

Dialogue between Farmers and Experts Regarding Farm Animal Welfare

Farmers' Juries in Norway, the Netherlands and Italy

edited by
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PREFACE

The main objective of work-package 4.4.2 is to evaluate farmers' responses to and acceptance of the Welfare Quality® assessment and monitoring system, its grading system and use for product information. It is particularly important to determine how farmers perceive the tool because they will be among its main users, and their acceptance is essential for its successful implementation. The Welfare Quality® team developing this tool also needs to know which aspects evoke farmers' interest and trust as well as those causing concern and distrust. We also need insight into their reasoning and motives for acceptance or refusal.

The basis of our juries work is the expectation that working with a selection of farmers will provide insights into how farmers in general might react to the final tool, and into the collective process of opinion development within the farming community.

The Welfare Quality® tool is meant to be implemented at European level. Based on earlier work in Sub-project 1 we can expect acceptance to vary not only between stakeholders but also between countries. Since opinions on and understanding of animal welfare differ between Northern, Western and Southern Europe we organized farmers' juries in three countries representing these geographic differences: the Netherlands, Norway and Italy. This report integrates findings and recommendations from the Dutch, Norwegian and Italian meetings.

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Part I

Norway

by

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SIFO, Norway

‘We should not treat pigs like they are our babies. Time and money have to relate. After all it’s smelling pigs.’ (*‘Vi må ikke behandle grisen som babyen vår, tid og penger må henge sammen, det er jo tross alt gris som lukter.’*)
Farmer, Revetal, Vestfold, Norway, 3 November 2008

‘Consumer opinions aren’t always consistent and sensible.’
Farmer, Revetal, Vestfold, Norway, 18 November 2008

‘They don’t have the means to pay for animal welfare in Tanzania. In Norway we do.’
Farmer, Revetal, Vestfold, Norway, 18 November 2008

INTRODUCTION TO PART I

In the autumn of 2008, jury meetings were arranged among consumers and farmers in different European countries to test out the Welfare Quality[®] tool as developed in EU project of the same name (see <<http://www.welfarequality.net>>). This report presents the results from the sessions with Norwegian farmers. It will present the jury meetings session by session, documenting what happened and the way in which discussions evolved in the farmers' juries meetings in Revetal, Vestfold in Norway on 3 and 18 November 2008.

2

METHODOLOGY, RECRUITMENT AND SET-UP

2.1 JURY METHODOLOGY

Jury methodology is a particular method used for so-called deliberative mapping. It is organized around meetings between (more or less) lay persons and experts (in a specific field), where the latter give presentations to and answer questions from the former. Juries resemble focus groups in size and group dynamics. However, the expert presentations and questioning and, consequently, the greater autonomy of the lay members, gives the jury methodology a distinct identity. Besides, in these jury meetings, the observers – the researchers – are just as focused on documenting ways or arguing, the changes in the structures of reasoning and emotional reactions, as the conclusions that the jury members subsequently end up with.

The methodological lay-out of our sessions in Norway were presented at a meeting in London, February 2008.¹ The concrete outline for the farmers' jury meetings and discussed in a meeting in Amsterdam in September 2008 (see Part II).

2.2 RECRUITMENT

We selected eight pig farmers from a farming area in Vestfold, about 1,000 km south-west of Oslo. We recruited the farmers through the system of public farm support. We were given a list of 18 pig farmers by the Norwegian Agricultural Authority (SLF) in the municipality of Re and its surrounding districts. Farmers were contacted and subsequent recruited by mail, telephone and e-mail. The farmers were offered a compensation of NOK 3,000 for two days of jury work. We did not refer to the 'jury' word, as this is clearly associated to legal processes in Norwegian. Instead we asked people to take part in

¹ Evans, A., Higgin, M. and Miele, M. (2008) *Citizens' Juries (Draft Proposal 04/02/2008)*. Presented at Welfare Quality meeting, London, 7–8 February.

discussion groups. We ended up with seven participants. The farmers, three men and five women, had different kinds of farms, most with mixed production (pigs, dairy cows and cereals) and involved in different stages of pig production. We also tried to enrol a profiled organic pig farmer in the area, but he refused after a one hour discussion: He was very interested in the Welfare Quality scheme as such, but did not want to be confronted with conventional farmers. He knew several of them and had had his quarrels with them.

The farmers involved turned out to be – as one should expect – a little more concerned with animal welfare than the average. It turned out that one of the farmers had – only five years previously – been the editor of the farmers’ associations programme for animal welfare of pigs. There were more women than men in the group, and it turned out that most of these farms were run as family units, where both spouses were actively involved. Some of the farmers knew about each other, and this certainly eased communication.

2.3 SET-UP OF THE MEETINGS

The jury meetings were held on 3 and 18 of November 2008 from 10 AM until 4 PM in the town hall in Revetal, the administrative centre of Re. The two days were filled with presentations and discussions, only with short breaks and one hour for lunch. Unni Kjærnes and Bjørn Forkman were presented as ‘experts’, while Eivind Jacobsen held the role as facilitator. A student, Erlend Eggen, took notes (on a lap-top computer) and everything was taped (audio). At the first meeting we also had an observer from the Norwegian Veterinary Research Institute. She was enrolled in the discussion on one occasion.

The meetings were organized with three sessions each day. The first day started with a ‘warm-up’ exercise aimed at mapping the participants’ initial conceptions of animal welfare. This was followed by a presentation of consumers’ views and attitudes to animal welfare. In the second session, a scientific approach to animal welfare was presented, followed by a third session in which four principles and 12 criteria for measuring animal welfare were presented. The first day ended with a presentation of homework exercises for the farmers. The second meeting started (the fourth session) with a presentation of answers to the homework exercise, followed by a presentation of the Welfare Quality assessment tool. The fifth session included presentations on how to calculate, calibrate and aggregate scores for the tool. The sixth session focused on the implementation and utility of the tool. It all ended (session seven) with reflection and evaluation of the sessions and the Welfare Quality tool as such. In the next chapters, the jury meetings will be presented session by session and what took place in them.

FARMERS' INITIAL CONCEPTIONS OF ANIMAL WELFARE

Our first session (the Post-it session) involved the farmers introducing themselves and introductions of the scientists and the project. It also involved a part where farmers came up with their definitions of animal welfare and, finally, a presentation by Unni Kjørnes, of consumer attitudes and conceptions of animal welfare as disclosed in the project.

3.1 THE FARMERS

Seven farmers attended the two meetings, three men and four women. For anonymity reasons they have been given fictitious names here.

JR runs a combined pig farm together with his wife and his son. Combined production implies that they run the whole life cycle of pigs, with sows, piglets and porkers all the way to slaughter. Jacob runs a fairly large enterprise, with 3,000 pigs, including 140 sows (the average pig farm in Norway is about 30–40 sows). He also produces some grain. Some years ago Jacob headed the steering committee of the Norwegian pig farmers' association's action plan for animal welfare in pigs.

JAS has only about 200 pigs per year. He buys piglets to feed them up for slaughter. His milk and beef enterprise is far bigger than pig production. He has got Duroc pigs, not the usual breed in Norway. He is soon retiring and does not want to expand production. His son helps out on the farm, but is employed full-time outside the farm. His wife is not taking part in the farm work. The farm also produces grain.

TG runs a combined pig farm together with her husband. They have about 70–80 sows. Currently they are building a new farmhouse (an investment of NOK 6.4 million), which will serve to improve animal welfare considerably. They have 24 farrowing units in the current old building. The new building will be of the same size. For a period, they will have production in both the old and the new buildings, but do not plan expanded production on a permanent basis. They also have some beef production – a combined breed (including Charolais) and some grain production.

MBT has a small production of piglets. She sells piglets. There are 20 sows on the farm. She also has some grain production and rents out a stable for horses.

TK is also running a combined pig production farm, with 95 sows per year. They expanded production four years ago when she and her husband took over from his father. Besides pigs they produce grain and seedlings.

MB also runs combined pig production together with her husband. They have 50 sows. They also produce grain.

AA takes part in a pig producing circle. Every eight weeks she receives 20 sows, resulting in 200–300 piglets, which are fed for slaughtering. She runs the farm together with her husband, but also holds a part-time position outside of the farm. They also produce grains.

The last farmer TAA was absent at the first presentation. Later he told us that he has a relatively large combined pig farm and is also very active in a breeding programme.

After the farmers' presentations, one of the farmers asked why this project was funded and what the ambitions were. He wondered if it had something to do with WTO negotiations and the EU's wish to protect European production against cheap import from South-East Asia and Latin America. They also wanted to know whether the aim was to launch a new standard. The facilitator pointed to the concluding session where these matters were to be discussed.

3.2 POST-IT PADS – ANIMAL WELFARE

In the next sequence, the farmers were asked to write down on yellow Post-it pads single words they associated with animal welfare. These pads were then put on a white wall and organized thematically.

The participants engaged actively in the task and soon all of them were back and forth putting new pads on the wall. Meanwhile, Unni and Eivind asked them how to organize the pads thematically. The discussion ran rather freely: 'space', 'air' and 'light' came up simultaneously from several participants. So did 'feed' – enough and appropriate, 'temperature' and 'hygiene' and 'health'. The surroundings of the pigs were mentioned as important for health and welfare. 'Comfort' is care and time to care for the singular pig. 'Comfort' is also important for the farmer.

One interesting pad pointed to the importance of good routines for emergency slaughtering. Severely sick pigs ought to be slaughtered in appropriate ways at the right time. 'This was

probably not mentioned by the consumers', one of the farmers noted sarcastically with a smile, accompanied by laughter around the table.

Discussions then turned towards natural instincts and needs. Nesting was mentioned as one such instinct. Pigs must be given enough straw was one answer to this. Freedom of movement was also mentioned. The question of fixation was discussed. Whose welfare are we focusing on, the sow or the piglet? Several of the farmers wanted to fixate the sow after birth in order to protect the piglets from her. However, one of the farmers said fixation should ideally have been abolished. Other claimed that some farmers were very anxious about fixation, they were afraid not to fixate the sows. They then discussed how to develop good housing solutions for the pigs to solve these problems. There is a need for more research in this area, some pointed out.

Genetics was also drawn into this discussion. There are differences between individual sows. Some are very good mothers, others are notoriously killing their surplus offspring by laying down on them. Developing good mothers through breeding was therefore mentioned as one important welfare component.

The welfare of farmers was also mentioned as important. Animal welfare should also have the farmers' well-being in focus.

The final board is shown in Figure 3.1.

