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## **Bringing Farm Animal Welfare on the Consumer's Plate – Transparency, Labelling and Consumer Education**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The welfare of farm animals (which includes cattle, pigs, sheep, goats and poultry) has become a high profile issue in Western societies. Food crises such as mad cow disease (BSE) in the early 1990s, bird flu A(H7N9) in the 2000s and, most recently, the 2013 horsemeat scandal (Jaskari et al. 2015) have raised the awareness of global health risks and ethical issues related to food production and consumption. Media coverage of animals' living conditions and of animal slaughter practices has further raised the profile of animal welfare (Evans and Miele 2012, Jokinen et al. 2012).

These high profile cases – as well as wider debates around the ethics of farm animal welfare, the environmental impacts of meat production, the health effects of meat consumption – have catalysed at times intense discussions about how individual consumers and society as a whole should act. The manner in which different stakeholders think about solutions to the 'problem of farm animal welfare' is critically dependent on their views on the ethical, environmental and nutritional issues at stake (see, for example, the diverse views and arguments advanced in de Bakker and Dagevos (2012), Diamond (1978), Graça et al. (2015), Miele et al. (2013), Cembalo et al. (2016), Sandøe et al. (2003), Springmann et al. (2016)), on the way in which they define the 'problem' and on the views they hold about the roles, responsibilities and influence of different actors. As a result of these divergent views, a whole series of solutions have been advanced, including (amongst many others): completely eliminating meat and animal derived products from diets; significantly reducing the volume of meat consumed; raising the welfare standards of animals farmed for food; encouraging sales of higher welfare products; better product labelling; and transitioning away from animal-based proteins to meat produced in laboratories (see, for example, de Bakker and Dagevos (2012), Dilworth and McGregor (2015), Jallinoja, Niva and Latvala (2016), Vainio et al. (2016)).

These, and other, solutions may face practical challenges. For example, they may have economic and social impacts on the livelihoods of farmers and food businesses, they may also have negative environmental impacts, or they may have adverse or unknown effects on public health. Even if these challenges could be addressed, the proponents of these solutions then need to consider how they can change consumer preferences. This can be described in very simple terms: could consumers be persuaded to give up tasty beef and delicious tandoori chicken meals, or could they be persuaded to replace meat with new plant protein food made of oats and beans? Put another way, if the aim is to change consumers' eating habits, we must first start by understanding their views and their motivations, and locating these in the context of individual and collective views on

issues such as animal welfare and the use of animals for food, the relationship between farming and farm animal welfare, the economic and societal importance of farming and of farmed animals, and ideas of place, location and landscape.

In this chapter, we explore the potential for food labelling to change or influence Finnish consumers' views on animal welfare and their food choices. Our central argument is that labelling can play an important role in changing patterns of food consumption (in this case, encouraging the consumption of meat farmed to higher welfare standards) but only where such labelling aligns with the issues that are of concerns to consumers (e.g. produced in Finland) and is implemented as part of wider processes of consumer education and awareness-raising.

## **CONSUMERS' VIEWS ON FARM ANIMAL WELFARE – BETWEEN MEAT AND HOT POT**

As Miele et al. (2013: 22) have pointed out, the scientific study of animal welfare is a relatively young but well-established scientific discipline. The authors argue that it is generally accepted that animal welfare is about *the animal itself*, and the increasing integration of biological sciences is contributing towards a greater understanding of the link between the animal's biology (e.g. species-typical behaviour and nutrition), its wellbeing and objective assessments of welfare. However, while animal welfare is increasingly focused on the individual animal, research in the social sciences suggests that consumers do not share this perspective. Instead, consumers tend to position welfare issues among broader ethical and value-laden conceptions of the human-animal relationship, such as pets and their wellbeing (Kylkilahti et al. 2016, Miele et al. 2011).

The increased media and public attention focused on animal welfare has stimulated discussions on animal rights and suffering. These have covered issues such as beating animals, raising chickens in cages, animal abnormal behaviours and inhumane treatment in slaughtering, all of which are well-known issues in large-scale food production (e.g. Kupsala et al. 2015). While these debates have led to increases in sales of organic and higher animal welfare products such as free-range eggs, the reality is that most meat continues to be produced intensively, where legislation and regulations define the welfare standards that are expected to be achieved.

