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Attitudes towards Farm Animals as a Part of Belief Systems

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Abstract:

In this paper, we explore whether attitudes towards farm animals belong to a larger set of societal values which we label “belief systems.” Our empirical analysis is based on a postal survey conducted in 2010: a random sample of 4,000 Finns aged from 18 to 75 years was selected from the Finnish Population Register database. Analysis techniques consisted of descriptive statistics, principal component analysis, and correlation analyses. Three different belief systems were identified—the Social Justice orientation, the Traditional orientation, and the Wealth orientation—and views on animal welfare were associated with them. In general, respondents with a Social Justice orientation expressed social tolerance and shared a relatively egalitarian attitude toward animals. Those with conservative values (the Traditional orientation) showed little concern for animal welfare. Regarding the allocation of trust and responsibility, respondents with the Social Justice orientation attributed responsibility for farm animal welfare to all relevant actors: consumers, producers, and business and regulative institutions. The belief system based on social justice was associated with low trust in agricultural producers but a high trust in non-governmental organizations as a source of information concerning farm animal welfare. In contrast, traditional values were associated with trust in agricultural producers and food chain actors. Overall, the results speak for the development and utilization of more diversified policy instruments in Finland, as the current system of governance over farm animals does not seem to meet the expectations of all Finns.

Keywords: [ANIMAL WELFARE](#); [BELIEF SYSTEMS](#); [RESPONSIBILITY](#); [TRUST](#); [VALUES](#)

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