What came up here did not differ much from what we found in the citizens' juries.² The concepts used were not very animal rights oriented, but a mixture of resources and animal

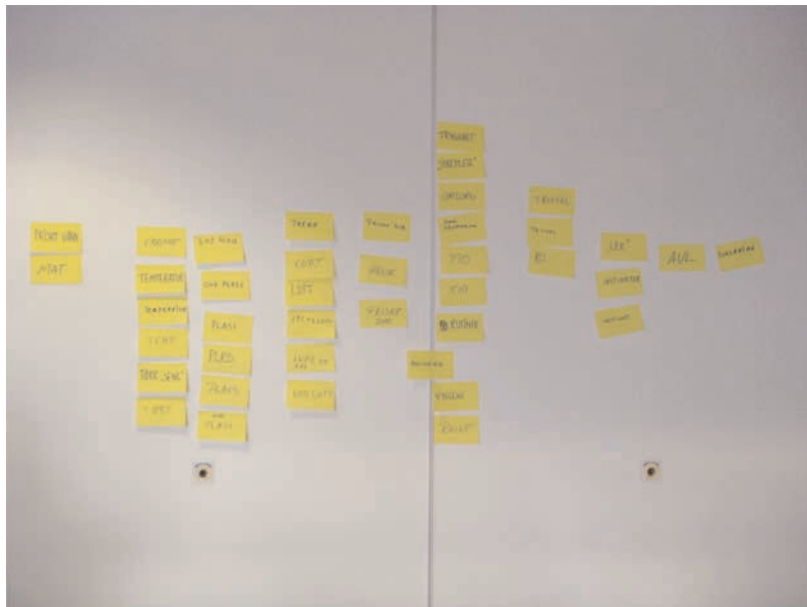


Figure 3.1 Post-it session, day 1.

² We organized parallel citizens' juries on many of the same themes where some of the same presentations were used.

based. One interesting difference from the citizens juries was the insistence on procedures for the killing of sick and injured animals. One of the farmers also noted here: ‘this you probably did not hear from the consumers, did you?’. Another difference was the focus on genetics and breeding. The predominant perspective was that of the farmers, not of the pigs.

EXPERT PRESENTATION – DISCUSSION OF CONSUMER CONCEPTIONS OF ANIMAL WELFARE

Unni Kjærnes presented consumer views on animal welfare as uncovered in WQ SP1 projects (see <<http://www.welfarequality.net>>). The discussion during (there were a lot of questions and comments) and afterwards centred on the fact that consumers seemed to be predominantly and comparatively (to other countries) pleased with animal welfare in Norway. The farmers wanted to know whether this could be translated to a greater willingness to pay more for animal welfare. Interestingly, the farmers seemed to split on whether a differentiation of the market was good or not. In the subsequent discussion several themes were in focus.

‘Animal welfare is good in Norway, people don’t seem to worry’, one farmer noted. ‘But isn’t this the case in other countries as well, that they think well about their own food and farmers?’ others asked. The farmers seemed to conclude that there were animal welfare differences between countries, and that it is important with strict legal regulations in this field. Great Britain, Sweden and Denmark all have such strict regulations, it was pointed out.

Local production also seems to be idealized in countries such as Italy, one farmer claimed:

‘I visited Italy a couple of years ago, to look at Parma ham production, which is very popular; but we would not have been allowed to produce under those circumstances, with narrow pigsties and wooden floors.’

It is better with strict universal regulations than to rely on localized practices, several seemed to suggest. However, local production may be good for marketing purposes:

‘When you have seen the farm or spoken to the farmer, you easily pay NOK 20 more per kilo’, one of the women claimed. Others pointed out that this kind of tourism often resulted in an unrealistic and romanticized picture of modern agriculture and husbandry: ‘Show them commercialized farming, and attitudes will change’.

But what about local differences in Norway, others asked. Here it was claimed that animal welfare in Vestfold (the region where they all live) is probably better than in other parts of Norway, such as in Rogaland and Hedemark (other important pig producing areas).

There is a positive development going on, with positive attitudes to animal welfare and changes among Vestfold farmers. Among the things pointed out here were differences regarding how much wood chippings and straw were used in the pigsties. 'There is no national standard on these matters', one farmer noted.

After half an hour discussion, the experts and the facilitator left for 10 minutes (the student stayed to take notes). The discussion seemed to continue among much of the same lines. However, some interesting elaborations were given, e.g. on the economic side of animal welfare: 'If you are going to earn money, you have to treat the animals well', one of the women claimed. 'It pays with good husbandry', another farmer added. 'In that respect, I think pigs are more vulnerable than e.g. the beef cattle we have', another pointed out.

Another point that was taken up was the fact that farmers are mostly alone with the animals. 'No one is watching, and if it starts getting difficult, that is where it sometimes goes wrong', one farmer pointed out. 'It's a vulnerable system. The veterinarian is rarely visiting – mostly every six weeks – for castration'. 'I think there is a lot of traffic on the farm', another farmer protested mildly. 'What I mean is', the first farmer proceeded, 'that if the farm is a bit too big in relation to the time available, or if you are too tired, it is easy to neglect some piglets'.

The scale of production was also touched upon: 'It has to be effective, and it is industrialized farming we deal with and it is important to communicate to consumers that animal welfare is important here'. To have this as a full-time preoccupation is better than to work part time, mornings and evenings, it was claimed. Besides, with more animals, it makes more sense to work out monitoring routines (cost-effectiveness). Such large scale means professionalization but, on the other hand, 'it can be too much, you have to have enough time to watch over all of the animals', it was pointed out.

The farmers were not particularly surprised by what Unni had presented on consumers and their views. One farmer contended:

'Consumer opinions aren't always consistent and sensible. For example, when the Swedes abolished battery hens, this only resulted in import of eggs from battery hens in Finland out-competing Swedish producers of free-range eggs. Alas, consumers should be told what kind of responsibility they have. Someone – perhaps you [pointing to the experts] – should take that job, because we get nowhere without consumers or retailers, as long as legal regulations are not available.'

Another farmer added:

'My impression is that consumers say they want animal welfare to be good, but when they see the price-tag, they go for the cheap options.'

Consumers should be given information on the consequences of their choices.

‘I think it is enough to label the food as Norwegian. That is a quality sign good enough. With all the food scares in other countries, consumers seem to be more conscious about buying Norwegian now than they were some years ago.’

This resistance against differentiation was even stronger uttered by another farmer:

‘Of course, it is possible to label products to inform consumers that this one comes from Farm A and this from Farm B, but, as I see it, this is not the way forward. Given the structure and (small) size of Norwegian agriculture, there should be one standard good enough for the whole sector. For this to happen, we need an internal debate and self-regulation to ensure that all products are good enough. I also have objections against, for example, organic farming. I do not agree with the politically motivated focus boosting organic farming to be better than conventional farming.’

One of the others disagreed. We need several standards, he claimed, one better than the conventional to ensure that consumer have an alternative:

‘They do not have such an option, given the effective import barriers in operation today. If some producers could go a little further, this would be good... It would serve to heighten the status of the pig and give consumers choices they do not have today.’

He then referred to Denmark as an example where such options were available. Others agreed:

‘If there were options available, you [consumers] would have to be made more conscious about the choices you make.’

‘Besides, we [farmers] would also have to make other choices.’

However, the main question staying unanswered throughout the session was whether consumers would be willing to pay more for higher animal welfare. Did not the expert-presentation show that consumers were more than content with Norwegian animal welfare as it is today? Would there be more to earn from further differentiation

EXPERT PRESENTATION – DISCUSSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO ANIMAL WELFARE

After a lunch break, Bjørn Forkman laid out his first presentation, pointing to animal-based rather than resources-based measurements founded on the five freedoms (presentation enclosed). He also stressed farming system neutral measurements, in other words, ‘we don’t care how you run/organize your farm as long as the pigs score high on welfare parameters’, he said.

This latter point provoked reactions from most of the farmers. Although they seemed willing to accept many of the animal-based measurements and also claimed to practice some them in their daily interaction with the animals, they protested against a totally system neutral standard. They wanted some resource based measurements to stay as a kind of baseline.

One of the female farmers put it like this:

‘Most animal welfare improving undertakings are really simple and cheap, like e.g. better cleaning, more care and not sending animals with bad legs on the slaughtering transport, but we probably need some regulations, because not everyone will do these things and not everyone is interested in doing these things: Therefore there has to be regulations.’

Several of the farmers also pointed to the fact that they, of economic reasons, had reduced the number of pigs in the sties, below the number they were allowed (according to regulations) to have there. This was motivated by a reduction in bad marks from the slaughterhouse, and an overall higher quality of the pigs. In other words, also by ‘looking to the purse’, as one farmer put it, farmers often go beyond the legal baseline obligations. ‘Farmers think along these lines, they have to think like this’, he added. In other words, they claimed that animal welfare pays off. Good animal welfare makes sense economically. They also stated that the change in regulations in 2000, with introduction of loose-housed farrow, had made it much more pleasant in the farmhouse, for animals as well for the farmers. On the other hand, there had been an increase in the number of fighting incidents that had to be managed.

‘I would think that an AW standard exclusively founded on animal based measures, could result in deteriorated welfare. Because, then it’s easy to start thinking that e.g. ceiling height, air volume, etc. isn’t important any more’, one farmer declared. To this Bjørn replied that it might be a problem if the animal-based measures did not cover the whole range of aspects of animal welfare. In other words, one has to make sure that all relevant aspects of animal welfare are measured. Others agreed with the first one: ‘It can easily become an excuse for doing nothing. Besides, if we take away these basic resource based standards, then we take away our competitive advantages as well’. ‘On the other hand’, another commented, ‘this is also our workplace environment, and by now we have adjusted to higher standards. We won’t go back on these, will we?’

Answering a direct question from Bjørn, one farmer stated that: ‘Applying animal based measurements, it might be felt kind of unfair; when and if scores (e.g. due to tail-bites) are low despite good intentions and considerable efforts to improve the standard on the farm’. They realized that resource based measures would give a better guaranty of direct returns for animal welfare investments. However, this is partly the case today as well, one pointed out. You have no direct control e.g. on tail-biting and it leads to bad marks and lower price at the slaughterhouse. ‘This is unfair, but you accept it, it’s the way it is’, a female farmer assured.

At this point in the discussion, an interesting detour started on the killing of ‘suffering’ and small piglets with minor chances of growing up. ‘Do ordinary people consider this to be a welfare issue at all?’, a female farmer asked. ‘I kill them in order to end their suffering. I doubt ordinary people understand this’, she continued. Others joined up, saying that it was – in theory – possible to raise them, but not within the premises of the farming systems. ‘You could take them into your house and put them on the warm bathroom floor’, one farmer noted, ‘but, how big is your bathroom’, the other farmer countered to the amusement of everyone. She proceeded, ‘I want the children to have a natural relationship to life and death’. Therefore, she had shown her own children how she killed these piglets.

