

# Essere Animali's Reporting of Programs (2020)

*This document contains responses written by the charity. ACE has made no content changes other than the removal of confidential information.*

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## Program 1

**Program name:** Investigations

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**Date commenced:** 2011

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### **Description:**

The nature of this program: We started Essere Animali in 2011 with the main goal to release the first investigations in our country. Since then we released dozens and with all possible styles: night visits in farms, placing hidden cameras inside these companies, visiting farms/slaughterhouses for a day with a pretext, and then with fully undercover workers.

The outcomes this program aims to achieve: The main aim is to show the reality of factory farming and the food system, or other animal abuse issues. We found this especially important when we started Essere Animali because prior to that no images were filmed in Italian farms and we thought showing the harsh reality of farms in our country was really important, since most people thought what was in documentaries at the time was happening only in other parts of the world. Moreover we wanted to move the focus of the Italian animal rights movement on this issue, since it was then very active mostly on animal research and anti-fur campaigns, especially in the more grassroots part. One more aim has definitely been giving strength to vegan promotion and campaigns

The interventions employed to achieve these outcomes:

- Using TV's and media: collaborating with journalists for their stories and being a reliable and professional source of information and footage or possibilities to film inside farms
- Using social media with a professional strategy to maximise the impact and the reach of any investigation
- Especially at the beginning participating in dozens of festivals and conferences to bring our unique vision of factory farms from the inside, something new and fresh for the movement at the time.

## How do you measure the outcomes of this program?

- Number of people reached (through media or social media)
- Number of tv and media talking about the investigations or using our footage
- Changes happening thanks to the investigations (interventions by authorities, companies cutting contracts with farms)
- Positive impact for ongoing campaigns (growth of signatures on petitions, pressure on corporates or other campaigns targets)

## Do you collaborate with other organizations in this program?

We often collaborate with renowned photographers like Aitor Garmendia of TrasLosMuros project, and Jo-Anne McArthur of WeAnimals.

As for organizations:

- We quite often collaborate to release their investigations translated into italian, or launching their work on the italian media (LI214, Otwarte Klatki, Animal Rights Netherlands/Belgium).
- Whenever needed we offered logistic help to other organizations interested in filming and doing investigations in Italy (VGT, Soko Tierschutz, freelance investigators working for Four Paws and other organizations)
- Whenever italian media is interested in stories or footage from other countries we work as a liaison and put them in contact with those we consider the most useful organizations and activists ( a national tv piece on finnish fox farms has been done thanks to us putting the journalist in touch with the head of investigations of Oikeutta Elaimille for example; other similar cases happened during the years)
- We collaborated with Otwarte Klatki to film horse markets in Poland for our horse slaughter investigation in 2014.
- We collaborated with Promuoviendo el Veganismo for a joint investigation in french foie gras farms in 2015
- We collaborate with Eurogroup for animals to use our footage for their political lobby work and campaigns (especially on fish welfare, where our footage has been critical)

## What are your top 5 biggest outcomes for this program prior to 2019?

Outcome 1: In 2016 Rai 1, the italian main national tv channel, dedicated a full 1 hour [“Speciale Tg1”](#) to our investigation work. It was aired quite late but nonetheless it got 1,6 million viewers

Outcome 2: In 2015-2016 we had our first collaboration with Report, the most important investigative journalism tv program in Italy. [This first work with them was aired in april 2016 and watched by 2,5 million people.](#) It was focused on the renowned company Amadori and their pig and chicken farms in the Emilia Romagna area, and has led to the amazing result of [the head of](#)

[the farm owned by Amadori recently entering a plea deal](#) to avoid a trial for cruelty and killing of animals. Since then we worked with Report on 5 more cases, bringing them directly inside factory farms and fish farms or giving them footage and contacts of other organizations' investigators for other countries (Finland, Hungary, Poland).

Outcome 3: French national tv France 2 dedicated [a full 30 minutes special to our Parma Ham investigations](#). We brought their reporters inside a pig farm supplying Parma Ham and got a lot of space for interviews and our footage. The program "Envoye special" has been seen on prime time by almost 2,5 million people in France. [In the same months the Daily Mail did a special on Parma Ham with us](#). Both media gave international visibility to our work and the problems hidden behind this world renowned italian product.

