

The eater, the buyer and farm animal welfare. A survey of seven European countries

Le mangeur, l'acheteur et le bien-être de l'animal d'élevage. Un aperçu comparatif dans 7 pays européens

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Résumé

Farm animal welfare is emerging as an important topic in Europe linked to the production, marketing and purchasing of food. Human-animal relationships is a field with many aspects and connotations. But connections between marketed food and the treatment of animals formulated as a social issue seems quite recent.

Based on answers from population surveys carried out in seven European countries in September 2005, this does not seem to appear in the same ways or to the same degree in all countries. The paper will use this variation as a point of departure for exploring different ways in which eating foods of animal origin may be associated with the life of animals within contemporary market based systems. Spreading out a rather wide canvas of questions dealing with what people do and think in relation to animals and their wellbeing in their capacities as buyers and eaters, the paper will explore national patterns across the various questions.

Each country comes out as distinct. While for example the Dutch seem to be quite instrumental and detached, shopping welfare friendly products without showing very much engagement. The French include this as another aspect of an encompassing conception of food quality, first of all associated with provenance. The Norwegians, on their part, are very much in favour of animal welfare as a social issue, but they do not associate this with their own practices of buying and eating food.

The paper will discuss these diverse national patterns in relation to a theoretical understanding of food consumption as a matter of institutionalised practices, formed in interrelations between different societal areas, like households, markets, regulatory institutions, and civil society. Forms of regulation and divisions of responsibility as well as the structure of food provisioning and culinary cultures come out as important dimensions.

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