In this discussion pet-owners relationship to their sick pets was also brought up. ‘People are making their pets undergo serious operations, and make them go through consequent suffering for years afterwards’, a female farmer maintained seemingly annoyed. She obviously meant the animals would have been better off if they had been ‘humanely killed off’. ‘We need regulations covering all kinds of animal husbandry’, she concluded, ‘not only for production animals’.

Another interesting detour related to breeding policies. Increasing the size of the farrow had for years been the aim of breeding policies in the farmers pig breeding organization – Norsvin (<<http://www.norsvin.no>>). A natural consequence of this is a systematically loss of piglets in the first days and weeks. There is a discussion going on in the organization on whether this is a viable policy. ‘We are some who want to reformulate the aims of breeding policy’, one of the farmers stated, ‘in order to down size farrows’. He meant the operational goal of the breeding policy should be changed from the number of piglets alive at birth (as today) to the number of piglets and their weight at three months age. This would help animal welfare as well as the economy of pig farming, he stated.

One of the farmers meant that animal based measures would risk becoming very subjective, based on the impressions of the singular auditor. Bjørn commented that these measures would be very 'objective', partly countable and all of them repeatable and reliable across different observers.

At the end of this sequence, the discussion returned to the question about animal-based vs. resource-based measures. One of the farmers meant a combination would be good. A resource and experience-based system 'hardwired' in 'legal regulations could serve to bring animal welfare up to 60–80% of the optimal level, whereas these animal-based registrations could help us to come even higher'. But, to totally abolish resource-based measures would be wrong, he proceeded. He also questioned whether consumers would agree to such a policy. However, the farmers all seemed to agree that the animal-based measures could be a good supplement to current resource-based regulations.

This ended a very lively and good discussion. Everyone – except one (male – the oldest one) – took very active part, and the tone was very inclusive and friendly. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. Though there was marked scepticism to regulations based on animal based measures, they seemed to grow more positive during the discussions, especially given that it would be possible to supplement rather than replace existing regulations.

During this discussion one of the participants had to leave to take care of her children.

6

EXPERT PRESENTATION – THE WQ ASSESSMENT TOOL

After a break, Bjørn commenced with his second expert presentation, this time on the WQ tool and the 12 criteria. His presentation was very much a continuation and elaboration of points brought up in the previous presentation. The farmers were still actively interrupting, commenting and asking questions. The mood was engaged and good.

After his presentation the sequence very much evolved into a question and answer session, where Bjørn came to hold a clear expert position.

The importance of castration was high up on farmers' agendas. If consumers accept it, they would gladly skip castration. Bjørn explained how British pig producers had a long tradition of non-castration. He also told about Danish experiments in this area. This evolved into a discussion pro and con of the Norwegian practise of anaesthetization vs. castration without anaesthetization vs. e.g. Dutch experiments with CO₂ anesthetization. One of the farmers took a clear stand in favour of the Norwegian practice. He was convinced that it was to the advantage of the pigs: They did not suffer that much, despite their yelling. And then again, there was the regard for the consumers and their opinions about Norwegian pig production. Besides, he pointed out, castration was not very time consuming, just about three minutes per farrow, and piglets had to be picked up many times anyway, so their potential fright from being picked up one more time for castration, should not be made to count in the larger picture. This eventually evolved into a discussion of immune-castration, where farmer were particularly concerned for the safety of the farmers themselves. Maybe the task of castration had to be left to the females? it was asked jokingly.

Farmers were somewhat sceptical about the validity of the measurements of fear, given that it was supposed to be based on letting strangers (auditors) into the sty. The pigs are naturally very wary and a stranger would automatically make them scared, they assured. Bjørn Forkman assured them that this part was placed a bit into the audit routine, after pigs had adjusted to the auditor for a while. 'It all then seems very much to rely on the particular auditor', one farmer noted.

Another point taken up related to whether pigs were to live indoors or outdoors. 'If regulations demand that pigs should stay outdoors, then we couldn't have pig production in Northern Europe', one farmer stated. 'Besides, this outdoor rearing would cause a lot of environmental effects e.g. related to drainage'. 'And what about infection prevention',

another added. To this Bjørn pointed to the system neutral character of the WQ tool, and the possibility of documenting good animal welfare, even in indoor systems. The farmers approved to this around the table. 'But what do the organic farmers say to this?', one farmer asked. Bjørn replied that it is possible to imagine that professional, industrialized large-scale pig-production may get higher WQ scores than parts of the organic sector. He added though, that this depended on the definition of animal welfare employed in WQ. If, he said, you say, like Norwegian consumers seem to say, that naturalness is the highest value, then you would get a completely other picture. 'Organic farming is a bit too glorified', one of the farmers concluded, accompanied by nodding all around the table.

On this point in the discussion the use of nose rings in parts of organic farming was brought up. Nose rings are used to keep pigs from digging too much in the ground. According to Vonne Lund, the observer from the Norwegian Veterinary Institute, nose rings were (two years ago) allowed in Danish organic farming in accordance with 'Statskontrollert økologisk', the dominant Danish standard in this field. One of the farmers reacted strongly against this. 'It is all a delusion', she claimed almost in anger. 'Advertisements showing happy pigs roaming in green clover fields', when they really has been mutilated, she implied. This proceeded into a discussion on whether nose rings represented a mutilation and whether it really had a significant effect on pig welfare. Vonne Lund took part in this discussion and served as a kind of defender of organic farming.

One of the farmers asked Bjørn whether welfare in relation to the instinct to produce social hierarchies could be measured with the WQ tool. Bjørn admitted that it could not, because they could not find system neutral ways of measuring group and hierarchy formation, and that this could be seen as a kind of flaw in the tool.

The session ended up with farmers being instructed in relation to the homework they were given. Everyone said they had enjoyed the sessions and the discussions. This ended the first day, and everyone returned to their homes, seemingly in good moods.

HOMework SESSION

The second meeting was held in the same locations a fortnight later. This time everyone came in time and they all sat down exactly on the same places as last time. Roles were also just like last time: Bjørn Forkman and Unni Kjærnes were experts, Eivind Jacobsen the facilitator, and the student – Erlend – took notes.

We soon started out with farmers' own presentations of their homework. It turned out that they had taken this task very seriously, and that they all claimed to systematically employ some animal-based measures in their daily encounters with their animals. Presentations started out at one end of the table and were relay-like passed around the table. The first presentation followed the questionnaire systematically, but with a lot of interruptions – comments and additions from the other farmers, questions from the experts and the facilitator. As we passed on around the table, presentations were less and less systematically related to the questionnaire and more and more took the form of additions to earlier presentations.

Most frequently observation of the individual animal was mentioned, whether this was related to enough feed, water, temperature (huddling behaviour), absence of injuries, sickness, fear, and so on. They also pointed to resource based measures, like the size of the sties, the condition of the water nipples, the room temperature, the amounts of hay/straw, and so on. It turned out that they touched and scratched a lot of the animals, in order to check their constitution (enough feed), temperature, general fear or to calm them down. One of the farmers assured that it was impossible to stroke on every pig, but that he did it systematically on e.g. young sows. Another farmer said that, 'In general, I think we overestimate pain in animals and underestimate fear', accompanied by nodding all around the table.

Just like in the first meeting, the most interesting points came up in digressions, this time regarding decisions about when to take injured or sick animals out for emergency slaughtering. The problem is to know when 'enough is enough'. A long-time sick and suffering animal could become well the next day, an experience several farmers claimed to have had. It was a bit hard to tell to what extent this was regarded as a moral and not only an economic dilemma. But, judged from the way these arguments was laid out, it sounded like they really cared for the animals: 'We try and we try, but finally we can't stand it any longer'.

Concerning the importance of the different criteria, the farmers seemed to agree that hunger and thirst was of basic importance. They also stressed the importance of comfort around

resting, pointing to how e.g. extra straw for nesting could prevent sickness as well as reduce aggression and level of fear. Absence of fear was also highlighted by several. There was also a discussion about the importance of temperature, where they seemed to conclude that what really counted are the pigs' possibilities to find different temperature zones suited for their needs. For instance, cold un-insulated farmhouses may not be a problem (even in wintery Norway) as long as the animals have enough dry straw to hide within.

In another digression, one of the farmers pointed to the difficulty of observing whether animals were hungry or thirsty. If animals – of various reasons (e.g. temporary sickness) – don't get enough to eat and drink for a couple of days, 'some of them seem to slip into a kind of apathetic state, where they kind of give up', he stated. They just lay there and you don't know whether they are content or just passive. This is mostly a problem in bigger entities, where you may overlook one or two in 60, 'it's simply not possible to watch them all'.

Still another digression was also interesting. A female farmer asked for whom the importance of the criteria was to be judged, the pigs or the farmers. 'It is clear', she said, 'that for us farmers, all of these are very important economically'. This perspective was also present in another discussion, where another farmer stated that she had often thought about for whom she was doing all the cleaning and tidying in the farmhouse: 'Obviously it's for us, the farmers, as the pigs don't care at all', she said.

This session was very much farmer driven, lively and full of concrete case stories and examples from farmers own experiences. The facilitator had to stop the discussions in order to stick to the time schedule.

EXPERT PRESENTATION: CALCULATING, CALIBRATING AND AGGREGATING SCORES

Bjørn Forkman then started his first presentation for the day, about parameters for measuring animal welfare. He pointed to the lack of an agreed upon, standardized operational way of measuring animal welfare. WQ(R) is an attempt to establish one such standard, he stated. Bjørn went through the parameters, mostly without interruptions.

The first reaction related to what one of the farmers understood as the farmers' non-inclusion in this tool. If farmers aren't included in the measurements and farmers' welfare taken in consideration, the whole system will fail, one farmer claimed. Bjørn countered that farmers would be included through a questionnaire. However, he stated, good intentions is not enough. The following very much developed into a question and answer sequence, where Bjørn explicated the ways used to measure the different criteria.

The farmers' principle reaction related to the correctness and 'fairness' of the scores, pointing to cyclic and random variations in production during the year and in the production cycles. It would be unfair to be measured at the 'wrong time'. It would also be unfair to be measured when you happened to have one of these tail-biting pigs around. The farmers were very much concerned that such seasonal or random variations would be taken into consideration.

Responding to a direct question from the facilitator about whether they could see any useful sides of this tool, a female farmer said she thought it was 'kind of hysterical'. Another farmer quickly responded that he thought the tool could be helpful, and not at least 'educational', as a supplement on top of, or alongside a physical standard like the one at the basis of today's regulations. 'We need some basic rules to relate to', another continued, 'and not at least, that there are someone coming to your farm, inspecting us, telling us that sties of this and this size is required, and so on. This, I think, is the most important thing you can do for animal welfare', she claimed, 'that others' eyes see what we do'.