Outcome 4: Since early 2012 we managed to expose for the first time ever in our country most of the standard practices in factory farms for many species, releasing the first comprehensive investigations on pig farms, egg laying hen farms, mink farms, dairy farms, horse slaughter, fish farms, chicken hatcheries and the first investigations on Parma Ham pig farms. We also released the first investigations done completely by undercover workers in Italy. This means during these years our footage has become an important reference for anyone wishing to find out about animal cruelty in our country, we have become the main source of infos and footage for journalists and managed to spark debates on the media and politics on many issues (the italian Minister of Health shared our investigations twice on her official facebook and twitter accounts, calling for more controls on farms). Last but not least, we definitely moved the focus of the movement on farmed animals, now at the center of campaigns, attention and debates.

Outcome 5: Thanks to these collaborations with tv reporters, and space on tv news for our investigations, every year our footage reaches millions of people. In 2016 we counted a reach of 15 millions people on tv alone; in 2017 of 13 millions; in 2018 of 18 millions. To this we have to add the reach we get on social media, which varies but has been up to 20 million users a year before 2019.

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## Program 2

**Program name:** Legal actions

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**Date commenced:** 2015

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## **Description:**

The nature of this program: Our investigations show a lot of cruelty happening inside farms and slaughterhouses. Part of it is perfectly legal treatment of animals, even if that means terrible conditions, but other footage shows illegal acts of cruelty, which we started filing complaints for in 2015. During our investigations we also found evidence of environmental crimes or sanitary problems, and we decided to file complaints on these issues too, in order to get visibility on the media for the conditions animals live in and have farms fined.

Our legal team also worked to help the campaign to close mink farms

## The outcomes this program aims to achieve

- Short-term: charges and fines for factory farms; exposure on the media of cruelties happening inside farms; trials for animal cruelty; closure of farms
- Long-term: creating legal precedents, with abuse on farmed animals charged with the same law now used to defend only pets. This we consider especially relevant, since it means moving abuse to farm animals from a fine to a criminal offence and thus also help the advancing in legal status of farmed animals. In the long term this will be the base to look at for new protection laws.

The interventions employed to achieve these outcomes: Investigations, lawyers work, media work

## **How do you measure the outcomes of this program?**

- Number of complaints filed
- Media exposure for our joint investigation and legal work
- Impact on the sector (farms closing down or big companies sewing ties with them)
- Results in trials

## **Do you collaborate with other organizations in this program?**

In one legal work on a mink farm we collaborated with Lav, jointly suing a 13.000 mink farm and bringing it to closure

## **What are your top 5 biggest outcomes for this program prior to 2019?**

Outcome 1: Our six month investigation with hidden cameras in a Parma Ham supplier in Forlì, created a great scandal, with the video watched by 500.000 people on youtube alone and articles on the press in England, China and Hong Kong. Our legal team managed to have [a Corpo Forestale inspection the same day](#) the investigation was released, which found incredible conditions and full evidence of what our videos showed. This led to the start of the first ever trial

for animal cruelty to a factory farm owner in our country. We consider this case particularly important for the long term results of our legal action project.

Outcome 2: In 2017 we managed to [close a 10.000 rabbit farm after an investigation done with tv journalists of La7](#). The tv program created quite a scandal and our complaint brought to inspections. The farms had illegal cages and some environmental and sanitary issues, and never reopened after being fined and forced to adjust to the law.

Outcome 3: In 2018 we released [a shocking investigation in a pig farm supplying Parma Ham](#) and our lawyer managed to have an inspection on the same day. The footage showed horrible cruelty, with pigs killed with a sledgehammer, and officers of Corpo forestale found some important evidence on site. A petition to close the farm was launched, reaching 280.000 signatures, and we also had meetings with local institutions and the mayor of the town. Thanks to this pressure we can now confirm that the farm has closed down at the end of 2019, after completing the last birth and fattening cycles.

Outcome 4: In 2018 we tipped the Corpo Forestale and helped them inspecting a Parma Ham pig farm near Brescia, in the north of Italy (the same we had visited with Daily Mail journalist Ian Birrel a few months before). The conditions of overcrowding and filth, alongside lack of some authorizations, [brought to a charge for the owners and a fine of 26.000 euros](#)

Outcome 5: In 2016 we started filing complaints on most italian mink farms because of their rooftops made of asbestos, which was very popular in Italy back in the '70's/'80's. Now asbestos should be removed. This legal action, even if on a side issue, helped give high fines to a few farms, force others to very expensive works, and brought to closure one of the country biggest ones, housing more than 30 thousand animals. A different kind of legal work helped bring to closure two more mink farms.

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## Program 3

**Program name:** Vegan outreach campaigns

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**Date commenced:** 2012

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### **Description:**

The nature of this program: If we want to solve the problem of factory farming and animal suffering the most important choice each of us can make on a daily basis is to stop eating

animals. We consider this message at the core of our animal rights vision and work to convey it in a positive and inclusive way.

