

To:

Mr Olivér Várhelyi, European Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare  
Mr Christophe Hansen, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Food

Brussels, 27th of March 2026

**Subject: Call for EU action to phase out force-feeding in foie gras production**

Dear Mr Várhelyi, dear Mr Hansen,

The undersigned Members of the European Parliament hereby address the European Commission to raise concerns regarding the practice of force-feeding ducks and geese in foie gras production in the European Union, a practice that is increasingly questioned in light of animal welfare considerations and its compatibility with the values and commitments of the Union.

Currently, force-feeding is maintained only in a very limited number of Member States or regions within the Union.<sup>1</sup>

The marketing requirements for foie gras<sup>2</sup> are based on technical standards established in 1991 and 1995<sup>3</sup>, in a regulatory context that predates the recognition of animals as sentient beings in the Treaties and the adoption of the Directive on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes<sup>4</sup>. In practice, these requirements contribute to the continuation of production systems that are difficult to reconcile with current animal welfare principles, which reinforces the need to reassess their adequacy in light of the Union's present values and objectives.

The scientific evidence accumulated over decades is clear in indicating that force-feeding causes serious harm to the welfare of ducks and geese.<sup>1</sup>

Along similar lines, Switzerland has introduced an obligation to inform consumers when foie gras is produced through force-feeding, explicitly indicating that animals are subjected to a painful procedure<sup>5</sup>, thereby sending a clear regulatory signal regarding the unacceptability of this practice.

The strong public support for higher animal welfare standards, consistently reflected in Eurobarometer surveys<sup>6</sup>, further underscores the need for the Union to continue strengthening its regulatory framework in this area.

There is no evidence of systematic monitoring or enforcement controls of EU animal welfare legislation on the farming of ducks and geese for foie gras production. Since 1998 (according to DG SANTE, formerly DG SANCO), only a handful of audits have been conducted

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<sup>1</sup> France, Hungary, Bulgaria, Spain, and Wallonia (Belgium)

<sup>2</sup> Commission Regulation (EC) No 543/2008 (current [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2026/343](#))

<sup>3</sup> EEC No. 1538/1991 and EC No. 2390/1995

<sup>4</sup> [Directive 98/58/EC](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Swiss law entered into force](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Eurobarometer on animal welfare](#) and [Eurobarometer on Europeans, agriculture and the CAP](#)

(one farm in Hungary and two farms in France). At the Member State level, according to official information, Inspections in foie gras production farms are almost non-existent.<sup>7</sup>

Spain has taken a significant step by formally debating the practice of force-feeding in its Parliament<sup>8</sup>, reflecting growing political attention to this issue.

In this context, we call on the European Commission, in the exercise of its right of initiative, to ensure that the progressive phasing out of force-feeding in foie gras production is explicitly included as part of the forthcoming modernisation of the European Union's farm animal welfare legislation, by presenting legislative proposals that establish a clear legal pathway to end this practice across the Union.

We also call for immediate action to begin preparations for a further revision of the EU poultry marketing standards, with a view to removing the minimum liver weight requirements currently linked to foie gras production. In line with the approach previously taken by the Commission in mandating the Joint Research Centre (JRC) to conduct a scientific verification of the water content limits for chicken carcasses in the EU, we request that a similar procedure be initiated regarding minimum liver weights. Specifically, the JRC should be tasked with assessing the scientific basis of this requirement and evaluating its potential role in incentivising force-feeding practices, which raise significant concerns regarding animal welfare.

Yours sincerely,

MEPs

Tilly Metz (Greens/EFA)

Niels Fuglsang (S&D)

Cristina Guarda (Greens/EFA)

Anja Hazekamp (The Left)

Tiemo Wölken (S&D)

Erik Marquardt (Greens/EFA)

Luke Flanagan (The Left)

Martin Häusling (Greens/EFA)

Kira Marie Peter-Hansen (Greens/EFA)

Sirpa Pietikäinen (EPP)

Thomas Waitz (Greens/EFA)

Sigrid Friis (Renew)

Jaume Asens (Greens/EFA)

Sebastian Everding (The Left)

Lena Schilling (Greens/EFA)

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<sup>7</sup> [Inspecciones casi inexistentes en las granjas de producción de foie gras](#)

<sup>8</sup> [A Motion adopted by the Spanish Congress of Deputies](#)

Majdouline Sbai (Greens/EFA)  
Michal Wiezik (Greens/EFA)  
Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy (Renew)  
Maria Noichl (S&D)  
Lynn Boylan (The Left)  
Nicolae Ștefănuță (Greens/EFA)  
Manuela Ripa (EPP)  
Rasmus Nordqvist (Greens/EFA)  
Marc Angel (S&D)  
Marianne Vind (S&D)  
Maria Ohisalo (Greens/EFA)  
Martin Hojsík (Renew)  
Per Clausen (The Left)  
Catarina Martins (The Left)  
Anna Strolenberg (Greens/EFA)  
Sara Matthieu (Greens/EFA)  
Rudi Kennes (The Left)  
David Cormand (Greens/EFA)  
Brando Benifei (S&D)  
Villy Søvndal (Greens/EFA)  
Jutta Paulus (Greens/EFA)  
Vladimir Prebilic (Greens/EFA)  
Petras Austrevicius (Renew)  
Catarina Vieira (Greens/EFA)  
Annalisa Corrado (S&D)  
Kristian Vigenin (S&D)

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<sup>i</sup> The report of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare [Welfare Aspects of the Production of Foie Gras in Ducks and Geese](#) concluded in 1998 that ‘force feeding, as currently practised, is detrimental to the welfare of the birds’. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations ([Goose Production FAO](#)) stated in 2002 that the production of fatty liver for foie gras ‘raises serious animal welfare concerns and is not a practice tolerated by the FAO. In 2023, the European Food Safety Authority ([Better housing needed foR ducks and geese EFSA](#)), although it has not assessed the animal welfare implications of force-feeding itself in foie gras production -since this was explicitly excluded from the scope of the evaluation requested by the European Commission- has nevertheless recommended avoiding the current rearing systems used during the overfeeding period, as they have significant welfare implications for the birds. The new report highlights that housing conditions are inadequate and insufficient, with cages and pens typically two to three times smaller than necessary for the birds to exhibit their natural behaviors. Veterinary associations have repeatedly emphasized that force-feeding is not a natural practice and should be ended. [The Welfare of Ducks during Foie Gras Production](#) by I. Rochlitz and D. M. Broom, published by Cambridge University (2017), highlights the welfare problems that arise in the final stage of production. Based on this evidence, it is concluded that force-feeding results in very poor welfare for the birds and should not be practiced. The Veterinary Medical Association conducted a literature review on the force-feeding process, which highlighted serious animal welfare concerns. The Veterinary Medical Association conducted a literature review on the force-feeding process, which highlighted serious animal welfare concerns [Foie gras production Avma](#). Another document provides a collection of testimonies from scientists and experts on force-feeding for foie gras production, once again highlighting that this practice causes multiple health and welfare problems [Scientists and Experts on Force-Feeding for Foie Gras Production and Duck and Goose Welfare](#)