Still another farmer said this seems to be a reasonable approach. 'Most importantly', he continued, 'is the fact that we may get a European standard. We may dispute certain aspects of this standard, but the important thing is that a common standard is developed'. However,

he was afraid that the standards would be implemented differently regionally across Europe.

The facilitator then asked whether they thought there were important omissions in the criteria and parameters presented. Earlier in the discussion the importance of stable groups had been mentioned as one such possibly lacking parameter. Apart from this, the farmers could not think of any others. On the other hand, the farmers returned to the total lack of resource-based measures. They did not agree with the tool on this point. One farmer elaborated on this, saying that he thought that it might be best if this standard (the WQ tool) would not include resource-based measures, but that requirements for buildings and facilities were included in e.g. the basic building regulations for this kind of farmhouses. The WQ tool cannot replace this kind of regulations, he claimed, but it can be very useful as a supplement.

A female farmer commented to this that it was ‘fascinating’ to think of the fact that animal welfare did not automatically depend on the physical regulations. ‘Farmers and regulators put down a lot of efforts in construction the right buildings and physical environments, but after all, it might be that this isn’t what really counts for animal welfare’, she reflected. ‘That’s why I think this (the WQ tool) is a fine way of measuring, an interesting way – unfamiliar to us though’. On the other hand, she asked how different this really was from the health-based inspections they were subject to today.

At this point the discussions closed for a coffee-break. In the break, the farmers continued to discuss their animals and animal husbandry. Interestingly the discussion gradually turned towards the working environment of the farmers themselves, the health risks involved and the need for protection, e.g. against dust in the farmhouses. ‘No one is talking about our welfare’, one of the female farmers noted.

Before starting up the next session, Bjørn was asked about how far the development of the WQ tool had come. There were also questions regarding the measuring of animal welfare during transport.

In the following session, Bjørn presented the scoring system in an exercise. This swiftly turned into a very interactive session. The farmers did have a lot of opinions about what should be regarded as acceptable levels of e.g. tail-bites. They agreed that 2% tail-bites should qualify for top scores, while around 20% would be unacceptable.

The same kind of discussion arose around the measuring of fear. Here one farmer claimed that this is not the worst welfare problem: ‘It should be judged mildly if the pigs are a bit jumpy when a stranger enters the sty’. The comparability across different farming systems and farm sizes were a concern also discussed here. Can this be applied to Denmark as well as Norway, it was asked.

Injuries on adult pigs: farmers regarded 50% severe injuries as far worse than 100% moderate or light injuries. They also regarded 25% severe injuries to be unacceptable. One of the farmer added that she had about 600 pigs and of these she had to work on two

to three animals with severe injuries. That was also very much her capacity, she said. More injuries than that would be hard to handle. When deciding scores on the parameters the farmers seemed to look mostly to the animals being worst off. They also added that it would be impossible to have no injuries. E.g. you often had to keep pregnant sows alive, even if they were injured. As such emergency slaughtering once again emerged as a safety valve and problem solver.

The session commenced and lunch was served. During lunch discussions continued around much of the same questions. Some new topics also emerged – barn fires and fire protection, and systems of how to get rid of manure and straw and its practical and welfare related aspects.

After lunch, Bjørn continued, complicating things a bit, as he said, presenting ways to add the individual animal welfare scores to form combined farm scores. He asked: are some criteria more important than others? Should the criteria be weighted differently? The following discussion took up arguments touched upon in the homework exercise presentation at the start of the day.

‘It is better to have middle scores on everything than to have good score on some criteria and bad scores on other’, one farmer started up. Still, ‘prolonged thirst is worse than prolonged hunger’, they agreed. Concerning comfortable temperature vs. pain induced by management, one of the farmers noted that consumers tended to be very concerned about e.g. castration. Therefore, he meant it would be wise to stress this parameter. ‘We often tend to underrate the importance of pains induced by the farming system’, he continued.

Bjørn proceeded with a short presentation of how the WQ experts had weighted the principles, and concluded that the jury farmers very much seemed to agree with the experts on these judgments. He also added that most of the farms tested out with the tool had been given rather low scores by the experts. This point was given some attention by the farmers, who questioned the realism of the scoring.

At this point one of the farmers had to leave.

Discussions gradually moved towards the topic for the next presentation: implementation of the WQ tool.

EXPERT PRESENTATION: IMPLEMENTATION AND UTILITY OF THE WQ TOOL

Unni gave an expert presentation, based on a Dutch presentation, of possible implementations of the WQ tool: 1. feedback to farmers, 2. certification of farms, and 3. information to the public (e.g. labelling of products). She also discussed different ways of labelling, e.g. a acceptable/non-acceptable dichotomy vs. a gradual system of ‘stars’.

A discussion swiftly aroused focused on labelling and consumer information: ‘You can’t put non-acceptable meat products in the shelves of supermarkets’, one of the farmers stated. ‘That won’t sell’, another added. Also, ‘I’d rather have two stars on my products than just to have an “acceptable” sign on it’, still another commented.

Unni then asked how this system could be made useful for the farmers. One farmer started out noting that usually good welfare is not incompatible with good economy. It is rather highly compatible, ‘it’s a plus’, he stated, and most farmers will be motivated to take part in such a system. Another farmer added that one needs someone to see you in the farmhouse. Usually, Norwegian pig farmers work alone, and farmers need someone else’s eyes to keep focus on animal welfare. On the other hand, such audits have to be accompanied by some kind of guidance/counselling service, in order to prevent farmers given low scores to give up, she supplemented. Others added that Nortura (the farmers’ co-operative) could do this counselling job. They have the necessary expertise and apparatus, and farmers are used to let them into their farmhouses.

Concerning product labelling, farmers were a bit more reluctant to accept this. ‘I would not like to have a two star product with my name on it in the shops. I would feel ashamed’, one farmer stated. ‘It would be most fair if the top rated got their label on the products, while the rest was piled into one category’, she proceeded. Another added, ‘Who are going to take the burden for the single star products that probably will be hard to sell?’. In order for these products to sell, they probably have to cost less to the consumer, they all seemed to agree.

But, did they think that this system would serve, not only to improve the economy of farmers, but to really enhance animal welfare, Unni then asked. One farmer answered that she thought so – at least it might motivate those with a middle score to improve for top scores. On the other hand, for those with the lowest scores, the system might work counter-

productively as a lot of these farmers would give up, as they realize that there is a too long way to the top.

They were also concerned with the potential size of a premium animal welfare market in Norway. They think it is rather small and that pig meat mostly is and will be regarded by most consumers as a homogenous product. Therefore, a quality assurance scheme like this should be included in already existing systems of e.g. Nortura or the normal veterinary inspection services, one farmer stated. He also added that he would not expect the retailers to take a lead on this either. I do not think any of them would bother to invest in an exclusive brand on pig meat, he said. Another farmer added that this system (WQ) puts a lot of responsibility on consumers. If consumers don't engage and are unwilling to pay more for higher animal welfare, the system fails. If this is so, then we have to stick to laws and universal regulations.

The discussion then turned to whether more imports could be expected to serve to mobilize consumers on these issues, and several farmers thought that might work. If there are more imports, focus will be on differences between the imports and the Norwegian products, and hence, consumers might more easily be mobilized. On the other hand, the Swedish farmers did not get that much extra per kilo, when confronted with imports. 'They expected to get one Krone (SKR) more and ended up with only 50 Øre', one farmer added. Thereby he questioned how much it would be possible to gain economically from being part of such a scheme.

Another comment concerned the costs involved in this kind of assurance scheme. 'You need a heavy market actor to get involved to carry the costs of investments and development', one farmer noted.

The session ended up positively with one farmer stating that: 'The richer we get, the more should we be able and willing to pay for animal welfare', adding that, 'They don't have means to pay for animal welfare in Tanzania. In Norway we do'.

FINAL SESSION: SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

Asked to sum up, one farmer stated that he was positive to this attempt to develop one common European standard for animal welfare. Another farmer added though, that it has to be constructed such that it is realistically attainable to everyone in Europe, across different farming systems, to be fair. However, it seems to be a long way to go before this scheme is universally applied all over Europe, another dryly put in.

At this point, just before closing, one farmer added that the use of antibiotics and hormones should be part of the scheme. Bjørn countered that these matters are more the concerns for consumers' health than an animal welfare problem. They might represent ethical problems, he said, but not an animal welfare problem. The farmer responded that it would be strategically smart to include antibiotics in the scheme in order to protect European production against imports from abroad. Consumers are very concerned about these matters; he added, a point confirmed by Unni referring to what is coming up in the consumer juries meetings.

FARMERS' JURIES IN NORWAY – IN SHORT

11.1 SHORT SUMMARY

The juries functioned very well and seemed to be a pleasant experience for all involved. During the presentations and discussions the farmers constantly came up with concrete examples and considerations from their daily activities. Even though the animal based approach was new to them, the homework showed that they all in practice employed animal based parameters in the farmhouses. It also showed a considerable personal involvement with the animals. They all seemed to have personal relationships with many of their animals, especially the sows, and a lot of the animals were daily talked to, rubbed behind the ears and scratched on their backs. Bjørn, coming from a Danish reality seemed rather impressed.

There were also very good discussions on the viability of different kinds of animal-based parameters. However, they did not like the thought of these animal based measurements replacing the current resource based ones. Instead they wanted them to come on top of, or alongside legislation and mainly resource based regulations.

Concerning the implementation of the WQ programme, most of the farmers were not as hostile to labelling as we perhaps expected them to be at the outset. Most of them agreed in a top level labelling and in WQ as a quality system supplementing the current law based regulations. They were also positive to the inspections/audits involved in this kind of system, giving them the opportunity to get some feedback in an otherwise lonely trade. However, they wanted the scheme to be accompanied by a counselling system, directing farmers with low scores on how to improve themselves.

All in all, the farmers turned out to be very interested, engaged and mostly positive to the WQ programme as a supplement to be put on top of existing regulations.

11.2 RELEVANCE

There is a marked opposition to differentiation among Norwegian farmers. Still, most of our pig-farmers were positive to having a two-tier labelling system, where those with a top score can have their products labelled to get a premium price, whereas the rest included in the scheme is put in one 'acceptable' category. On the other hand, they seemed to be more hostile against a multilevel labelling system. The latter may serve to make farmers with low scores to resign, it was claimed.

There were also a certain scepticism concerning the realism of letting consumers decide the pace and direction of animal welfare improvements. On a general level, they did not have too much faith in consumers. However, in case of increased imports, consumers might be mobilized for animal welfare and Norwegian production in general. They were also sceptical to the realism of having retailers implementing them. Norwegian retailers don't seem to be really interested, they claimed. Therefore, if this system is to be implemented, it would be best to have it included in the existing system for health inspections or in the quality counselling system of the major abattoir/meat producer, the farmers' co-operative Nortura.

