

# **Report No. 5: Animal Welfare Comparative Report – Producers, Consumers, Supply Chain Actors in Sweden and other European Countries**

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This report summarizes similarities and differences between Sweden and other European countries regarding animal welfare discourses and policies, including debates and methods of implementing animal welfare measures. Comparative data from WQ-reports and publications, “Eurobarometer”-studies and some further publications are used. The report follows the main themes in the reports about Swedish producers, consumers and supply chain actors (reports 1-3), but does not take up all themes in detail (not all are taken up in the comparative studies); furthermore some general aspects and conclusions about communication of animal welfare to consumers are discussed. It seems important to point out that:

- the comparison between the countries and groups was not systematically done in the WQ-project (that is, the groups and countries compared differ between the reports and publications), and
- the differences between countries found in the reports as less important than similarities and joint views from actors in different countries. This is especially true for farmers (which is not surprising after decades of Common Agricultural Policy where European farmers have been “socialized” into thinking and acting in European perspectives).

## 1. Introduction

The WQ-project investigated for a number of European countries the views of producers, consumer and supply chain actors regarding animal welfare and animal welfare policies. To some degree (that is: not for all EU countries) comparisons are done between the countries in WQ-publications, and some similarities and differences have become visible

- in terms of views and attitudes of different actors,
- in approaches in European countries to regulate and control animal welfare.

Heterogeneous approaches of regulation remain under the increasing “Europeanization” of policies, strategies and regulations through the EU. The differing approaches in terms of policy styles and instruments are

- the economy and market based policy model in the UK and the Netherlands,
- the state and administration based policy model in Norway and Sweden,
- the spatial, localized and thematically focused based policy model in France and Italy.

All dominant models make use of more traditional policy instruments – (a) regulatory, command and control strategy (based on governmental institutions) or (b) market based instruments using labeling and other market conforming strategies to communicate and manage animal welfare.

The “Eurobarometer” attitude research shows that consumers have difficulties to optimize information and make informed choices. This empirical result can, however, be interpreted differently when using different theories, frameworks of paradigms (see below, Bock and Miele). In a practical perspective the result can be seen as showing the necessity of a more integrated approach to animal welfare policy in which the specific weaknesses of each approach should be compensated through combination with other approaches. The main

problem with animal welfare seems that of communicating it between the actors, in the public and in public policy – the scientific discourse about and measurement of animal welfare is part of that broader issue. To combine the advantages of different policy models in integrated strategies of animal welfare assessment and communication, a further interesting question is: How to integrate animal welfare policy and assessment in strategies and policies for sustainable development implemented in all EU countries?

The policy options will be discussed further in report 6 where trends and development are in focus. For the comparative report it is only required to keep in mind a “two level structure” of animal welfare strategies,

- the “subjective components” of actors attitudes, acceptance, willingness and behavior and
- the “framing components” of regulatory and policy approaches.

In the further design of policy approaches one question is: What can be concluded from differing views and attitudes in terms of policy instruments and policy mixes?

Methodologically seen the comparison of similarities or differences between Sweden and other countries should be used cautiously – being aware of the selectivity of countries and the specific functions and roles of groups that articulate their views and attitudes about animal welfare. The results referred to below are “spotlights” in a largely “dark” (or knowledge missing) policy arena of animal welfare. The groups of producers, consumers and different supply chain actors, firms and retailers, may differ considerably in their attitudes and in their behavior. As the available comparative reports for the WQ project make visible: differences between various groups of producers, consumers, citizen, commercial actors make the comparison between countries complicated.

## **2. Comparison of attitudes and behaviour of producers**

There are several studies available comparing producers in European countries that work with WQ-data. The ones referred to below give a broader picture, but not very systematic in terms of data available and countries compared – the sequence of presentation is from broader comparison (more countries, more general themes) to more specific (less countries or more specific themes).

1. From the data of the WQ-project a comparative analysis about European pig producers is available. The following question is answered: How do European pig farmers (from Sweden, Norway, UK, Netherlands, France and Italy) perceive and define (a) animal welfare generally, (b) in terms of measures and (c) of producer schemes? (Bock & van Huik 2007)

**General perception of animal welfare:** Comparing across the countries mentioned above the salient point is not the differences between farmers from different countries but that there are two main groups of farmers across the countries with regard to their general perception of animal welfare.

“... it is possible to distinguish between two groups of farmers. The first describes animal welfare primarily in terms of animal health and the fulfilment of basic physiological needs. They consider animal welfare important for its impact on zoo-technical performance and, thus, economic results. Most of them participate in basic and top quality assurance schemes. The second group defines animal welfare in terms of the possibility for animals to express their natural behaviour and centres on the notion of the freedom and comfort of the animals. Most of this group participate in specific animal welfare or organic schemes. For these farmers animal welfare is important for the animal itself, for their moral obligation to take good care of animals as well as for reasons of production and economic performance. The same distinction can be made in assessing attitudes towards current and future animal welfare regulations and farmers’ readiness to implement stricter measures in the future. “ (Bock & van Huik 2007, p. 939)

*Evaluation of specific animal welfare measures by the farmers:*

“Farmers in basic and top quality assurance schemes generally favoured the continuation of the status quo, whereas farmers involved in the later two types of schemes favoured stricter regulations and measures. These different attitudes can partially be explained by the fact that some of the new measures have already been implemented by farmers in the last two types of schemes (and in the French top quality assurance scheme). ... There was also a clear link between farmers’ definitions of animal welfare and their attitude towards some of the new measures. This was most evident when housing systems and questions of hygiene were involved. Farmers in basic and top quality assurance schemes were opposed to outdoor housing as they thought it would reduce hygiene, endanger animal health and negatively affect zoo-technical performance. Farmers in the specific animal welfare and organic schemes were generally in favour of straw bedding and referred to the importance of animals expressing their natural behaviour. These arguments fitted with their definition of animal welfare.” (Bock & van Huik 2007, p. 938f)

*Participation in producer schemes:* Producer schemes exist in various European countries as quality assurance schemes that include animal welfare components but are not to be seen as animal welfare schemes in the strict sense of the term.