The outcomes this program aims to achieve: To move as many people as possible towards a plant-based (or vegetarian, reducetarian) diet and create a positive debate on the issue, combating negative stereotypes on vegans

The interventions employed to achieve these outcomes: We work in different ways on vegan outreach: leafleting, social media engagement and facebook advertising, creating veg challenges and with a specific website where we publish and share interesting and appealing vegan information/recipes.

### **How do you measure the outcomes of this program?**

- Number of participants in our veg challenges
- Number of veg guides leafleted
- Reach of our facebook ads campaigns
- Number of visits on our [www.ioscelgoveg.it](http://www.ioscelgoveg.it) website

### **Do you collaborate with other organizations in this program?**

We recently started collaborating with Veganuary and brought the project to Italy, with the great result of becoming the country with the 7th largest number of sign-ups.

### **What are your top 5 biggest outcomes for this program prior to 2019?**

Outcome 1: We launched our Veg Week challenge in 2014. At first it was only a facebook event to create community and propose a daily menu. Since 2015 it has been professionalized and we created a sign-up form, with a series of daily emails, a downloadable guide with a weekly menu and a lot of infos. From 2015 to 2018 we had more than 50.000 sign-ups to the challenge.

Outcome 2: In 2016 we launched our [www.ioscelgoveg.it](http://www.ioscelgoveg.it) (i choose veg) website. We managed to collect hundreds of recipes from more than 40 italian chefs and foodbloggers, creating a wide web of contacts for our future projects and making it quite rapidly become one of the first results for vegan recipes on google. In the first years this specific website attracted about 100k unique visitors a year.

Outcome 3: In 2014 in Milano we co-organized with an animal sanctuary which has become the biggest and most acclaimed veg festival in Italy, called MiVeg. The event attracts up to 10.000 people every year for a full weekend. In 2018 we left the organization to the sanctuary alone, because it is a time consuming project and since the logistics were now well established, we decided to use resources on other projects.

Outcome 4: In the end of 2016 after the launch of loscelgoveg.it website we printed [our first veg eating guide](#), distributed at festivals, events, street stalls and to volunteers in different cities. We started a project of leafleting it in front of universities in 2018, with a total of 20.000 copies distributed that year in Bologna and Milano. We had already printed 10.000 more in the two previous years.

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## Program 4

**Program name:** Fish welfare corporate campaign

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**Date commenced:** late 2018

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### **Description:**

The nature of this program: In Italy the consumption of meat has been declining in the last years, but eating fish has been steadily going up. Fish are the most killed animals, the most neglected ones in the legal system (and even in the farm animal protection movement). We decided to focus on them with a campaign with three main goals: show how today more than half of fish in the market comes from industrial farms and not from the sea, try to reduce the number of fish killed in our country and create better conditions for these animals in farms.

The outcomes this program aims to achieve:

- Give visibility to the neglected suffering of fish in farms
- Create awareness on the sentience of fish
- Supermarkets adopting stricter welfare policies for fish farms
- Influencing better legislation on aquaculture

The interventions employed to achieve these outcomes: Investigations; petitions; corporate outreach and pressure campaigns; media work; networking with european organizations

### **How do you measure the outcomes of this program?**

- Media and tv reach for the campaign and investigations
- Reach of our investigations and videos on the web and social media
- Number of companies adopting our requested policies for fish

## Do you collaborate with other organizations in this program?

On a european level and on a future political campaign we work closely with Eurogroup For Animals

## What are your top 5 biggest outcomes for this program prior to 2019?

Outcome 1: [Our fish farm investigation in 2018](#) has been the first of its kind in Europe and was released by [The Guardian](#) and a few spanish media, along with most of the italian press talking about it.

Outcome 2: This footage was particularly important for the whole european fish welfare movement, and has since been used widely by Eurogroup for Animals and other organizations, because it showed directly for the first time some problematic issues they were working on in their political lobby work.