The farmers were also reluctant to let go of the regulations already in place. They thought about the WQ tool as something to be put on top of existing regulations, not as something to replace them. Animal-based measures had to be used in addition to resource-based measures. This was also so because of the expected low frequency of inspections/audits and the 'subjectivity' of animal-based measures, as some of the farmers put it.

These views should also be understood in light of the relatively 'advanced' state of the Norwegian pig industry (relative to other Norwegian productions), where there has been a lot of attention and broad educational initiatives related to animal welfare. These Norwegian pig farmers obviously felt very confident and comfortable speaking about what goes on in their farmhouses. 'I have nothing to hide', one farmer noted at one point. They also stated that pig production in Norway was lucrative right now and had been so for a while.

11.3 REFLECTION ON THE METHOD

The jury methodology was new to all involved in these meetings. It turned out to work very well: The discussions were lively, full of case stories and concrete examples, and the participants were highly engaged. There was also a friendly and including atmosphere all through the meetings. The farmers all turned from being curious but sceptical to mostly

positive during the sessions. It was also obvious that they liked speaking about these issues, with the experts as well as with each other. They also became more confident on the experts as well as each other during the sessions.

There may be several reasons for this 'success'. First, the farmers turned out to be a relatively homogenous group, and they knew about each other (without being close friends). We tried very hard to recruit one major organic pig farmer, but he refused to meet the others. He claimed to have had a number of quarrels with at least two of the male farmers taking part in the sessions, and saw no reason why he should repeat them in this setting. Thereby, no big paradigmatic discussions about how animal welfare should be defined took place. Neither were there big differences in opinions about differentiation or the potential roles of consumers.

Second, the fact that the majority of the farmers were women may have given the conversations a more listening and less competitive form than would have been the case if men were dominating. This may also have been the reason why all – except one – farmers were well represented in the transcripts.

Third, all the sessions were carefully planned with good and engaging presentations. The expert presenters managed to communicate very well with the participants.

This also owes very much to a fourth point – perhaps the most important one: The farmers themselves were experts in the field they were asked to discuss. Of that reason, they could communicate easily and 'on the same level' with the experts. They had all thought a lot about animal welfare questions and somehow they all employed animal based approaches in their daily dealings with their animals. The balance in the situation was also eased by the fact that one of the experts (Unni Kjærnes) and the facilitator (Eivind Jacobsen) had diminutive prior knowledge of animal welfare and pig production. This made it possible to alternate roles, in the way that the farmers during the conversations could take on an educative, teaching role towards the 'ignorant' social scientists.

A fifth, more speculative, point can also be hinted on here: Norwegian farms are relatively small, implying that the farmer him-/herself are taking care of the animals on a daily basis. This means that the Norwegian pig farmers – due to their daily encounters with animals – probably are more likely to share the perspectives of the expert animal scientists, than farmers on really big farms do. On the really big farms one should expect farmers to take more managerial roles, whereas the daily animal husbandry is being taken care of by employees.

Part II

Netherlands

by

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INTRODUCTION TO PART II

The main objective of Work Package 4.4.2 is to evaluate farmers' responses to and acceptance of the Welfare Quality[®] assessment and monitoring system, its grading system and use for product information. It is particularly important to determine how farmers perceive the tool because they will be among its main users, and their acceptance is essential for its successful implementation. The Welfare Quality[®] team developing this tool also needs to know which aspects evoke farmers' interest and trust as well as those causing concern and distrust. We also need insight into their reasoning and motives for acceptance or refusal.

The basis of our juries work is the expectation that working with a selection of farmers will provide insights into how farmers in general might react to the final tool, and into the collective process of opinion development within the farming community.

The Welfare Quality[®] tool is meant to be implemented at European level. Based on earlier work in Sub-project 1 we can expect acceptance to vary not only between stakeholders but also between countries. Since opinions on and understanding of animal welfare differ between Northern, Western and Southern Europe, we organized farmers' juries in three countries representing these geographic differences: the Netherlands, Norway and Italy.³

This report reflects findings and generates recommendations from the Dutch meetings.

The synthesis report (Part IV, D 4.19) will integrate and compare the findings across all three countries.

12.1 THE CHOICE OF METHODOLOGY

It is not enough to simply ask farmers if they would accept the Welfare Quality[®] tool or not without first explaining its complexities and how it works. We need to know what

³ Bock, B.B. and Huik, M.M. van (2007) 'Animal welfare, attitudes and behaviour of pig farmers across Europe', *British Food Journal*, 109(11), pp.931–944.

underpins their reasoning and motivation and how their individual and collective opinions develop.

We therefore used a method that imitates the way in which farmers might develop their opinion in real life – in response to information input and in exchange with other farmers and their organizations. Of course this imitation has limits: the scale is small and the group of farmers involved selective; the period of time is short; the information provided is a bit one-sided and limited to the general features of the Welfare Quality[®] monitoring tool ; the role of organizations is barely included and the role of policy-makers, society at large and the media excluded. However, this method also has important advantages through the close and in-depth interactions with their peers.

Although the term ‘jury’ gives the impression that the participants act like a trial jury and are asked to take a decision, this was not the case here. We used the term ‘discussion meetings’ rather than ‘juries’, in order to avoid giving the farmers the idea that they were involved in decision-making.

Juries are considered a qualitative research method in the social sciences. They are generally used to explore issues we know little about and to understand the influential aspects of phenomena. In the present study they will reveal the different opinions that exist, and their underpinning ‘logics’. We do not expect to learn how many farmers adhere to which opinion or that will accept the tool.

The reliability and scientific quality of qualitative methods, such as juries, is grounded in the transparency of the research process. Thus, it is important to explain the design of data-collection and analysis in detail so that others can check the likelihood and credibility of our results.

12.2 METHOD OF DATA-COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

We focused on one farm sector and allowed for variance among participants with regard to subsector (breeding, fattening, integrated), production method (organic, conventional), region, gender and age (see Table 12.1). We selected participants using the so-called snowball-method via our contacts in the farming community. In addition, we sought farmers who were interested in discussing animal welfare and willing to invest two full days in our project. Several of the participants were actively engaged in farmer organizations so we were able to probe personal and organizational opinions. We reimbursed farmers’ travel expenses and the costs of their replacement at the farm.

All juries took place during two full days in October and November 2008 with a break in between of two weeks which also served as a period of reflection. In the Netherlands a

TABLE 12.1 Outlook on the farming system of the farmers involved in the meetings.

	Farming system and no. of pigs	Remarks	G	Region
1	1100 breeding pigs (sows)	Wants to grow to 1600 breeding pigs	M	East
2	Closed system, 400 sows	Rents storage and stables, 1 worker	M	Centre
3	Closed system	Family farm (runs the farm with husband)	F	South
4	650 sows, 500 fattening pigs	Also young cattle, political active	M	East
5	650 sows, own maize land	Partnership with parents, young farmer	M	North
6	250 sows, 1600 fattening pigs	Wants to grow to 400 sows and 3000 pigs*	F	South
7	4000 fattening pigs	Family farm, without successor	M	West
8	Fattening and breeding	Also poultry production, 5 workers	M	Centre
9	300 sows, 900 fattening pigs	Partly organic, 1 full-time worker	M	North-East
10	400 sows, 200 fattening pigs		M	East
11	400 sows	Partnership with wife	M	South-East
12	400 sows	Successor unknown (children too young)	F	East
13	300 sows, location has to change	Farm situated in zone for "extensification"	M	East

Note: * This farmer has a so called 'zichtstal'; visitors are welcome to view the pigs through big windows.

professional facilitator was hired to chair the session. The meeting was audio-registered and transcribed by several reporters. In addition the project co-ordinator and researcher were present as well as one or two animal scientists involved in other projects of Welfare Quality®.

The same protocol was followed in all three countries and the input by experts was basically the same. It was translated into the appropriate languages and presented by different national experts, all working in Welfare Quality®. This standardized approach maximized comparability across countries, so any differences in the findings are likely to reflect differences between the three countries and farming communities.

Data analysis proceeded as follows. First of all we composed a complete transcription of all sessions based on the notes taken during the sessions. In this report, we summarized what farmers said and discussed but also described and reflected upon the interaction process. We then summarized and compared farmers' opinions and also tried to get insight into the way the interaction process evolved. We compared the opinions presented and the questions raised and searched for agreements and collisions of opinions; we also tried to follow if some of the farmers more strongly influenced the process of opinion building than others and in which direction. The latter was indeed the case; the two farmers active in farmers' organizations repeatedly called upon the other to 'close the lines' and collectively oppose to issues that were experienced as threatening (see Chapters 15 and 16).

Programme for the Farmers' Juries

Day 1: The definition of animal welfare

Session 1 What do farmers define and perceive as a good life for animals?

Inventory of opinions and discussion among farmers.

Session 2 What is animal welfare in the eye of animal scientists and citizens?

Two short presentations and discussion among farmers about differences and correspondences.

Session 3 What is new about the Welfare Quality® assessment tool?
A short introduction into the tool: the principles and criteria and the logic of animal-based assessment.

Home-work for farmers: how would they measure the fulfilment of criteria by way of animal-based measures? And how important are the different criteria for them?

Day 2 The Welfare Quality® assessment tool

Session 4 The measurement of criteria.

Discussion with farmers based on their homework and the presentation of the measurements used in Welfare Quality®.

Session 5a Translation of measurements into farm scores.

Expert presentation; interactive exercise and discussion.

Session 5b From parameter scores to criteria scores and farm scores.

Expert presentation; interactive exercise and discussion.

Session 6 Implementation strategies: management advice and product information.

Expert presentation and discussion.

Session 7 Reflection on the process.

12.3 THE FARMERS

In total 12 farmers participated in both meetings. One farmer could unexpectedly only attend the first meeting. The farmers differed in subsector, production method, farm size, age, gender and region (see Table 12.1). In this way we tried to grasp personal and farm differences which might potentially influence the farmers' attitude, although we never aimed at giving a representative picture of Dutch pig farmers.

The Structure of the Report

The report is structured along the main research questions. They include the following:

Chapter 13: Farmers' definition of animal welfare and response to the definition of scientists and citizens.

Chapter 14: Farmers' response to the logic and the criteria of the Welfare Quality Assessment Tool.

Chapter 15: Farmers' response to the measurements of animal welfare.

Chapter 16: Farmers' response to the calculation of animal welfare scores.

Chapter 17: Farmers' attitude towards implementation.

Chapter 18: Reflection on the process and conclusions.

Chapter 19: Recommendations.