“Most farmers expected that participation in quality assurance schemes will become mandatory in the near future and that staying outside of schemes will only be possible for very small farms, operating in a local niche market; not for ‘real’ professional farmers who produce for a larger market and sell their pigs to non-local slaughterhouses and retailers. But there were also some notable differences between countries. Whereas most Italian farmers were convinced that in the future all farmers would have to participate in some sort of animal welfare scheme and perceived this as advantageous, only about half of the Norwegian farmers shared this view. They had no

faith in higher prices for better animal welfare and morally objected to dealing with animal welfare in this way. Promoting a product as animal friendly would in their view imply that other products were not, or were less, animal friendly. British farmers expected that the existing schemes would become integrated in a national scheme, with a focus on animal welfare. The majority of Dutch farmers thought that schemes would remain in place and that participation in them would be advantageous for the future position of their farm.” (Bock & van Huik 2007, p. 935f)

Though not mentioned here as a “remarkable difference” the results from interviews with Swedish pig, cattle and poultry producers (see report 1) say: participation in producer schemes is seen practically as a necessity for market access and many farmers participate in several schemes simultaneously. Furthermore, Swedish producers seem more supportive than other EU producers of the idea that: it would be better to have in future a single, public and neutral information system with clear information about animal welfare and the farm products (meat, dairy products, eggs) instead of many competing labels that many consumers may not be able to distinguish from each other.

An overall conclusion from this comparative study in the WQ-project is, that in spite of significant differences in policies, approaches, control measures for animal welfare, the European farmers should be viewed as a group in that national differences are only one - and a limited - factor that makes differences between them. Other factors differentiating the European farmers seem to be more important than national differences - their farming and behavior practices, also insofar as they count more for the participation in different types of animal welfare schemes.

*2. The attachment of farmers to their animals* was analyzed in a further report referring to Swedish, Dutch and French cattle, pig and poultry producers that have been studied in the WQ-project (Bock et al 2007). In this study a specific framework was used to identify varying levels of attachment of farmers to the farm animals.

“The analysis makes use of the framework provided by Willkie (2005) who distinguishes four types of relationship of varying levels of attachment and detachment. This suggests that the frequency, intensity and intimacy of farmers’ contact with the animals defines the level of attachment or detachment that farmers feel for their livestock. ... Professional farmers’ relationships with farm animals ranged from concerned attachment (and even attached attachment for a few farmers) to detached detachment. Hardly any of the farmers qualified their relationship with all their farm animals as attached attachment. Generally, they only felt such close, emotional bonds with their pets and sometimes a few cows or pigs. Our analysis confirmed that animal species matters as does the purpose for which they are kept, the number of animals, the length of their stay on the farm and the frequency, intensity and intimacy of the contact between the farmer and the individual animal. In general farmers felt more attached to cows than to pigs or chicken as they find cows more likeable and are able to enter into mutual relationships with them. Farmers also felt

closer to breeding than to fattening animals, because the former generally needed more individual care and attention and stayed longer on the farm.” (Bock et al., 2007, p. 120)

This result of comparing a more limited number of European countries fits in the broader picture of farmers as a specific group of animal welfare actors, as producers in the sense of a functional and professional group with specific attitudes, knowledge, experience and practices that are not mainly dependent on policies and animal welfare programmes. The animal welfare programmes are a new and intervening factor that represents an external control of their practices of animal husbandry and limits their own knowledge, experience and expertise. In that regard the following conclusion for the “attachment”-study seems important for the future of animal welfare policies:

“The ongoing process of agricultural scale-enlargement and the concentration of animal production in a smaller number of large farms will continue to influence farmer-animal relationships, since these developments increase the number of animals that a farmer has to look after. At the same time more technological devices are being used for taking care of the animals. From our research we would expect these trends to contribute to a more detached relationship between farmers and their animals: with the animals becoming de-individualized as group care replaces individual care. Animals can even be de-animalized when they become perceived as solely living tools of production. There may, hence, be good reason to worry about the weakening of farmers’ attachment to certain animals in sectors such as meat production, where scale-enlargement and intensification is ongoing. This could be counterbalanced by a tightening of animal welfare legislation, to promote the adaptation of production systems that strengthen farmers’ contact with individual animals, counteract the disappearance of individuality within the group and prevent farmers from seeing animals as part of the “production machinery”. (Bock et al, 2007, p. 121)

*3. Comparison of policy approaches from the European pig farmer studies* (Bock and van Huik, p. 934f) with data from the WQ-project is available for the following countries: UK, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, France, Italy (that in this study only pig producers are compared has to do with the time of its preparation: in the WQ-project pig producers have been interviewed before other producer groups – as is also indicated in the first sentence of the following quotation).

