

The Honourable Minister of Agriculture
Prof. dr. sc. Davor Romić
Ministry of Agriculture
Ulica grada Vukovara 78
10000 Zagreb
Croatia

-The Hague, 11 March 2016

Dear Minister,

As the initiator of the Dutch Fur Farming Ban I'm writing to you with an urgent appeal to hold on to your Animal Protection Act, which entails a fur farming ban on all animals with a ten year phasing out period. This development corresponds with European wide support for banning such fur production farms.

As member of Parliament from the Netherlands, I am, together with some other MPs, the initiator of our national fur farming ban, which has been confirmed by the Higher Court in 2015. Similar to the situation in your country, the Netherlands forbid the breeding of foxes, chinchillas and mink for fur and represents public opinion which no longer accepts the cruelty and lack of animal welfare for the production of fur.

In the Netherlands, the decision to phase out fur production was even more difficult and challenging giving the impact of this decision on the existing fur farms. The Netherlands are after Denmark and China the biggest minkfur producer in the world with an amount of six million mink each year. However, this economic value was no argument for the Dutch government to reject this kind of cruel industry. Public opinion in the Netherlands and in the European Union has been pivotal to the development of the legislation and a strict phasing out period for farmers to adjust to the new situation. As such we are very surprised to hear that the Croatian ban could be diminished by a new amendment to the Animal Protection Act which would exclude chinchillas from the existing ban.

Considering the fact that the transitional period should end in less than a year, this last-minute adjustment would be a clear indication of giving in to the demands of an industry which has had sufficient time to adjust to this new legislation. From a legal point of view, this kind of adjustment would seriously undermine the effectiveness of the law. From an economic point of view, this sends out the adverse signal that the industry is rewarded for stalling and delaying decisions and not responding to national legislation in a proper and timely manner.

In response to concerns of citizens and consumers about the animal welfare aspects of the treatment and killing of animals for fur, several other European member states have adopted or intend to adopt legislation banning fur farms. Croatia has the backing of the following European countries with similar legislation and strict phasing out periods; the Netherlands, UK and Northern Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia.

I would regret if Croatian Animal Protection Act would be changed or diminished by giving in to the minority of farmers who didn't respect and implement the Act contrary to a majority of farmers who did comply and made investments to adhere to the law.

There are ample studies and reports which clearly show that it is impossible to achieve minimal animal welfare standards when breeding animals for fur. We can also provide you with reports detailing the environmental concerns and impact of the fur farming industry as well as the possible hazardous effects of fur products on human health. Independent research in different European countries has recently shown that fur products contain different chemical substances, which has already resulted in a Rapex procedure with a decision by the European Commission to retract fur jackets from the European market.

I applaud the effort to ban fur production and strongly support the implementation of the current law and phasing out of fur farms without making amendments, thus achieving a higher level of animal protection which corresponds to the level of protection given by other European member states and which sends a consistent and even-handed signal to the industry.

Of course I'm willing to provide you with more information on our ban if necessary.

Yours faithfully,

Henk van Gerven
Member of Dutch Parliament