Although the issues of farm animal welfare are increasingly recognised in Western consumer cultures, studies have also shown that consumers do not necessarily show any affinity towards animal wellbeing (e.g. Davidson et al. 2003; Schröder and McEachern 2004). For example, Evans and Miele (2012) have noted that eating meat and the use of animals for food are often taken for granted in certain affluent Western societies. They also argue that the main reason why consumers do not take animal welfare 'seriously' is that consumers do not recognise or acknowledge the connection between food (meat) and its origins (animal). Expressed another way, people 'de-animalise' the meat (Buller and Cesar 2007). For example, a living pig (animal) is transformed firstly to carcass (dead meat) and then to pork ribs and bacon (food ingredients). The journey of buying and eating meat for consumers usually begins in supermarkets where they choose, for example, between steak (beef) and chops (lamb). Furthermore, animal flesh is often sold in products using culturally familiar names (e.g. Lancashire hotpot, Karelian stew) which blur the distinction between living animal and 'dead' meat.

Another issue is that the majority of consumers' knowledge of farm animals' living conditions is no longer based on personal experience. Most people now live in urban environments and their understanding of animal welfare is based on information from the television, the internet, newspapers and social media, rather than on knowledge gained from visiting farms and seeing living animals (Evans and Miele 2012; Vanhonacker and Verbeke 2014). In addition, intensive farming techniques generally involve raising animals out of sight, for example inside cowsheds and piggeries. The consequence is that more people interact with animals through zoos and through the lives of their pets, rather than through farming and the lives of farm animals.

Despite these barriers to greater public understanding, empathetic attitudes towards animal rights have strengthened in the Western world (Franklin 1999). Recent academic studies suggest that consumers are willing to pay more for higher welfare in animal-based products (e.g. Napolitano et al. 2010), that consumers with pro-environmental attitudes are also concerned about the wellbeing of farm animals (e.g. Vanhonacker and Verbeke 2014), and that some consumers are transitioning from meat consumption to plant-based diets as part of wider moves towards more sustainable consumption (Vinnari and Vinnari 2014; Jallinoja, Niva and Latvala 2016; Vainio et al. 2016).

Despite this, many people, if they can afford it, continue to eat meat on a daily basis. As Harrington (1991) indicated 25 years ago, the majority of consumers have little interest in production systems' effect on animal wellbeing. There are many countries where there is limited consumer demand for higher welfare meat products (Lusk 2011), higher welfare products remain a niche market in most countries, and also those few consumers who buy meat directly from farmers' markets or from farms are engaged in a niche activity. Therefore, the route whereby meat products go from the farm to the dinner table is rather difficult to perceive and trace for many consumers; consumers do not see the processes of farming, slaughtering, cutting or packing, but they tend to assume that transportation and other practices are done following the rules and regulations imposed by animal welfare legislation.

## **FOOD LABELLING COMMUNICATING WITH CONSUMERS AND PROMOTING ANIMAL WELFARE**

Consumers' understanding of the path from farm-to-fork is not particularly helped by the complicated EU legislative frameworks which govern animals on farm, animals as food and the information allowed on food labels. The relevant EU legislation which exists to address animal products (albeit from more of a human-health and food safety perspective) includes the so-called "Hygiene Package" (consisting of EU Regulations EC 852/2004, EC 853/2004 and EC 854/2004) and the General Food Law Regulation (EC 178/2002) which enshrines the 'farm-to-fork' concept into law and places responsibility on the food business for things like traceability of the food product (Heyder et. al. 2010).

Country-of-Origin Labelling, or "COOL labelling", dictates how production and processing must be clearly presented to consumers to avoid any uncertainty. For example, bacon that contains pork from Denmark but has undergone significant processing in another country such as the UK, must indicate this on the label, for example, phrased as "Produced in Britain using Danish Pork." Earlier regulation of COOL labelling was replaced by the recently introduced *Food Information to Consumers* (or the "FIC") EU Regulation 1169/2011. The FIC is a broad piece of legislation which also covers allergen information and as nutritional labelling. It is expected that the COOL regulations will either remain the same or possibly become more stringent to avoid any issues of food fraud particularly involving blended meat products.

More directly related to animal welfare, however, the EU signed in 1986 its Council Directive 98/58/EC *Concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes*, which came into effect in 2009. This provides a baseline for animal welfare standards across the EU, although EU Member States can set stricter standards within their own country. This ability to set stricter standards has opened up many opportunities for the meat industry to appeal to broader markets of concerned consumers, but it has also resulted in a wide array of logos and labelling marks indicating varying levels of animal welfare, along with standards and logos on a variety of other food issues that often get bundled together with animal welfare such as organic, fair trade, and sustainability (Grunert et. al. 2014; Heerwagen et. al. 2015).

