

Religious slaughter : encouraging dialogue between stakeholders and interested parties as well as gathering and dissemination of information.



The DIALREL project is a FP6 ['specific support action'](#) intended to address issues relating to the practice of religious slaughter and the market and consumers. The principle aims of this project is to explore the conditions for promoting the dialogue between interested parties and stakeholders and facilitating the adoption of good religious slaughter practices. The additional aim is to review and propose a mechanism for implementation and monitoring of good practices.



The DIALREL Project

Religious slaughter has always been a controversial and emotive subject, caught between animal welfare considerations, cultural and human rights issues. There is considerable variation in current practices and the rules regarding religious requirements are still confusing. Similarly, consumer demands and concerns also need to be addressed. Therefore, there is a need for information relating to slaughter techniques as well as product range, consumer expectations, market share and socio-economic issues. The DIALREL project aims to gather this information by encouraging a constructive dialogue between interested parties.

The basis of a realistic dialogue

Although religious slaughter has been performed in Europe for centuries, alongside conventional slaughtering that, for about a century, has included preslaughter stunning, objections to the practices on welfare grounds have been expressed since the 19th century. However, the demand for products from animals slaughtered by religious methods has considerably increased in recent years and as a result, their market share is now considerable.

There are two main types of religious slaughter that need to be considered in this context: the slaughter method for the production of halal meat intended for Muslims; and Shechita for obtaining kosher meat for Jewish consumers. For religious slaughter, it can be acceptable to use preslaughter stunning as in conventional slaughter. However, there is a continuing debate on the merits and possible adverse effects of preslaughter stunning in general. . Although information relating to religious slaughter methods has increased, animal welfare, consumer

and other socio-economic and market issues have not yet been sufficiently addressed.

In addition, relevant EU legislation allows derogations so that Member States can retain the right to authorise religious slaughter without prestunning within their own territory, under official veterinary supervision. However, it is also required that the welfare of animals slaughtered by religious methods shall be protected as it must for animals conventionally stunned and slaughtered.

DIALREL will facilitate the adoption of good practices in religious slaughter that can meet the welfare standards of the EU, and the expectations of the market and consumers. Activities will include a review of national legislation and research and an analysis of the prevalence of various practices. The influence of diverse religious beliefs and interpretations on slaughter practices will also be taken into account. Another topic to be covered will examine the extent to which food consumption patterns are affected as well as public and consumer concerns for food quality and safety.

In order to review and propose a mechanism for implementation and monitoring of before-mentioned practices, the project will explore the conditions for promoting the dialogue between interested parties and stakeholders. The social dialogue will take place within Member States, candidate and associate countries. Long term, welfare of farm animals should be improved through a harmonisation of techniques and regulations within the EU.

The workplan foresees five phases: conflicting standards (in the context of religion, legislation and animal welfare), evaluation of current practices, consumer and consumption issues, market transparency, and dissemination activities. The latter will be structured around dedicated websites and workshops, providing a platform for debate, exchange of information, and consensus.

Prejudices hinder communication, understanding, and knowledge. The DIALREL project will be an excellent opportunity to bring together different opinions on an important cultural issue, and move towards a resolution.

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