

Public attitudes and the understanding of animal welfare standards: could One Welfare help?

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In this presentation I will talk about the public understanding of farm animal welfare and I will refer to recent trends in Europe and in other industrialised countries. I will address three issues: Firstly I will illustrate how animal welfare concerns are constantly linked in consumers' mind to anxieties for human health and risks for the environment. After the experience of the BSE, FMD and other epidemics in the last decades, large scales, intensive systems of animal production have become the main source of these anxieties. Secondly I will talk about the 'market mechanism' that has emerged in Europe for addressing these consumers' anxieties and improving the welfare of farm animals. Here I will address how ordinary people gain knowledge about the quality of life of farm animal primarily from the information available on the animal foods markets, in the form of food labels or food adverts. Then I will point out to some of the limits of this approach: only certain aspects of animals' life are communicated while others are actively concealed (e.g. slaughter); the current unevenness of monitoring and assessment methods for farm animal welfare; the lack of regulation about 'animal friendliness' claims on foods.

This last point is very important since it allows food companies to suggest that the quality of life of farm animals is reflected in the quality of the food they buy (*tasty foods are produced by happy animals*) without the need to formally corroborate these claims with a standard of animal production that certify the 'animal friendliness' of the system adopted.

Thirdly and lastly I will reflect on the opportunities emerging with the One Welfare approach. By mirroring One Health, with its emphasis on an interdisciplinary approach to safeguarding the wellbeing and health for people, animals and the environment, this concept is a great opportunity to fully engage with the concerns of the public.

Key words: food adverts - food consumption - food labels - public understanding of animal welfare.