Beyond the legislative requirements, there are independent body or industry-driven standards circulating in the European market which are able to go beyond the minimum standards required by the EU. These are identifiable to consumers often in the form of logos appearing on the label and packaging. The existing animal welfare labels in Europe include, for example, the Danish label (Dyrenes Beskyttelse), Beter Leven in the Netherlands, Label Rouge in France, Krav in Sweden, and the Freedom Food label developed by the UK Royal Society for the Care and Protection of Animals (RSPCA) (Heerwagen, et. al. 2015). There are also industry standards and labels which cover animal welfare as part of wider requirements such as food safety. For example, the UK Red Tractor scheme covers all farm products including vegetable and dairy, food quality and safety, animal disease contingency plans and quality management systems. It also includes some farm welfare conditions, for example hatchery conditions for chicks and untethered exercise for cows and lambs (Krieger and Schiefer 2003). In Finland, the only national quality system concerning animal welfare is the industry-driven "Laatuvaastuu" (quality responsibility) that focuses on responsible pork production. This certification was created by the Association for Animal Health ETT, and was approved as a national quality system by the Finnish Food Safety Authority (EVIRA) in 2013 (Kaljonen 2016).

To complicate matters further, the scope of organic logos and labelling sometimes overlaps with animal welfare standards. Organic is often presumed by consumers to mean that foods are

minimally processed without the addition of chemicals, fertilizers in the soil or hormones in meat, and that there is a certain degree of attention to animal welfare, alongside a commitment to sustainable production along the food chain (Makatouni 2002). Not all logos appearing on food labels are created equally, however, and the level of organic purity or degree of animal welfare may be different. In 2010, the European Union (EU) introduced a mandatory logo for organic foods in order to make the identification of organic products easier for consumers (Janssen and Hamm 2012). The logo of the EU became mandatory for all pre-packaged organic produce within the EU; such products must now have at least 95% organic ingredients and the ingredients not grown organically must be listed on the label (European Commission 2007). The “Euro-leaf” logo is meant to symbolise the marriage of “Europe” (the stars derived from the European flag) and “Nature” indicated by a stylized leaf and the pale green colour, and also meant to represent high standards of animal welfare (European Commission 2016). The animal welfare specifications indicate that farm animals must be “freely grazing in open-air” and treated “according to enhanced animal welfare conditions” and (perhaps somewhat vaguely) ensuring 100% organic feed, although in some cases the use of “minimal additives and processing aids” is permitted (European Commission 2007). The United Kingdom’s Soil Association has produced organic standards for food destined for human consumption and meets (or in some cases exceeds) the minimum standards of the EU’s legislation.

The wide array of available logos, and underlying standards, in the EU means that it is difficult for consumers to differentiate between logos (even those directly focused on animal welfare), let alone to understand the animal welfare standards or performance that underpin terms such as “organic” and “sustainable” (Ramsingh 2016). Research suggests that consumers tend to conflate these terms and assume that higher animal welfare, higher quality and safer food are all related, and that products that perform well on one dimension will also perform well on the others (Harper and Makatoumi 2002; Grunert et. al. 2014).

## **EUROPEAN UNION, WELFARE QUALITY® ASSESSMENT AND CONSUMERS**

Changing consumer attitudes towards farm animals and meat production have highlighted the need to strengthen the dialogue between producers, legislation, trade and consumers. Labelling has been identified as one tool that can be used to structure this dialogue although, reflecting the discussion above about the problems with multiple labels creating confusion for customers, the EU concluded that it needed to develop a common strategy and standards on the European level. Starting in 2004, the European Commission funded a Welfare Quality® research programme (which ran from 2004 to 2009) to develop European standards for on-farm welfare assessment and product information systems, as well as practical strategies for improving animal welfare (Evans and Miele 2007; Miele and Kjærnes 2009).

The Welfare Quality® research programme was designed to enable an open dialogue between animal welfare scientists, consumers, producers and other stakeholders (Miele et al. 2011). When the research programme was launched 2004, consumers’ viewpoints on farm animal welfare were studied by conducting focus group discussions in European countries such as the UK, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Hungary, France and Italy (Evans and Miele 2012). The use of focus groups to produce information on consumers’ thinking was based on the idea that researchers wanted to explore the opinions of ‘ordinary’ consumers rather than of individuals who were already highly motivated on animal welfare issues (Evans and Miele 2008: 13).