“Studies of environmental and agricultural policy and the first set of studies on the regulation of animal welfare within Welfare Quality ... lead us to make the following cautious distinctions between countries: with Norway and Sweden being statist, with a strong corporatist element; The Netherlands, the UK and to a lesser extent France being liberal with a strong corporatist tradition and Italy being state-centralist. ... The above categorisation fits well with the level and type of animal welfare regulations that exist within these six countries .... In France animal welfare laws are set at the level of European Directive (2001/88/EC) whilst The Netherlands has implemented a few additional measures. In both countries some farmers participate in different

production and marketing schemes which require compliance with more stringent animal welfare measures .... Thus, in these two countries, levels of animal welfare above the legal level are realised in the market arena. ... In Norway and Sweden the issue of animal welfare is primarily resolved by legal regulations which are at a significantly higher level than the EU directive .... Only recently have the first production schemes been developed that focus specifically on animal welfare and use this as a marketing device. The UK takes a position somewhere in the middle, with relatively strict animal welfare legislation (beyond the EU level) and the existence of several specific animal welfare schemes. Both may be partly explained by the high level of public concern and activism, especially following the BSE crisis. This pushed politicians to tighten the law and to implement the Food Safety Act (1990). In response retailers developed quality assurance schemes that included several stringent animal welfare measures .... In Italy public concern about animal welfare is moderate and has not resulted in high levels of public engagement and activism. Consequently there is little reason for government, farmers or retailers to tighten legislation or design animal welfare production schemes .... Italian legislation is set at the level of the EU directive and only very recently have production schemes that pay specific attention to animal welfare have been set up.”

When comparing policy approaches with regard to their influence on the practices of farmers, it seems difficult to obtain a clear impression. Rather than driven by clearly distinguishable practices of producers animal welfare policy seems to be driven by public concern, animal welfare activism, and crises like BSE. Which policies farmers themselves would prefer, market based or regulation based or other ones, is not easy to describe – it depends also on specific conceptual frameworks and policy descriptions. In all EU countries animal welfare policies are influenced by a European-wide issue attention cycle that was during the 1990s to a large degree a reaction to the diseases and scandals in animal welfare that happened in Europe. This reactive way of policy - independent of the policy styles - is something which should be taken into account in assessing animal welfare policies. Such policies have not developed from a continuous, consequent practice of improving animal welfare in consensus between the actors, but in reaction to problems which seems to be out of control of all actors.

*4. Researchers in the WQ-project from Norway (as non-EU member) have studied Norwegian producers' and consumers' views of animal welfare* (Skarstad et al, 2007) and identified a skepticism towards “industrialized” agriculture, a skepticism which during recent years has been found in other countries as well. The following quotation gives an impression that similar debates as that in Sweden (see other reports of this study: the “Swedishness”-debate, the national or local origin of food, and the focus on farmers as producers of animals and animal welfare) are not just specific to Sweden, but can be found in other countries. It seems that such discourses about local/national food production and farming styles are influenced by diffuse motives and critical views of modernized or “industrialized” agriculture (no longer by the older motive that was dominant in many national agricultural policies: that of gaining national autonomy in food production) and have as a basic motive that of food quality.

“Thus, both consumers and producers viewed a good animal life as involving a balance between freedom, care and economy, which may suggest that domestic animals cannot be reduced to either nature nor society .... Our study largely confirms the mentioned alliance between primary producers and consumers .... this alliance was expressed through many consumers’ and producers’ common expression of their scepticism towards an industrialised, profit-driven system of agriculture. Although there were some producers who did not believe that animal welfare is poorer in the EU, producers and consumers generally tended to converge around the idea that – all in all – farm animals in Norway have a better life than farm animals raised in other countries. Industrialised agriculture, as is the norm in *other* countries – with farmers showing little *care* for and having minimal contact with the animals, treating them as *objects* for the purpose of making *profit* – seemed to both many consumers and producers to be the most egregious example of a bad life for animals. ... The turn to quality production is often associated with the emergence of alternative food networks, that are being established as an alternative to industrialization and commodification of food on a global scale .... Our findings confirm previous studies linking quality production to the “local” dimension, supporting an analysis of animal welfare regulations as a way of promoting an alternative to industrialisation and globalisation. Murdoch and Miele ... and Murdoch et al. ... characterise the turn to quality as a movement from a generic, standardised production system towards forms of production that are more specialised and dedicated. But there are also important elements in our material that open up for another interpretation. These elements witness to the possible effects of making animal welfare “a regulatory object” for the purpose of establishing high quality food production. In Norway, animal welfare is likely to be transformed into a quality attribute in order to promote Norwegian agriculture in anticipation of increased international competition. Thus, animal welfare regulations are established not only as an *alternative* to a globalised and industrialized agriculture, but as a strategy for competitive advantage in a globalised world of largescale operations” (Skarstad et al. 2007, p. 84f).

In Sweden the debate was less influenced by the idea of “splendid isolation” with regard to EU-membership, but still in Scandinavian context in which one can see a separation line between small agricultural producers (Norway and Sweden) and large agricultural producers (Denmark).

### **3. Comparison of attitudes/acceptance of consumers and citizen towards animal welfare**

*1. “Eurobarometer” 2007:* The so-called “Eurobarometer” attitude surveys (with representative random samples of the inhabitants in each member state) have not often taken up animal welfare questions, but still 3 times (2005, 2007, 2010) in recent years so that one can compare the attitudes of citizen and consumers more broadly than for countries in the WQ-project.

According to the Eurobarometer study from 2007 the concern of citizen about animal welfare and food quality is high in all countries, but higher in Sweden (74% in Sweden, 64% in all other countries; there are some differences between results from WQ project results and this survey – the higher concern in Sweden according to this survey may be a consequence of the method, the sample and the formulation chosen, but does not need to be seen as a contradiction to results from the WQ-project). The high level of concern seems to reflect the problems mentioned above - BSE etc. - that influenced the public attention to animal welfare as a consequence of which it entered policy agendas.

