



CONSUMER
CONCERN...
Creating
a better
deal for
farm
animals

EUROGROUP
FOR ANIMALS

Consumers demanding change

The Eurobarometer, a series of large scale surveys carried out by the European Commission in all EU Member States, has revealed that the way farm animals are treated is a serious consideration for many citizens and consumers

“Eurobarometer presents overwhelming evidence of support for better animal welfare throughout the EU. This is an urgent wake up call to the European Union and indeed anyone involved in food production methods, including retailers, that over half of the consumers and voters want to see better treatment of farm animals”

Sonja van Tichelen Director
Eurogroup for Animals



Across the EU, billions of animals are farmed for their meat and other products – most are farmed intensively. Although current large scale farming methods used in the EU traditionally result in cheaper production costs and cheaper products sold to consumers, such methods cause distress and suffering to animals. Consequently these methods are not meeting the demands of the European public.

For decades, farmers assumed that cost is the main factor influencing the purchasing habits of consumers. However several opinion polls show that other issues such as quality, taste, origin and the way the product is produced may be as important to consumers as the price.

Animal welfare influences buying habits

Increasingly Europeans consider animal welfare a key factor when choosing farm animal products. Eurogroup for Animals believes that the development of farming standards which respect the needs of animals and their natural behaviour makes good business sense for governments, producers and retailers.

80% of Europeans think the rights of animals should be upheld no matter what the cost...

Farm animals matter

Eurobarometer shows that Europeans care about farm animal welfare. They have concerns about the farming of poultry, pigs and cattle....

Europeans care about broiler chicken welfare

There are currently 5.2 billion chickens farmed for their meat in the EU. They live in heavily stocked sheds, are kept almost continuously in dim light and are above all genetically selected to grow fast. This causes a host of welfare problems including lameness, skin diseases and heart failure which results in millions dying before the slaughter age.

Eurobarometer shows that Europeans are deeply critical of the welfare of meat chickens – 56% say meat chickens are among the three farm animals (including laying hens and pigs) whose welfare most needs improvement.



Most Europeans want welfare-friendly eggs

The 243 million European laying hens kept in battery cages can also suffer severe welfare problems. They are confined five to a cage in which each bird has a floor space less than the area of an A4 page in which to live. These living conditions restrict the birds' movement and mean they are unable to carry out their natural behaviours such as flapping their wings, stretching and dust bathing. Tens of thousands of birds can be kept in cages stacked six tiers high in one building. This system will be banned in the EU from 2012.

These birds often suffer from fragile bones, injured feet and claws and they cannot escape from other birds if aggression breaks out.

Eurobarometer found that 58% of those surveyed rate the welfare of laying hens as bad. 59% of regular shoppers said they would pay more for welfare friendly eggs and 53% of these shoppers already buy eggs mainly from non-caged systems

Meeting consumer demand

Although Eurobarometer reveals that most Europeans would like to buy welfare-friendly food, farmers, retailers and governments are not making it easy...

Europeans say it's difficult to find welfare-friendly food

Throughout Europe, consumers cannot easily identify welfare-friendly products on the shelves; a majority (51%) told Eurobarometer that it was difficult to identify from the labelling that the product was sourced from welfare-friendly production systems.

Under European law only eggs have to be labelled with the way they are produced (free range or battery). However, the law is not uniformly respected in all countries and does not apply to eggs imported into the EU or to eggs used in other products. In addition, misleading labels like 'farm fresh' and 'country fresh' and cheerful illustrations on egg boxes can make consumers believe they are buying eggs from free range hens.

The end effect is that consumers are not able to buy the welfare-friendly products they want and this in turn is having a negative effect on the potential profits that farmers and retailers could make from exploiting this market.

One third of Europeans are buying fewer animal products because they are not satisfied with the way animals are treated



Benefits and opportunities for all

Eurogroup for Animals believes that by improving conditions through farm assurance schemes backed up by appropriate labelling, animals, European consumers, retailers, farmers, and governments would all benefit.

