiary of these subsidies, the German government has also called for an end to export refunds for live cattle exported for slaughter. The European Commission has now ended subsidies on cattle exported for slaughter, but with the major exception that subsidies are still paid for cattle going to Egypt or Lebanon. As the majority of EU cattle exported for slaughter go to Lebanon, the Commission's move has done virtually nothing to improve things in practice. Compassion in World Farming urges the European Commission and the Council of Ministers to now observe the Parliament's wishes and abolish these subsidies immediately and completely.

It is ethically unacceptable for European taxpayers' money to be used to promote a trade that routinely inflicts great suffering on animals. The European Commission and the Council of Ministers must act immediately to abolish all subsidies for the export of live cattle from the European Union.

1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) exports around 200 000 live cattle a year to the Middle East, on journeys lasting up to 10 days. Germany, France and the Republic of Ireland are the biggest exporters. The long journeys and inhumane handling and slaughter methods awaiting the animals on arrival in the Middle East make this an immensely cruel trade. Most of the animals are slaughtered without stunning – their throats are cut while they are fully conscious and they are left to bleed to death.

This trade is generously subsidised by EU taxpayers. Around 60 million euros a year are paid out in export refunds to dealers who export live cattle to non-EU countries. Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) believes it is ethically unacceptable for public money to be used to promote a trade that routinely inflicts great suffering on animals.

Investigations by CIWF and other animal welfare groups, as well as independent film producers, have revealed the scale of animal suffering involved in this trade. The European Commission has accepted that in light of the concern for animal welfare, export refunds for live animals for slaughter should be limited as much as possible[1]. The payment of subsidies on cattle exported for slaughter has therefore now been ended, but with the major exception that subsidies are still paid for slaughter cattle going to Egypt or Lebanon. As the majority of EU cattle exported for slaughter go to Lebanon, the Commission's move has done virtually nothing to improve things in practice.

2. The transport routes from the European Union to the Middle East

The map shows the major routes used for the transport of live cattle from the EU to Lebanon (see inside back cover for a fold-out map of the routes). The journeys to Lebanon are between 3000 and 5800km and can take up to 10 days, or longer if adverse weather or other problems arise.

From Ireland, the cattle are transported by road to Waterford or Cork, and are then sent by sea across the Bay of Biscay, through the Straits of Gibraltar and across the Mediterranean Sea to Beirut in Lebanon.

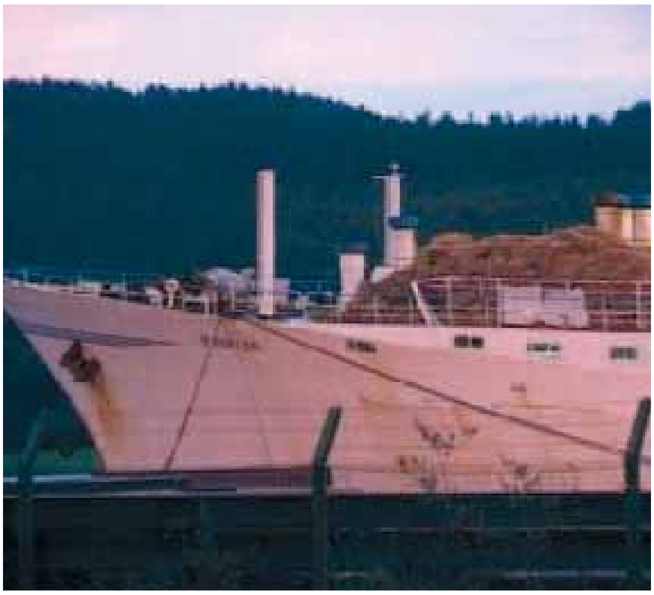
From mainland Europe, the cattle are transported by road to a southern European port, usually Sète in France or Trieste in Italy, and from there they are shipped to Beirut. Hungarian and some German cattle also leave from the port of Koper in Slovenia.

3. The scale of the trade and recent trends in live cattle and beef imports into Egypt and Lebanon

The EU exports around 250 000 live cattle to third countries each year (table 3.1). Over 80% of these are slaughtered shortly after reaching their destination. The majority of live cattle exported from the EU for slaughter go to Lebanon.

Prior to 2001, Egypt was also a significant importer of live cattle for slaughter from the EU. However, Egyptian imports of both live cattle and beef from the EU plummeted in 2001 as a result of restrictions on imports due to the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and fears over bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in European cattle (table 3.1). By 2002, Egypt was not importing any live cattle from the EU, whilst beef imports from the EU have continued at a very low level. Egypt has largely replaced EU beef with imports from alternative sources (figure 3.1). Initially, Egypt continued to import large numbers of live cattle from Australia. However, Egyptian imports of live cattle have now fallen to very low levels. The reduction in live imports has been compensated for by an increase in domestic beef production in Egypt to over 290 000 tonnes in 2003[3].

Lebanon, on the other hand, has continued to be heavily reliant on live imports, and the majority of these imports are from the EU (figure 3.2). Around 98% of live cattle imported by Lebanon are for slaughter (table 3.1).



Ship loaded with cattle at an Irish port. Some of the animals have been kept on-board for 5 days, awaiting departure for Lebanon

Table 3.1: Numbers of live cattle (head) and quantities of beef (tonnes carcass equivalent) exported from the EU to third countries, by importing country, 2000-2004. Source: Eurostat-Comext[2]. NB. Data includes animals and beef exported both with and without refunds. The slaughter category includes other cattle that are not pure-bred for breeding, e.g. for further fattening, but the category mainly consists of animals for slaughter.

Importing country	Cattle/Beef imported	Year 2000	2001	2002	2003	2004 (Jan-Aug)
Egypt	Live cattle (head)	48 400	1 005	0	0	0
	% for slaughter	85.5%	100%	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Beef (tonnes carcass equiv.)	171 107.4	5 435.6	69.4	409.1	785.7
Lebanon	Live cattle (head)	168 838	149 537	224 231	186 712	104 009
	% for slaughter	97.6%	99.2%	97.2%	98.3%	98.6%
	Beef (tonnes carcass equiv.)	8 021.9	2 339.2	3 805.5	3 176.2	2 560.5
Others	Live cattle (head)	82 802	19 819	35 184	46 566	102 980
	% for slaughter	17.2%	46.7%	28.5%	28.0%	61.9%
	Beef (tonnes carcass equiv.)	384 903.8	479 083.1	455 564.8	353 028.0	195 139.2
Total	Live cattle (head)	300 040	169 361	259 415	233 278	206 989
	% for slaughter	73.4%	93.1%	87.9%	83.0%	80.4%
	Beef (tonnes carcass equiv.)	564 033.1	486 857.9	459 439.7	356 613.3	198 485.4