Eurobarometer 2007 – the levels of trust of citizen in animal welfare actors do not differ significantly between Sweden and most other EU-countries (only significant differences in the new member states):

- relative high expectation/trust (above 20% or responses) is attributed to farmers, veterinaries, national governments and animal protection organizations (that is: actors that can be seen as having or being able to use expert knowledge; according to the recent Eurobarometer survey, the trust is much higher in medical/veterinary experts),
- relative low expectation/trust (below 20%) is attributed to the European Commission, consumers, shops and restaurants.
- The “European public therefore envisions a situation where farmers are mainly responsible for their own livestock, assisted by veterinary professionals, and regulated by national governments who are in turn pressured by civil society. ...This varies slightly in the new Member States, with farmers seen as even more influential (53%), whilst national governments are seen as less equipped for taking action here (18%).” (p. 27)

*2. Regarding the question how consumers want to be informed about animal welfare* results are available from the Eurobarometer study 2007 and from the study of Mayfield et al 2007 (comparing consumers in Sweden, Italy and Great Britain); the latter are for few countries only, but more detailed than the Eurobarometer results.

How do European citizen want to receive information about welfare-friendly products? This question is answered in the Eurobarometer study 2007 as follows:

“The need for greater information on food sourcing is in further evidenced by views on the specific matter of food labelling. Overall results here are almost exactly identical to these seen for the results on information while shopping ..., with 33% agreeing that labelling enables them to identify welfare-friendly products and 55% disagreeing. Again, this seems more of a problem in the new Member States, where only 23% agree. ...These results are very much in line with the results from the previous survey on attitudes to animal welfare, where respondents were asked whether, when shopping for meat, eggs or milk, they can easily identify products sourced from animal welfare-friendly production systems from their labelling. Here over half (51%) said that they could never or rarely do this, with only one fifth (20%)

saying they could most of the time and 23% some of the time. Again it was notable that this was particularly a problem in the new Member States. With the exception of eggs..., labelling schemes in the countries of the EU tend to be largely voluntary when it comes to the issue of the animal welfare conditions under which animals are farmed. Consequently, we see much variation between countries when it comes to results for this question ” (p.44).

According to this study there is not a strong difference between Sweden and the majority of EU-countries, but rather between the new (East European) member states and the rest. The study by Mayfield et al. 2007 gives for the three countries compared a better explanation for the findings:

“If the hypothesis is accepted that consumers would use product information regarding welfare attributes of food products if it were provided, the next issues to be considered are likely to be what type of information consumers would find most useful and the quantity and quality of such information. Survey respondents were asked to rank in importance a number of possible types of information that might usefully be included on product labels. This information had to be ranked as either: ‘very important’; ‘fairly important’; or ‘not important’. The types of information were: a simple welfare assurance mark; a welfare grading system; information on where the animal was kept and information on what the animal was given to eat. ... Consumers were questioned as to whether they considered it important to include information on where animals are kept. Most respondents, particularly those in Italy (80%), stated that it was very important and, in GB and Sweden where the majority was smaller (55% and 50%), a significant number of respondents considered it fairly important (32% and 39%). The number of respondents who thought it not important was consequently low. Similar results were seen in response to the question regarding the importance of what farm animals are fed except, perhaps, for Sweden where the number of very important responses was lower and the not important responses slightly higher. The Swedish result can be explained, perhaps, by reference again to the previously discussed comments regarding the confidence Swedish consumers have in the welfare-friendly systems already employed by their farmers generally. ... The confidence of Swedish consumers in the quality and safety of food produced in their own country appears to be given further credence if the responses of surveyed consumers to questions regarding the inclusion of a simple welfare assurance mark and/or a welfare grading system on the product label, are considered ... Only 36% of Swedish respondents considered an assurance mark to be ‘very important’ with a further 39% believing a grading system to be ‘very important’. The number who stated that they believed these devices to be ‘not important’ were relatively large at 15% and 17% when compared to consumers in GB (9% and 11%) and particularly so when compared to Italian consumers (7% and 5%). Both the Italian and British consumers responses are significantly different to those from Sweden (at the \*\*\* level for both for the assurance mark, and the \*\*\* level for Italy and \* level for GB for the grading system). It would seem that consumers in Italy would prefer more assurance in the animal

welfare-friendliness of the products they purchase through the adoption of welfare assurance and grading schemes than do either Swedish or British consumers. On the other hand, the Swedish results might be described as revealing a degree of complacency on the part of consumers or, at best, an over reliance and over confidence in the efficacy of existing production methods in Sweden.” (Mayfield et al 2007, p. 68f)

Although the questions to consumers were much more detailed in this (telephone interview) study than in the Eurobarometer studies, the results leave the actors and decision makers still in an unclear situation – what to conclude? Should the product information and labeling just follow the consumers’ attitudes and wants that seem full of insecurity, reflecting ad hoc- and general answers that may be different when one asks more specifically and discusses more in-depth the questions with consumers (as in the focus group studies in the WQ-project)?

The problem is that a simple transformation of survey results into information spreading models is not reliable and methodologically doubtful (the question “how do consumers want to be informed?” seems general and vague). This opens a discussion of a more complex interpretation of consumer behavior that is not only focused on the buying acts and information for that, but takes into account long-term development and change of consumer behaviour (which implies learning, attitude and behavior change).

