

The consequences of introducing animal based welfare assessment in legislation and official control – an interdisciplinary seminar at SCAW, SLU 4th October 2011

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Acceptance and attitudes – producers, retailers, consumers, citizen, experts

Abstract: The presentation summarizes attitudes and acceptance of animal welfare policy and animal based assessment by various social groups (results of surveys and interviews in the Welfare Quality project and recent expert interviews). Swedish producers, retailers, consumers and citizen support animal welfare policy broadly. The experts interviewed, veterinarians and others, support the idea of animal based assessment rather than environment or resource based assessment; they see the idea as easy to communicate to consumers (also supported by the findings of the Welfare Quality Citizen Juries). Experts interviewed disagree only about the implementation of the assessment system in policy. Animal welfare policy depends from consumers and citizen that support animal welfare with more diffuse attitudes, from different perspectives, from ethical and value based views, in terms of willingness to pay, as groups that have no direct contacts with farm animals and no detailed knowledge about different assessment systems. Their attitudes help to frame the expert discourse about assessment in the broader discourse about animal welfare in Swedish society and public policy. Animal based assessment requires such framing and broader support but its functioning requires more than acceptance by different groups. Advantages and limits of animal based assessment, what is to be included in animal based measures, and the possibility of combination of different forms of control will be themes of continuous debate. For the long-term development of animal welfare policy further factors than animal based assessment are important. Scenario analyses show that success or failure of animal welfare and assessment measures depend from the development of agricultural policy, food quality and safety and their integration in overarching policies of sustainable development.