The central aim of the Welfare Quality® research programme was to develop an effective welfare assessment framework that would both reflect the understanding of animal welfare scientists, and also be accepted by the public and other interest groups. As described by Blokhuis et al. (2010), the Welfare Quality® research programme attempted to deliver reliable, science-based, and understandable production information on the well-being of poultry, pigs and cattle. As a result of dialogue between different stakeholders, the research programme proposed a farm animal welfare assessment framework comprising four high-level principles and twelve supporting criteria (see Table 1 below; see, also, Veissier et al. (2011)). While some companies already use (elements of) the Welfare Quality® framework, the framework is still in the process of being developed and updated (Blokhuis 2015).

**Table 1: The principles and criteria of the Welfare Quality® assessment**

Principle	Description of the assessment criteria
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Good feeding	<p>1. Animals should not suffer prolonged hunger and they should have sufficient and appropriate diet.</p> <p>2. Animals should not suffer prolonged thirst and they should have sufficient and accessible water supply.</p>
Good housing	<p>3. Animals should have comfort around resting.</p> <p>4. Animals should have thermal comfort, i.e. not too hot or too cold.</p> <p>5. Animals should have enough space to be able to move around freely.</p>
Good health	<p>6. Animals should be free of physical injuries.</p> <p>7. Animals should be free of disease, i.e. farmers and handlers should maintain high standards of hygiene and care.</p> <p>8. Animals should not suffer pain induced by inappropriate management, handling, slaughter, or surgical procedures.</p>
Appropriate behaviour	<p>9. Animals should be able to express normal, non-harmful, social behaviours, e.g. grooming.</p> <p>10. Animals should be able to express the behaviours characteristic of their species, e.g. foraging.</p> <p>11. Animals should be handled well in all situations, i.e., handlers should promote good human-animal relationships.</p> <p>12. Negative emotions such as fear, distress, frustration or apathy should be avoided whereas positive emotions such as security or contentment should be promoted.</p>

### ***Finnish Context of Studying Animal Welfare***

While the Welfare Quality® assessment framework offered the potential to address at least some of the issues around product labelling, it was also important to understand whether and how it would work in practice. Of particular importance was understanding the relevance of the assessment framework to (the majority of) consumers who have limited knowledge of the natural behaviours of farm animals, or of the implications of current farming practices for farmed animals.

To explore these questions, we now look at consumer research conducted in Finland. Kupsala et al. (2011: 29) have shown that around 25% of Finnish consumers consider animal welfare issues while they are shopping for groceries. In their study, a majority of the respondents felt that it was difficult to establish what an individual consumer could do in order to improve the living conditions of farm animals. Interestingly, almost half of consumers in the study questioned the reliability of information directed to consumers on choices promoting animal welfare. Furthermore, further research by Kupsala et al. (2015) indicated that female gender, young age, urban residency, a non-farming background as well as social-equality attitudes were all linked to greater concern for farm animals.

As a part of a national Welfare Quality® research project, Finnish consumers' perceptions of farm animal welfare were explored in the autumn of 2013. As in earlier studies conducted in other countries, focus group was chosen as the method to gain information (Munsterhjelm et al. 2014). Five workshops were conducted and the participants were recruited from different backgrounds: (i) university students, (ii) social sector workers, (iii) hunters, (iv) home economics teachers, and (v) vegans and semi-vegetarians. A total of 23 people participated to workshops, of whom fifteen were women and eight men. The participants' ages ranged from 22 to 61 years. The workshops were planned and coordinated by the third author of this chapter (Kuismin 2014).

Using the specific example of pigs' welfare, farm animal welfare was discussed in the workshops under four themes: daily shopping and consumers' relationship with meat and meat products; the origin of animal products and farming practices; participants' views on the defining features of farm

animal welfare; the proposed principles and criteria of the Welfare Quality® assessment. The participants were also asked to think of possible ways of presenting the assessment results to consumers, and to consider how the welfare assessment might affect their willingness to pay for meat products.