*3. Focus group discussions* (in Sweden, Norway, Italy, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Hungary) have been done in the WQ-project to explore the range of animal welfare concerns, the knowledge about animal farming and the animal food purchasing preferences of diverse groups of ordinary citizens. The conclusions from these more in-depth studies with qualitative methods are as follows (Miele 2010, p. 9f):

“First, the participants in the seven countries showed high interest in the treatment of farm animals and most of them were under the impression that positive changes have been achieved through recent European and national legislation as well as positive initiatives by retailers and other meat supply actors. Second, in most countries the majority of participants had limited knowledge of animal farming practices, but they tended to associate negative welfare with industrial-intensive methods of production (factory farming) and large-scale production (mass production), whereas they tended to associate positive welfare with organic, free range and extensive/ outdoor systems of production, as well as small-scale farming. ‘Organic’ was unanimously perceived as the most welfare friendly system of production across the seven study countries. Third, the vast majority did not prioritise animal welfare considerations while shopping for food, and many thought that they were choosing welfare friendly products while buying ‘*quality assured products*,’ i.e. they would expect all quality products to be produced in an animal friendly manner. Product labels and brands are considered useful sources of information for assessing the animal friendliness of products even when they do not carry any specific welfare claim. Their importance varies across countries, consistent with availability: most important in the UK, Sweden

and the Netherlands, least important in Norway and Hungary. In Italy and France brands are considered important for assessing welfare friendliness, even though most brands make little or no explicit reference to animal welfare. Fourth, while the consistently positive answers lend support to the view that a norm has been developed in Europe about consumer responsibility for animal welfare, consumer action (i.e. what people actually do in order to enact this norm) is strongly dependent on trust in experts, food suppliers and regulatory institutions.”

The conclusions from these focus group studies are somewhat better at showing the problems with consumer attitudes and behavior than the simple national comparison in Eurobarometer studies. One important result is the finding that consumers have a generally limited knowledge about animal welfare and farming practices. The following Belgian consumer study, with an even more detailed discussion on consumers’ attitudes and preferences, is an exemplary study to discuss the question: What to conclude from the available – and not always consistent – information about consumers attitudes, views, preferences?

*4. In a Belgian consumer study about citizens’ attitudes to animal welfare* the results are discussed with regard to attitude/behaviour connections (Vanhonacker et al. 2010). This is furthermore important for interpreting the results from the comparative studies in the WQ project and the Eurobarometer surveys.

“People’s preference (or rejection) of higher welfare products was more closely associated with moral issues than with quality or sensory ones. The main reasons for choosing animal welfare products were the higher acceptability of higher welfare production methods and respect for animals. By contrast those who did not have a preference for higher welfare products, tended to ignore the animal origin in order to avoid feelings of guilt .... In current marketing strategies, animal welfare is incorporated in broader quality assurance schemes ... rather than having a specific and dedicated ethical claim or label. Respondents’ negative associations between higher welfare products with price and availability matched findings in the literature .... Yet, the extent to which these negative associations inhibited claims of pro-welfare behavior (i.e., buying higher welfare Products) was inversely related to the personal priority that individuals gave to animal welfare. Efforts to communicate animal welfare issues with the public need to acknowledge the variety in people’s interest in animal welfare and their engagement in pro-welfare behavior .... While peoples’ behavior towards animal welfare varies, most citizens agree about the inadequacy of animal welfare-related information on food products, both in terms of availability and the way in which it is currently provided. They see the need for information that is credible, reliable, and can be interpreted at glance. The public’s need for credible and reliable information led to them expressing a preference for a source that is perceived as free from vested interests (such as the government) to communicate welfare-related information. Ideally, such information should be the result of an integrated approach, reflecting the general opinion that farm animal welfare is a joint responsibility. Respondents favored a product label that is focused specifically and solely on animal

welfare in a transparent format as the medium for communicating this information. Although this study sheds some light on the public's needs and interests in information related to animal welfare, practical implementation remains particularly challenging with respect to unambiguously determining what is "good animal welfare" and what amount of information should be communicated to the public and by whom." (Vanhonacker et al. 2010, p. 564f)

One main finding from this study – not a surprising result, but an issue that seems less thoroughly investigated in the WQ-project – is, that it is necessary to go beyond that what is often taken as a fact: that there is a dissonance between what consumers say and what they do, which is not telling the whole "truth" about consumer behaviour. The connections between attitudes and behavior need to be interpreted further. For that purpose a series of conceptual frameworks are available, especially from social-psychological research; the connections are seen as more complex, affected by different intervening factors (such as learning, behavior change, social group and class status, education levels, age, gender, and others). A cautious conclusion from that trend of action research can be: instead of aiming at a general model or communication strategy for consumers and citizen about animal welfare, the communication should take into account more the different situations of consumers and should be addressed better to different social groups (using different strategies for the groups). Such a conclusion has been drawn (earlier) e.g. in the research and discussion about environmental attitudes and awareness. The following comparison of results from several studies is part of that broader discussion.

