

Norway plans to slash subsidies to fur farms

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This undated handout photo made available by the Four Paws International group shows foxes at a fur farm at an undisclosed location in Finland in 2013

Norwegian fur farmers denounced Tuesday a government proposal to slash financial support to the controversial industry and warned that it could lead to farm closures in vulnerable rural areas.

The Norwegian government has proposed to cut 17.8 million kroner

(\$2.35 million, 2.1 million euros) in agricultural subsidies to the farmers, accounting for more than half of total state aid to the industry.

"If it is maintained, this proposal is very badly thought out," Guri Wormdahl, spokeswoman for the Norwegian Fur Breeders' Association told AFP.

According to the group, Norway's 280 fox and mink fur farms have a turnover of more than a million kroner each and create jobs and economic growth in some of the country's most far-flung regions.

Cutting subsidies would threaten "about half of the farms", Wormdahl said, adding that the government gets good value at just 100,000 kroner (12,000 euros, \$13,200) in subsidies per farm.

"This will mean fewer nurseries and hospices in rural districts. It's a policy that takes a short-term view," she said.

Animal rights groups critical of the conditions of animals in fur farms welcomed the proposal, which is up for negotiation with Norway's agricultural trade groups.

"Fur farms are presented as the most profitable farming sector but they still demand tens of millions of kroner in special aid," said Live Kleveland from the Norwegian Society for Protection of Animals in a statement, adding that the vast majority of furs are exported.

"Sixty-eight percent of the population want to dismantle fur farms and most likely do not want their taxes going to this controversial sector."

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