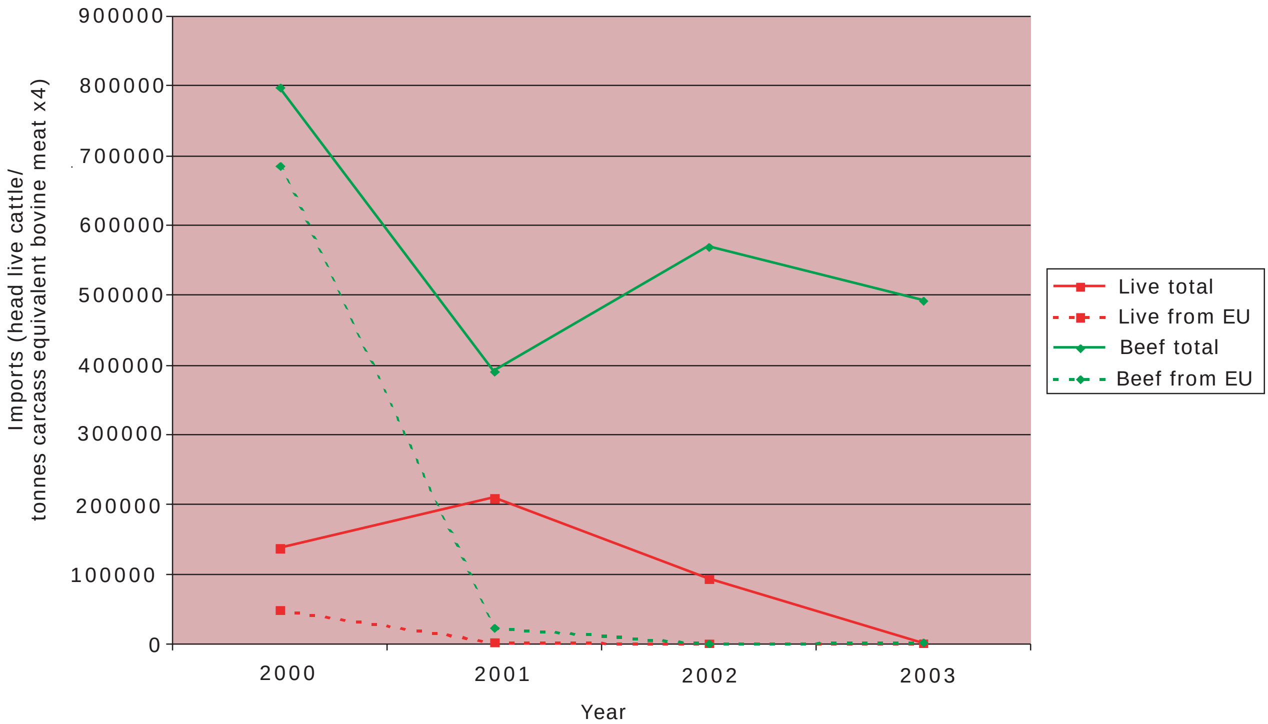


Figure 3.1: Egypt live cattle and bovine meat imports, 2000–2003. Source: Eurostat-Comext[2] (EU data); FAOstat[3] (global data). NB. Quantities of bovine meat are displayed as tonnes carcass equivalent multiplied by 4. Assuming the average weight of live cattle imported to be 500kg, and using a conversion coefficient of 50% to convert live weight to carcass weight, each tonne of bovine meat is approximately equivalent to 4 live animals. The quantity of bovine meat has therefore been multiplied by 4 to give a visual representation of the approximate scale of bovine meat imports in relation to live imports.

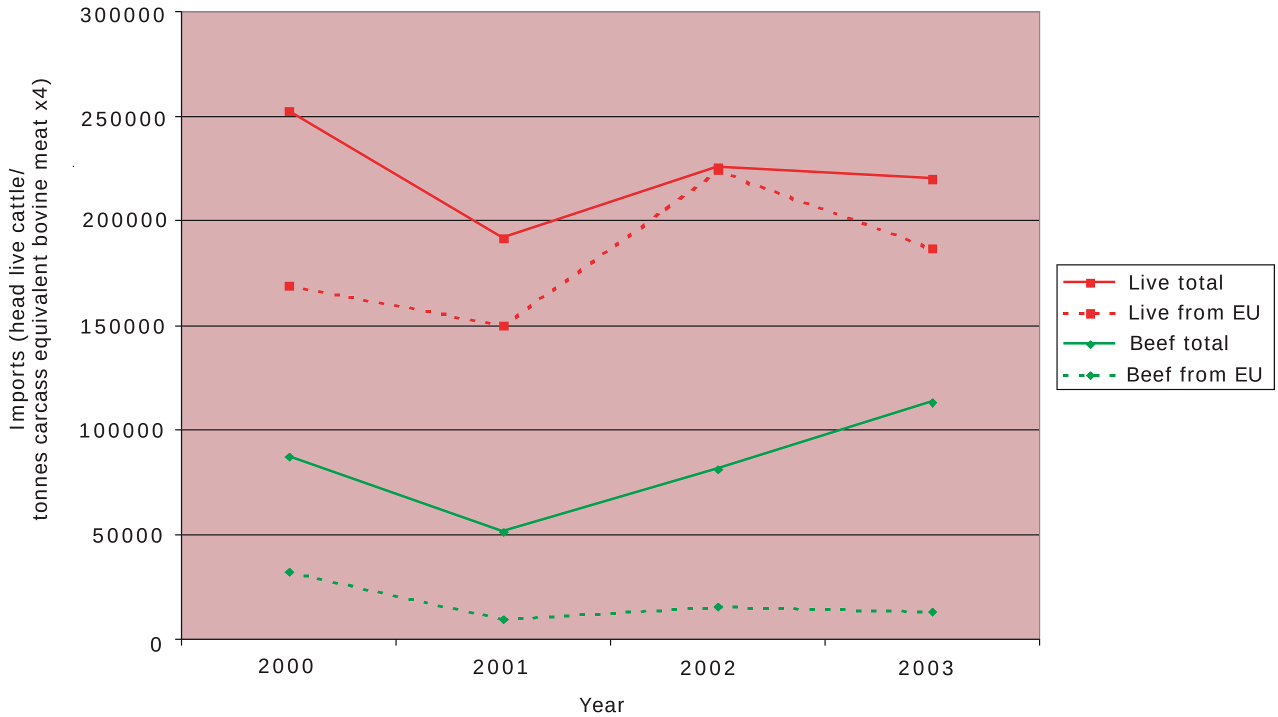


Figure 3.2: Lebanon live cattle and bovine meat imports, 2000–2003. Source: Eurostat-Comext[2] (EU data); FAOstat[3] (global data). NB. Quantities of bovine meat are displayed as tonnes carcass equivalent multiplied by 4 (see figure 3.1 for explanation).

Refunds are payable on male cattle for slaughter and on pure-bred cattle for breeding exported to Egypt or Lebanon, and on pure-bred cattle for breeding exported to other non-EU countries. Refunds are therefore payable for the vast majority of live cattle exported from the EU. For example, in 2003 refunds were paid for nearly 230 000 cattle (table 3.2), around 98% of the total number exported in that year (table 3.1).

Table 3.2: Numbers of live cattle (head) exported with refunds by each EU country, and proportions of the total number of live cattle exported from the EU with refunds, 2002-2003. Source: European Commission[4].

Exporting country	2002		2003	
	Head	Percentage	Head	Percentage
Austria	5 083	2.1%	4 937	2.2%
Denmark	1 787	0.7%	1 416	0.6%
France	72 145	29.4%	42 815	18.7%
Germany	116 562	47.4%	123 431	53.8%
Ireland	31 678	12.9%	37 776	16.5%
Italy	3 065	1.2%	145	0.1%
Netherlands	7 169	2.9%	12 723	5.5%
Portugal	0	0.0%	11	0.0%
Spain	7 872	3.2%	5 206	2.3%
Sweden	403	0.2%	818	0.4%
Total	245 763	100%	229 278	100%

Germany is the largest exporter of live cattle to third countries, accounting for around half of all exports from the EU (table 3.2). France and the Republic of Ireland are the next largest exporters, accounting for a further 35-40% of total EU exports between them. These countries are also the main exporters of live cattle to Lebanon (table 3.3). Other significant exporters of live cattle to Lebanon are Spain and the Netherlands.