*5. An interpretation of consumer behaviour*, relevant also for actors and action in the supply chain, is given by Miele and Bock (2007, p.2f) discussing the results from several studies. They come to three more critical conclusions beyond the simple articulation of European citizens' interest and attitudes about animal welfare:

- (1) "In the social sciences, neoclassical economists have proposed a simplified model of consumer behaviour based on the utilitarian principle where consumers can be thought of as trying to maximize their utility from consumption. Within this model, Bennet ... has argued that animal welfare can be interpreted as an unsought 'externality' of the production and consumption of animal products. However, there are multiple perceptions of this 'externality': for some, the suffering of animals provides a reason for avoiding partially or completely the consumption of animal products and for becoming vegetarian or vegan; for others, it reduces the satisfaction (net-utility) that they obtain from the consumption of animal foods." (ibid.)
- (2) "Mayfield et al. argue that the utilitarian argument brings into question the merits of providing greater information to consumers about animal production methods, a policy suggested by many policy-makers within the EU as a means of generating 'demand pull' to improve the welfare of animals. Consumers may be blissfully unaware (or '*actively ignorant*', as Evans and Miele ... put it) of the suffering of animals associated with the products they consume and derive high levels of utility from their consumption. Information on production methods may reduce consumers' utility and

thus their overall welfare. From a *human utilitarian* position, this is not desirable, at least in the short term.” (ibid.)

- (3) “In the longer run, the argument is that with appropriate information on animal welfare, consumers can demand the products with the animal welfare attributes that they want and so better satisfy their preferences and improve their welfare. In addition, if *animal utility* also becomes part of the equation (either in its own right or as a function of human utility), it will further strengthen the argument for improved consumer information on animal welfare and improved consumer choice. “ (Miele and Bock 2007, p. 2f)

The third conclusion offers the key to a more adequate understanding of the consumer/animal welfare issue than given in a utilitarian perspective (based on a simplified understanding of human motivation and action) and with a simple follow the consumers’ wants-rule (or giving them the information they want). No immediate and direct conclusions can be drawn from that what is found from consumer studies – the consumer behaviour needs to be interpreted and can be interpreted in different ways. The dominant utilitarian model from economics would not necessarily be the best for interpreting consumer choice; it looks in a short term, economically conditioned perspective on the buying decisions, but does not take into account social factors affecting the consumers in the long run, as result of awareness building, learning and behavior changes. Furthermore it is not realistic to expect that at some point in the foreseeable future most actors have similar ideas and attitudes; this is also not necessary to achieve a more coherent animal welfare quality system or policy. The ongoing discourse that is influenced by new knowledge and events maintains a situation where there is always unclear or insufficient articulation of interests by various actors, and animal welfare regulation and policy need to deal continuously with that. And the factors that have been discussed above, particularly in the Belgian study, should be taken into account in that they ask for differentiating strategies of animal welfare communication for different social groups.

#### **4. Comparison of supply-chains** (regarding animal welfare models, product information, firm behavior)

Answers to the questions how animal welfare related information enters the supply chain, at which points, through which actors and practices, in which ways, with which consequences and effects (to imitate a classical formula from communication research), seem difficult to obtain, even with the abundant empirical information from the WQ-project. With all the detailed country-specific and comparative information about different actors, attitudes, regulatory and policy practices, there seems still a deficit of knowledge about the food supply chains of which animal welfare has become a constitutive component. A general reason for that deficit may be the complexity of the interlinked and interacting processes and activities in supply chains. It is not one specific group and actor view or practice that can be studied but a complex cluster of interacting actors and practices. The very term of “supply chain” says already that it is a linear model of subsequent acts, formulated in the conventional economic

terminology of production, distribution and consumption that guides the analysis and understanding of supply chain problems. But this linear model of “chains” has come under criticism also in recent economic debates, and food supply chains may be an example for such that require more complex process models, e.g. networks. There is little research and no advanced research methodologies have been applied in the WQ project and further WQ research done so far to follow the complexity of supply chains.

A methodological step forward in conceptualizing the complexity of supply chains - still one to be elaborated systematically in further research about animal welfare and food production - can be the use of the concept of integrated or sustainable supply chain networks (Winkler et al 2006; not discussing here the somewhat illogical formulation of “chain networks”), where the economic components and further ones of supply chains are described, e.g. as follows: long term agreements, integrated planning, sourcing, making and delivering of goods and products along the entire supply chain, coordinated processes, improvement of effectiveness and efficiency of the value chain management, higher security and flexibility of material flows, better services, establishing of win-win situations, higher competitiveness and profitability for each partner (Winkler et al. 2006, p, 21). We are not going deeper into this discussion here, but it may be seen as a framing argument for the following, more specific conclusions, that linear supply chains should be reformulated in terms of networked processes.

For the following points the results from the Swedish supply chain studies (see conclusions report 3) should be seen as basic reference information. Animal welfare is by all actors in the Swedish supply chain, producers and retailers, perceived as something which should be part of animal management universally, not as something used to differentiate some products from other products. Communicating animal welfare to consumers is done mainly by referring to Swedish origin of products; only few labels in the retail sector and few producer schemes have the explicit aim to guarantee good animal welfare standards. The general interest and care for animal welfare by both producers and retailers is compatible with the view that animal welfare is seen as a non-competitive and non-market issue, rather as one for which governmental institutions have the main responsibility. This can be seen as a reason that limits activities and efforts to promote animal welfare in market strategies and by branding in Sweden.

Going one step further, these conclusions seem to converge with the finding from the interviews with Swedish producers (see above, 2) that Swedish farmers seem to support more than producers in other countries the idea that it would be better to have in future a single, public and neutral information system with clear information about animal welfare and the farm products (meat, dairy products, eggs) rather than many competing labels (that many consumers may not be able to distinguish from each other).