In each chapter, we will briefly summarize and analyse farmers' reactions taking into account also how the process evolved and how farmers built their opinion in interaction and in the course of the sessions as a whole.

FARMERS' DEFINITIONS OF ANIMAL WELFARE AND RESPONSES TO THE DEFINITIONS OF SCIENTISTS AND CITIZENS

We started the first day of the jury workshop by discussing with farmers about their notions on animal welfare (13.1). We then invited experts to introduce the view of animal scientists (13.2) as well as of citizens (13.3) and invited farmers to react to those ideas.

13.1 FARMERS' POINT OF VIEW

We started by asking farmers to write down on Post-its which they considered important aspects of animal welfare (see Table 13.1). Among them were: animals feeling well; feeling safe; happy animals, feeling comfortable, good climate; peace, hygiene and regularity;

TABLE 13.1 The issues brought forward by the farmers on the Post-its.

Animal welfare is in us	Welfare cannot be expressed in surface of the stable	Clean and healthy animal, good production results, piece in the stables / animal welfare
Dutch climate difficult to control		
Health	If you work with pleasure, the animal feels better	
Insights on animal welfare changed through public opinion	Animals and human should feel well	Healthy animal, fit, good shape, happy animal / animal welfare
No difference pets and animals kept for production		Animal should feel comfortable, space should meet requirements
The animal / pig should feel well	Animals should feel happy, both pets and production animals. One should do all to achieve that	Animals that feels well has good welfare
Welfare entrepreneur / animal		
Quiet treatment, good results	Animal feels comfortable	Behaviour specific for production animals
Animal should feel safe	Feel good, comfortable. Piece. Satisfied	
Low mortality rate, few aggression		Animals should remain healthy
Good climate	Peace, hygienic conditions, and regularity	Whether the animal feels happy in its environment

sufficient space; fitness, good shape, healthy; low mortality rates; little aggression among animals; productivity; farmers working with pleasure gives more animal welfare.

From the above summary it clearly emerges that farmers did not only consider aspects of housing, body condition and health to be important but also positive emotions, social behaviour and human–animal interaction, without necessarily formulating it in this way. Notable is also that farmers often explain the importance of certain aspect through anthropomorphic arguments.

‘The animals notice if you work with pleasure. You have to approach them in a humane way. I always say that you need to consider them as baby’s, as it were your children. We want to eat from a clean plate. Well, the pigs also want to eat from a clean rearing trough’ (12).

The farmers had expected that they would fully agree on the definition of animal welfare, but there was lively discussion and some disagreement about the significance of productivity and the extent to which citizens’ perceptions of animal welfare should be taken into account. Some farmers proposed time and again that productivity and animal welfare were one and the same thing.

‘A pig just is part of a group. Why would one pig be less happy than another one? I keep my pigs purely for economic reasons. It is not necessarily interrelated, but if the pig feels bad it does not produce well. If a pig feels well, it is able to produce’ (11).

‘If the animal does not feel well it will not produce well’ (8).

Others did not agree at all. Production had nothing to do with welfare in their view. Some even pointed out that productivity could be too high and that this might damage animal welfare, although the farmers agreed that this risk was much higher in other sectors, such as broiler production or dairy farming.

‘For me the production does not relate much to welfare. If a sow produces five or 20 piglets is not because the latter animal feels better’ (1).

All farmers agreed that their perception of animal welfare had changed in response to citizens’ concerns. They also fully agreed that animal welfare was of utmost importance and it was their responsibility. They differed in the extent to which they wanted to take citizens’ ‘naïve’ and ‘false’ expectations on board and allow them to define how they should handle animals. Most of them felt that citizens were too ignorant of what really mattered to farm animals and wrongly compared them to pets and wild animals. Some farmers also believed that citizens were misled by NGOs.

13.2 THE SCIENTIST POINT OF VIEW

In the second session, an animal scientist briefly presented how scientists' definition of farm animal welfare developed through time starting with the Brambell report and moving to animal based measures. She summed up three ways of measuring animal welfare: management (which can be asked for), housing conditions (which can be checked), and the registration of characteristics on the animal itself (which is more difficult to measure), and emphasized that researchers on animal welfare now preferred to look at the animal itself.

The farmers very much appreciated the trend towards animal based measures; in their view this was exactly how they approached animal welfare – looking at the animal. In their view this was the right, scientific and objective way of looking at animals. They also explicitly agreed with the animal scientist that an anthropomorphic attitude should be avoided as it wrongly compared animals and their needs to human needs. Looking at animals as animals was the right and objective way of looking at animals. But they also raised some questions, among which the following.

- How to take individual differences between animals into account in a standardized assessment method? Some animals are more aggressive than others.
- How to take into account that some so-called negative behaviour (e.g. aggression) is nevertheless natural behaviour that as such is perceived as an important contributor to animal welfare?

In doing so they pointed at the practical paradoxes that animal farming entailed and came along with new regulations for animal welfare. They specifically referred to group housing, which addresses the natural need of herd animals but at the same time increases the risk of injuries as a result of rank fighting.

‘Pigs have an order of rank and fight about it, depending on the different situations. Fighting you can only avoid by separating the animals, which is neither good as the pigs are herd animals’ (4).

13.3 THE CITIZEN POINT OF VIEW

We then presented Welfare Quality® results on citizens' opinion. Farmers were relieved that citizens' opinion was more positive about farming than they had expected. At the same time the presentation confirmed their belief that citizens were 'naïve' and ignorant and approached animals from a human 'anthropomorphic' point of view, which in their view

was wrong and subjective. Farmers looked at animals in a zoomorphic way, i.e. they look at animals as animals – just like the scientists were doing.

Farmers also remarked that citizens had wrong and exaggerated expectations of animal farming, which did not guarantee animal welfare. As an example they referred to citizens' romantic and false idea about small scaled, organic farms where the animals enjoy living.

'The only image seen by citizen is the one with pigs in the mud. That looks beautiful. Always the most beautiful is presented. But in average during the year things look differently' (7).

Against this romantic image they pointed at the fact that it was actually at the professional, successful and modern farms that animal welfare was better assured. For the farmers management was most important.

'Entrepreneurship should be considered important. A professional attitude makes the difference. That is important, and independent from the size of a farm' (11).

'On a professional farm are skilled people, who have the time to look after the animals' (2).

In addition, farmers underlined that citizens wanted all kind of nice things for animals but then as consumer were not ready to pay for anything. It was moreover extremely difficult in their view to reach the wide public as they had too little interest in farm reality.

'Who are the ones who come to an open day on my organic farm? It is a small group of people who like to have a nice day out of the house. The consumers are those who buy the meat. The distance to this anonymous group of consumers, those you do not see on your open day, is big. I would like to come into contact with this group of consumers' (9).

In conclusion, we can say that farmers felt akin to the scientists and said to share their animal-based and 'objective' point of view. In their view both of them looked at animals as animals, which was experienced as a safe-guard against 'exaggerated' definition of animals' needs and expectations towards animal farming. Perceiving animals as animals meant among others that health and bodily fitness were considered as important aspects of welfare and warranted by providing good feeding, housing and health care. They also believed that animal should feel well and that social behaviour was important. Nevertheless, they perceived the opinion of citizens and the importance they attached to positive feelings and social and natural behaviour as wrong, romantic and exaggerated. In their view citizens should know more about the reality of modern animal farming. This would help to get rid of the bad image that animal protection organizations were sketching of modern animal farms; citizens would then be able to see how well animals fare and how well they are treated. At the same time, they hoped that citizens would then become convinced to let go of their romantic ideas about animals' needs. The farmers expected information, hence, to have a positive influence on citizens' attitude although they had also experience that citizens did not share their positive perception of some aspects of

modern animal farming. In their view, citizens them 'misunderstood' or 'misperceived' what they saw. Information and promotion were, hence, closely related for farmers.

FARMERS' RESPONSES TO THE LOGIC AND CRITERIA OF THE WELFARE QUALITY[®] ASSESSMENT TOOL

In the third session, we introduced the Welfare Quality[®] tool. The WQ expert on animal welfare introduced the four principles and 12 criteria which should allow farmers to understand the logic of the WQ Assessment Tool and its difference to other monitoring tools. The session should prepare the farmers the farmers to do their 'homework' in between the meetings, and to discuss the WQ Assessment Tool the second day in more detail.

Generally speaking, all farmers agreed with the principles and criteria as being relevant and important. There were some questions about the inclusion of some aspects. One of the farmers, for instance, missed air quality as criteria besides temperature. Also the use of antibiotics was discussed as it was not listed in the list of criteria. Another farmer was worried that the age of animal might not be taken into account as it resulted in different needs regarding housing conditions. Some discussion also evolved around the importance of light and daylight.

'Would it matter to provide daylight or not for having a rhythm in day and nights for the animals? And if so, to which criteria this belongs?' (4).

We discussed such issues quite extensively to convince the farmers that we were interested in their opinion and to find out to what extent the monitoring tool covered what farmers considered as important as well.

For what concerns the relative importance of the criteria it became clear that the last principle was considered as least important as it was not important for survival. Most farmers did, however, underlined that social behaviour was important, although it might result in fighting and, hence, injuries.

'One should be very much aware of how things get interpreted. Pigs have to be able to show natural behaviour, but also to meet the criteria of absence of disease and injuries. But diseases and injuries are part of the natural behaviour of the animals. Fighting the order of rank in the group is natural behaviour as well, but simultaneously it results in injuries. You should pay attention to how the criteria are going to be used' (11).

Their doubts mainly regarded other natural behaviour, positive emotions and human-animal relationship. In their view here again animals' needs were exaggerated and wrongly compared to human needs. One should also keep in mind that animals were kept for economic purposes.

'If I give my children a new toy they like it a lot, but after a while they are not satisfied any longer. If I take it away, my children do not become unhappy' (9).

They also wondered how these aspects could be measured in any objective way by outsiders who do not know the animals and their 'normal', regular behaviour given the specific conditions at that farm and this specific group of animals.

'But that will bring new problems, if to be controlled by people, because of the interpretation, thus the subjective assessment of the people who have to control' (4).

We also asked the farmers to do some home-work before the next meeting. They received a table with principles and criteria and were asked to add some animal-based measurement that they would want to use for checking the fulfilment of the criteria. We also asked them to define which principles and criteria were most important to them as farmers.

As the Table 14.1 shows farmers agreed that hunger, thirst, comfort around resting, thermal comfort and absence of diseases were important. They were less convinced of the importance of behavioural aspects and ease of movement. Most of the farms also considered pain, injuries and fear important indicators of welfare as well as a good human animal relationship. We can conclude that farmers agreed about the importance of aspects directly related to health and food safety as well as productivity and product quality, and that a majority of them also considered negative and painful feelings as important welfare indicators.