The number of live cattle exports to other non-EU countries apart from Egypt and Lebanon in the period January to August 2004 was more than double the number in the whole of the previous year, and the proportion of these that were exported for slaughter rather than for breeding also more than doubled over the same period (table 3.1). This is because of the accession of ten new countries to the EU in May 2004. Poland and Hungary, in particular, export large numbers of live cattle, but export relatively little beef. It is therefore likely that these countries will be looking to supply significant numbers of live cattle to the Lebanese market in future. Indeed, within the first four months of EU membership Hungary had already claimed refunds on over 300 live cattle exported to Lebanon (table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Numbers of live cattle (head) exported from the EU to Lebanon, by exporting country, 2000-2004. Source: Eurostat-Comext[2].

Exporting country	Year				
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004 (Jan-Aug)
Austria	0	112	0	12	0
Denmark	0	0	180	0	0
France	62 405	64 617	79 830	49 815	27 236
Germany	42 435	37 824	107 329	97 951	70 804
Hungary	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	318
Ireland	63 185	11 627	31 406	36 714	2 010
Italy	0	0	2 822	0	0
Netherlands	813	149	647	1 650	461
Spain	0	35 208	2 017	570	3 180
Total	168 838	149 537	224 231	186 712	104 009

4. Reasons why some countries import live animals

The European Commission has stated that export refunds will continue to be granted for slaughter cattle exported to Egypt and Lebanon because these countries traditionally import substantial numbers of animals for domestic slaughter due to "cultural and/or religious reasons"[1]. The desire to slaughter animals by religious methods is often cited as one of the main reasons why live cattle imports are preferred by certain countries. Compliance with Halal slaughter requirements is necessary for the entry of beef products to most countries in the Middle East, including Egypt, where over 90% of the population is Muslim. Despite this, imports of live cattle to Egypt have fallen to very low levels, whilst they continue to import large quantities of beef (see section 3). This clearly demonstrates that the requirement for animals to be slaughtered by religious methods does not necessitate imports of live animals.

Around 70% of the population of Lebanon is Muslim and it is one of the few countries in the Middle East where there is not a requirement for all imports to be Halal. However, even for those imports where it is required, there is no reason why Halal slaughter cannot take place within the EU, with the meat or carcasses then being exported to Lebanon. CIWF is opposed to religious slaughter without stunning (see section 6.3), but if it is to happen, it should be carried out within the EU, thereby avoiding the additional suffering involved in a long journey to Lebanon.

There is every reason to believe that importers in Lebanon would accept religious slaughter performed in the EU with stunning. Many within the Muslim community now accept that the meat from stunned animals can be Halal provided that the stun does not kill the animal, but only renders it unconscious, with death being caused by the cutting of the throat. Indeed, New Zealand is a major exporter of Halal slaughtered sheepmeat and a significant exporter of Halal slaughtered beef. New Zealand's main Halal meat market includes countries in the Middle East. All of New Zealand's Halal meat exports are derived from animals that have been stunned before slaughter, and the importers in the Middle East are aware of and accept this.

Another reason often given for importing live animals is the preference of consumers in the Middle East for freshly slaughtered, non-refrigerated meat. However, modern meat preservation techniques involving controlled refrigeration in a protective atmosphere mean that it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between fresh and refrigerated meat. This can therefore no longer be considered a significant objection to imports in meat and carcass form. Also, the impact of stress during transport on the animals can result in poor meat quality. Most common in slaughter cattle are quality losses caused by DFD meat (dark, firm, dry) after exhausting transport[5].

Refrigerated meat from animals that have not been transported over great distances may therefore be of better quality.

Another reason why Lebanon imports live animals may be a lack of refrigerated trucks and warehouses in some parts of the country. A continuous cold chain is necessary for the safe import, storage and distribution of imported meat and carcasses. As Lebanon already imports some meat and carcasses, it is clear that facilities are already in place in some areas. Indeed, an article in the Irish Farmers Journal in 2005 claims that the import of chilled South American beef to Lebanon at $2 500 per tonne is undermining their demand for live cattle[6]. This clearly indicates that the trade in live cattle is, at least to some extent, in direct competition with the trade in beef to Lebanon. It is likely that imports of live cattle to urban areas could easily be replaced with beef imports, and that some investment in the necessary infrastructure would be required if imported beef is to reach the more remote rural areas.

5. The financial cost to European taxpayers of subsidising the trade in live cattle

Export refunds for live cattle and beef were first made available to exporters in the countries of the then European Economic Community (EEC) in 1968, and they have been included in the budget every year since. The rates of refund for the export of live animals, as at March 2005, are 53 euros/100kg for breeding animals, and 41 euros/100kg for slaughter animals[7].

The total amount paid out in refunds fell from around 100 million euros a year to only around 40 million euros in 2001, as a result of greatly reduced live exports due to the FMD outbreak and fears over the discovery of BSE in German and Spanish cattle (table 5.1). The amount paid out in refunds has now climbed again to around 60 million euros a year.

Table 5.1: Amounts paid in refunds for the export of live cattle from the EU to third countries, 2000-2003. Source: European Commission[4,8].

Year	Refunds paid (million euros)
2000	110.8
2001	40.5
2002	55.7
2003	58.9

Germany and France receive the greatest amounts in export refunds for live cattle, followed by Ireland (table 5.2). Despite the fact that German exporters are the largest beneficiaries of these refunds, the German government has called for an end to the payment of refunds on live cattle exported for slaughter, due to concerns over animal welfare. This is a clear sign that the costs associated with the payment of refunds for the export of live cattle go far beyond the direct financial cost to EU taxpayers.

Table 5.2: Amounts paid in refunds for the export of live cattle from the EU, by exporting country, 2002-2003. Source: European Commission[4].

Exporting country	Export refunds paid (euros)	
	2002*	2003**
Austria	1 998 597.72	1 766 008.24
Denmark	539 768.76	377 956.29
France	21 455 871.25	17 459 011.08
Germany	18 248 364.96	27 247 746.81
Ireland	4 681 772.65	8 187 379.17
Italy	532 343.17	168 952.33
Netherlands	1 796 709.18	2 509 281.31
Spain	6 353 867.38	988 541.21
Sweden	123 123.67	188 157.05
Total	55 730 418.74	58 893 033.49

* EAGGF financial year 2002 (16 October 2001 – 15 October 2002)

** AGGF financial year 2003 (16 October 2002 – 15 October 2003)

6. The animal welfare cost of the trade in live cattle

6.1. Animal welfare during long distance transport

All of the cattle exported live from the EU to Lebanon must endure both road and sea transport. They are loaded and unloaded several times, often involving rough handling and moving up and down steep slopes into dark and unfamiliar places. At staging posts and during transport they are crowded together and may be mixed with unfamiliar cattle. They may be subjected to extremes of temperature, humidity, vibration and noise during the journey. They experience sudden movements during acceleration, braking and cornering that can throw them off balance, and constant movement at sea that may cause motion sickness. They will be prevented from resting properly or carrying out normal behaviour such as grooming, and will be deprived of food and water either because it is unavailable or because they are too overcrowded, sick, injured or frightened to obtain it. As the journey wears on they will become increasingly exhausted and dehydrated and less able to cope with the physical and psychological stress. In some cases, conditions are so bad that animals may actually die.

