

ANIMAL WELFARE GROUP COUNTRY PROFILE | ITALY



KEY METRICS

(All figures are approximate)



POPULATION



4,363,000



2,455,000



678,000

Italy imports significant quantities of leather raw material. The most significant quantities are from Brazil.



2,511,789

Cattle slaughtered in 2014



211,000

Total number of livestock farms
(excluding poultry)



14%

Of total EU beef produced by slaughter

2002 BEEF CONSUMPTION (EU)



23.3
kgs/capita
(51.4 lbs/capita)



The objective of the country profiles is to provide an overview of the animal welfare landscape and the differences between regions. The information provided is general in nature and a summary of facts, it does not represent the opinion of Leather Working Group. The country profiles are living documents, that are reviewed and updated from time to time. While Leather Working Group has taken due care to ensure the information is accurate as of the date of publication, the information is provided on an "as is" basis and we make no representation or warranty as to its accuracy. Please note that examples of high-quality and low-quality animal welfare can be identified in every region. Leather Working Group is not liable to any person for any loss suffered or incurred as a result of reliance on the information.

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SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

Transport

- Italy follows European Union (EU) legislation for the transport of live animals. These regulations are comprehensive and state that animals must be fit to travel and should have the necessary documentation, and that the conditions of travel do not cause any harm to the animal.
- Approximately 80% of leather produced in Italy is imported from other countries. Therefore, animal welfare in those countries must also be considered.

Traceability

- All EU countries must have an animal traceability system in place. All animals must have a passport which, along with their other documents, must be moved with the animal.
- Italy has a national database with the details of the movement of its cattle. This database allows an animal to be traced from birth to slaughter.

Slaughter

- Italy complies with EU regulations regarding slaughter and adds very few additional protection in its national legislation.
- Animals must be stunned prior to and must remain unconscious or be rendered unconscious again for the slaughter. The accepted methods for stunning are clearly outlined.
- Slaughter in accordance with religious rituals is permitted in licensed slaughterhouses.

Legislation

- Italy must comply with or improve upon the EU legislation for animal welfare. In many cases, Italy meets but does not exceed the EU regulations. However, these regulations are extensive and guarantee good animal welfare.

Governance

- There is evidence of some corruption in Italy. However, there is generally good governance.
- The enforcement of animal welfare legislation is the responsibility of provincial police forces.

NGO Activity

- Major NGOs have highlighted that Italy imports a significant amount of leather from Brazil which is a potential area of concern for both animal welfare and the environmental impacts.
- Some NGOs have taken issue with 'culturally significant' events which have been accused of animal cruelty in the past.
- There is evidence of severe mistreatment of buffalo, exposed by an NGO. It should be noted that this is illegal in Italy and therefore potentially evidences that governance is not totally effective.

FARMING

In 2010, Italy's total livestock herd (including poultry and equine) was 9.9 million, this represents 7.6% of the total European Union (EU) livestock herd¹.

The EU Farm Structure Survey collects information on the structural characteristics of agricultural holdings for all EU Member States every 10 years through an agricultural census. Based on the most recent data from 2010, nearly 70% of Italy's livestock population is comprised of cattle (44%) and pigs (24.8%). In real terms, there are roughly 4.4 million head of cattle and 2.5 million head of pig. After poultry, sheep make up the third largest category of farmed animals with roughly 680,000 head in 2010².

The central northern region of Italy, particularly the territories of Lombardia and Veneto, proved to be the most important livestock producers among the Italian regions in 2010; combined they produced 44% of Italy's livestock population. Lombardia itself accounted for 28% of the animal livestock in 2010, contributing to 12.4 % of the total livestock of pigs and 11 % of the cattle population².

Between 2000-2010 the total number of agricultural holdings with livestock decreased drastically (-65 %), from 627,200 to 217,330, however the total number of livestock remained fairly static with a change of just -0.6%. Categories of small and medium sized holdings saw a decrease in livestock numbers, with the bigger class of farms – those with 500 or more heads of livestock – recording an increase. This points to a trend towards further industrialisation and mechanisation within the livestock farming industry in the country².

TRANSPORT

As a member of the EU, Italy must follow EU laws and regulation, but may opt to implement its own national laws to coincide with EU laws. In 2004, the EU implemented the Protection of Animals During Transport Regulation. The Regulation is comprehensive and includes detailed requirements for transporters and inspection authorities to ensure protocol is applied. The Italian government introduced legislation for implementing the EU Directive for protection of animals during transport originally in 1992 and included provision to adopt any EU repeals such as the 2004 directive. Italy chooses to apply EU standards to the transport of livestock animals³.

