



## Review

# Perceived importance and responsibility for market-driven pig welfare: Literature review



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## ABSTRACT

This review explores barriers and opportunities for market-driven pig welfare in Europe. It finds, first, that consumers generally rank animal welfare as important, but they also rank it low relative to other societal problems. Second, consumers have a wide range of concerns about pig welfare, but they focus especially on naturalness. Third, pig welfare is seen as an important indicator of meat quality. Fourth, consumers tend to think that responsibility for pig welfare lies with several actors: farmers, governments and themselves. The paper concludes that there is an opportunity for the market-driven strategy to sell a narrative about naturalness supplemented with other attractive qualities (such as eating quality). It also emphasizes that pig welfare needs to be on the political/societal agenda permanently if it is to be viewed as an important issue by consumers and if consumers are to assume some sort of responsibility for it.

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## 1. Introduction

Farm animal welfare has been a topic of public debate in several European countries since the mid-1960s, more than nine in ten EU citizens believe it is important to protect the welfare of farmed animals (Eurobarometer, 2016), and more than half of all Europeans express

that they are prepared to pay more for products sourced from welfare-friendly production systems (Eurobarometer, 2007, 2016). This interest and debate has increasingly led to a call for political initiatives (Fraser, 2008). Some of the debated concern has centered on the welfare of farmed pigs, probably because pig production is one of the biggest areas of farm animal production in Europe (Eurostat, 2014). In light of this, one strategy has been to implement legislation to protect pig welfare at national as well as international/regional levels in which formal regulations impose minimum standards of welfare. An example at regional level is the EU Council Directive 2008/120/EC (EC,

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2008), where minimum standards for pig housing are defined. Such legislative approaches do, however, have some limitations. One limitation is that the tightening of either local or regional animal welfare legislation may merely make local or regional pig production less competitive as the result of more costly production; any connected rise in imports might cancel out the improvements on pig welfare secured at the national or regional level. With growing worldwide trade in animal products there follows an increase in the intensity of price competition which makes it more difficult to use regional legislation to implement costly animal welfare improvements (Grethe, 2007). Another potential limitation is the complexity of obtaining international agreements on pig welfare legislation (Heerwagen, Mørkbak, Denver, Sandøe, & Christensen, 2015).

Furthermore, public concerns may not be fully satisfied by welfare requirements imposed by regulation, either because the public has a different understanding of animal welfare from that envisaged by the regulator or because of the level of welfare secured is not high enough (Christensen, Lawrence, Lund, Stott, & Sandøe, 2012). Animal welfare is a complex and multi-dimensional concept (Fraser, 1995; Lund, 2006; Mason & Mendl, 1993), and studies have shown that there is a difference between expert's and laymen's understanding of it (Lassen, Sandøe, & Forkman, 2006). Freedom from suffering and frustration are central components in both approaches, but in the lay perspective this is supplemented with the idea that living a natural life is a very important part of animal welfare. Disagreements can also arise over the level of welfare achieved – for example, over how many days of access to the open field the animals should be allowed or how much straw should be provided. Regulations whose content and level is in tune with the mainstream expert approach may result in a regulatory strategy that fails to fully meet the demands and interests of the public.

In light of these limitations, there has been a growing focus from policy makers on another approach to the concerns, namely a strategy where consumers are seen as the drivers of increased animal welfare standards (Grethe, 2007; Heerwagen et al., 2015). Such market-driven strategies rely on consumers paying a price premium for labeled meat products produced with welfare standards exceeding the regulatory norms. For actors in the meat supply chain the higher prices covers the increased production costs of animal welfare friendly production systems, making it likely that at least parts of the sector will move towards a production where the animal welfare is above the regulatory norms.

A number of things must, however, be in place for market-driven animal welfare to be a success. First, farmers must be willing and able to produce according to higher welfare standards. Secondly, there must be economic incentives in place that enable farmers to gain, or at least not lose, income by producing in this way. Thirdly, other actors such as slaughterhouses and meat processors must be willing to market special products with an animal welfare label of some kind. Fourthly, retailers must be willing to market and sell the premium products. Finally, consumers must be willing to buy the products at a premium price. For this to happen, consumers need to believe that animal welfare is an important issue. Furthermore, consumers need to assume responsibility and not just regard welfare as a problem to be solved through regulation. For if they do not assume responsibility, it is less likely that they will support the market-driven strategy and buy premium products. In this paper we focus on this consumer aspect of the issue.