TABLE 14.1 Perceived importance of principles and criteria.

Principle	Welfare criteria	Certainly important	Less important	Un-important	Blank
Good feeding	1. Absence of prolonged hunger	12			
	2. Absence of prolonged thirst	12			
Good housing	3. Comfort around resting	10.5 ¹	1.5 ¹		
	4. Thermal comfort	10.5 ¹	1.5 ¹		
Good health	5. Ease of movement	5.5 ¹	6.5 ¹		
	6. Absence of injuries	9	3		
	7. Absence of disease	12 ²			
Appropriate behaviour	8. Absence of pain induced by management procedures	8.5 ¹	4		
	9. Expression of social behaviours	5	6	1.5 ¹	
	10. Expression of other behaviours	2	7	2	1
	11. Good human-animal relationship	8	4		
	12. Absence of general fear	7.5 ¹	4.5 ¹		

Notes: ¹ If farmers marked two options or put crosses half between two options we gave .5 to each options;

² One farmer (11) disagreed with the phrasing of the criteria: absence of diseases.

FARMERS' RESPONSES TO THE MEASUREMENTS OF ANIMAL WELFARE

During the second meeting of the jury workshop we focused on the monitoring tool itself. We discussed the homework of the farmers which regarded their definition of the most important criteria and their measurement (already summarized in Chapter 14). We then proceeded with explanations of experts of the way the various criteria were measured in the monitoring tool.

We started with a brief reflection on the accomplishments of the first day, as summarized by the facilitator. When he concluded that farmers and scientists seemed to think similarly about animal welfare, and farmers considered the animal-based approach attractive, some farmers pointed at some important weaknesses of this approach: its supposed subjectivity in measuring animal welfare and the difficulty to forecast the evaluation of farms. Especially the latter was considered problematic as it undermined the certainty needed when making investments. Although resource-based measurement had its negative side, they were at least very clear, stable and predictable. Although the farmers were interested in animal welfare, the political discussion about it was worrying as it threatened their existence as entrepreneurs. They repeatedly indicated that they would like to close this discussion in order to be able to move on, and they were frustrated that there seemed to be no end to new discussions and new demands

‘Imagine I want to build a new barn. Regarding the slitting width you know the regulations. It is easy to meet the regulations. You know: so many years you can continue. End of the discussion. But if in the near future somebody passes by and says the welfare of the animals does not meet the standards: the pigs have to socially behave differently, that is much more difficult’ (9).

We then started with the presentation of the animal scientist, who explained how the different criteria were actually measured at the farm. The presentation took place in an interactive way as each measurement was discussed with the farmers. During the discussion farmers repeatedly mentioned that there were actually still many resource-based measurements present. They were disappointed as they had expected much more animal-based measurements. At the other hand they were often not convinced that behaviour was actually the best way to measure certain criteria. When it comes to hunger and thirst, for instance, most farmers thought that counting the drinking nibbles was a good

measurement. When it comes to hunger, it made more sense to them to look at the exterior of the sow instead of her behaviour.

‘So you don’t speak about hunger, but measure the condition. In my opinion you should measure the fat if you want to measure hunger, instead of the behaviour’ (11).

But in general they expected little problems around hunger and thirst.

‘Prolonged hunger normally does not exist’ (1).

When discussing comfortably resting, farmers agreed that watching how they lay down was a good indication. But it also depended on the feeding system present.

‘They lay down like cigars in a box. They are not too close to each other, neither too far’ (2).

‘It depends on the feeding system. With feeding stations you won’t see that; there is always movement’ (3).

The discussion became more emotional when the experts pointed at ‘pressure points’ and ‘hygiene’. Quite suddenly farmers became very concerned about the measurement of problematic situations that were actually very exceptional in their view.

‘What percentage we are discussing about? I find it useless; we are discussing something that hardly happens. From my point of view as good pig farmer – and I see myself as good pig farmer – this just does not happen’ (1).

‘It looks like an attempt of researchers to be important. Nothing wrong with that, everyone wants to be important. But you should not invent things’ (2).

They turned back now on the measurement of hunger and thirst. Initially the measurement of hunger and thirst did not evoke major discussion. Later on, farmers reacted very emotional as such measurements in their view suggested a careless treatment of animals as farmers would let them suffer from hunger and thirst. First of all, it made no sense to them to measure something that would never occur. But, even more important, including it in a tool as a regular measurement would communicate in their view that such states were realistic and needed control. Farmers were very concerned about the risk of farmers being portrayed and perceived as cruel and careless.

The expert tried to explain that the monitoring tool was meant to be applied everywhere in Europe not only in the Netherlands and therefore needed to be inclusive. But this did not help much to calm down the farmers.

‘Here we talk about the situation in the Netherlands. Not about France or Spain, as I have no knowledge on what happens there. I am not involved in what is going on there, what they do over there’ (9).

‘We know about controls there, controls are badly organized over there and farmers there are not afraid of the controls’ (2).

Also the discussion about the implementation of the tools started again. Farmers expressed their fear that monitoring would be used to introduce more stringent regulations.

'We time and again speak about research, the measuring instrument. But what are we going to do with it? Will the government control de sector, or develop a system that includes consumers' concerns? That is my feeling; we try to please the consumer but he watches his wallet. You should put the things in today's perspective. Most important is that the product is good and healthy. We should not focus on a pressure point. There are more important things. The sector should not be punished by extreme control because one idiot from Belgium fed animals with fat poisoned with dioxins' (13).

'I find it dangerous what happens. It is a European research which is also carried out in Southern European countries. The Netherlands have to join the whole. Maybe the most difficult criteria should be released; we already have a plus for animal welfare. And we have to consider WTO restrictions' (11).

When discussing the criteria of human-animal interaction and natural and social behaviour it became more and more difficult to reach agreement about appropriate measurements. Farmers did not agree with the scientists neither among themselves about which were clear indicators of a situation and which not.

'If an animal approaches me after some minutes he has no fear' (11).

'If they all eat and one is not eating he has fear' (5).

They also discussed time and again that it very much depended on the context. How animal reacted was influenced by production system and the management style. This needed to be taken into account when making measurements. For instance, when farmers entered pens regularly, animals would react with less fear of an assessor than in a farm where farmers hardly ever entered the pen.

'In group housing they see you more often, so get more experience with you' (11).

'Entering a box of an individual animal is entering their safe space. They react anxious' (2).

In their view, the reaction in the latter case did not mean that pigs were living in constant fear; one instance of fear did not mean bad welfare and should not be punished. They also stressed the importance of the timing of an assessment. A valid assessment of welfare could never be based in a one-time assessment. After mixing animals always fought which resulted in scratches. This could simply not be avoided in group housing and was part and parcel of the pig's natural social behaviour. In that light, one could see scratches even as proof of good treatment. In doing so they also stressed the interrelation between criteria: when fulfilling the welfare requirement of group housing, the score on 'injuries' would naturally raise. Sometimes it was therefore impossible to score well on multiple criteria. This was not the fault of the farmers. Therefore it was unfair to punish him with low welfare scores

They also worried about the objectivity of such measurements. Some farmers repeatedly suggested that an assessor might evaluate an animal as fearful because he or she was in a bad mood himself/herself. They doubted the possibility of measuring something like fear in an objective manner.

‘Even your own mental condition affects the behaviour of the animals’ (8).

Summarizing we may conclude that farmers demonstrated the following reactions:

1. disappointment that many measurements were still resource-based;
2. offense about the suggestions that even the very basic of good welfare needed checking such as hunger and thirst;
3. concern about the subjectivity of measurements;
4. concern about the context-dependency of results, depending on management style/routine, production system and the animals’ (racial, individual) character;
5. concerns about the timing of measurements and punishment based on incidentally low measurements.

FARMERS' RESPONSES TO THE CALCULATION OF ANIMAL WELFARE SCORES

This session focused on the calculation of welfare scores at criterion and principle level. The WQ expert explained the process of calculation and calibration, making use examples and exercises in which the farmers could participate. The first two exercises dealt with scores on criteria level; in the first example farmers were asked to grade farms with varying percentages of animals with mild, average and serious injuries. The second exercise regarded the scoring of farms based on the percentage of pens with fearful animals. The third exercise asked for the calculation of scores based on different percentage of animals with prolonged hunger and thirst; it served to illustrate how scores as principle level and the potential trade-off between criteria.

Already the first exercises resulted in a passionate discussion about the denominations used. Farmers felt offended by the terms used as 'prolonged hunger' but most of all terms like 'injuries', 'fear' or even worse 'panic'. Some animals might sometimes have 'scratches' but never 'injuries' which in their view implied mistreatment. When the expert showed some examples and asked farmers to score them, they were astonished and angry. These were extraordinary examples in their view, very exceptional.

'I don't know what you are speaking about. I have never experienced this in my life. I have seen a scratch. I am dumbfounded. I have over 1,000 sows on my farm' (1).

The terms used were important to them as they depicted reality in a twisted way, feeding the general distrust towards farmers and modern animal farming. In addition, they feared that such terms would be misused by NGO's and the media. They forecasted headlines in the newspapers stating that '40% of Dutch pigs has injuries and live in fear!'.

Farmers did not like to participate in the exercise. They did not want to participate in an unrealistic example as it could be interpreted as an agreement with the measurement and confirmation that such bad situations were reality. The example was also far too theoretical in their view. This could not be done without actually seeing the farm and the animals.

'You should first of all decide what you consider a scratch and what you consider an injury. This exercise is not precise enough. You would do better visiting a farm' (9).

They finally agreed that serious injuries were unacceptable and that every farm with serious should anyhow receive a zero score.

The second exercise regarded the calculation of farm scores based on the percentage of pens with fearful animals. Farmers again started discussing the denomination of the concept ‘fear’, which they translated as ‘anxiety’ and something bad whereas it was often more about ‘alertness’ in their view – a concept with a positive connotation. Moreover, most farmers found the described behaviour very normal.

‘Running, fighting and that kind of activities are expressing the pigs are healthy’ (1).

‘To avoid the reaction you mention, one should treat the pigs almost as dogs. The relation between human and the animal determines to a large extent how animals react. These animals we keep for production, not as pets’ (2).

They also criticized the appropriateness and validity of the tests used.

‘Yes, a researcher that walks in, just after having a shower and smelling of deodorant. The animals react differently to him than to one of the people taking normally care of the pigs. The assessor should watch how the pigs react to the farmer walking around, not a researcher’ (9).

‘If you know the researcher is coming, you just visit the weeks the pigs more frequently’ (2).

They also wondered how farms could be compared in this way. It very much depended on the farmers’ routine and acquaintance of farmer and animals.

