



HM Government

The Government's 5 year Progress Report on International Animal Welfare

February 2015

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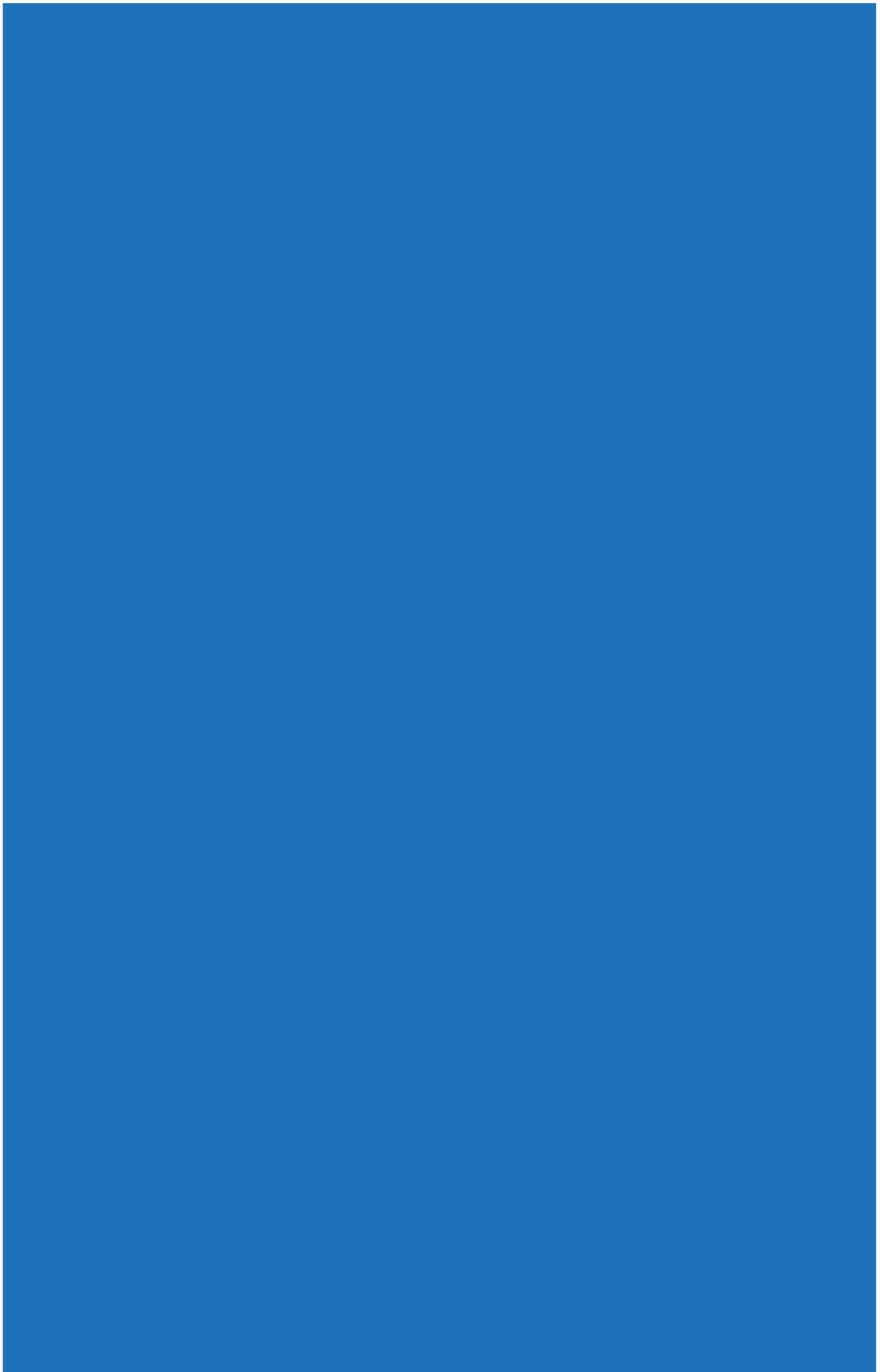
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Foreword



I am delighted to introduce this report on recent successes in the UK in raising international animal welfare standards. The promotion of high standards of farm animal welfare is a firm Coalition Government commitment; and we have also said that we will work to reduce the use of animals in scientific research and end the testing of household products on animals.