*1. The retailers’ action and determinants of that (Miele and Bock 2007):*

One argument from a more complex view of supply chain problems is given by Miele and Bock. It forwards the points of inter-organizational relations, power relations and market domination that prevail in food supply chains, with that also questioning the simple assumption that sellers follow buyers or consumers' demands. "While much of the existing literature relies on consumer-demand arguments for explaining the rise of animal welfare standards, Ransom's article uses sociological neoinstitutionalism, specifically institutional isomorphism, to reveal that agri-food organizations are either forced by large food retailers or by the demands of interacting with other complex organizations ... to adopt animal welfare standards in an effort to maintain access to markets, political power and legitimacy (e.g. to endorse policies of Corporate Social Responsibility). Further, due to the continuing uncertainty surrounding the definition of agricultural animal welfare and the standards and techniques used to ensure compliance, the evidence supports the theory that organizations will model themselves after similar organizations that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful." (Miele and Bock 2007, p.2; see also Miele and Bock, above, 3.)

## *2. The problem of trust between the actors (Eurobarometer 2010):*

Social and economic networks require, according to the intensifying discussion in recent decades, social capital, or more simply said: trust between the actors to function well and continuously. From different WQ studies (producers, consumers, retailers) the conclusion is supported: The actors in the supply chain regard each other with some distrust – and that will probably continue, in spite of all willingness to cooperate: producers/farmers see retailers as powerful actors with little interest in animal welfare and consumers as "thinking in terms of animal welfare but in their purchasing behavior forgetting that". Consumers – here we can also refer to recent Eurobarometer (2010) results – frame animal welfare mainly as food quality and security problems and demand from public authorities to do more (control) and inform more about food quality and safety. The majority of Europeans (64%) and still more Swedes (74%) are worried about the welfare of farmed animals – high levels of concern are also found about antibiotics or hormones in meat, pollutants (e.g. mercury in fish, dioxins in pork). Europeans and Swedes trust mostly experts as doctors and health professionals regarding food risks (80-90%), much less the farmers and the European institutions (less than 60%), and still much less the retailers/supermarkets and the food manufacturers (about one third or less). The consumers seem to be an "over-researched" interest group whereas the retailers seem to be "under-researched" (see also scenario analysis by Ingenbleek et al.), but this is finally not a decisive question. More important is: Who can drive animal welfare policy effectively – producers, retailers, consumers (as market actors), scientists, governmental institutions, animal welfare movements? Which coalitions are possible and effective? The questions seem to require to be thought through again in terms of networked processes.

## *3. Producer schemes:*

No specific animal welfare schemes are operated in Sweden and almost all farmers are participating in top- or basic producer schemes, often in several schemes simultaneously. The differences between producer schemes and "real" animal welfare schemes can be raised with

regard to that situation. But it seems that the comparison of the two types of schemes has not brought clearness about the limits of producer schemes with regard to conveying reliable information about animal welfare to consumers. The question of whether animal welfare schemes are always better at conveying animal welfare quality information more clearly, consequently, effectively to consumers is not yet finally answered. In the following section this question is discussed further.

#### *4. Animal welfare labels:*

From the Swedish studies in the WQ-project (see reports 1-3) an important result was that farmers/producers had no consensus about the potential of animal welfare labels (e.g. chicken producers saw more often an advantage of such labels, cattle producers not). Swedish consumers did not know the existing food labels well and there are no detailed results available about their views of animal welfare labels, only more general results about reliable information sources: consumer organizations, food experts and food authorities found highest trust, politicians and the EU the lowest. Among retailers the interest in animal welfare differs, as also their views about producer or retailer led schemes (a few of the latter exist, and the correspondence to producer schemes is not obvious). No detailed results are available about retailers views of animal welfare labels as distinct from other food or quality labels, but the conclusion from report 4 (see above) seems to support the one: there is some consensus among Swedish producers, consumers and retailers that good animal welfare standards do not necessarily require animal welfare labels as a market oriented approach would prefer. The option for or preference of specific regulations depends much on how animal welfare is perceived - as a public or a private good. Among the Swedish actors the view as public good and non-competitive issue seems to prevail and consequently to limit interests and efforts for animal welfare labels as brand names.

An important statistic from Eurobarometer is the low number of citizen - and no significant differences in Sweden compared to other EU countries - that see labels as useful to identify welfare-friendly products: "... 33% agreeing that labeling enables them to identify welfare-friendly products and 55% disagreeing." (p.44) Also this single result requires interpretation, taking into account the whole context of animal welfare and the supply chain. In the study by Mayfield et al 2007 the conclusion (referring also to Eurobarometer results) for animal welfare policy are clear:

"Consumers are generally in favour of welfare product labelling with an assurance scheme to signify the animal welfare provenance of meat and other animal products. Swedish consumers do not feel that this was as important as their GB and Italian counterparts, probably because they appeared to have more trust in their own farming systems. A significant proportion of consumers is also in favour of a welfare grading scheme. Most consumers had a positive willingness to pay for higher welfare friendly food products. These findings are generally consistent with those of a recent Eurobarometer survey of attitudes of EU citizens towards Animal Welfare ... The policy implications of these findings are clear. First, the market is failing to provide the choice of products that consumers want in terms of animal welfare

attributes. Second, consumers do not have adequate information on which they can base their purchasing decisions to satisfy their preferences concerning the animal welfare provenance of the food they eat. There is a strong case, therefore, to be made in support of an animal welfare labelling scheme for food products within the EU (and possibly applied to third countries - although this could be challenged under current trade agreements through the World Trade Organisation).” (Mayfield et al. 2007, p. 71)

As other studies referred to above (Miele and Bock 2007, Vanhonacker et al. 2007) also concluded: it is not simply a matter of informing consumers more, they are overburdened with information and they may in their own interest even not want to know how the conditions of animals are in modern agriculture – that is, consumers are in dilemma situation when acting with regard to animal welfare e.g. in purchasing food, and these dilemma situation should be taken up in animal welfare policies (it would, for example, require to see consumer behaviour as something that needs to be seen developing in a long term perspective, not as something of single, “atomized”, short term buying acts), not a simple “consumer enlightenment” model.

