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Press release by LAV and ANIMAL EQUALITY - 5 November 2015

RABBIT MEAT, VIDEO-INQUIRY BY LAV AND ANIMAL EQUALITY IN ITALIAN REARING FARMS UNVEILS A THOUSAND SUFFERINGS AND ZERO RIGHTS: ONE OF THE MOST "ULTRA-INTENSIVE" PRODUCTION SYSTEMS LACKING SPECIFIC REGULATIONS.

WE CALL ON THE GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT TO ACKNOWLEDGE RABBITS AS PET ANIMALS: GO ON WWW.CORAGGIOCONIGLIO.IT AND SIGN THE PETITION BY LAV AND ANIMAL EQUALITY. THESE ANIMALS SHOULD BE RESPECTED, NOT "EATEN"

Rabbits reared in complete lack of rules and control, without space and in unhygienic conditions, immersed in hairs, litter and flies, with breeding does artificially inseminated throughout their life, kittens separated from their mothers ahead of time, where diseases outbreaks are business as usual (rabbits commonly develop mycosis, encephalitis, eye infections, enteritis, ear mites and are improperly treated, often by the breeder rather than the veterinary), where the journey to the slaughterhouse of healthy and sick rabbits alike adds to the suffering in the short life of these "meat" animals: **this is the reality documented by the striking video-inquiry carried out in Italy by LAV and Animal Equality** in some large Italian rearing farms, including the sage of transport and slaughtering of the rabbits. To put an end to their suffering, the two associations have launched the dedicate information website www.coraggioconiglio.it where you can find information and sign the petition to urge the Government and Parliament to draft a law recognising these rodents the status of pet animals.

The video-inquiry has been carried out thanks to an undercover inquiry team (in some cases with hidden cameras) that infiltrated rabbits rearing farms and slaughterhouses in the greatest production areas in Italy. This complex, unprecedented work has unveiled a tragic reality: dead kittens unscrupulously thrown to the ground, others left to starve or dead for hours inside the cages where they lived their entire life, sick animals, with tumours, untreated, neglected, their throats mercilessly slit...

"While we cannot bear to spend our lives with a dog or cat and then cook it, this is not the case for rabbits: Italy produces half of Europe's rabbit meat (262,500 tons in Italy , 512,876 in Europe [source: Faostat 2012] thus challenging even the Chinese production (735,000 tons) - said Roberto Bennati, vice president of LAV - Pet or wild rabbits can live up to 12 years, while a rabbit's life inside rearing farms is as short as 12 weeks, does live for a maximum of 2 years and breeding rabbits for 4 years. All because of absolutely unnecessary meat consumption. With our petition we want to save over 30 million rabbits reared and killed in Italy every year: these animals are for loving and respecting, do not eat them!"

"Our recent inquiry has revealed an "ultra-intensive" rabbit rearing system which deprives these animals of the most basic ethological needs, – explained Matteo Cupi, executive director of Animal Equality – one of the most blood-curdling "production" processes, mostly unknown, unsaid and astonishingly tolerated, inflicted upon animals who are defenceless against those rearing, transporting and slaughtering them. It is a ruthless, out-of-control system: just think that each rearing farm operator is usually in charge of 600 does, with only 48 seconds to dedicate to each animal. This means that if an animal dies or gets sick, it will be many hours, if not even the next day, before someone notices. Does and breeding rabbits live in individual wire mesh cages, in which their legs never touch the ground and often get trapped, wounding them. Kittens, bred for fattening, are crammed together with up to 7 animals in the same cage and thus as little as 450 squared centimetres of living space per rabbit, less than an A4 sheet of paper! The cages are placed one on top of the other and the excrements fall on the animals in the cages below. Excrements are

everywhere, with strong exhalations of substances such as ammonia which are dangerous for the health of the animals, rabbit hairs and flies, attracted from litter, are everywhere”.

While there are people who stoke up this horror feeding on rabbit meat - **every Italian consumes 2.6 kg of meat from this animal, especially in the centre and south, with a record 10 kg in Campania, compared to a European average of 1.5 kg** - many, on the contrary, live with this animal: after dogs and cats, rabbits are the most popular pet in Italian households with nearly one million animals. It is precisely thanks to this trend that rabbit meat consumption has been steeply dropping for years now. Unfortunately, the legal protection of rabbits does not compare in any way to that accorded to dogs and cats...

*“To overcome this contradiction and put an end to the production of rabbit meat and skins, we ask citizens to go on www.coraggioconiglio.it and sign our petition to provide these animals with the same protection and dignity we recognize dogs and cats”, **declared LAV and Animal Equality.***

Furthermore, industry data vary greatly depending on the source, another sign that this production sector eludes adequate monitoring: *“why doesn't anyone know how many rabbits are being reared and slaughtered when the law establishes that all animals bred and sold for food supply must be controlled and guaranteed?”*, **asked LAV and Animal Equality.**

- The data on reared rabbits differ according to the source:** 11 million based on an Istat census in 2007, 70 million for Avitalia, 175 million according to Faostat (2012).

- They type of rearing and total number of farms in Italy also varies depending on the source:** according to the Ministry of Agriculture 35% of rabbit meat production comes from 20,000 small and micro rural rearing farms with less than 50 does; 65% is produced in 8,000 intensive farms with over 100 does. While data reported by Avitalia and Istat's agriculture census are quite different: why? What's more, there are thousands of micro family-run rearing farms which have never been counted or checked...

- Even the number of rabbits slaughtered in Italy doesn't add up:** nearly 30 million according to Istat 2007, 60 million for Avitalia, around 23 million based on Istat's census on agriculture (2011) and approximately 175 million according to the F.A.O (2012).

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