Two distinct, albeit overlapping, themes emerged from the research. The first was that, for consumers, farm animal welfare is of secondary importance compared to the role of meat as food, to price, and to indigenous production (also Evans and Miele 2012). The second was that, when talking about animal welfare, consumers emphasised the importance of living a natural or nature-like existence; that is, farm animals' dignity and their individual welfare were central elements of consumers' interpretation of farm animal welfare. We discuss each of these below.

### ***Eating Meat: The Distinction between Animals and Meat***

We found that most consumers' understanding of farm animals is limited to meat as a product. For example, a pig is seen as pork or bacon to be consumed. When consumers are making food choices, the animal is often absent and the link to animal welfare is weak. This highlights how the connection between animal and food is dismissed (Evans and Miele 2012), although consumers did favour indigenous meat production (also Niva et al. 2004; Autio et al. 2013) and food packaging as important factors in their consumption decisions. It seems that the route of meat products from a farm to a dinner table is rather difficult to perceive for consumers; as Evans and Miele (2012: 312) have argued, the act of eating an animal is an astonishingly smooth and unremarkable practice in everyday life.

In fact, the workshops suggested that not only do consumers not think about the origins of the meat that they consume but that they are alienated and distant from these animals. Participants in the workshops argued that the recognition of the connection between animal and meat is associated with negative meanings. They commented that, when they were cooking meat, they did not think about the origins of the meat or differentiate between meat and meal. In fact, the terms that consumers used when talking about meat (e.g. "home-made", "Karelian stew") could well be interpreted as an attempt to avoid thinking about the origin of the meat. The following quotations show how ordinary consumers can consciously alienate themselves from the origin of meat products:

"Package says: 'Karelian stew meat'. I put these in the oven, and it becomes Karelian stew. I do not have a clue what I have had. Karelian stew anyway. That's easy." (Female, 39 years, home economics teacher)

"I admit I've fallen for that myself, like when I started getting grossed out by eating animals, it made it easier for me, you know if (...) it didn't remind you the food [of an animal]. I didn't want to think where it came from. (...) the more processed it is or more manufactured, somehow it distances you from the idea or the guilt or whatever sensation of it having ever been an animal and what it has gone through in all its life before it got here to our table." (Female, 29-years, vegans and semi-vegetarian group)

That is, Finnish consumers appear to conceptualise animal eating in similar ways as the consumers in the UK, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, where they emphasise meat as a significant attribute rather than the animal itself. It is interesting to note that research has suggested that consumers in France, Italy and Hungary are able to link animal welfare in broader sense to meat quality (Evans and Miele 2012: 308).

Packaging and appearances can further alienate consumers from the origin of the meat product. Our data suggested that if a package includes a picture of a "happy" chicken or has a picture of cows happily walking in green meadows, consumers felt more informed about the product and where the food comes from. Yet, in fact, this kind of information can be highly misleading as a description of animals' actual living conditions.

Meat packaging usually provides information not only on the content, but also on the country of the origin, on the producer (or company) and, on occasion, the farmer. From a business perspective, packaged meat has an obvious advantage in comparison with meat counters, because the packaging allows the use of persuasive and positive descriptions of the product such as 'examined and supervised domestic production'. In our study, the focus group participants agreed that domestic production was the primary factor they considered when buying meat products. This

implies trust in the ethicality of domestic products (Pettersson and Bergman (2007) reached a similar conclusion in Sweden), but also in the superiority of domestic over overseas products in relation to animal welfare practices. In general, Finnish consumers see domestic production to be safer, more reliable and purer compared with imported food (Niva et al. 2004). This is reinforced by, as in other Nordic countries, Finnish consumers having high levels of trust in regulatory authorities (e.g. Kupsala et al. 2011, Skarstad et al. 2007). In fact, workshop participants were almost dogmatic in the level of trust they had in domestic meat:

“It is for me at least with all the food I buy it is important for it to be Finnish. That's why all the package labelling is really important for me, so that there'd be a clear indication, it being Finnish.” (Female, 31-years, social sector worker)

“I can't say that I would buy that [Welfare Quality®] (...). Especially if there would be a price difference I don't think I would do. I reckon you'd still get the domestic stuff. (...) in a way if you had (...), produced overseas or cheap, and domestic and then you had this kind of ethical meat, then I'd still buy the domestic. (...) if it was the same price then I might buy the ethically produced stuff.” (Female, 25-years, university student)

Other studies have confirmed that, for Finnish consumers, one of the main motivating principles behind their food choices is that it is domestically produced (Niva et al. 2004: 23; Autio 2013), even if this makes it more expensive than imported products. In fact, Pettersson and Bergman (2007) found that, among Swedish consumers, low-priced imported meat invoked suspicion and opposition. Similarly, Vanhonacker et al. (2016) concluded that Belgian consumers considered domestic broiler production and its meat to be significantly superior to imported products.