In my previous role as Foreign Secretary I had the honour of Chairing the Inter-Ministerial Group on Animal Welfare. This is a role that I have been very pleased to continue since becoming Leader of the House of Commons.

Through this group Ministers from Defra, DFID, BIS, HO, and FCO have worked collaboratively to improve animal welfare. This report summarises that work and the successes achieved by the Group, its Departments, and officials, over the last 5 years.

It contains information on the Government's portfolio of work in four major areas: tackling the Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT); reducing the unnecessary use of animals in scientific research internationally; pressing for higher farm animal welfare standards in Europe and beyond; and safeguarding farm animal welfare protection in the context of International Financial Institution (IFI) funding.

Why does it matter? Animal welfare is an increasing concern amongst the general public, who frequently look to Government to take the lead in both maintaining and improving standards. As an internationally acknowledged exemplar of expertise and good practice, it is important that the UK plays an active role globally too.

For example, tens of billions of animals are farmed each year worldwide to produce food for a burgeoning global population; and there is a wide variation in welfare standards, with many animals subject to significant suffering.

Similarly, the use of animals in scientific research is an area in which the UK has a key role to play in supporting efforts by other countries to develop alternatives to animal testing wherever feasible, and to share best practice from our own very rigorous animal research regulatory framework. In addition we are tackling the illegal trade in wildlife, which is a truly global issue. To solve it, countries need to work together to reduce and ultimately remove demand for these products.

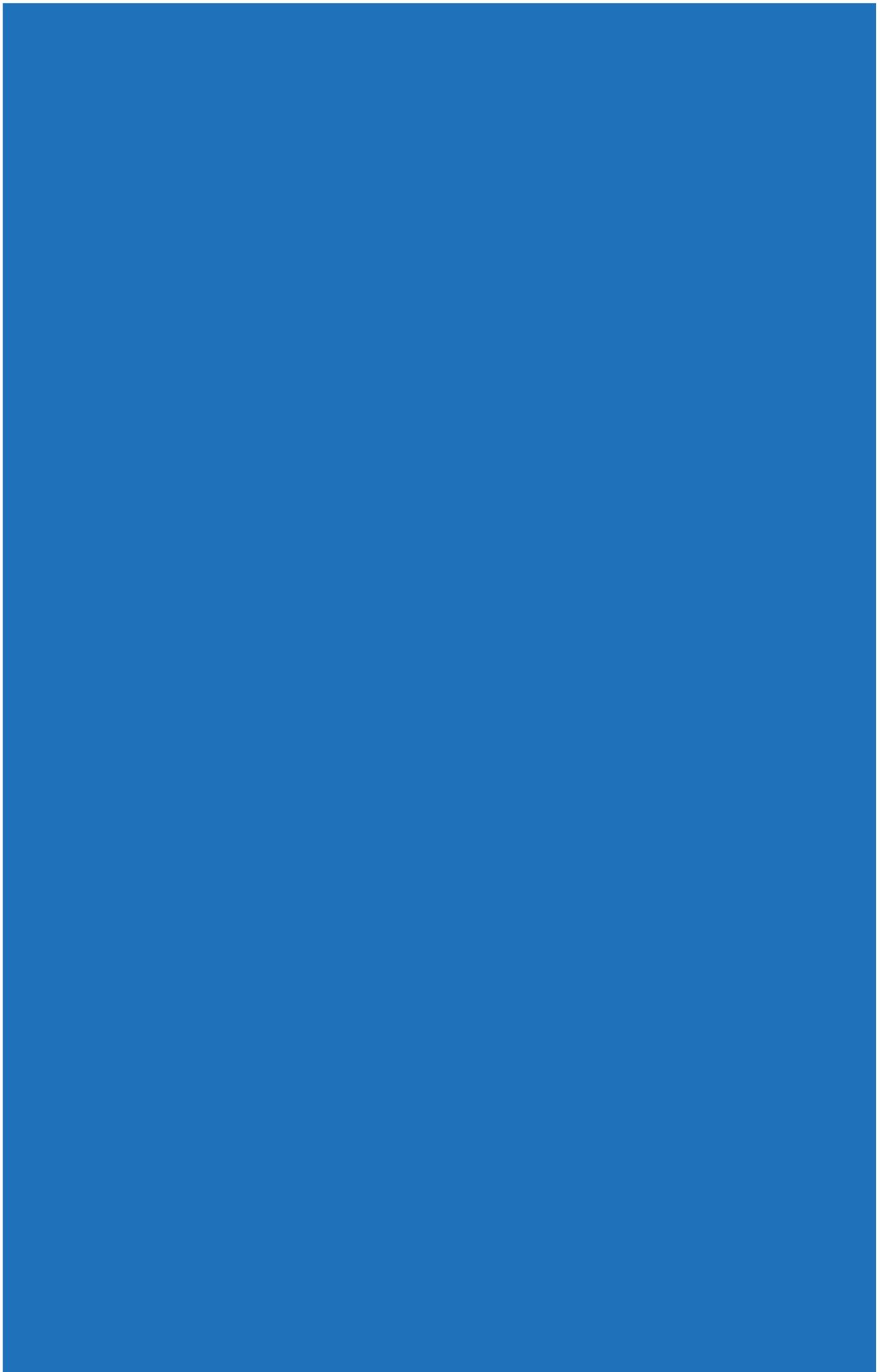
A concerted, co-ordinated international effort across source, transit and market countries is needed, with firm commitments made at the highest levels of government and the international system. This is an important issue and one that this Government takes very seriously.

