How the market for animal welfare-friendly food products works

Building on earlier findings from Welfare Quality on the current and potential market for animal welfare-friendly products, our recent findings indicate the value that animal welfare has as a marketing term. In this way it is used by retailers to protect and differentiate their brand and the products they offer. The key to understanding the development of products that carry farm animal welfare claims is found in three inter-related retailing dynamics:

- Brand Management

Farm animal welfare is becoming an increasingly important issue for retailers' brand management. Retailers use their control over the 'quality' of the supply chains to include farm animal welfare criteria, especially for 'own label' ranges. In practice, this varies widely both between countries and retailers.

- Innovation within supply chains

Quality Assurance schemes have provided a key instrument for defining safety and quality (including farm animal welfare) throughout a supply chain. Such schemes are used varyingly by market actors from abattoirs, producers, processors, retailers etc. They are used not only to fulfil their food safety responsibilities, but also to enable a more transparent process in defining minimum standards for products and setting specifications for 'higher' quality ranges and products.

- Limitations to supply and demand

The growth in the supply of welfare-friendly food products is restricted by uneven legislation and enforcement on farm animal welfare across Europe. Demand for 'welfare friendly' is not uniform across all categories, product-ranges and retailers; only the higher valued meat cuts are often marketed as 'welfare friendly'. The rest of the carcass may often not receive a premium price. Read more

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