



Slow Food Policy Paper on Animal Welfare September 2013

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On the front cover

Maremmana Cattle – Photo by Manfredo Pinzauti

The policy paper can be downloaded at the following link: www.slowfood.it/slowcheese/eng/20/animal-welfare

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ANIMAL WELFARE ACCORDING TO SLOW FOOD

Each year the welfare of millions of animals raised for their meat, milk and eggs for human consumption is often seriously compromised. Intensive livestock production also significantly jeopardizes environmental sustainability, human health and the livelihood of small-scale farmers and rural communities. As the consumption of animal products continues to increase, it has become necessary to confront these problems in order to safeguard the health of citizens and the environment, and quarantee that small-scale farmers can thrive in their activities while ensuring that the welfare of animals is respected.



Animal Welfare and Small-Scale Farmers

FAO data indicates that around 1 billion people depend on animals as a source of income, food, cultural identity and social status. It is estimated that 60% of families that live in rural areas keep animals¹. Animal welfare is of crucial importance to these communities in that a secure supply of food depends on the health and productivity of animals, and these in turn depend on the care and nutrition that animals receive. Good living conditions for animals means better animal health, less stress and subsequently less disease and use of drugs. While structural investments for the improvement of production facilities in the short term can be very costly for producers, the benefits in productivity and in improved product quality can increase income.

The current system poses a great threat to the livelihood of small-scale farmers who cannot keep up with the competition of big producers and the low prices of industrial meat production. The lack of a proper labelling system makes it more complicated for consumers to make conscious choices and thus more difficult to 'reward' farmers that employ more animal-welfare friendly techniques. Knowing the story behind the animal products we eat should not be considered important solely from a gastronomic standpoint, but should be a duty of all responsible consumers, as it is a choice that determines the survival of small-scale farmers and the conditions in which animals are raised.

Low quality meat at an excessively high cost

Over the past fifty years, agriculture has been subjected to increasing industrialisation, along with a corresponding rise in meat consumption. These changes have come at a high cost for the environment. According to the FAO, around 280 million tonnes of meat are produced every year². Every American consumes around 125kg of meat a year, while the European average is 74kg. Demand has been increasing globally even in many developing countries and emerging economies over the past ten years, due to a growth in wealth in the urban middle classes. Figures on meat consumption in China are particularly striking, with consumption rising from around 20kg per person in 1980 to 52 kg in 2006.³

The repercussions of such patterns of consumption are devastating: CO₂ emissions from the world meat production and distribution cycle are estimated between 18% and 51% of global emissions⁴. Current practices also heavily contribute to soil degradation, increasing desertification, pollution, reduction of water resources and the loss of plant and animal

¹ FAO (2009) The State of Food and Agriculture — http://bit.ly/anwmnC World Livestock — Livestock in Food Security (2011) — http://bit.ly/vRlZBC

² FAO (2008) Food Outlook - November Edition http://bit.ly/1aH5PXb

³ FAO (2006) Livestock's Long Shadow http://bit.ly/CRCLd

biodiversity. A reduction in the consumption of meat is the first step to countering these problems, but choosing animal products that have been produced with high welfare standards can contribute to a healthier environment.



An Unsustainable System

The intensive production of meat requires vast amounts of land to allow space for grazing and the production of animal feed. Around 3,5 billion hectares of land (making up 26% of total dry land)⁵ are involved in meat production. Around 470 million hectares alone are devoted to the production of animal feed, adding up to a third of arable land⁶. Animal feed used in Europe is mostly imported, with an average of 40 million tonnes of protein crops imported annually from South American countries, mainly in the form of soy beans and corn gluten feed⁷. The intensive production of animal feed has devastating impacts on the environment. It is estimated that cattle raising is responsible for about 80% of all deforestation in the Amazon region⁸.

Furthermore, while being the world's largest importer of animal feed, Europe is also a large-scale exporter of meat and dairy products in developing countries, competing with local producers and threatening the development of local economies and livelihood of communities.

The question of animal feed, however, also goes well beyond the farm, affecting all those countries that produce raw materials for the feed that is then used for livestock in western countries. Maize and soy monocultures are severely influencing the development of local communities and the ecological balance of the planet.