The EU Regulation on the Protection of Animals During Transport states that “no person shall transport animals or cause animals to be transported in a way likely to cause injury or undue suffering to them”. Animals must be fit for travel and documentation must always be carried stating: the origin and ownership of the animals, their place of departure, the date and time of departure, their intended place of destination and the expected duration of the intended journey. Conditions are provided for unexpected delays, the state of appropriate transport vehicles with additional requirements for long journeys. These are controlled through certificates of approval issued by the inspection body⁴.

Particular conditions of the legislation to ensure appropriate animal welfare standards include: livestock (excluding poultry) cannot undergo journeys exceeding eight hours unless the roof, floor and bedding, feed, partitions and minimum criteria for certain animal's requirements are met. Subject to the requirements for longer journeys being met, bovine, ovine and caprine species may be transported for up to 30 hours altogether excluding a one-hour rest period that must be given mid-journey. No animal shall be transported unless it is fit for the intended journey. Transport vehicles must be designed to maintain appropriate conditions for the animals including space, temperature and safety. Loading, unloading and handling procedures are detailed to minimise distress in the animals. Specific parameters are provided for watering and feeding intervals, journey times and resting periods. Detailed space allowances based on species category and weight are provided which transporters must comply with⁴.



TRACEABILITY

Since 2005 it has been mandatory for EU countries to adopt animal traceability through animal identification and movement tracking programs. Italy, along with other EU countries, follows the mandatory regulation of EU Legislation 178/2002 in this regard⁵.

EC Regulation No 1760/2000; AKA Identification and labelling of beef and veal, states that member states of the EU region must establish a database containing details of all cattle and their movements. Every animal is given a passport that must accompany it whenever it is moved and be handed in to the EU upon its death. Every farmer must maintain an up-to-date register of cattle births, deaths, and movements, have a means to demonstrate the history of every animal and hold data up to three years⁶.

SLAUGHTERING

Italy is a member of the EU, and as such EU laws and regulations apply. However, Italy may opt to implement its own national laws to coincide with EU laws. In 2009, the EU implemented EC Regulation No. 1099/2009, AKA the protection of animals at the time of killing. In a similar style to regulation on transport of animals, this regulation regarding slaughter is comprehensive and has been designed to minimise animal suffering as much as possible. The Italian government introduced legislation for implementing the EU Directive for 'protection of animals at the time of killing' originally in 1998 and included provision to adopt any repeals such as the 2009 directive. Italy chooses to apply EU standards to the slaughter of livestock animals and in general does not apply national rules for more extensive protection⁷.

The EU regulation regarding the protection of animals at the time of killing states that "animals are to be spared any avoidable pain, distress or suffering during their killing and related operations". Any persons involved in the slaughter of animals should take necessary measures to minimise the stress, suffering and pain of the animals being slaughtered by ensuring that they are kept in clean and adequate thermal conditions, and prevented from slipping or falling. The directive states that business operators working in animal slaughter must ensure animals are: protected from injury, handled with consideration to their normal behaviour, not showing signs of avoidable pain or fear, not suffering from withdrawal of feed or water, and are prevented from interaction with other animals that could harm their welfare⁸.

EU regulation clearly states that animals should only be killed after stunning and that the "loss of consciousness and sensibility shall be maintained until the death of the animal". A comprehensive list of approved stunning methods is included in the regulation⁸.

Specific provision is made within the regulation for animals subject to particular methods of slaughter prescribed by religious rites; in these cases the requirement that animals should only be killed after stunning shall not apply provided that the slaughter takes place in a slaughterhouse⁸.

EU regulation includes additional requirements applicable to slaughterhouses, which focus on the maximum capacity of each facility, and how procedures at slaughterhouses must be monitored by an animal welfare officer to ensure that protocols to minimise avoidable pain, distress or suffering in the animals are met⁸.

Based on the Eurostat publication on EU Farm Structure Survey statistics, latest data from 2009 indicates that over 1 million tonnes of beef and over 1.5 million tonnes of pork meat were produced through slaughter in Italy. 10% of total EU veal and 14% of total EU beef was produced through slaughter in Italy, meaning Italy has the third highest slaughter rate of cattle amongst EU member states⁹.





HIDES, SKIN & LEATHER

Italy is the fourth largest producer of finished leather in the world. It manufactures, approximately 1 billion ft² of bovine, and 0.3 billion ft² of sheep and goat leather. Leather is produced in three main geographical areas, these being Solofra, which is predominantly small skins, St Croce which is mainly footwear/leathergoods and Arzignano which is mainly upholstery¹⁰.

It should be noted that Italy slaughters approximately 2.5 million bovine animals and 2.5 million sheep¹¹. The domestically available material equates to approximately 180 million ft² of bovine and 17.5 million ft² of sheep in finished leather terms. Therefore to produce 1 billion ft² of finished leather, Italy must import large quantities (around 80%) of its raw material¹⁰.