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## Program 5

**Program name:** Ban fur farms campaign

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**Date commenced:** 2013

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### Description:

The nature of this program: When we launched the project the fur farming sector had already been banned in quite a few european countries and other organizations were releasing investigations and getting a lot of media attention. We decided to launch a similar project with the goal to get a ban in our country, where the production and number of farms was small but tried to expand

### The outcomes this program aims to achieve:

- Short-term: create awareness on the presence of mink farms in Italy; stop the expansion of the market and halt plans to open new farms
- Long term: a national ban on fur farming



The interventions employed to achieve these outcomes: Investigations; legal actions; media work; online and offline outreach; petitioning; local campaigns whenever needed; contacts with politicians and institutions, both local and national ones;

### **How do you measure the outcomes of this program?**

- Impact on the fur farming sector (number of animals killed, number of farms)
- Direct results with local campaigns opposing new farms
- Presence on the media and people reached

### **Do you collaborate with other organizations in this program?**

When we launched our first investigation and the campaign in early 2013 we contacted Lav, who had worked with politicians to propose a fur farming ban in the Parliament, and started coordinating behind the scenes with separate but aligned campaigns.

In a couple local campaigns to halt the construction of new farms we worked with Lav local groups or small local organizations. An important campaign, which led to stopping the opening of a new farm in a small town, and then closing it down a few years later when it managed to open in a nearby town, was run with local Lav group and coordinated efforts with a committee of neighbours and citizens.

### **What are your top 5 biggest outcomes for this program prior to 2019?**

Outcome 1: Our campaign was launched in february 2013 with the first ever investigation in italian mink farms, aired on prime time tv on Canale 5 and viewed by almost 5 million people. The investigation took 18 months to be completed. Another investigation released in 2015 was aired by Tg1 on prime time, seen by 4 million viewers.

Outcome 2: In 2013-2014 we managed to halt the construction of a 40.000 mink farm twice, first in Lombardia and then in Modena, in the Emilia Romagna region. In march 2014 the city council of Modena after our campaign and meetings even issued a statement banning the opening of new mink farms in their area. This project for what would be the biggest mink farm in Italy has never been proposed again.

Outcome 3: From 2013 to 2018 we helped stop the opening of 3 more mink farms in the Lombardia region of Italy. 2013-2014 saw the highest prices ever for fur pelts and the mink farmers association was heavily promoting a transition to mink farming for anyone who had other kinds of farms. We started this campaign in the right period, since a lot of projects were presented in many city councils and we got leaks and information from local residents or even politicians opposing the farms. About 10 farms opened anyway, but our work was vital to contrast what could have been a much higher number of farms in Italy now. FYI: our campaign and the fur crisis has brought the number of active farms in 2020 at 10, a number lower than 2013.

Outcome 4: In early 2018 along with the Italian elections we launched a public campaign and contacted all political parties, asking them to take the pledge for a ban on fur farming. 5 out of 6 of parties now composing the Italian Parliament publicly said they would vote for a ban. No discussion has taken place yet, since Italian politics did not work out very well in the last years.

Outcome 5: The number of minks killed in Italian farms has dropped from 200.000 in 2014 to 145.000 in 2018/2019 (now about 100.000)

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## Program 6

**Program name:** Foie gras corporate campaign

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**Date commenced:** 2015

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### **Description:**

The nature of this program: In 2015 we had the opportunity to film some foie gras farms in the south of France along with Spanish friends of Promoviendo el Veganismo. Since in Italy the production of foie gras has been banned since 2007 we decided to launch the investigation along with a campaign asking supermarkets to stop selling foie gras in their shops. We launched a petition and started what was our first corporate campaign, which has been really useful to get contacts with managers of the main companies in the market and to learn how to deal with them. This is a campaign we never invested a big budget and resources in, but was very important to activate our supporters and activists and get some victories, sometimes small and sometimes big, important for motivation and fundraising.

The outcomes this program aims to achieve: Expose the cruelty behind foie gras and stop the sale of this product in all Italian supermarkets

The interventions employed to achieve these outcomes: Investigations; petitions; corporate campaign; demonstrations; media work

### **How do you measure the outcomes of this program?**

- Number of supermarket chains banning foie gras
- Articles, reach and visibility on the media for the campaign

### **Do you collaborate with other organizations in this program?**

We collaborated only with Promoviendo el veganismo for the 2015 investigation

### **What are your top 5 biggest outcomes for this program prior to 2019?**

Outcome 1: The investigation was released on [Corriere della Sera](#), the most important italian newspaper

Outcome 2: The foie gras campaign had good media visibility: it was featured in Speciale tg1 in 2016, and also on Rai 2 food program "Eat Parade". Our first campaign victory was featured in newspaper Corriere della Sera too.