We have achieved a lot. Notable successes in these areas include:

- The London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade, held in February 2014, which resulted in a high level declaration of 25 commitments to tackling IWT, endorsed by 40 countries and the EU; and the announcement of £10m which would be made available to tackle IWT over the next four years.
- Leading a major international programme of engagement that has put in place mechanisms for China, Brazil and other countries to learn from and adopt techniques that will refine, reduce and where possible replace the use of animals in their safety testing regimes.
- Bringing about significant improvements in international standards for farm animal welfare through the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) in collaboration with the European Commission and other EU Member States.
- Leading on efforts to ensure that lending by the multilateral banks we support adequately recognises animal welfare needs. Through targeted action we have secured commitments with major European and international organisations to safeguard animal welfare standards.

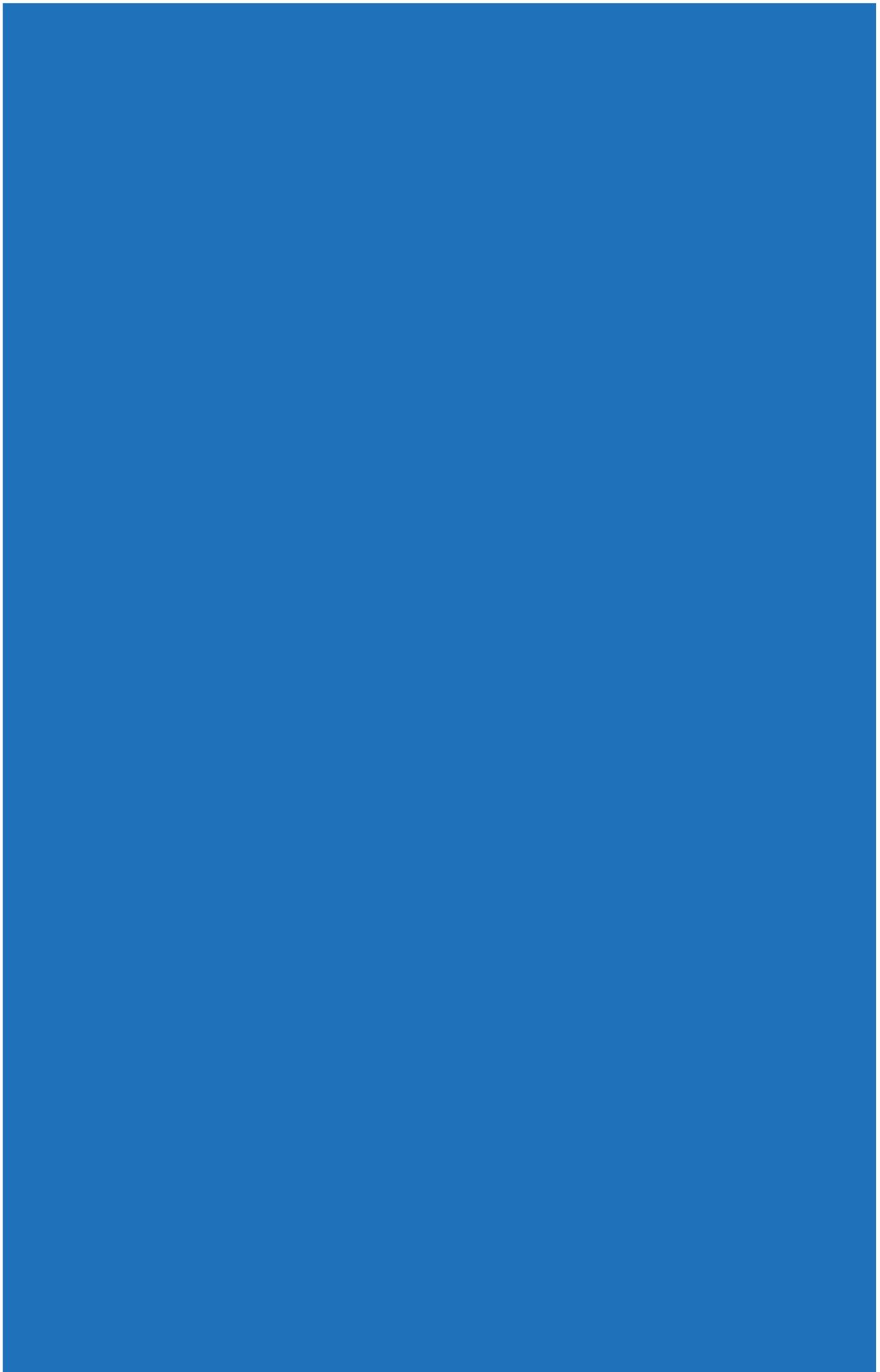
Our wider achievements have recently been formally recognised by World Animal Protection (an international NGO) whose Animal Protection Index places the UK in the top four countries in the world for animal welfare, alongside Austria, Switzerland and New Zealand.