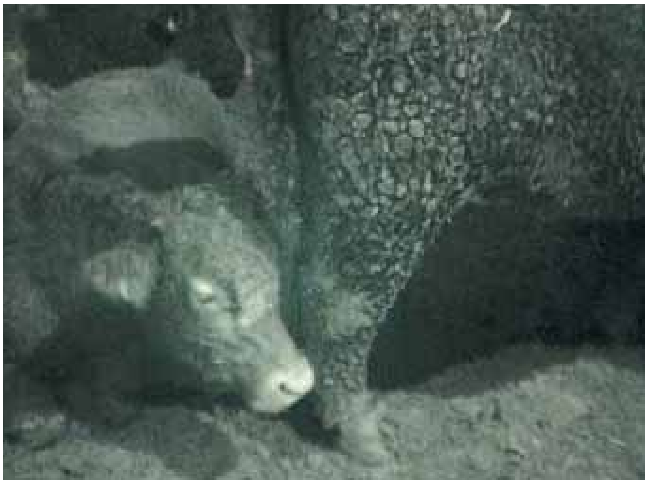
Loading of cattle at an Irish port

Mortality during road transport is generally low in adult cattle[9], but may be considerably higher during sea journeys, especially in rough weather[10]. The fact that even a small number of animals may die highlights the severity of the stresses placed on all of the animals during transport. There are many other indications that welfare during long distance transport is poor.

The vast majority of cattle are bruised during loading and transport. Jarvis *et al* (1995) investigated the incidence of bruising on carcasses at two slaughterhouses and reported bruises on 97% of carcasses. They found that bruising was increased if cattle were driven using a stick[11]. Bruising is worse at high stocking densities, as cattle are more likely to fall during transport, and are frequently unable to get up again[12]. These fallen cattle are then trampled, often causing other animals to lose their footing. Bruising increases with distance travelled and the length of time spent in lairage[13]. Staging posts are particularly stressful for bulls[5]. Unfamiliar bulls will often engage in fighting and mounting behaviour, which also causes bruising and may result in exhaustion and considerable fear and injury. Many of the animals exported from the EU for slaughter are bulls, and unfamiliar bulls from several sources are often mixed.

Cattle appear to prefer to remain standing during transport[9]. However, after lengthy transport they will lie down due to fatigue. Tarrant *et al* (1992) found that cattle weighing 600kg began to lie down after 16 hours of transport[12]. The enzyme creatine kinase is released into the blood when there is muscle damage (e.g. bruising) and during vigorous exercise. High levels of creatine kinase in the blood plasma are indicative of physical fatigue. Levels of this enzyme in the plasma increase proportionately with the duration of the journey, and remain high for several days after transport[14,15].

Food and water deprivation, compounded by the stress and physical exertion of transportation, can result in significant weight loss in cattle during transport, with the amount of weight lost increasing with journey time. Losses of between 3 and 11% of initial bodyweight in the first 24 hours have been recorded[9]. After journeys lasting several days, EU cattle arriving in Lebanon will be stressed, hungry, dehydrated and exhausted, and are likely to have lost a significant amount of weight. Indeed, many are held for up to ten days to allow them to regain the lost weight before they are slaughtered.



Exhausted and filthy European cattle held in lairage in Beirut

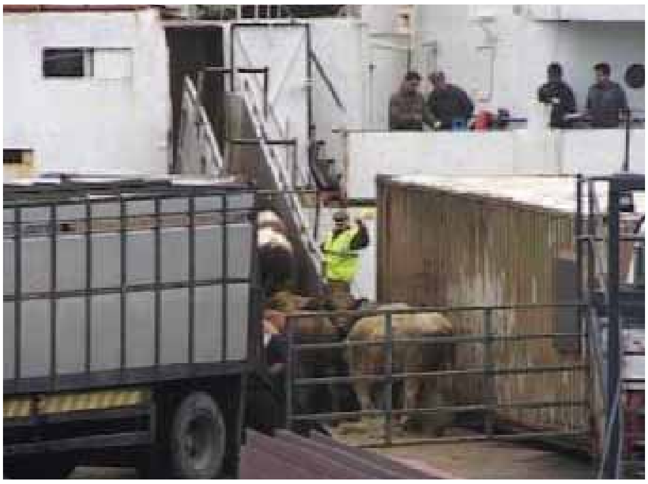
6.2. Current legislation and enforcement – why it isn't enough

Provided that the vehicle meets certain requirements, current EU legislation allows cattle to be transported by road for 14 hours, followed by a 1 hour rest period in which they must be given water and fed if necessary, and then a further 14 hours of travel. A further 2 hours of travel is permitted if the destination can be reached in this time. Otherwise, the animals must be unloaded, given food and water and rested for 24 hours. The entire sequence can then be repeated indefinitely. These journey and rest times do not apply to transport by sea. If the animals remain on the vehicle on a roll-on roll-off vessel, they must be rested for 12 hours after unloading at the port or in its immediate vicinity, unless the journey time at sea is short enough that the voyage can be included in the travel scheme outlined above for transport by road[16].

In their 2002 Report on the Welfare of Animals During Transport, the European Commission Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare (SCAHAW) concluded that 1 hour does not give ruminants enough time for sufficient food and water intake, and therefore prolongs the duration of the journey without allowing the animals to rest and recover. They recommend a rest period of at least 6 hours after 12 hours of transport, and 24 hours of rest after a further 12 hours of transport. In the case of cattle being transported to slaughter, they recommend that journeys of a total length of over 12 hours should be avoided[17]. The European Parliament has called for an overall limit of 9 hours on journey times for animals travelling to slaughter. CIWF believes that an overall limit such as this is essential to protect the welfare of transported animals.

Currently permitted space allowances for heavy cattle (weighing approximately 500 to 600kg) are 1.3 to 1.6m^2 per animal during road transport and 1.5525 to 1.8m^2 per animal during sea transport[16]. The SCAHAW report recommends that cattle weighing 500kg should have 2.03m^2 per animal for journeys of more than 12 hours in order to allow them to access food and water, and to lie down as they become fatigued[17].

Current legislation does not specify a maximum gradient for ramps used for loading and unloading cattle. CIWF investigators have witnessed ramps used to load cattle onto ships for the Lebanon at angles of up to 45º to the horizontal. Cattle have considerable difficulty negotiating ramps at such extreme angles, which often results in rough handling and excessive and inappropriate use of electric goads during loading. CIWF investigators have evidence of electric goads being used repeatedly and being applied to inappropriate areas such as the head. Current legislation states that the use of electric prods should be avoided as far as possible[18]. The SCAHAW report recommends a maximum ramp angle of 20º to the horizontal to avoid the risk of animals panicking and stumbling[17].



These Irish cattle are repeatedly prodded with an electric goad as they struggle to negotiate a steep loading ramp

It is clear that current EU legislation does not protect the welfare of animals during long distance transport and falls well short of the SCAHAW recommendations in several key areas, including transport times and rest periods, space allowances, loading conditions and handling. Revised legislation coming into force on 5 January 2007 will do virtually nothing to improve the situation. Journey and rest times, and space allowances, will remain unchanged. The new Regulation continues to allow the use of electric goads on the hindquarters, and specifies a maximum ramp angle of 26º 34 minutes for cattle[19], which is still steeper than the SCAHAW recommendation.

There is considerable evidence that EU legislation on animal welfare during transport is routinely flouted. A series of missions carried out by the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) in nine member states during 2003 revealed serious breaches of the legislation, including the following[20]:

- Maximum journey times are often not adequately monitored or enforced. Route plans are frequently poorly filled out or incomplete and are rarely scrutinised. In some cases, the actual journey and means of transport may be completely different from that indicated in the plan. Ineffective sharing of information allows certain dealers who repeatedly fail to comply with legislative requirements to continue their business in another district;
- Even where food and water are available at assembly centres and markets, animals are sometimes allowed insufficient time to access these and undergo long distance journeys in varying stages of hunger and thirst. The majority of animals are unable to drink once loaded onto the vehicle because, at the allowed stocking densities, many animals are unable to gain access to the drinkers;

- Trucks used for long distance journeys may not be suitably equipped where inspectors do not adequately distinguish between journeys of more or less than 8 hours;
- Overstocking is tolerated in some member states unless animal suffering can be proven;
- Animals that are unfit for the intended journey continue to be transported where there is a lack of training or where economic considerations take precedence.