Industrial Farming and Animal Suffering

- 4 World Watch Institute (2009) Livestock and Climate Change http://bit.ly/2mKHdl
- 5 FAO (2006) Livestock's Long Shadow http://bit.ly/CRCLd
- 6 Ibidem
- 7 Friends of the Earth (2010) Less Soy, More Legumes http://bit.ly/1eWfvlr
- 8 Greenpeace (2009) Slaughtering the Amazon http://bit.ly/f2lDmb To learn more, see also the short video http://bit.ly/19TE10L and photogallery http://bit.ly/KoXTRT by Greenpeace.

In 2007, the Treaty of Lisbon of the European Union officially recognized animals as sentient beings and stated that Member States must pay full regard to animal welfare in decision making, thereby putting animal welfare on equal footing with other key principles such as gender equality, social protection, the protection of human health, sustainable development and consumer protection. Despite this important move, too often the welfare of farmed animals is still neglected.

Animals pay a harsh price in the current system. Factory farms reduce animals to mere machines and commodities. They are packed into tight cages or confined to small spaces where they spend a short but painful life. During this time they are often subjected to mutilations, their beaks are trimmed, tails docked and horns removed in order to avoid injuring themselves or their companions due to the stresses of being condemned to a life less than natural. After having spent the entirety of their lives in these conditions, they are then transported to slaughterhouses, often travelling for many hours at a time and in gruelling conditions. They feel the stresses and strains of not being able to express their natural behaviours, often left in the hands of people who have not received adequate training, denying them the compassionate and respectful treatment that a sentient being deserves¹⁰. Living in these conditions makes animals more prone to diseases. In many intensive farms they are therefore routinely injected with vaccines and antibiotics, posing a risk to those who consume their meat. In the US for instance, 80% of all antibiotics used is destined to the livestock sector¹¹ and in Germany data indicates that an estimated 1700 metric tonnes of antibiotics are employed for veterinary use compared to about 300 metric tonnes for humans use¹².



Knowing Where Your Food Comes From

Animal welfare has become an increasingly important issue for consumers: they want to know where their food comes from, ensure that it is safe and has been produced according to high standards. Slow Food members are particularly attentive when it comes to food choices. A recent survey conducted amongst European Slow Food members further confirmed their awareness when it comes to meat consumption and animal welfare. In fact, 87% of respondents said they were willing to change their shopping habits to buy more animal welfare friendly foods, compared to 62% of consumers in a similar survey by the European Commission¹³. Furthermore, 90% of European Slow Food members that took part in the survey indicated that they were willing to pay a higher price for products that guarantee high welfare standards. The same percentage also believes their purchasing choices can positively impact animal welfare. In order to allow consumers to make these informed decisions and ensure farmers who invest in animal welfare are supported, mandatory adequate labelling of animal products, which currently does not exist, must be guaranteed.

⁹ The Treaty of Lisbon http://bit.ly/Gzwfkn

¹⁰ To learn more about the role of factory farming on animal suffering, see *The Way We Eat. Why Our Food Choices Matter*, by Peter Singer and Jim Mason (2006, Rondale Books) and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Eating Animals* (2010, Black Bay Books)

¹¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2013) Threat Report 2013 - http://1.usa.gov/1eH9sSL

¹² Bundesamt für Verbraucherschutz und Lebensmittelsicherheit (2013): Hintergrundinformation: Zahlen über die Antibiotikaabgabe 2011 in der Tiermedizin nach Regionen und Wirkstoffklassen http://bit.ly/1fxeOPO

¹³ European Commission (2006) Attitudes of EU Citizens towards Animal Welfare – http://bit.ly/nHctNf

Animal-Welfare Policies in the EU: Where Are We Now and Where Are We Heading?

Since the early 1990's, the European Union has been on the forefront concerning animal welfare legislation. Much has been achieved over the years: Barren battery cages for hens have been outlawed, as have sow stalls (after the first few weeks of pregnancy) and the tethering of sows and veal crates. However, much still remains to be done and at the heart of the problem lay issues of enforcement and implementation.

