

# India opposes EU proposal to include animal welfare issues in WTO talks

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## Of rights and wrongs

- ▶ Officials says these are attempts by developed countries to block exports from the developing world using these new standards. It will throw many people out of jobs
- ▶ While animal rights organisations say international standards should be made mandatory in India too and exporters should be asked to follow them. Inclusion of such standards will improve the appalling condition of slaughter houses in the country
- ▶ Animal welfare concerns are being increasingly recognised around the world. They must be formalised within the WTO trade agreements, said EU senior representatives at Brussels conference on Global Trade and Farm Animal Welfare

INDIA has opposed a reported move by the European Union (EU) to include animal welfare issues in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations. However, animal activists here, who have welcomed the EU decision, said they would soon petition the commerce ministry asking to hear their concerns on traders meeting out cruel treatment to animals. The activists also want India to agree with the EU on the matter.

Reacting to reports of EU pitching for the inclusion of animal rights in the WTO talks, official sources said these were attempts by developed countries to block

exports from developing countries using these new standards. "These are non-tariff barriers to curb exports. It will, in turn, throw many people out of jobs in developing countries," an official said.

Meanwhile, animal activists in India said they would shortly meet commerce ministry officials in this

regard. "This (inclusion of animal rights in WTO talks) is not a non-tariff barrier. International standards should be made mandatory in India too and exporters should be asked to follow them," said Anjali Sharma, a lawyer and an activist with New Delhi-based NGO Citizens for Animal Rights (CFAR).

Rishi Dev, another activist with the same NGO said they would submit to the government a study done in this regard showing cruelty to animals in different parts of the country.

"For instance, we found several instances of cruelty towards animals in Kerala. But the government did not take any action. Only when our campaign asking international tourists to boycott Kerala resulted in a drop in number of tourists to the state, did the state government listen to us and promised to take action," Dev said.

"Similarly, our study on domestic pharmaceutical majors funding tests that resulted in cruel treatment towards animals, will be an eye-opener for the commerce ministry," he added.

Inclusion of animal welfare standards in WTO agenda will improve the appalling condition of slaughter houses in the country, he said, adding India should take the lead in promoting animal welfare. Animal welfare concerns are being increasingly recognised in food production around the world. They must be formalised within the WTO trade agreements, according to several representatives of the EU who spoke at a recent Brussels conference on Global Trade and Farm Animal Welfare. According to them, formal recognition of animal welfare standards within binding WTO agreements would result in unlocking the UN and World Bank resources, needed to help the developing world raise its animal welfare levels.