The other important consideration is cost. The workshops suggested that, when consumers have the option of purchasing ethically- and organically-produced but more expensive foreign meat, the price of ethically produced overseas meat needs to be close to the price of favoured domestic meat for customers to switch to the more ethical product. More generally, the workshops pointed to the importance of indigenous production, the information received from food packaging (in particular, country of origin and details of the producer and the farmer) and lower prices as the most important criteria when making purchasing decisions. Animal welfare was seen as a much less important consideration.

### ***Naturalness and Animal's Good life – Animal Welfare on a Plate***

When talking about animal welfare, the consumer workshops suggested that consumers see this as comprising three elements. First, farm animal welfare is defined in relation to the animal's living conditions, in particular where these can be described as natural or species-typical (also Spooner et al. 2014). Second, the animal itself has a value and dignity. Third, when consumers talk about the transparency of meat production while pursuing animal friendly products, they value indigenous production. From an animal welfare perspective, the ideal situation was described as one that combined both a 'natural' life and a 'good' life for animals.

Yet, even those, mainly carnivorous, workshop participants who stressed the importance of natural behaviour and of species-typical nutrition justified meat production, and thus 'exploiting' the animal for human purposes, when it was done with dignity and respect. They did not identify eating meat as a problem as such but stressed the importance of offering animals purposeful nutrition (non-genetically modified feed) and of treating these animals well. They perceived that keeping animals tied up had the effect of distancing the animal from its natural living conditions (also Spooner et al. 2014), and were critical of Finnish meat production practices, seeing them as leading to farmers being alienated from understanding what is best for farm animals:

“It is just unbelievable how (...) these farmers, how alienated they are from living their life with the animals. There was a TV programme that showed (...) pigs and they said we are fine for space here. The pigs could not even turn or pass each other. How can they say in front of the TV that that is fine? Yeah so, that is right in line with EU regulation.” (Female, 61-years, social sector worker)

When workshop participants identified attributes other than low price as important, they indicated that they might be willing to pay a premium price for domestically produced meat and for higher welfare meat, such as meat certified to Welfare Quality® standards. This finding is in line with consumer willingness to pay more for organic products.



“I am prepared to pay little extra for domestic meat, because I want to believe that the quality of Finnish production is controlled. For example, Polish imported meat is cheaper compared to Finnish one.” (Female, 39-years, home economics teacher).

“I would pay [extra]. I mean if you could make sure that (...) the animal has lived, been able to carry out species-typical behaviours and have a species-specific diet, then absolutely. It is an investment in one’s own health. I also think the label [Welfare Quality®] is practical for consumers. But I think there has to be also transparency that you can check from the Internet page information on that specific meat package.” (Male, 29-years, hunter)

This young man connects an animals’ wellbeing to his own health and welfare. As Autio et al. (2013) have noted, Finnish consumers are increasingly unhappy with industrial global food production systems, which they see as harmful both personally in terms of health and globally in terms of social and environmental justice. When consumers talk about natural living conditions and species-typical nutrition, they appear to view animals as having meaning or uses beyond being a component of a meal or a source of energy (protein). In that context, the quality of an animal’s life is seen as more important than satisfying individual needs of consumers. That is, consumers see that the animal’s welfare is important, and that the animal should be treated with respect throughout its life. In the following quotation, the consumer is picturing mass produced broiler’s meat as plastic and artificial:

“In a way you should respect the life of the animal too. Even though it’s raised and born into dying in a way. (...) I for example feel precisely that something like broilers, it’s as if they’re plastic, the way they go around like that.” (Female, 25-years, home economics teacher)

The quotation suggests that animal dignity has been compromised as a result of mass-production and intensive farming. Thus, the food industry could be said to be breaking the link between humans and animals, and creating distance between the two. Among our interviewees, the group that had the closest link to animals being used as food, namely the hunting group of young males, had a strong ethical orientation towards animal welfare and naturalness (in the sense of species-typical, organic, and GMO-free feed). They appreciated domestic, even local, production and often had a personal or recognized direct relationship to food production.