- Consumers would get the animal protection they want
- Retailers could sell higher quality products
- Farmers could exploit market demand
- Governments could provide animal welfare and economic growth
- Farm animals would live a happier and healthier life.

43% of Europeans think about the welfare of animals some or most of the time they buy meat

Welfare at work

Case study

Lloyd Maunder is a family poultry rearing business, founded in 1898 and based in Devon, England. It employs around 800 staff and, through its partnerships with farmers, processes around 480,000 chickens each week.

Many Lloyd Maunder farms are accredited to produce chickens that meet the welfare standards for chickens developed by the UK's Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and required by the Freedom Food farm assurance and food labelling scheme established by the RSPCA in 1994.

The scheme encourages farmers to improve the ways in which farm animals are looked after and enables consumers to choose farm animal products which adhere to higher welfare standards.

Chickens on Freedom Food accredited Lloyd Maunder farms are reared in barns where they are given more space than in industry standard barn systems and are given the opportunity to express their natural behaviour.

The barns feature straw bales, perches and sometimes even toys like lightweight plastic footballs that the chickens can play with. The lives of these chickens are very different from those of many of their counterparts in the UK, Europe and elsewhere.



Increasing demand

During 2003, their first year of Freedom Food membership, Lloyd Maunder sold on average 7,000 birds reared under this system per week. Today, sales have grown 20 times to meet consumer demand and six major retailers now carry their products.

Thirteen years ago 70% of Lloyd Maunder chickens were reared under standard industry conditions – now fewer than 30% are kept in this way.

Lloyd Maunder also rears organic and free range chickens in response to consumer demand for higher welfare products.

Consumer interest and demand for farm animal products produced to high animal welfare standards is on the increase

The future

Working through legislation

Eurobarometer shows that most Europeans believe that the laws protecting farm animals do not go far enough. To bring about change governments need to introduce and enforce minimum legal standards which guarantee the protection of the welfare of all farmed animals and work with producers and retailers...

Europeans want government action now

According to Eurobarometer 53% of Europeans believe that their governments' farm animal welfare policies are inadequate



The way forward

Voluntary and industry standards

Eurogroup for Animals advises that governments, retailers and producers should work together to promote the development of voluntary farm assurance schemes guaranteeing high standards of animal welfare.

This requires policy makers throughout the EU to:

- Ensure farm assurance schemes are independently regulated and based on genuinely higher animal welfare standards
- Ensure that consumers can differentiate easily between competing schemes of different quality
- Develop standards for welfare assured farming recognised across the EC
- Make available funding from Europe's Common Agricultural Policy to develop and promote the schemes.

Eurogroup believes that adopting these principles will meet the demand of European citizens and provide a positive market opportunity to consumers.

About Eurobarometer



For more than 30 years the European Commission has operated the Eurobarometer – a series of large scale surveys and in-depth reports on social and political attitudes within EU member states.

A total of 33,000 Europeans were surveyed in 2005 on their attitudes to animal welfare and 25,000 were surveyed specifically about their attitudes to animal welfare as consumers.

For the full results of this survey visit: http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/euro_barometer25_en.pdf

About Eurogroup for Animals

Eurogroup represents the leading animal welfare organisations in the EU and has become recognised as a reliable and effective partner in dialogue with the EU institutions and all those involved in animal welfare across Europe.

Eurogroup works to reduce animal suffering throughout Europe by promoting animal welfare as a core element of sustainable development. In today's enlarged EU, animal welfare, consumer concerns and economic factors are increasingly interrelated. Eurogroup strives to ensure that animal welfare is taken into account in all relevant EU policy areas and that European laws designed to protect animals are adopted and enforced.

A vital part of Eurogroup's work is the coordination of campaigns into a consolidated approach in all Member States of the EU.

EUROGROUP FOR ANIMALS

6 rue des Patriotes | 1000 Bruxelles | Belgium

T. 32 (0)2 740 08 20 | F. 32 (0)2 740 08 29

e-mail. info@eurogroupforanimals.org

www.eurogroupforanimals.org