Outcome 3: Before 2019 all but two italian supermarkets who previously sold foie gras have agreed to ban it from their stores after our campaigns, with a total of about 11.500 stores involved. FYI: In 2019 we got on board one of the last two, and just one remains as target of the campaign

Outcome 4: In early 2016 michelin starred chef Pietro Leemann joined our campaign and took part in a video on the cruelty of foie gras, asking to sign the petition. Some media talked about his support for the campaign

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### **How does your organization's work fit into the overall animal advocacy movement?**

We consider Essere Animali a farm animal protection organization, even if a really small fraction of our work goes to other programs ( fur farming and circus animals)

### **How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your organization's ability to carry out your programs?**

Italy has been heavily impacted by the pandemic and we had to cancel a lot of events: a veg festival organized by our Brescia volunteers in june, street and media actions for the Veg Week in may, along with fundraisers and community events for volunteers and supporters for a few months.

We also had to completely halt our outreach program in universities since the end of february, with no exact date of universities reopening yet communicated by the italian government. And of course all relationships with corporates have been halted for a few months from the end of february to mid-june.

Since also all investigation work was halted for three months (which may impact our plan of releases for 2021), our head of investigation used the lockdown time to work on a report on the factory farming system in Italy from 2010 to 2019, which came out as a very detailed and useful paper and got some space on the press too.

During the pandemic we also used the occasion to get a lot of space on radios, tv's and articles on the press correlating the risk of zoonosis to factory farming and the animal based food system.

**Have you taken any steps to improve programs that you deemed less successful (due to COVID-19 or otherwise)?**

A few years ago we put a lot of energy and resources into creating and running local groups and coordinating their street activities, trying to have them special, media attractive, bold or highly visual. This was really time consuming and brought little results. Some of the local groups closed or have been closed and this has slowly changed and brought us to a deeper discussion and analysis of local and street activities in 2019-2020.

We started Essere Animali with the idea to carry out highly visual and media attractive actions similar to those of Greenpeace or what Igualdad Animal/Animal Equality and other european organizations were doing at the time. We still do some of these, but we reduced them a lot because we valued them as time consuming, sometimes expensive and no more relevant and important as they were for our organization's visibility and media reach back then when we started.

We now work on a different way: there is no plan to open more official Essere Animali chapters around italy except for the three in Milano, Bologna and Brescia (those who work smoothly and well by themselves), but instead we are creating a network of volunteers who can be a contact in their area and can be engaged for specific campaigns/projects.

**Have you cut off any unsuccessful programs to make room for other ones (due to COVID-19 or otherwise)?**

As already mentioned we immediately started with a clear main focus on factory farming, the food system and the promotion of plant based eating. But in our first years we also did some other campaigns, for two reasons: because we wanted to help on other issues whenever we saw a possibility for results, and because some topics could maybe get more attention and where useful to grow our base of followers/contacts and have a wider audience to engage with factory farming activism.

In the last years we stopped completely campaigns on zoos and dolphinariums, and also our outreach on animal research (apart from an investigation carried out in 2019 because we had a unique possibility to film the first one in our country on that topic and thus help those organizations and campaigns working on these issues).

We still carry out just one or two minor activities a year on circus animals, because a national ban seems very near and we want to still put the spotlight on the issue and then claim our part in what will be a huge victory, since we released some of the most interesting investigations on this issue a few years ago.

This focusing was decided also to have more resources for farm animals corporate and vegan outreach campaigns.

**Are there any other outcomes for past/discontinued programs, not mentioned in the Program Tables, that you would like to mention?**

We helped close down the Dolphinarium of Rimini. The company was already in the middle of a legal battle, and we helped push the situation leading protests and media actions, often along a small local grassroots group. They closed down at the beginning of 2018.

In 2015 as part of a coalition of local organizations we helped halt the culling of dozens deers in the park of Ravenna

In 2015 we helped translate and promoted in Italy the documentary Cowspiracy, which created high interest and became a real case: in less than a couple years more than one hundred screenings were organized by volunteers all around Italy. The film has been screened also inside many county and city councils and in the Italian Parliament, with our presence as speakers.

**Is there anything else you'd like us to know about your charity's programs, not mentioned in the Program Tables?**

Our investigations and expertise on the factory farming system and its impacts on animals and the environment has been really useful for local residents' campaigns which managed to halt the construction of huge factory farms. We always gave our help to community coalitions and events, speaking at their conferences, using our name and investigations to get more media attention in the area, and they always appreciated and recognized our role. For example in Ceneselli we helped the campaigns that managed to stop the construction of a 30.000 pig farm, and in Schinevaglia of a 13.000 pig farm.

We consider these struggles vital for the movement not only for the short term results, but also because they give us the possibility to get in touch with average people concerned about their environment and bring to light the suffering of animals in farms.