Of course we have not done any of this in isolation. We have worked closely with our stakeholders, including Compassion in World Farming (CIWF), the Royal Society for the Protection of Animals (RSPCA) and World Animal Protection, and I would like to thank them and my officials across Government for all their excellent work in this area.



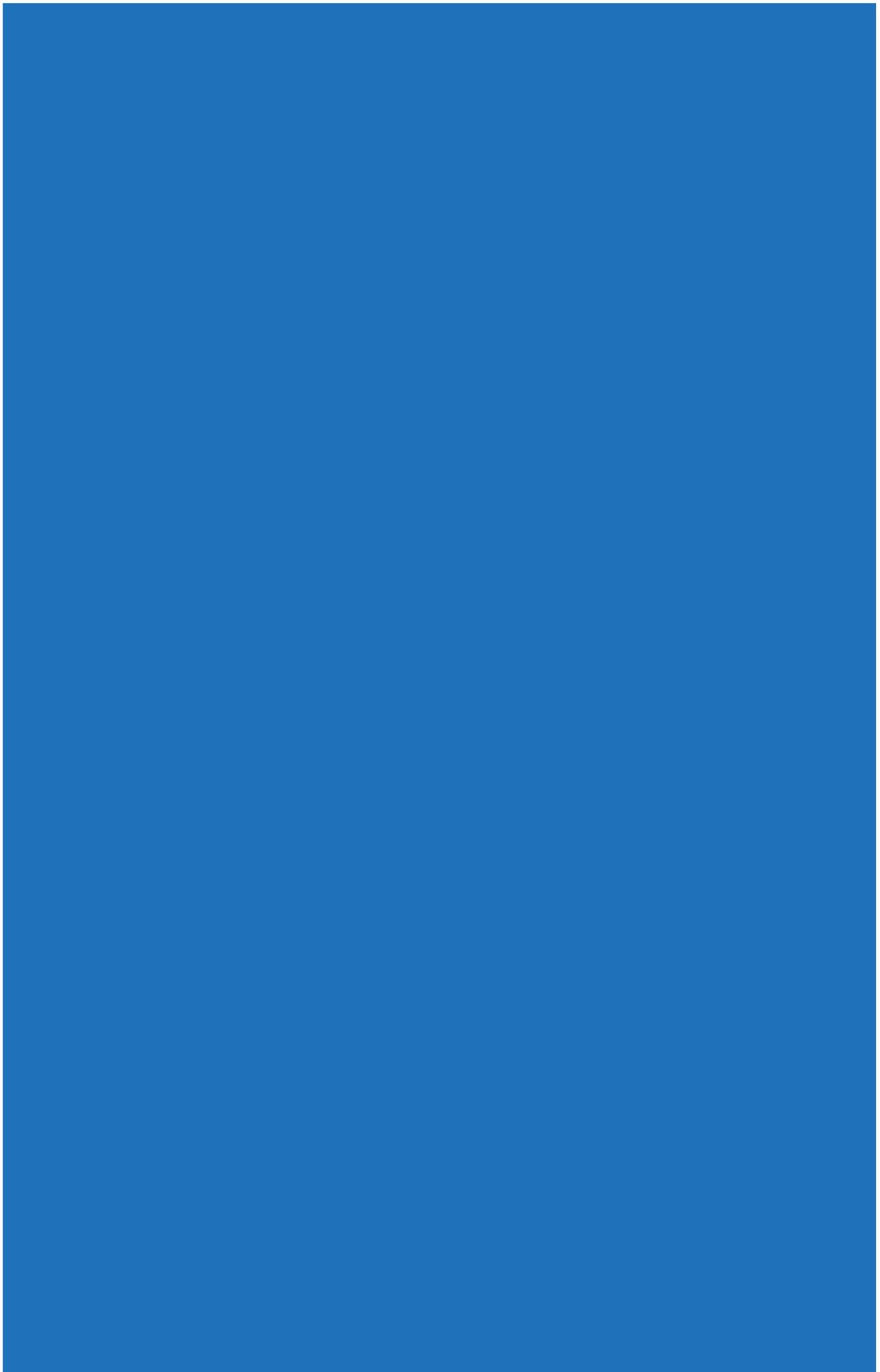
Introduction

1. The UK has long been recognised as a world leader in delivering animal welfare improvements and as one of the world's foremost trading nations. In the last five years, we have combined leadership in these two areas not only to improve access to global markets for UK businesses but also to ensure that animal welfare standards elsewhere reflect those we have become used to here.
2. This report summarises action taken by the Government in collaboration with a number of different business sectors and NGOs in the last 5 years, and the consequential progress in raising international animal welfare standards; and promoting best practice.
3. The report covers four main areas:
 - i) Tackling the growth in the Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT)
 - ii) Reducing the unnecessary use of animals in research internationally
 - iii) Sharing UK expertise to improve animal wellbeing and pressing for higher animal welfare standards in Europe and beyond
 - iv) Safeguarding farm animal welfare protection in International Financial Institution (IFI) funding.



Rationale for action

4. Each year around 70 billion animals are farmed for meat, milk and eggs worldwide (2.3 billion in the EU); with about 25,000 slaughtered every minute. Global agricultural exports are valued at some \$1,745 billion (\$661 billion in the EU) equivalent to 9.5% of all merchandise traded (WTO 2013). The Government continues to encourage innovation in technological development of high quality agricultural and food production. The conditions, under which the animals are raised, vary significantly. UK welfare standards are amongst the highest in the world; but standards elsewhere may be lower, leading to significant unnecessary pain and suffering for millions of sentient beings. It is therefore important that we share the benefits of our experience (and knowledge of best husbandry and veterinary practice) internationally; to raise standards and assist other countries in improving their performance. This will also help UK producers compete on a more level playing field.