#### *5. Retailer led labels:*

There are still only few retailer led labels found in Sweden and the situation in other European countries is not very transparent. At first glance retailer led schemes seem to be a conventional economic policy instrument (in the sense of brand names and branded goods) that seems to fit into a market-based approach better than into a regulatory, state-centered policy approach. The situation in Sweden - in difference to other European countries as the Netherlands and the UK - is that of favoring a state-centered approach which finds support by most actors, but does not necessarily mean neglecting markets. For future possibilities of the role of markets in approaching animal welfare the results from expert interviews (see report 6) will be important.

#### **5. Comparison of views on animal based assessment measures**

Not much information is available from the earlier WQ studies – this debate seems to have come up with the WQ project, the project being a catalyst for this discussion. The recent interviews with experts (see report 4) give a more up to date impression of the situation. This debate is ongoing, within science, policy, and among the different actors in the supply chain. Among Swedish experts different interpretations of animal based assessment measures can be found, and this may also be the case for experts in other countries. Some experts, especially Swedish veterinaries see animal based assessment measures as the future of animal welfare – which reflects a specific expert view that is coherent with these experts being veterinaries and controlling animal welfare. Other experts, also non-Swedish ones, see animal based measures in a broader context with more variation: it may come up in future in combined solutions – as such of the combination of animal- and resource-based assessment approaches. Furthermore,

the discussion about animal-based measures is not ending with the proposal developed in the WQ-project, but it is an issue of ongoing expert discussion.

## 6. Conclusions from the comparative studies

No systematic comparison is possible for producers, consumer, supply chain actors and animal welfare policies in European countries; there are not sufficiently similar studies and data. It is however a question how much and what knowledge is required to understand the differences and problems in different countries. Collecting more (and more often) data about attitudes, views, knowledge and practices of different actors by way of attitude research may not be a way to achieve continuously better knowledge and with that knowledge possibilities to manage animal welfare. The conclusions from the empirical results are one problem, another one the rethinking and re-conceptualization of the roles of all actors in the animal welfare arena. This is what several publications of the animal welfare project have started to do, asking - cautiously - about the interpretation of empirical results and the concepts and theoretical frames used for that (and as a consequence of that the simpler question about differences between countries seems to be reduced to a less important one).

1. What *producers* can do to improve animal welfare seems to a large degree determined through their participation in producer led schemes as the ones found in Sweden, or in extended animal welfare schemes as found in some other countries. But this again is defined in the framework of economic functions and roles and does not - as in the case of consumer done above – ask for their further roles and social contexts. Producer studies often end with studying the influence of corporate actors such as farmers’ unions on the producers. For producers some concern has been raised within the (social-scientific) studies in the WQ project that they become less and less “attached” to their animals with the large numbers of animals that have to take care for in larger and larger farms, with less and less farmers, and with the short time they have the animals in the farm (e.g. pig production). Although this may give a “comfortable” answer to hand the responsibility for animal welfare over to other actors and control systems it should not simply be seen so.
2. What *consumers* think and what they can do about animal welfare (when buying food) is not determined through the (economic) definition of the consumer role and by research focusing on the buying act; reducing consumers to buyers implies to give them information about animal friendly products and production processes. The “simple marketing perspective” when looking at consumers in the animal welfare debate should at least be broadened to a “social marketing perspective” that studies more realistically how the consumers can influence the production processes and all economic and political activities linked to consumption, thus setting their action in a social context where they are not only consumers but also citizen.

3. What *citizen* can do (that consumers cannot) is beyond a short-term economic action perspective, takes citizenship and citizen rights perspectives into account. When consumers are seen as citizen one looks at their social interaction with other actors, their political behavior, and their behavior in a longer time perspective where such decisive developments for animal welfare happen as individual and collective learning, or changes of life- and consumption styles. It can be mentioned here, that the citizenship debate is broadening today in several dimensions – mainly towards global citizenship and towards ecological citizenship; both may imply important moments for animal welfare policies in a European context.
  
4. What *retailers* - who are seen by other actors as the powerful ones - can do to improve animal welfare seems strongly determined by their economic function and role. More than consumers and producers (that are perceived as individuals), they act as organized or corporate actors that cannot be addressed as persons. But it is doubtful whether one should see retailers only as market-determined actors when one looks in new terms such as mentioned, integrated supply chains, at their activities. Here the economic process that is conventionally described as “supply chain” becomes a social network in which as complex processes and interactions happen as in other social networks or in policy processes.
  
5. *Who can drive animal welfare policy effectively* – producers, retailers, consumers (as market actors), scientists, governmental institutions, animal welfare movements? Which coalitions are possible and effective? The comparative European reports do not give clear or commonly agreed on answers about such policy-related questions where one asks no longer about attitude and behavior of specific groups. But this does not say that they are useless when it comes to decisions. The question of actors’ cooperation is not only one of building trust or social capital, but one that requires more the study of policy processes, policy networks and policy instruments that can be combined in integrated strategies for animal welfare management. This requires as a first step to discuss the supply chain issues (see report 3) in a broader perspective of “integrated supply chain networks” as mentioned above.

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