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European agricultural policy and farm animal welfare

M. Winter^{a,*}, C. Fry^b and S. P. Carruthers^c

^a Countryside & Community Research Unit, Cheltenham and Gloucester College, Francis Close Hall, Cheltenham GL50 4AZ, UK

^b Department of Geography, University College London, 26 Bedford Way, London SW1, UK

^c Centre for Agricultural Strategy, The University of Reading, PO Box 236, Earley Gate, Reading RG6 6AT, UK

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Abstract

This paper examines a neglected aspect of food policy: the impact of agricultural policy on farm animal welfare. Defining farm animal welfare is difficult but some general standards are now widely accepted and the determinants of these are increasingly seen as being tied up with farm structural and enterprise characteristics. In Europe both of these are heavily influenced by the Common Agricultural Policy. The influence of the CAP on farm animal welfare is explored through examination of two important sectors — dairying and pigs. In both cases it is concluded that the CAP, either directly or indirectly, has encouraged the structural changes in these sectors that account for a deteriorating record of farm animal welfare. However, it is conceded that market and technological factors are also of considerable importance. More research is required to isolate policy influences. In the meantime the reform of the CAP heralded by Agenda 2000 provides an opportunity to ensure that welfare is more centrally recognised within the CAP.

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