5. The UK Government has developed a long term strategy to reverse the recent trend of an increasing illegal wildlife trade, through measures to improve enforcement, reduce demand and engage local communities in wildlife management and alternative livelihoods. The Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) is a serious criminal industry worth more than £6 billion each year. While threatening the future existence of whole species, it also devastates already vulnerable communities, drives corruption and undermines efforts to cut poverty. Illegal ivory trade activity worldwide has more than doubled since 2007, with ivory selling for up to £1,200 per kilo while rhino poaching has increased by 5,000% between 2007 and 2012, with one killed by a poacher every 10 hours.
6. The UK led Europe by introducing a ban on using animals for testing cosmetics in 1997. Europe followed in 2009. The UK is now looking to introduce a ban on testing household products on animals. However concerns remain about emerging markets where animals may still be used for testing cosmetic products; and where those countries may require imported products to be tested on animals.



Summary of activity

7. Considerable strides have been made in the last 5 years to help raise international standards for animal welfare in the following areas:

i) Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT)

Background

8. The Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) is a global problem which threatens our most iconic species with extinction. Countries need to work together to eradicate the market for illegal wildlife products, ensure effective legal frameworks and deterrents are in place, strengthen law enforcement and promote sustainable livelihoods and economic development. The UK Government's actions are led by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), which is working very closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Department for International Development (DFID), the Home Office and other Government Departments and Agencies.

