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Measuring the consumer benefits of improving farm animal welfare to inform welfare labelling

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Abstract

Policy makers in the European Union are envisioning the introduction of a community farm animal welfare label which would allow consumers to align their consumption habits with their farm animal welfare preferences. For welfare labelling to be viable the market for livestock products produced to higher welfare standards has to be sufficiently segmented with consumers having sufficiently distinct and behaviourally consistent preferences. The present study investigates consumers' preferences for meat produced to different welfare standards using a hypothetical welfare score. Data is obtained from a contingent valuation study carried out in Britain. The ordered probit model was estimated using Bayesian inference to obtain

mean willingness to pay. We find decreasing marginal WTP as animal welfare levels increase and that people's preferences for different levels of farm animal welfare are sufficiently differentiated making the introduction of a labelling scheme in the form of a certified rating system appear feasible.

Highlights

► The study explores how people value changes in the level of a farm animal welfare score. ► We carry out a contingent valuation study of meat with different welfare standards. ► Differentiated WTP estimates suggest that a welfare scoring system may be feasible. ► Very high welfare scores may not be able to command the necessary price premia.

Keywords

- Farm animal welfare;
- Labelling;
- Welfare score;
- Meat;
- Contingent valuation;
- Bayesian