When considering an animal itself, workshop participants commented that the Welfare Quality® criteria were obvious; in fact, some expected that farmers could and should be expected to do even more. They also believed that small farm size delivered better animal welfare more than mass production farms (a conclusion which mirrors research by Spooner et al. (2014) into the views of Canadian consumers). According to Autio et al. (2013) Finnish consumers value small producers’ artisanship and small-scale organic farming.

A final issue raised in the workshops related to the wider question of the scale of meat production and consumption. As noted by one participant:

“Nevertheless, I mean somehow, I do not want it to be factory farmed meat because (...) we do not, in my opinion, really need to produce meat as efficiently as we do now. We would get by with less meat production, and meat consumption specifically. That is where the change should be made. Nobody needs to consume as much meat as we currently do.” (Female, 26-years, university student)

The extract illustrates that at least some consumers view intensive farming and eating meat as being unsustainable (also de Bakker and Dagevos 2012). These consumers are most likely to transform their diet – as least partially – towards more plant-based, which responds to two challenges: sustainable consumption (Vinnari and Vinnari 2014) and farm animal welfare. Yet such a decision requires information, reflection and a willingness to give up ‘tasty beef and delicious tandoori chicken meals’ at least to some extent.

## **CONSUMERS COMMUNICATING WITH BUSINESS: LABELS, CONSUMER EDUCATION AND TRANSPARENCY**

Our study has given insight into understanding of consumers' views on farm animal welfare and its meanings in everyday life. It seems that Finnish consumers do consider farm animal welfare when making grocery purchasing decisions (also Kupsala et al. 2011), or at least they know that animal welfare requirements are higher (for example) in organic production than in traditional meat production. Because there is no animal welfare labelling of Finnish meat, it seems that consumers' views on animal welfare are based on the presumption that authorities (e.g. through legislation, policy and guidelines) take care of major ethical problems in food production.

It is challenging for consumers to see a connection between animal, meat products and welfare (Buller and Cesar 2007, Evans and Miele 2012). Many consumers are distanced from farm animals and they often see low prices and domestic production as being of more importance than welfare issues. However, the interviewees were almost unanimously of the opinion that the only ways to drive higher levels of farm animal welfare – apart from supporting organic production – were to have either a transparent, impartial, and supervised label indicating the level of animal welfare (also Heerwagen et al. 2015), or to tighten the legislation to create more stringent animal welfare requirements.

The workshops, and other literature on consumers and farm animal welfare, also pointed to a number of other factors that are important to raise awareness and facilitate changes in consumers' behaviour. First, the provision of reliable information about the entire meat chain (through packaging, labelling, internet sources) is essential to engage consumers with animal welfare issues. Food labels and easy to recognise logos could help in this process.

Second, the development of markets for medium and premium certified levels of animal welfare plays an important role in raising consumer awareness and, over time, attracting new consumer segments (Heerwagen et al. 2015: 81). For example, the workshop findings suggested that the creation of a Finnish animal welfare labelling system (e.g. EU Welfare Quality®, national certified system, or a voluntary certification standard) would affect food choices especially for those consumers who already recognise the connection between meat products, animals, and farming practices.

Third, consumer education about the general state of living conditions of farm animals is needed. Bringing animal production closer to consumers (e.g. visibility, direct exposure to farms) would educate consumers that meat comes from animals, and thus reduce their alienation from the animal itself (Spooner et al. 2014: 155, 157). This could be achieved through, for example, engaging schools to participate in farm-based education, attracting consumers to agri-tourism or encouraging consumers to buy meat directly from farmers. Some retailers in the UK, for instance, have launched education programmes aimed at primary school children. An example is Tesco's *Farm to Fork* programme which teaches children about where food comes from (Tesco, 2014). In addition, also adults could benefit from similar information while planning, purchasing and preparing the household meals; however, how to educate adult consumers remains as a challenge for food business.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Through better labelling and more effective communications, higher animal welfare could be turned into an asset, not only for animals, but also for food companies and the wider food industry. However, there are challenges. In the case of Finland, these include the fact that higher welfare meat is still a niche market, that consumers do not see the link between animal welfare and meat, and that customers prioritise domestic (or indigenous) production and affordability over higher animal welfare. Therefore, for labelling to play a meaningful role in changing consumers' attitudes and practices, there is also a need for consumer education on animals and animal welfare, for the wider availability of higher welfare products, and for the gap between consumers and animals to be narrowed.

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