Summary of activity

- In February 2014 the UK hosted a high-level international conference in London, on tackling the illegal wildlife trade; attended by leaders from over 40 nations, from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas and a dozen key international organisations. The Conference delivered an ambitious political Declaration containing 25 commitments to action on enforcement and criminal justice, reducing demand for illegal wildlife products and supporting sustainable livelihoods. The London Conference marked a turning point in the fight against IWT by focussing high level political attention and resources on the issue.
- The Government welcomed the Elephant Protection Initiative (EPI) launched at the London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade in February 2014 by the Presidents of Botswana, Chad, Gabon and Tanzania, and the Foreign Minister of Ethiopia. The EPI is an agreement to put ivory stockpiles beyond economic use and to eradicate domestic ivory markets in exchange for access to new funding to protect elephant populations. The UK Government is fully committed to supporting this fund, in the first instance by matching the first tranche of private sector funding amounting to around £1m.
- DFID is providing £10 million from 2014 to 2018 to support implementation of London Declaration commitments, to be administered by Defra. Support for five IWT projects was announced in March 2014 with a total value of £1.3 million.
- It was announced in December 2014 that a further group of 14 projects in developing

countries is being funded through the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund.

- The UK plays a leading role in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Since 2011, the UK has been chair of the CITES Rhino Working Group, tasked with investigating the drivers behind, and possible solutions to, the dramatic rise in rhino poaching.
- In September 2010 the UK adopted a stricter approach to the re-exportation of rhino horn, refusing to issue permits in all but exceptional cases. The Government encouraged EU Member States to take a similar approach and the EU Commission issued guidance to this effect in February 2012.
- The UK provides targeted funds on a bilateral basis to assist the conservation of particular threatened species. This includes:
 - Funding of over £300,000 to support the Global Tiger Initiative; to build enforcement capacity in elephant, rhino and tiger range states; and
 - Regular contributions to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species monitoring programme, monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants.

Activity at national level

9. The Government is funding, until 2016, the National Wildlife Crime Unit, a specialist police unit which assesses wildlife crime and assists wildlife law enforcers.
10. Border Force is responsible for operations to seize IWT products and since 2014 has been seizing products in transit and passing seizure information back to the source country. They have had some notable successes, including the seizure of twelve critically endangered iguanas at Heathrow in early 2014 which were returned to their native Bahamas.

Future actions

11. Countries will report on progress against the actions agreed at the London Conference at a follow-up Conference in Botswana in 2015. Defra and FCO are providing support for this conference at which it is expected that participating countries will agree on the action needed to reinforce the commitments they made in London in February 2014; and to support new areas of activity that are seen as necessary. A third high level conference may also be held, probably in Asia, in the future.

ii) Work to reduce the use of animals in scientific research internationally

Background

12. The Programme for Government included a Coalition Commitment to “work to reduce the use of animals in scientific research”. This recognises the Government’s role in supporting the 3Rs – Replacement, Reduction and Refinement – both in the UK and overseas. It recognises the need to increase openness and transparency in animal research and provides a platform to foster greater public awareness, both of efforts being taken to promote the 3Rs and of the reasons why animal research continues to be needed to deliver major health and other benefits to society.
13. The UK scientific community is a global leader in promoting and implementing the 3Rs. In addition to finding alternatives to directly replace the use of animals, our scientists are also making technological advances which allow completely different approaches, not involving animals, to answer their research questions. Furthermore, we continue to make significant advances in refining procedures and hence reducing suffering.
14. There is significant scope for us to share these new scientific opportunities and to promote the 3Rs; both in research and testing, on an international scale. This report summarises some of the actions we have taken to deliver this impact internationally.

Summary of activity

15. The Government published a Delivery Plan¹ in February 2014 that brought together existing and new initiatives to implement the Coalition Commitment. The Plan has three strategic priorities:
 - i. Advancing the use of the 3Rs within the UK;
 - ii. Using international leadership to influence uptake and adoption of 3Rs approaches globally; and
 - iii. Promoting an understanding and awareness about the use of animals when no alternatives exist.
16. Under priority ii, we have continued to exert influence with our traditional research partners in Europe and North America, for example through agreeing and implementing a European Directive² and through a ministerial visit to the USA in 2013, both of which focussed on the delivery of the 3Rs.
17. We have also directed activity towards newer research partners, such as China and Brazil, where much animal-based research is conducted, some of which may present ethical barriers to UK scientific collaborations and trade.
18. Furthermore, we have taken the opportunity to showcase the UK’s expertise in the 3Rs to overseas delegations; with a particular focus on the impressive portfolio of projects being advanced by the UK’s National Centre for the 3Rs (NC3Rs)³ both in research and regulatory testing.

¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-to-reduce-the-use-of-animals-in-research-delivery-plan

² EU Directive 2010/63 on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32010L0063>

³ <http://www.nc3rs.org.uk/our-science>

Research

19. Research is an international endeavour and the UK's strength in the Life Sciences is, to a great extent, dependent upon effective collaboration with scientists in other countries. To facilitate such collaboration, it is important that the standards of welfare and use of animals are compatible; and that the 3Rs are consistently applied.

China is a very important partner for UK science and, in pursuit of this, we have;

- Established a strong working relationship with the Chinese Association for Laboratory Animal Sciences (CALAS) and held a successful scene-setting seminar in Beijing in March 2014; focused on developing standards for research, animal welfare and ethical use;
 - Supported CALAS in developing their standards in China and welcomed a visit to the UK by a delegation from CALAS where we familiarised them with our regulatory scheme and our approach to developing standards; and
 - In partnership with CALAS, organised a second seminar in Beijing in March 2015 which will support the move from voluntary CALAS standards to mandatory national standards for research into animal welfare and ethical use in China.
20. Both directly and through the European Commission, we have also supported the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) in developing Guidelines on the Use of Animals in Research and Education, now published in the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code⁴ and being applied throughout its 180 member countries.
21. All these actions are aimed at reducing unnecessary animal use and improving animal welfare standards globally so that UK scientists can be confident in the ethical rigour of their international research collaborations.

Regulatory testing

22. The safety testing of novel materials such as cosmetics and medicines is conducted according to international regulatory testing requirements and differences between countries may drive duplication of some animal testing as well as creating ethical barriers to trade for UK and overseas companies. In order to address this, we have sought to influence regulatory requirements and to ensure that validated 3Rs approaches are adopted internationally as rapidly as possible.
23. As an example of this work, we have engaged with the China Food and Drugs Administration (CFDA) and welcomed two delegations of senior CFDA officials to the UK in December 2014.

As a result of these visits, we have:

- Developed the foundation to support CFDA in joining the OECD Good Laboratory Practice (GLP) Mutual Acceptance of Data system for the safety testing of medicines;
- Supported CFDA in their intention to move towards the EU model of testing cosmetics by developing a roadmap towards fuller implementation of risk assessment, thus eliminating unnecessary animal testing; and
- In partnership with CFDA and the cosmetics industry, planned a workshop, to be held in Beijing in 2015, to provide training and experience in risk assessment methodologies.

⁴ Chapter 7.8 in the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code www.oie.int/international-standard-setting/terrestrial-code/

24. Brazil is the world's third largest cosmetics market and we have initiated discussions in support of proposed legislation which will ban animal testing of finished cosmetic products and promote acceptance of overseas (e.g. UK) generated non-animal test data. We have also worked closely with China, including through visits from the China Food and Drugs Administration (CFDA) to help build their capacity in this area.
25. As a result of our sustained international engagement, we have established the UK as a partner of choice in the sharing of knowledge and best practice in this field. Details of this international work, and progress on the Coalition Commitment on animal research more widely, will be set out in a progress report due to be published, later this year.

iii) Sharing UK expertise to improve animal wellbeing and pressing for higher animal welfare standards in Europe and beyond

Background

26. We have continued to build on past successes in improving farm animal welfare in the UK. There have been significant recent farm animal welfare advances in Europe with the introduction of the ban on keeping egg-laying hens in battery cages (which came into effect on 1 January 2012) and the partial ban on keeping pigs in sow stalls (a year later). The Government has supported the Commission's on-going work to ensure full compliance with these controls Communitywide; to provide a level playing field for UK producers.

