



The Netherlands, 7 March 2006

Dear Mr. Vallat,

The NBvH (Dutch Smallholders Association) has taken notice of your statements, recently published in *Le Monde*, regarding the vaccination plans of France and the Netherlands: "*La vaccination peut a priori être utile dans les pays les plus touchés, mais cette vaccination peut n'être qu'une solution d'ultime recours dans les pays qui ne peuvent plus contrôler la situation par les mesures d'abattage et de confinement des élevages*"

We were completely baffled. Therefore we hope that this is a misinterpretation of your words. We are in the middle of an epidemic (worldwide) which will probably last for some years, as the experts have predicted.

The best way, according to these same experts, to fight the epidemic is vaccination. And vaccination is absolutely safe; vaccinated animals stop shedding the virus almost immediately to such an extent that infection of other animals is almost impossible. And for commercial holdings the use of sentinels gives extra security; and of course one must practice every bio-security measure.

You state that vaccination should only be started when the outbreaks are no longer controllable with the usual measures; but in such circumstances vaccination is of no use at all. Building up immunity takes time, two injections with 3 to 4 weeks in between, and by then the disease will have spread everywhere. Besides, during outbreaks there will be no personnel to administer the vaccine in time, because all hands are on deck trying to control the outbreaks.

Not vaccinating in the current situation with the spread of H5N1 will be the end of organic and free range holdings. And not in the least, the end of hobby and smallholding, where poultry and other birds are kept in the open air and cannot be locked up.

It seems as though the OIE has been pressured by trade politics. The lobby for non-vaccination due to fear of losing markets, is very strong. The OIE has always proclaimed that products from vaccinated animals are perfectly safe.

The OIE should continue to propagate this message of safe products; otherwise vaccination will be nothing but the instrument of trade wars with all the social consequences.

We hope you can confirm this is all some misunderstanding. France and the Netherlands need all the support they can get for their brave efforts to put an end to the non-vaccination policy.

The OIE would do well to give vaccination more attention and approve of vaccination as an appropriate measure of AI-prevention by including it in the Animal Health Code.

With the highest regards on behalf of the signatories beneath,

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