The European Union's second Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals was welcomed in 2012 and outlines the EU's vision for animal welfare until 2015. While the document outlines that the EU is committed to the issue, many areas were not addressed and a serious legislative void exists in many cases:

- ► **Animal transport:** legislation currently allows animals to be transported for several days. While animal advocacy groups are working to set a limit at eight hours, for Slow Food this is still an unacceptably long transport time.
- ▶ Dairy cows: no law regulating the well-being of cows used in the dairy industry currently exists.
- ▶ **Antibiotics:** a strategy for the substantial reduction of the use of antibiotics in animal husbandry is needed.
- ▶ **Cloned Animals:** a clear ban on the sale of meat from clones and their offspring is yet to be put in place.
- ▶ **Labelling:** no labelling system for meat products exists, making animal-welfare friendly choices difficult for consumers and leaving them further in the dark as to whether animals are fed with GM feed.

Other areas of concern include the loss of local slaughterhouses meaning that even small-scale farmers must transport their animals for long distances. This causes the animals to be stressed before and during the slaughter process and causes the quality of the meat to be compromised, resulting in a loss in terms of productivity. To counter this problem, more local and smaller slaughterhouses are needed and initiatives and legislation addressing the use of mobile slaughterhouses must be promoted.

Implementation is a further issue of concern within European countries. In 2012 the law banning battery cages was introduced and despite having 12 years to comply with the legislation, many countries failed to do so, resulting in a situation of continuing suffering for hens relegated to overcrowded cages. The same situation repeated itself when the 2013 ban on sow stalls was introduced. Member States must ensure effective monitoring and controls regarding animal welfare legislation in order to ensure maximum compliance and avoid the suffering of animals.

In the 2012-2015 Strategy, the European Union indicated that it will pursue research on the welfare of fish. Increasing amounts of research indicate that fish are intelligent creatures, capable of feeling pain, fear and psychological stress¹⁴. Fish are being threatened by the exploitation of the marine environment and the devastating consequences of aquaculture. This has serious implications for the livelihood of local communities around the world that have depended on fishing for many generations. Farmed fish are confined in very small areas and poor quality water and overcrowded spaces mean that they cannot breathe properly. Furthermore, confining fish to cages means that they cannot exercise their natural swimming behaviour. The welfare and the sustainability of farmed fish should therefore be an area of concern.



Slow Food is convinced that a greater coherence on food policies at the EU level is needed and, in this respect, hopes that the Common Agricultural Policy measures on animal welfare will provide real support to farmers. In particular, it is necessary to introduce measures that take into consideration the cost of animal welfare by supporting farmers who voluntary choose to improve their standards beyond those required by law. Slow Food will furthermore strive for the full recognition of animal welfare as an element in future EU strategies on the sustainability of the food system.

The Slow Food Approach to Animal Welfare

Slow Food has been actively working to promote a holistic approach to food and agriculture for many years and good animal welfare practices are a fundamental part of this. They are important not only because they respect animals as sentient beings, but also because they benefit farmers, consumers and the environment.

Slow Food's survey on meat consumption and animal welfare indicated that 89% of respondents believe that animal welfare does not receive enough attention in their country's policies. Members also called for Slow Food to take action by raising awareness among public authorities and supporting producers who work to better the condition of their animals.

Through its projects Slow Food can ensure that the connection between animal welfare, human health and livelihoods, and environmental sustainability is understood by a growing number of people. In particular, with projects such as the Presidia, Slow Food can have a direct impact on the welfare of animals. Slow Food will therefore begin an important journey in the elaboration of specific guidelines on animal welfare, involving the producers themselves as well as members of the Terra Madre food communities.

Current Slow Food Presidia production protocols involving livestock already include a variety of welfare provisions. Protocols state that Presidia must safeguard native breeds or breeds that have adapted to the local environment. Producers are required to pay particular attention to the bedding and the amount of space available for each animal, guarantee access to pastures where possible or space for animals to roam freely. It is important in the Presidia that reproduction occurs within the farm itself and that newborns are allowed to spend as much time as possible next to their mothers. Diets are based on fresh forage which can be integrated, when necessary, with hay, cereals and legumes, preferably locally produced. Therapeutic interventions must prioritize the use of plant-based or homeopathic remedies, while antibiotics and other conventional veterinary medicines must be used only if other effective remedies for the ailment do not exist.

Slow Food does not support practices involving the close confinement of livestock, the use of genetically modified animals or their offspring, long distance transport, routine mutilations, the use of antibiotics, and slaughter without pre-stunning. Animal feed must not include the use of urea, corn silage, foods or products made even partly with genetically modified organisms, additives and industrial waste.