In 2016, Italy imported 1.1 billion USD worth of raw and part processed material from around the world, with Brazil being the most significant exporter of material to Italy, exporting over 200 million USD worth of wet blue grains and splits. This was followed by the USA and New Zealand for wet blue and wet salted, or brined bovine material. Italy also imports large quantities of sheep from Nigeria, Spain and Algeria, and goats from India and Nigeria¹¹.

To this end, it is worth noting that it is likely that leather produced in Italy will not be from domestic raw material. It should therefore be noted that the animal welfare footprint of Italy stretches beyond the borders of the country, due to the large scale leather manufacturing sector.



LEGISLATION & REGULATION

The Italian government has implemented EU regulation requirements relating to farm animal welfare into domestic legislation. The most impactful is the EU Directive 98/58, AKA the protection of animals kept for farming purposes, released in 1998. EU member states were required to bring into force laws, regulations and administrative provisions, including sanctions, necessary to comply with the directive¹². The Italian government introduced legislation for implementing this EU Directive in 2001¹³.

The EU regulation on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes is clear that animal welfare is the responsibility of any persons in charge of animals, whether on a permanent or temporary basis. The regulation states that owners or keepers shall take “all reasonable steps to ensure the welfare of animals under their care and to ensure that those animals are not caused any unnecessary pain, suffering or injury”. Furthermore, the conditions under which animals are bred or kept must have regard to the “development, adaptation, domestication, physiological and ethological needs of the animal in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge”. Provisions to demonstrate compliance with the regulation include: appropriate staffing, inspection, record keeping, freedom of movement, buildings and accommodation, feed and water, and breeding procedures¹².

Additional EU directives were released in 2008 regarding the protection of pigs¹⁴ and the protection of calves¹⁵. The additional directive for pigs focuses on the minimum standards for the protection of pigs confined for rearing and fattening. Requirements include access to adequate space, reductions in noise levels and parameters for light lux intensity. Additional provision of material to allow for pigs to engage in exploratory and foraging behaviour must be provided. The Italian Government introduced legislation for the implementation of the EU directive on the protection of pigs in 2011¹⁶. Regarding calves, the EU directive defines these as bovine animals up to six months old and in a similar way to the regulation on pigs, the directive focuses on rearing and fattening. Much of the directive focuses on the accommodation conditions for calves including avoiding isolation, providing adequate space, heating, ventilation and light. The Italian Government introduced legislation for the implementation of EU directive on the protection of calves in 2011¹⁷.

Some festivals are exempt from animal welfare legislation on the basis that they are part of Italian heritage, for example the biannual Palio di Siena horse race, however some of these have been accused by campaigners of cruelty to animals¹⁸.

Information on governance is subjective; to help quantify implementation of law we use the independently published Global Corruption Index to assess the level of governance in each country. Italy is ranked 60th of 176 countries which places it alongside Cuba. This ranking suggests there is a moderate level of corruption in Italy¹⁹. Government bodies have mandated responsibility to implement animal welfare legislation and standards as set out in EU directives, the Global Corruption Index suggests that there may be moderate inconsistencies in enforcement of such legislation.

Animal welfare law varies across Europe with northern states generally having the most stringent legislation²⁰. In Italy, the National Plan for Animal Welfare has been in place since 2010; this defines the programs of the Sanitary Authority to ensure legislation concerning the protection of animals on farms is adhered to and to provide information and guidelines for the breeding of various species²¹. The Ministry of Health is in charge of animal welfare in Italy with the Animal Welfare Committee located in Office VI. Until December 2016, animal welfare was policed at a national level by the Corpo Forestale dello Stato or CFS. This police unit has since been absorbed by the Carabinieri, the national gendarmerie of Italy. Their responsibilities include food safety and controlling of live animals. At a local level, the provincial police force also have a responsibility to enforce animal welfare laws²².

Italy's published legislation is generally in line with other European countries, regarding safeguarding the minimum EU conditions of animal welfare. An area of difference is that cruelty to animals is included as an offense in the Criminal Code which means that it is a crime to subject an animal to injury, abuse, unbearable conduct or hardship. This is applicable to all persons who come into contact with the animal in the breeding, transport and slaughter process and means a wider range of people are responsible for animal welfare and monitoring of practice than in many other EU countries²¹. Veterinary services are responsible for carrying out checks on the application of the rules concerning animal welfare and reporting annually on the results of such activities to the regions and autonomous provinces, which in turn transmit the aggregated data to the Ministry of Health²³.

As of January 2017, the EU Commission has established the Platform on Animal Welfare which is comprised of competent authorities, businesses, civil society and scientists. The Platform has been set up to assist the Commission with the development of coordinated actions on animal welfare, with a particular focus on better application of EU rules, the development of voluntary commitments by businesses, and to increase the market value of the EU's products through the promotion of EU animal welfare standards²⁴.