Through a review of the literature, we aim to synthesize existing information about the willingness of European consumers to play their role in market-driven animal welfare. We will focus on pig production, as this is one of the biggest areas of farm animal production in Europe (Eurostat, 2014), and because several countries, including Denmark, have increasingly focused on marketing various grades of animal welfare in relation to pigs, in the form of welfare schemes and pork quality labeling options (Heerwagen et al., 2015). We will investigate two issues: 1) To what extent do consumers find pig welfare important? 2) Where does responsibility for ensuring the welfare of the pigs lie according to consumers?

## 2. Methods

The criteria for including papers in the review were as follows: All papers examined were peer-reviewed articles in English from international journals, dating year 2000 and after; all included qualitative or quantitative empirical findings; all reported findings from European countries and all discussed public perceptions and animal welfare in relation to pigs (or in a few cases non-species-specific animals yielding marketable meat produce). Literature on pigs as pets or laboratory animals was excluded. In addition to the database searches, relevant publications found in reference lists in publications and conference presentations were included where they met the inclusion criteria. The search was concluded in November 2015.

The searches used the following keywords, individually and in combination: Animal welfare, animal well-being, animal ethics; public, consumer\*, citizen\*, people\*; attitude\*, perception\*, opinion\*, position\*, view\*; pig\* and pork. The asterisk (\*) indicates word-trunks and includes non-defined endings.

Searches on 'Animal Welfare' brought up material on animal welfare and pigs/pork that would not have been captured by searches specifically on 'pork' or 'pig' (for example, if 'pork' or 'pig' were not part of the title, abstract or keywords). In the broad initial search process it was therefore necessary to search on 'Animal welfare' or related synonyms. The synonym tool used to find related terms was Parasaurus Englix ([www.Lingo24.com](http://www.Lingo24.com)). In the applied keywords, consumers as well as citizens were included, because these concepts are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature, without clear conceptual separation. By including both search words this review includes studies where participants speak from the point of view of a citizen, a consumer, or both. Consumer responses reflect values, interests and practices associated with buying, preparing and eating meat, whereas citizens responses reflect values, interests and practices relating to the common good and organization of society (Korzen & Lassen, 2010; Lassen et al., 2006). Whether a study queried consumers or citizens is important, because it can greatly affect the values being expressed and the responses given. Some studies are consistent and reflect on whether they deal with consumer or citizen perspectives (e.g. Boogaard, Boekhorst, Oosting, & Sørensen, 2011; Krystallis, de Barcellos, Kügler, Verbeke, & Grunert, 2009; Krystallis, Grunert, de Barcellos, Perrea, & Verbeke, 2012; Schröder & Mceachern, 2004; Sørensen, de Barcellos, Olsen, Verbeke, & Scholderer, 2012; Vanhonacker, Verbeke, Van Poucke, & Tuytens, 2007; Verbeke, Pérez-Cueto, de Barcellos, Krystallis, & Grunert, 2010). Others are imprecise in this regard and unreflective (e.g. Knight, Nunkoosing, Vrij, & Cherryman, 2003; Mayfield, Bennett, Tranter, & Wooldridge, 2007; Phillips et al., 2012; Tawse, 2010). Methodically the literature search was therefore broad, although the focus was on consumers, and in the review analyses the precise distinction is ignored given the difficulty of the matter. Throughout the rest of this paper the wordings used in the articles cited (consumer, citizen, people, participants) are also those used in the actual studies. Another important feature of the applied keywords is that *perception* is in this review interpreted as including expressions of willingness to pay (WTP). Consumer WTP refers to the maximum amount of money an individual would, hypothetically, be willing to pay in exchange for a good or to avoid an undesired alternative. The hypothetical nature of WTP often induces respondents to exaggerate their willingness (Lagerkvist, Carlsson, & Viske, 2006), and this could lead to the conclusion that stated WTP expresses attitudes rather than indications of economic value (Kahneman, Ritov, Jacowitz, & Grant, 1993). As pointed out by Bennett and Blaney (2002), among others, it is not entirely clear whether estimated willingness to pay is a sound measure of consumer preferences and relative values or merely a measure of attitudes on an arbitrary monetary scale. In the present review expressions of willingness to pay are thus integrated in the description of public perception.

Relevant studies were expected to be found in a very broad spectrum of social sciences, and therefore searches were conducted in

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