During the 1990s, considerable film evidence was collected by CIWF and other welfare groups, as well as by independent film producers, showing the inhumane treatment of cattle exported from the EU to the Middle East. Both at southern European ports and at ports in the Middle East, injured cattle who were unable to walk were often loaded and unloaded by tying a rope or chain around one foreleg and winching them up using a crane. The immense stress on the leg from the weight of these heavy animals will clearly be very painful and can lead to broken bones. Animals were also routinely beaten during unloading in the Middle East.

In response, the European Commission introduced Regulation 615/98, which provides that the payment of export refunds is subject to compliance with EU welfare laws throughout the entire journey to the third country[21]. In practice, this proved largely unenforceable and unworkable and appeared to do little to reduce the animal suffering involved in the trade.

In 2003, the Commission introduced Regulation 639/2003, which strengthens the enforcement of welfare rules during the transport of cattle to third countries by requiring compulsory checks by a veterinarian of all consignments of live cattle at the place of changing the means of transport and at the first place of unloading in the country of final destination. The Regulation also introduced a new penalty, amounting to the total loss of refunds for all animals in a consignment if a given percentage or number of animals has died during transport or otherwise been treated in a way that does not comply with the provisions of EU welfare legislation[22].

In 2003, export refunds were refused or recovered for over 6 000 animals, nearly 3% of all live cattle exported to third countries (table 6.1). In the majority of cases, refunds were refused because of non-compliance with welfare rules, including many incidents of death during transport and emergency slaughter[4]. The majority of animals for which the refund was not paid were from Germany, which is the major exporter. All of the reasons given by the German authorities for non-payment relate to inadequate transport conditions, non-compliance with transport and rest period requirements, or death of animals during transport.

As the new rules requiring veterinary checks of all consignments of live cattle exported to third countries only came into force on 1 October 2003, the impact of this Regulation will hardly be reflected in the 2003 figures. It is therefore likely that the actual level of non-compliance with animal welfare rules is much higher.

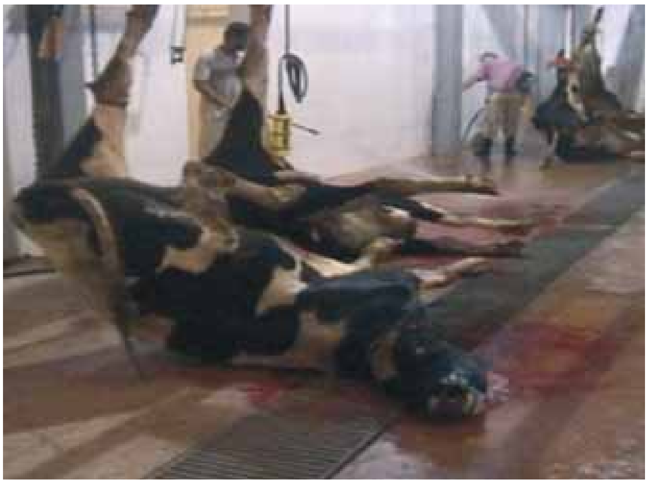
Table 6.1: Numbers of live cattle, and proportion of total live cattle exported with refunds, for which payment of the refund was partly or totally refused or recovered, by exporting country, 2003. Source: European Commission[4].

Exporting country	Animals for which refund not paid or recovered (head)	% Animals for which refund not paid or recovered	Refunds not paid, recovered or recovery pending (euros)	% Refunds not paid, recovered or recovery pending
Austria	415	8.406%	140 546.36	7.958%
Denmark	1	0.071%	177.02	0.047%
France	272	0.635%	67 903.00	0.389%
Germany	5 607	4.543%	1 479 156.00	5.429%
Ireland	37	0.098%	10 654.15	0.130%
Italy	6	4.138%	2 574.04	1.524%
Netherlands	100	0.786%	29 555.40	1.178%
Spain	3	0.058%	359.16	0.036%
Sweden	6	0.733%	1 653.60	0.879%
Total	6 447	2.812%	1 732 578.73	2.942%

It is clear that EU welfare legislation is frequently not complied with during the transport of live cattle to third countries, and that improved enforcement will not be sufficient to safeguard animal welfare because the legislation is in any case seriously flawed. Even if the welfare of the animals could be protected during transport to the third country, the EU has no powers to interfere in the way animals are treated after their arrival in a non-EU country. In Lebanon, the cattle are often transported in severely overcrowded trucks with no roof to provide shelter from the sun, frequently in very high temperatures. Awaiting them at the end of this journey is a death that can only be described as appalling.

6.3. Animal welfare during slaughter in the Middle East

Most cattle in the Middle East are slaughtered without first being stunned into unconsciousness. In autumn 2004, CIWF filmed the slaughter of EU cattle in Lebanese abattoirs. The animals are hung upside down by one leg from a rail and then dragged along to the slaughter point. For such large animals to be hung upside down and dragged in this way is painful and frightening. Once at the slaughter point, the animal's head is pulled back to expose its neck. Its throat is cut while it is fully conscious and it is left to bleed to death. After throat cutting, some cattle take a long time to die, and may make co-ordinated attempts to get up for several minutes. CIWF investigators have witnessed some cattle struggling for up to 7 minutes before apparently losing consciousness.



These German cattle struggle to escape after their throats are cut in a Lebanese abattoir

The European Food Safety Authority Scientific Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (SPAHAW) recently reviewed the scientific research on animal stunning and killing methods. They concluded that due to the serious animal welfare concerns associated with slaughter without stunning, pre-cut stunning should always be performed. An animal that is not stunned becomes unconscious only after a certain degree of blood loss has occurred, whilst after greater blood loss, death will ensue. Cattle and other farm animals have systems for detecting and feeling pain and, as a result of the cut and blood loss, if not stunned, their welfare will be poor because of pain, anxiety, fear and distress. The cuts that are used in order that rapid bleeding occurs involve substantial tissue damage in areas well supplied with pain receptors. The rapid decrease in blood pressure that follows the blood loss is readily detected by the conscious animal and elicits fear and panic. Poor welfare also results when conscious animals inhale blood because of bleeding into the trachea, resulting in severe distress and fear[23,24].

Without stunning, the time between cutting through the major blood vessels and insensibility, as deduced from behavioural and brain response, is up to 2 minutes in cattle[25]. The extended period of apparent consciousness observed in some of the cattle at the Lebanese abattoirs suggests that neck cutting is sometimes not being performed properly and all of the major blood vessels that should be severed may not be, thus prolonging the suffering of the animals.

An eyewitness account of the slaughter of Australian cattle in Egyptian abattoirs was published in the Australian Veterinary Journal in 2003[26]. It describes how the slaughtermen deal with the large Australian cattle that are unaccustomed to handling and difficult to control. The cattle are driven into a narrow gangway and a slaughterman cuts the Achilles tendon of the right hind-leg of each animal to make them easier to control and prevent them from escaping when they are driven to a landing in front of the slaughter room. Here they are surrounded by the slaughtermen, who continue to cut more tendons on the fore- and hind-legs and to stab at the eyes of the cattle. The animals are then kicked and beaten into the main hall for slaughter. These brutal slaughter methods violate Islamic law[26].

