

Farm animal welfare and food policy

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Abstract

Legislation has been the main policy approach for protecting the welfare of farm animals. The use of legislation raises issues such as whose preferences the legislation reflects and whether the preferences of some people in society should constrain the food consumption choices of others. The paper outlines a survey in Great Britain which sought to measure people's willingness to pay to support legislation to ban the use of battery cages for egg production in the European Union (EU). It discusses the implications of the survey findings for animal welfare and food policy. It concludes that legislation which constrains food consumption choices may be justified where there are significant negative animal welfare externalities as a result of livestock product consumption. However, the combination of legislation and producer subsidies may provide an appropriate policy which improves animal welfare without directly constraining food consumption choice and could help to achieve other policy aims regarding agriculture in the EU.

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