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World's largest food co. debuts sweeping animal welfare reform

Nestlé first major food maker to partner with animal welfare NGO

by *Sustainable Food News*
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Initiative aims to ensure farm animals in supply chain are well cared for

Nestlé, the world's largest food company, Thursday announced sweeping animal welfare reforms in its supply chain.

Based in Switzerland, the multinational food firm said it signed a partnership with World Animal Protection, requiring all its 7,300 suppliers of animal-derived products - including milk, meat and eggs - to comply with the NGO's tough animal welfare standards.

Nestlé is the first major food company to form an international partnership with an animal welfare NGO.

"Our decision to work with Nestlé is based upon their clear commitment to improving animal welfare and the lasting change this can have on millions of farm animals around the world," said Nestle CEO Mike Baker.

Some of the new requirements for suppliers include spacing requirements for the rearing pens of certain species of animals, such as pigs and cows, to ensure they are not cramped and can engage in normal animal behavior.

Last year, an undercover video filmed by Mercy for Animals showed extreme abuse of dairy cows at a Wisconsin farm supplying milk for Nestle products. The video captured employees beating and dragging cows with farm equipment. Nestle cut ties with the supplier.

"Mercy For Animals praises Nestlé for stepping up to the plate to improve the lives of farmed animals on a global level," said Nathan Runkle, president of Mercy For Animals. "We are heartened that Nestlé not only took notice, but also took action, after egregious cruelty was exposed at one of its dairy suppliers."

Nestlé and farm animal welfare

Nestlé has commissioned independent auditor SGS to carry out checks to ensure the new standards of animal welfare are met on its supplying farms.

In 2014, several hundred farm assessments have already been carried out worldwide, Nestle said. Some of these checks are also attended, unannounced, by World Animal Protection representatives whose role is to verify the auditors.

"When a violation is identified, Nestlé will work with the supplier to improve the treatment of farm animals to ensure they meet the required standards," the company said. "If, despite engagement and guidance from Nestlé, the company is unable or unwilling to show improvement, it will no longer supply Nestlé."

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