It is clear from these descriptions of slaughter in Lebanese and Egyptian abattoirs that there is an urgent need to establish and enforce standards for humane slaughter in these countries. This must be accompanied by training of slaughterhouse workers and investment in appropriate facilities and stunning equipment in order to improve the welfare of slaughter animals. CIWF believes it is indefensible for European taxpayers' money to be used to send cattle to be slaughtered by methods illegal within the EU.

7. The risk of spreading infectious animal diseases through the trade in live cattle

There is a risk of spreading infectious diseases over large distances through the long distance transport of live animals[5,17]. Diseases such as FMD, bovine viral diarrhoea and bovine rhinotracheitis can be transmitted to other animals at staging points or during transport, presenting a major risk of spreading the disease[17]. For example, this was well documented in 2001 when FMD was transmitted within the United Kingdom (UK), and also spread to France, Ireland and the Netherlands through live animals exported from the UK. These diseases can be devastating in their effect on animal welfare and the economics of farming.

Long distance transport not only increases the opportunities for animals to come into contact with diseases, but also makes them more susceptible to infection because of some degree of immunosuppression resulting from the stress during transport[17].

The risk of spreading infectious diseases is increased when animals from numerous sources are mixed together. This is frequently the case with cattle exported from the EU to Lebanon. Often, cattle from several European countries will be mixed together in a staging point at a southern European port, before being loaded onto the ship for the journey to Lebanon.

8. The environmental impact of the trade in live cattle

Trade related transportation is one of the fastest growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions and is therefore significant in terms of climate change[27]. Fuel consumption is much greater for the transport of live cattle compared with the transport of refrigerated meat and carcasses. This is because the weight and volume of carcasses is only around half that of live cattle, and will be even less for meat rather than whole carcasses. Also, refrigerated vehicles for the transport of meat and carcasses are constructed of relatively light materials (plastic fibres and insulating foam) as opposed to the heavy metal framework and loading equipment of livestock vehicles. Therefore, despite the additional fuel consumption as a result of the refrigeration unit, a refrigerated vehicle will consume considerably less fuel and carry twice the number of carcasses compared with a similar sized livestock vehicle[28]. The reduction in the volume of the transported load if the trade in live cattle were replaced with a trade in meat and carcasses would also result in a reduction in road traffic.

For the first time in over 20 years, EU beef consumption is higher than production, and this situation is predicted to continue for the foreseeable future[29] (see section 11). Subsidising the export of cattle when the EU is not self-sufficient in beef creates unnecessary food miles, because beef must be imported into the EU to replace the exports.

9. The threat to food security in Lebanon posed by the subsidised trade in live cattle

Beef production throughout the Middle East is limited by the arid climatic conditions and nutritionally poor soil. As a result, Middle Eastern countries generally import the majority of the beef they consume. In Lebanon, domestic production accounts for less than 10% of the beef supply[3].

The Lebanese government has set itself the major goal of improving livestock production in order to raise livestock farmers' income and living standards, guarantee food security in animal products, develop local food industry and reduce dependence on imported products, which are often cheaper than those produced locally[30]. An increase in self-sufficiency in food would help build the national economy.

EU subsidies for the export of beef and slaughter cattle to Lebanon allow EU products to be sold more cheaply, undermining the development of local beef production. The lack of infrastructure necessary for the transport and storage of refrigerated meat and carcasses in remote rural areas means that it is live cattle that are transported to these areas for slaughter and local distribution, in direct competition with local producers.

Given the local conditions it is unlikely that Lebanon will ever be entirely self-sufficient in beef. However, replacing live imports with refrigerated beef imports may reduce the influx of subsidised EU imports to rural areas, thus encouraging the development of local beef production. At the same time, the supply of beef to the main urban centres could be maintained by meat imports, as facilities exist in these areas to store and transport refrigerated meat and carcasses.

10. Fraudulent subsidy claims – the vulnerability of the system to abuse

Investigations by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) have uncovered a number of irregularities in the live cattle export refund scheme, involving false proofs of arrival, dead animals being claimed for, discrepancies in the weight of animals claimed for, and incorrect classification of animal for slaughter as pure-bred[31]. The higher rate of export refund for breeding animals has now been limited to heifers and cows of no more than 30 months of age in an attempt to prevent abuse of the system[22].

A significant number of cases in which refunds were refused or recovered in 2003 (table 6.1) were the result of animals being claimed for that were not entitled to refunds, discrepancies in the weight of animals claimed for, or animals not being brought into free circulation in the third country of destination[4].

In a 2002 report, the European Parliament Committee on Budgetary Control state that they doubt the Lebanese market can absorb such a high volume of beef from the import of live cattle from the EU, and that they therefore doubt that Lebanon is the sole destination of the cattle[32].

A look at the per capita supply of beef in Lebanon adds further weight to this suspicion. Beef supply per capita per year in Lebanon has risen dramatically from just 7.4kg in 1990 to 17.3kg in 2002 (table 10.1), so each person's beef consumption would have to have more than doubled over this period. This in itself would not necessarily arouse suspicion, as the improving economy since the end of the civil war in Lebanon could be expected to contribute to increased demand for beef. However, the per capita supply of beef has fluctuated wildly from year to year, which is very unusual. For comparison, beef supply per capita per year in Egypt has remained relatively steady at around 8 to 10kg over the same period.

Table 10.1: Supply/capita/year of bovine meat in Egypt and Lebanon, 1990–2002. Source: FAOstat[3].

Year	Supply/capita/year (kg)	
	Egypt	Lebanon
1990	8.1	7.4
1991	8.0	8.1
1992	7.9	11.9
1993	7.9	11.6
1994	9.5	10.1
1995	9.5	9.3
1996	9.0	9.2
1997	9.9	16.6
1998	10.3	13.6
1999	10.3	16.6
2000	10.8	17.6
2001	9.3	12.8
2002	9.8	17.3

European authorities have no jurisdiction over what happens to the cattle after they are released into free circulation in the third country. It makes a mockery of the export refund system if some of these cattle are simply passing through Lebanon to other countries, when EU legislation has been introduced to limit the countries that live cattle for slaughter can be exported to.

11. The potential impact on the European Union of abolishing subsidies for the trade in live cattle

Although the exact timeframe is still under negotiation, the EU is committed to the reduction and phasing out of all export subsidies, as part of the World Trade Organisation Framework agreed on 1 August 2004. EU export subsidies are becoming less and less significant, falling from 25% of the value of farm exports in 1992 to 5.2% in 2001. In 2001, export refund expenditure was 2.763 billion euros, compared to 10 billion euros in 1991. The EU budgetary expenditure on export refunds has fallen from 29.5% of the value of exports in 1991, to 7.5% in 2001[33].

The EU already exports considerably more beef to third countries in the form of meat and carcasses than as live cattle (table 3.1), and the number of live cattle exported has fallen dramatically over the past decade, from around 970 000 in 1995 to only about 250 000 a year. Subsidy payments have also been substantially reduced over the same period. The rates of refund for the export of live animals have fallen from 95 euros/100kg in 1995 to 53 euros/100kg for breeding animals, and from 90 euros/100kg in 1995 to 41 euros/100kg for slaughter animals[7,8].

Against the background of export subsidy reduction and eventual elimination, and considering that EU live cattle exports have declined significantly over the past decade and account for a relatively small proportion of overall EU beef exports to third countries, the economic impact of the removal of export refunds for live cattle is likely to be minor.