Summary of activity

27. The Government's veterinarians and officials regularly share the benefit of their experience and expertise with the European Commission and other Member States. Good examples include the UK's hosting of officials from Romania and Bulgaria to learn from our experience on the long distance transport of sheep; and our active involvement in a French-led study tour on the same for calves. Government policy and veterinary input has also been sought to assist the development of guidance for the EU poultry and haulage sectors on issues surrounding welfare during transport.
28. In addition, strong support is provided to the EU's Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) inspection and audit processes, as well as EU welfare training. The Farm Animal Welfare Committee was specifically commissioned to produce advice on the welfare of farmed fish which was subsequently sent to the European Commission to assist their deliberations on appropriate management in what is a developing policy area.
29. The Government has promoted opportunities provided by funding under the EU's Regional Development Programme to support capital and other investment in welfare-friendly practices (and the trialling of such under commercial conditions) with a view to sharing those that are successful across the rest of Europe and beyond. In addition, advice has been offered to assist with applications. This will continue under the post-CAP reform successor arrangements that have applied since 1 January.
30. The Government continues to explore opportunities to improve control processes by making them both clearer (for farmers and producers) and easier to apply (for the competent authorities). Defra is currently considering the potential benefits of a move to robust guidance on 'good welfare practice' on the management of farm animals, produced with the active involvement of the industry. The test case has been the broiler sector. The

European Commission has already expressed an interest in what Defra is doing, as the basis for their new horizontal Animal Welfare legislative framework (a proposal for which, the Commission has indicated will surface later this year).

Work with international animal welfare organisations

31. In collaboration with the European Commission and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the Government's veterinary experts, alongside government officials play an active role in developing international animal welfare standards that are practical; and reflect the latest scientific and technological developments. As a recognised exemplar, the UK is able to positively influence other member countries to raise their game. The UK's veterinary experts have recently accompanied educational visits focused on EU welfare standards to both Thailand and Brazil. There is no doubt that without the UK's efforts progress, particularly in third countries, would be noticeably slower.
32. In parallel, a number of commercial livestock concerns, across a range of sectors, including the pig trade organisation BPEX, and beef and sheep equivalent EBLEX, are continuing to develop strong relationships with their export markets; through the exchange of expertise in a range of areas (including animal welfare) and this is set to continue as competition for worldwide sales intensifies. The Government has encouraged this and wider collaboration, given that stockmanship is widely recognised as the single most important influence on animal welfare and thus industry buy-in is critical to the success of any initiative to raise standards.
33. Significant increases in UK exports of pork, beef and lamb in recent years have been achieved, partly at least, as a result of our reputation for a high quality product (underpinned by robust animal health and welfare standards).
34. NGOs; including the RSPCA and World Animal Protection; also have their own training schemes and many are providing support to equivalent European initiatives, such as the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) or Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF). University Departments like those in Bristol, the Scottish Rural College (SRUC) and elsewhere also provide specialist support and expertise when required.
35. Involvement in a range of other collaborative scientific and technical research at EU and international level has also enabled the UK to share not only its expertise in these fields, but also its economic and social policy skill-base more widely.

iv) Safeguarding farm animal welfare protection in International Financial Institution (IFI) funding

Background

36. In November 2013, a group of NGOs published a report drawing attention to very poor animal welfare conditions in agribusinesses outside the EU financed by IFIs supported by the UK.

http://www.hsi.org/assets/pdfs/hsi_ifi_report_june_2013.pdf

This was at odds with the Government's desire to promote better animal welfare standards worldwide, with those in the EU as the benchmark.

Summary of activity

37. Throughout 2014 the UK has been at the forefront of efforts to ensure that lending by the multilateral banks strongly supports the delivery of appropriate animal welfare standards. The UK Government has worked collaboratively with a range of interests to achieve a number of significant successes;
- A change to the Environmental and Social Policy of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) requiring all future lending to adhere to EU standards on animal welfare.
 - A review by the European Investment Bank (EIB) of their approach to animal welfare in their lending, leading to a commitment to ensure that all EIB lending will reflect EU animal welfare standards from 2015.
 - A revision of staff guidelines on animal welfare at the International Finance Corporation (IFC), particularly highlighting the wider economic, social and environmental benefits of improved animal wellbeing. In addition, the new guidance used for IFC lending related to animal husbandry has been aligned with World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) standards.
 - Increased awareness of the need for appropriate farm animal welfare standards at both the Asian and African Development Banks.

Conclusions

This Report highlights the considerable amount of successful work undertaken by the Government and its partners over the last 5 years on animal welfare; in a wide range of areas. It also demonstrates our strong commitment to animal wellbeing and improving animal welfare standards in Europe and beyond.

In the future, we will continue this commitment; working collaboratively with our European and international partners and other stakeholders in this area to provide: strong and focused leadership; share knowledge and experience; and help build capability.