Slow Food in Action

The 2013 survey indicated that animal welfare is an issue of increasing importance to Slow Food members, with 93% of respondents demonstrating an interest in the topic and 84% expressing their desire to learn more. The majority of respondents (nearly 80%) cited that concerns relating to the impacts of meat production and consumption on environmental and human health were behind this interest.

Animal welfare is a core component of Slow Food's 'good, clean and fair' approach to food production and consumption. Slow Food's future actions on animal welfare will revolve around two main areas: The first will involve working with producers of the Slow Food Presidia project to have a direct impact on the conditions in which their animals are raised. Special attention will be devoted to the welfare issues revolving around mutilations (particularly dehorning) and force-feeding. The second area of action concerns the promotion of educational initiatives on animal welfare and meat consumption for adults and children.

As part of its efforts on animal welfare, Slow Food commits itself to:

- ▶ reviewing, along with producers, the production protocols of the Presidia involving livestock by 2020, to ensure they are all compliant with good animal welfare practices;
- ▶ promoting educational initiatives on farm animal welfare and meat consumption. Through dedicated campaigns, Slow Food wants to work to raise awareness among consumers on the importance of reducing meat consumption and choosing meat from extensive farms that pay particular attention to high quality, natural feed and the natural behaviour of animals;
- ▶ supporting efforts to request mandatory labelling of products that specify methods of production, as a fair step towards consumers, producers and farm animals. Slow Food's narrative labels are a positive example of a labelling system that allows consumers to easily understand where the food comes from and how it was produced.

The Slow Food Presidia

The future of farming envisaged by Slow Food lies in small-scale agriculture. Small-scale farmers must be provided with the necessary support, information and training in order to successfully address the animal welfare issues.

Slow Food's Presidia project offers many positive examples of a collaborative effort between farmers and experts to improve overall production processes and animal husbandry practices; the strict production protocols are in fact agreed upon with producers.

Alongside the survey submitted to members of the association, Slow Food also launched a similar survey on animal welfare for producers in the Presidia projects in Europe. The survey highlighted the close relationship farmers have with their animals and their willingness to ensure the feed provided is of the highest quality and that their animals are raised with respect for their natural behaviour.

Around 60% of respondents give their animals access to pastures and, when this is not available, allow them to roam freely around the shelters. Of particular significance is the transport time from the farm where animals are raised to the slaughtering facilities: In the vast majority of cases it takes only under an hour.

More generally, 97% producers were in agreement that animal welfare positively influences the quality of the final products and over 60% declared themselves willing to undergo further training on animal welfare. In the survey, producers also called for Slow Food to raise awareness amongst public authorities on the problems that small-scale farmers face and asked for more support in the promotion of high welfare products.

Education on Animal Welfare and Meat Consumption

Education is one of Slow Food's core tools. By understanding where our food comes from, how it was produced and by whom, adults and children can learn how to combine pleasure and responsibility in their daily choices. Knowing where our meat comes from and how the animal was raised is the first step in making conscious choices to eat less meat but of better quality.

Thanks to its extensive network and projects worldwide, Slow Food has the potential to create a lasting impact on consumers of any age group, farmers, chefs, retailers, veterinarians and experts. Education must start at an early age by integrating animal welfare within existing projects and programmes, such as school and community gardens. In this way Slow Food can ensure that younger generations have the necessary tools to make healthier and more sustainable choices as they grow up.

Labelling of Animal Products

Slow Food's survey on meat consumption and animal welfare indicated that more than half of respondents buy meat from trusted sources such as local butchers. However, only 9% think that current labelling regulations make it possible to identify high animal welfare products.

Not only does this deny consumers the right to know where their food comes from and how it was produced, it also damages the producers who believe in an animal welfare friendly approach.

For this reason, Slow Food has developed the narrative label project, based on the idea that every product should tell a story; starting from the area where it is produced and the way it is processed, ending with its quality and taste. Only by telling the story of a product can we give it the value it deserves. This new model of labelling products can be utilised alongside the labels required by law. The narrative label (a 'counter label' of sorts) provides detailed information on the producers, their facilities and the local area, the plant variety or animal breed used, the cultivation or breeding techniques, the processing phase and the animal welfare provisions in place.

Chemical and scientific analysis are not sufficient to judge the quality and taste of a product. Technical approaches fail to take into consideration the origins, the history and the processing method of the product itself.