The EU would probably be able to increase beef exports in meat and carcass form to the Middle East in order to compensate for the cessation of live exports. However, even if this does not prove to be the case, the current EU beef market situation makes it likely that a market for the cattle could be found within the EU. During the 1980s and 1990s, there was considerable overproduction of beef within the EU, and large quantities were placed in intervention storage. Export subsidies played a role in removing excess cattle and beef from the EU, thereby reducing the notorious "beef mountain". However, EU beef consumption was higher than production in 2003 for the first time in more than 20 years, which allowed for the clearing of intervention stocks during 2004. European Commission forecasts predict that this situation will persist over the whole of the period 2004 to 2011. Indeed, by 2011 EU beef production is predicted to decrease to around 7.9 million tonnes. As a result of tight domestic supply and steady demand, imports are expected to increase to 0.57 million tonnes over the same period[29].

Export refunds for live cattle are paid to dealers, and therefore do not directly benefit farmers. In some countries, for example the Republic of Ireland, farming groups have claimed that live exports are essential to provide competition within the industry and thus maintain cattle prices. However, this argument is not supported by the evidence. Irish live cattle exports to third countries fell from over 36 000 head in 2003 to less than 12 000 in 2004, contributing to a 70% increase in the number of young bulls going through beef plants in Ireland in 2004. Despite this dramatic drop in live cattle exports to third countries, cattle prices in Ireland increased over the same period, reaching 280 cents/kg for the first time in 5 years. For example, the average price of all cattle going through the Connacht Gold markets in 2004 was 650 euros, up from 589 euros in 2003[34]. This clearly demonstrates that demand for live cattle from Lebanon is not necessary to maintain internal cattle prices in Ireland.

It is likely that the overall impact on the economy of exporting countries of eliminating live cattle exports would be positive. A study of the Australian live export industry found that the trade could be costing Australia around $1.5 billion in lost GDP, around $270 million in household income and around 10 500 lost jobs. The primary factor driving the profitability of the live trade is market distortions (in both the domestic and export markets) in favour of live animals. The study concluded that New Zealand's strategic decision to severely curtail its live sheep trade to prevent animal welfare concerns affecting its more valuable, value-added sheepmeat trade demonstrates that improved processing productivity and efficiency can counteract and potentially more than offset the adverse impacts of ending live exports. The decision to end live exports can therefore be made on the basis of potential cross-sectoral impacts of the live trade on a much larger and more economically significant processing sector[35].

12. The way forward – towards an alternative to the trade in live cattle

The European Convention for the Protection of Animals during International Transport, which was signed by the European Commission in 2004, states that "For reasons of animal welfare the period during which animals, including animals for slaughter, are transported should be reduced as far as possible"[36]. This is supported by the conclusion of the 2002 SCAHAW report that "After a few hours of transport welfare tends to become poorer as journey length increases…journeys should be as short as possible"[17].

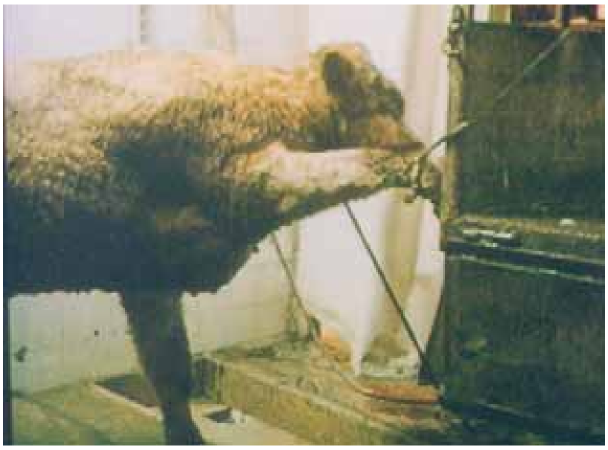
Despite these statements, the principle of the "free movement of goods" takes precedence over animal health and welfare considerations in EU trade law. Live animals have traditionally been subject to this free trade principle because they are classified as agricultural products. CIWF campaigned for a decade for animals to be given a new status in EU law as 'sentient beings'. This was crowned with success in 1997 when the EU adopted a Protocol amending the Treaty of Amsterdam, which recognises animals as sentient beings[37]. This legal recognition of animals as sentient beings is also included in the text of the proposed new EU Constitution. CIWF believes that, as sentient beings, animals should not be subject to the EU's rules on the free movement of goods. This legal argument should be used to justify a ban on the long distance transport of live animals.

This French bull is one of the many animals to be injured during transport

The 1997 Protocol annexes a provision to the Treaty of Amsterdam, which requires the EU and its Member States, in formulating and implementing EU policies on agriculture, to pay "full regard to the welfare requirements of animals"[37]. CIWF believes that in light of the great suffering imposed on animals by the live cattle export trade to the Middle East, the EU must bring this trade to an end as a matter of urgency. The first step towards this is the immediate and complete elimination of export refunds for live cattle exported to third countries. This is likely to make the trade in live cattle economically unviable. Both in 2001 and in 2002, the European Parliament voted to delete export refunds for live cattle from the budget. CIWF urges the European Commission and the Council of Ministers to now observe the Parliament's wishes and abolish these subsidies.

If the EU wishes to preserve the export market to Lebanon, it must do so via a joint agreement with Lebanon aimed at assisting with the further development of a reliable system for the storage and distribution of refrigerated meat and carcasses. In doing so, it will be possible to completely replace the export of live cattle with exports of beef. Financing for this venture could be made available by redirecting some of the expenditure currently funding the export refund system for live cattle.

1) An Irish bull is unloaded at a Lebanese abattoir



2) It appears that the bull's leg has been tied to the vehicle

3) The bull is left to struggle

4) The bull falls down conveniently near a drain; seconds later his throat is cut

13. Conclusions and recommendations

It is ethically unacceptable for European taxpayers' money to be used to promote a trade that routinely inflicts great suffering on animals. The European Commission and the Council of Ministers must act immediately to abolish all subsidies for the export of live cattle from the European Union.

- The trade in live cattle from the EU to the Middle East inflicts great suffering on animals. Current EU legislation is frequently not enforced and, even where it is enforced, it is insufficient to protect animal welfare during such long journeys. European authorities have no control over what happens to cattle once they are released into free circulation in a non-EU country, and it is therefore impossible to protect their welfare. Most of the animals are slaughtered without stunning – their throats are cut while they are fully conscious and they are left to bleed to death.

- The trade is made possible by subsidies amounting to around 60 million euros a year. In addition to the financial cost to EU taxpayers, the trade also has consequences in terms of the risk of spreading infectious animal diseases over great distances, the environmental impact of long distance animal transport, and the potential threat to food security in the importing countries.

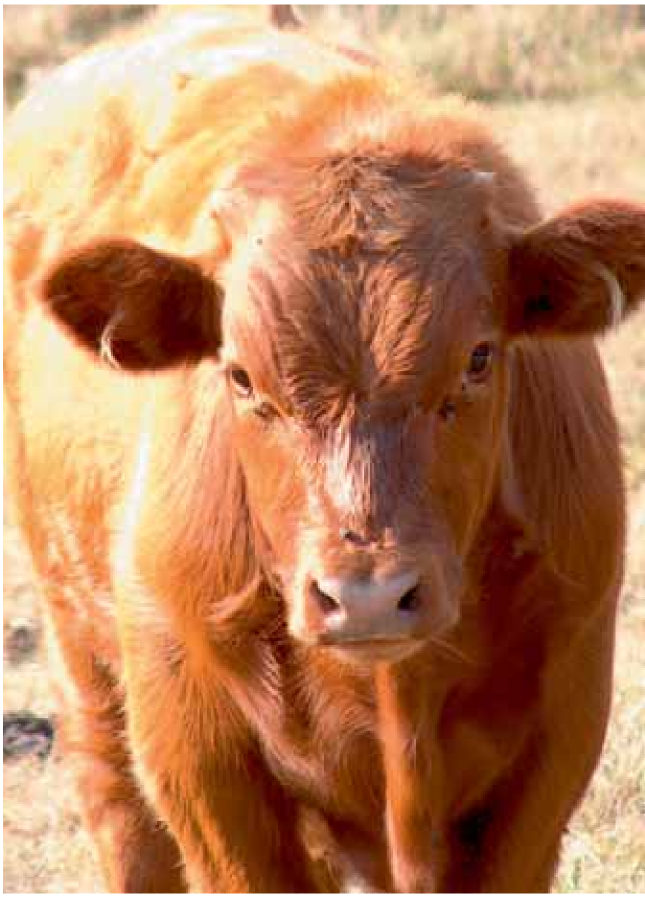
- The trade cannot be justified on the basis of cultural or religious objections to imports of beef in the Middle East. If required, Halal slaughter can be carried out within the EU, with the meat and carcasses then being exported rather than live animals.