NGO ACTIVITY

Animal welfare NGOs established in Italy are in a significant minority when compared to those focused on human welfare and environmental protection. NGO animal welfare focus tends to come from European NGOs. Global campaigns for animal welfare driven by organisations such as Compassion in World Farming and the RSPCA have helped shape EU regulation which has in turn shaped policy and legislation in Italy. Eurogroup for Animals is an organisation based in Brussels, Belgium, which seeks to improve the treatment of animals throughout the EU, and represents animal welfare organisations in most European member states. Since it was launched in 1980, the organisation has also influenced the EU to adopt higher legal standards of animal protection²⁵.

Eurogroup for Animals campaigns for the development and enforcement of higher animal welfare standards in food and farming, both through EU legislation and through the voluntary means of responsible food chain actors. The organisation has multiple campaigns with a particular focus on reducing live animal transport and enforcing existing transport legislation. Other relevant campaigns focus on enforcing animal welfare legislation for improved slaughter methods and the provision of environment enrichment for farmed pigs²⁶.

A significant animal welfare NGO is the Lega Anti Vivisezione (LAV), founded in Italy in 1977 with over 35,000 members and 85 branches. LAV focuses on the abolition of vivisection and the recognition of animal rights; the organisation works against violence to all living beings including humans²⁷. LAV is opposed to events that are deemed to exploit or harm animals such as the Quintana joust in Foligno in central Italy that forms part of the 'Italian Heritage' events¹⁸.

The campaign group Four Paws has highlighted cases of severe neglect and animal cruelty within Italian buffalo farms supplying mozzarella. Investigations took place in the area of Campania where most of the buffalo farms are located. As buffalo meat is not generally consumed, male calves are considered to be an 'unwanted by-product' and Four Paws have found evidence that these calves are in some cases being brutally killed using illegal methods. The investigation also found evidence that adult buffalo were subjected to poor living conditions that did not meet their species specific needs such as a lack of shelter from the sun, overcrowding, and limited access to drinking water. Some buffalo were also found to have open, untreated wounds and many suffered severe walking difficulties due to overgrown and untended hooves. The evidence of neglect discovered by Four Paws shows welfare standards falling well short of what is required by law in Italy²⁸.

Italy sources large quantities of raw material from Brazil for the leather manufacturing industry. The Greenpeace campaign 'Slaughtering the Amazon' highlighted the impact that deforestation is having on the Amazon biome as a direct result of the cattle farming industry. The report states that "The cattle sector is the key driver of deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon. According to the Brazilian government: 'Cattle are responsible for about 80% of all deforestation' in the region. In recent years, on average one hectare of Amazon rainforest has been lost to cattle ranchers every 18 seconds"²⁹. Although deforestation is not a direct animal welfare issue, the fact that this is an outcome of cattle farming and taking into consideration of the amount of leather that Italy sources from Brazil, the Greenpeace focus should be highlighted.

There is an increasing trade in livestock between the EU and the Non-EU countries involving the live export of animals. Exports of cattle and sheep from Europe to non-EU countries with lower animal welfare standards, have increased in value by about 50% since 2012. This has been driven by a market for meat destined for halal slaughter, and difficulties in refrigerating meat over long distances. There is evidence that animal welfare is being neglected during these long journeys and transportation rules not being enforced³⁰.

✓ FARM ASSURANCE SCHEMES

There are an increasing variety of farm production schemes within European member states containing animal welfare standards that go beyond the legal minimum requirements. Schemes can be retailer-led or founded by producer organisations, sometimes in co-operation with NGOs. The differences between schemes reflect higher national legal requirements, higher quality industry schemes, organic production schemes and specific welfare-friendlier schemes. However, consumer communication of higher animal welfare standards using a quality assurance scheme logo is not always effective. Farmers differ in their motivation for participating in animal welfare schemes, some are mainly encouraged by premium prices; others give ethical reasons for changing towards animal friendly production methods³¹.

In a review for the European Commission (2009), the RSPCA Freedom Food (UK), Label Rouge (France) and Bioland (Germany) schemes were described as exemplar animal welfare schemes using a farm assurance scheme approach. No Italian assurance schemes were described as exemplar³².

A study conducted by the University of Bologna, Italy, found that Italian consumers had a particular interest in the availability of space and the absence of movement restrictions (chains or tethers) in relation to animal welfare standards. Regarding labels on food packaging, the study found that the possibility of identifying products with high animal welfare credentials and the knowledge of specific legislation on farm animal protection is limited³³. The conclusion being that farm assurance schemes are not prevalent in Italy or considered particularly useful at informing consumers.





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