- The payment of export refunds to support the trade cannot be justified on the basis of the economies of the exporting countries. The economic impact of the removal of export refunds for live cattle is likely to be minor because export subsidies are already being phased out under World Trade Organisation agreements and live cattle exports from the EU have declined significantly over the past decade and account for a relatively small proportion of overall EU beef exports to third countries.

- The payment of export refunds to promote the trade in live cattle is indefensible in view of the scale of animal suffering involved, the other consequences outlined above, and the apparent abuse of the subsidy system. If the EU wishes to maintain the export market to Lebanon, some of the expenditure currently funding the export refund scheme for live cattle could be redirected to assist in the development of the necessary infrastructure in Lebanon to facilitate EU beef exports in place of live exports.

- The European Parliament has repeatedly voted for the deletion from the EU budget of export refunds for live cattle exported to third countries. Moreover, despite the fact that Germany is the major beneficiary of these subsidies, the German government has also called for an end to export refunds for live cattle exported for slaughter. The European Commission has now ended subsidies on cattle being exported for slaughter, but with the major exception that subsidies are still paid for cattle going to Egypt or Lebanon. As the majority of EU cattle exported for slaughter go to Lebanon, the Commission's move has done virtually nothing to improve things in practice. CIWF urges the European Commission and the Council of Ministers to now observe the Parliament's wishes and abolish these subsidies immediately and completely.

- In light of the status of farm animals as sentient beings and the obligation under EU law to pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals, CIWF believes there is an urgent need for a fundamental change of policy, whereby the long distance transport of live animals is abandoned and replaced with the principle of slaughter as close as possible to the place of rearing, followed by the transport of meat and carcasses.



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"European taxpayers will be appalled at the use of public money to promote a trade that inflicts such suffering on animals. The European Taxpayers' Association fully supports Compassion in World Farming in their campaign to end subsidies for the export of live cattle from the European Union."

Michael Jaeger, Secretary General, Taxpayers' Association of Europe

"Taxpayers will be horrified to learn that their hard-earned money is being used to essentially subsidise animal cruelty and keep Middle Eastern farmers in poverty. Compassion in World Farming is right to campaign for the immediate abolition of subsidies for the export of live cattle and taxpayers across Europe will support them in their fight."

Matthew Elliott, Chief Executive, The TaxPayers' Alliance

"The Halal Food Authority believes that the welfare of animals is of paramount importance. It is unacceptable to transport animals over long distances in conditions that result in them arriving at their destination soaked in their faeces and urine, injured with bruises, tired, thirsty, hungry and suffering from stress. Islam dictates to refrain from consumption of animals that have been maltreated and could have symptoms of ailments. We support Compassion in World Farming in their campaign to end EU subsidies for the export of live cattle."

Masood Khawaja, President, Halal Food Authority, London

STOP THE BULL SHIP

THE SUBSIDISED TRADE IN LIVE CATTLE FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION TO THE MIDDLE EAST

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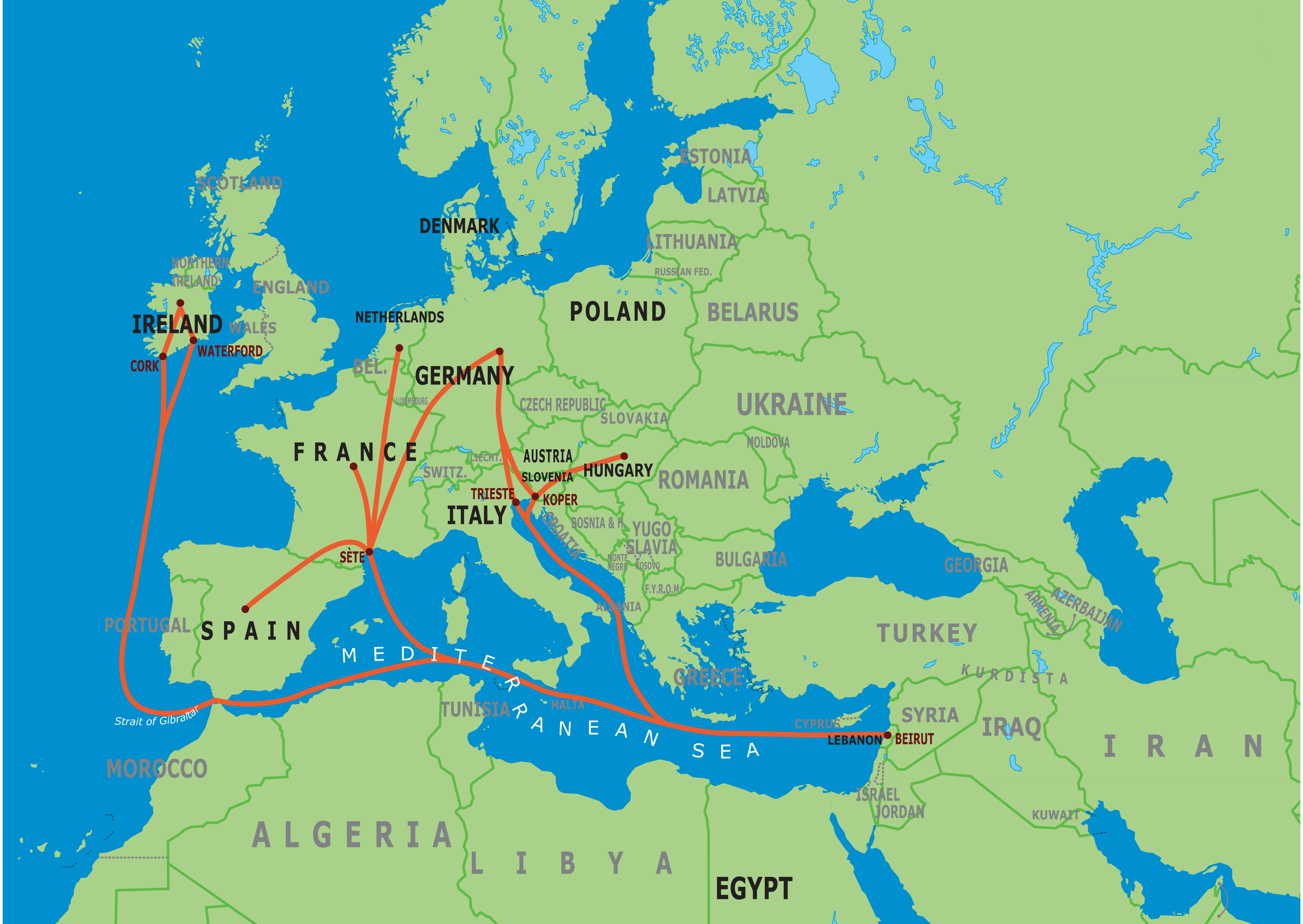

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