‘The more you work with the animals, the more they and the farmer get used to each other. This differs among the type and the size of the farm, and the age of the animals’ (7).

They finally disagreed to participate in the exercise. When the WQ experts explained the scoring done by researchers involved in the WQ project, the farmers were concerned by their lack of expertise, but also by the fact that none of the farms had received a 100 score.

‘Why didn’t you take people involved in the sector, representatives of the feed companies, or veterinaries? A researcher, with all respect, is no expert on this issue’ (3).

‘So, this means no farm is without fear. No farm can ever score 100?’ (2).

The farmers also refused to do the third exercises. One reason was that it would confirm the existence of prolonged hunger and thirst. But another important reason was that they did not like the idea of trade-off – as if less hunger could compensate for more thirst. They did not agree with such a principle – both should be okay. But they were also worried that a trade-off principle would evoke suspicion among the public.

As time was running short by now we skipped the explanation of the calculation of farm scores.

Summarizing, we may conclude the following:

1. farmers were concerned about the denomination of the criteria that could be misused to portray farmers as cruel and careless;
2. they had difficulty to participate in the theoretical exercises which seemed to confirm their earlier concerns and worries;
3. farmers are worried to be punished for situations that are difficult to avoid in intensive husbandry;
4. farmers' experience increasing control as disrespect of their own professionalism.

FARMERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION

During the final session, we presented two possible implementation options to the farmers: using the assessment as a management tool for farmer or using it for informing consumers.

The project leader, here taking the role of expert again, briefly explained the objective of the WQ project and the options for implementing the monitoring tool.

In their reaction farmers questioned the possibility to get the monitoring tool implemented as there were already so many labels in use. They wondered if Welfare Quality had collaborated with the retailers.

‘This has to be taken up by the retail, otherwise it won’t work. And at the European level, otherwise there is no chance for success. They have to pull the project forward’ (11).

Also, co-operation with NGO’s and other interest groups was important in their view to make sure that they were satisfied with the monitoring results and would not bring up others issues again.

‘Also, the environmental movement has to agree, otherwise they will point out another issue again’ (11).

They also wondered if consumers were interested in a label that measured just animal welfare. In their view, consumers were also concerned about health and safety, nutritional value, and environment-friendly production. It would make more sense in their opinion to study how consumers could be motivated to actually buy and pay for animal friendly products.

‘All kind of crisis we had. You have to have the consumers at your side. We have to improve our image, and take a share in the market. From the sector to the outside, improve the image. In the market, how to organize and regulate seems difficult to me. They do all to buy the pigs as cheap as possible’ (4).

They rejected the idea that the assessment tool could be useful as management information system as it did not deliver new information. The criteria were already fulfilled in most Dutch farms and feed-back therefore irrelevant. In addition many evaluations were too subjective as they depended on the judgment of a single assessor. And, as many things

were measured at one point in time and out of context, the scores were not reliable enough to be used for management adjustments. And finally, what use would it have when it did not result in premium pricing?

‘It is interesting if you can express whether you can earn more per pig if the welfare of the animal is good’ (5).

‘Who would tell me about the score on the lameness of my sows? You are going to organize a lot for that 5% of people that make a mess of their business’ (9).

The facilitator summarized the issues to be considered regards the use and implementation of label for animal welfare as followed: it has to be implemented at European level with the support of all parties involved in the chain and relevant NGO’s; it has to be based in objective measurements and regard different aspects that relate to the production (not only animal welfare) and that are all of interest to consumers; better results for animal welfare should be rewarded by higher prices.

REFLECTION ON THE PROCESS AND CONCLUSIONS

During the two days the sphere of the discussion changed. Some farmers were initially concerned about the objectives; they feared that taking part in the discussion could be misused as proof of farmers' general consent with the implementation of the tool. We managed to ease this suspicion. During the first day, most farmers were open and did not hesitate to express their views and to differ in opinion. They also told us at the end of the first day how much they enjoyed discussing the subject and how much they appreciated being asked to participate in a research project in this way.

The second day began with much more suspicion and defensiveness, which grew during the day and with more detailed discussion of the various steps in the tool. They felt attacked and stigmatized, and there was hardly any disagreement among them anymore. This was reinforced by the fact that those farmers active in farmers' organizations called upon the others to form a united front against 'the others' who time and again made life difficult for farmers. In this process, they often referred to actions taken by NGOs in the Netherlands in the recent past and especially the roles of the party for animals and the media.

At the end of the second day, all farmers said that they had enjoyed the workshop and that they really liked discussing animal welfare among each other and with the WQ experts. They appreciated the interest of the experts in their opinion and their request to participate in the research while it was still going on. They liked how the experts approached them in their professional role as farmers. At the same time they experience the researchers has being from another world. It was very interesting to hear about the various approaches to animal welfare and the opinion of experts and consumers, but their own attitude and definition had not changed in the process. The methodology worked well as a research instrument as it did reveal the worries and concerns of farmers. It also demonstrated where farmers agreed and disagreed. Important is also that the deliberation among and with farmers showed as very clearly how politicized the subject is and how political farmers operated, individually as well as collectively, when phrasing their responses or refusing to respond, and when calling each other in line. The methodology is less suited in our view for informing farmers and engage them in the construction of a monitoring tool. It proofed to be difficult for farmer to elaborate on theoretical examples, not only because their knowledge and experience is practical in nature. Very important is in our view as well that the examples and the issue of animal welfare itself is so closely linked with their personal and professional interests, that it is very difficult to look at it from a detached, theoretical

point of view and, thus, also non-engaged and non-political point of view. Farmers are stakeholders and also in the juries defended their stakes.

Based on the farmers' juries, we may conclude the following.

- Dutch farmers are concerned about animal welfare, as entrepreneurs but also because they want to be good farmers. Treating animals well is part of their professional ethic and pride.
- Most farmers consider health and bodily fitness as the most important aspects of animal welfare although they acknowledge the importance of feelings of wellbeing and the social needs of animals. Animals' welfare can in their view be warranted by providing good feeding, housing and health care. Farmers differ in opinion regarding the significance of productivity and the importance of natural behaviour.
- Farmers defend their own practice but they also admit that they have learnt from the public discussion and opened up to animal welfare.
- Farmers feel akin to the scientists and share their animal-based and 'objective' point of view animals. They considered the view of citizens as 'exaggerated' and romantic.
- Farmers like the idea of animal-based measurements as it is close to what they do. Some measurements are less relevant in their view but in general they agreed that the principles and criteria made sense. They agree that hunger, thirst, comfort around resting, thermal comfort and absence of diseases are important criteria. They are less convinced of the importance of behavioural aspects and ease of movement. Most of the farms also consider pain, injuries and fear important indicators of welfare as well as a good human–animal relationship.
- Farmers are concerned about the measurement of animal welfare in the monitoring tool. They consider many measurements as invalid and unreliable. They consider the measurements as subjective, especially when feelings and human–animal relationship is concerned. But they also underline the context-dependency of results (management style/routine, production system and the animals' (racial, individual) character). They are also concerned about the timing of measurements, which will influence the results. Finally, they are worried to be punished based on incidentally low measurements and for results that they cannot control.
- Farmers worry about the unpredictability of animal welfare scores when based on animal-based measurements, especially in the light of required investments.
- Farmers were also very concerned about the denomination of the criteria and the inclusion of very basic aspects of good welfare. This implied that even basic animal welfare was under threat in Dutch farming, and allowed the misused of the monitoring tool by NGOs to portray farmers as cruel and careless.
- Farmers sometimes differed in their opinion about the significance of certain aspects of animal welfare or their measurements. But when called upon the need for group solidarity they gave up individual differences and confronted the Welfare Quality® team with one voice.
- For farmers the discussion about animal welfare and the monitoring of animal welfare is a highly political discussion. They experience animal welfare monitoring as threatening their business interests. They are relatively open when discussing

animal welfare as such but become careful and defensive when the monitoring of welfare is at stake.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Dutch farmers' juries reflect the importance attached to animal welfare and the topicality of the issue in recent times. Farmers feel threatened but also accused and disrespected as a group. That explains the at times very passionate discussions and the readiness to 'close the ranks' against 'the others'. Although the situation in the Netherlands is special and animal welfare is not such a politicized issue in other countries, the reaction of Dutch farmers still teaches us important lessons about how to ascertain the acceptability of the monitoring tool among farmers.

- First of all, the experience with the Dutch farmers' juries tells us that language is very important. We have to be very careful which words to use for principles, criteria and measurements as they create a certain image. This also means that we have to be careful how to translate the terms into the various languages and the significance of certain words. They might seem neutral to us but they are not to farmers and not to citizens.
- We need to be aware that the media and NGOs are very active in some European countries and will try to use the assessment results for their own cause. Dutch farmers are realistic when pointing to the possibility of NGOs making use of 'catchy terms' like injuries. Therefore, we should try to find sufficiently neutral terms. Even a result with 'zero injuries' will probably not be interpreted as especially animal friendly by most consumers. In their view having no injuries should be the norm and not something to be evaluated as above the average and extra-ordinary.
- We need to provide sufficient and transparent information to farmers about assessment and evaluation procedures, their objectivity and timing. We have to be very clear as well about the significance of one-time measurements and the possibility of 'redoing' the assessment in some circumstances.
- We need to show farmers real results to convince them of the need for and benefits of assessment. We know that the real-life situation is not as fantastic as farmers believe and that there is room for improvement. Farmers are open to change and improvement once they are convinced of the need and possibility of change. For this we can call upon the professional pride of farmers and their own professional ethics in which taking good care of animals has a central position.

Part III

Italy

by

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INTRODUCTION TO PART III

Part III reports on the final results of the activity carried out within the Welfare Quality® work package 4.4.2 whose goals are as follows:

- understanding how farmers perceive the usefulness of the animal welfare assessment tool developed by Welfare Quality®;
- understanding how farmers think about the distinction of farms based on the assessment results (e.g. basic, good, excellent).
- understanding how farmers think of the implementation of the WQ Assessment Tool and its use for product differentiation.

This study has been carried out in Italy, Norway and Netherlands; in Italy, two whole day meetings was organized on 11 and 25 November 2008 to involve a jury of pig farmers in the discussion.

The jury meetings were held from 10 a.m. till 16 p.m. in a large meeting hall inside the farmhouse of the agri-tourist farm 'La Razza', sited in the countryside a few kilometres from Reggio Emilia. Seven scheduled sessions were foreseen for expert presentations and farmers' discussion with some short breaks of one hour for lunch and of 15 minutes for two coffee breaks per day. In between the two day meetings, the farmers were asked to fill in an exercise form in order to collect their opinions on the criteria and the measures to assess pig welfare.

In autumn 2008, the same kind of jury farmers' meetings were conducted in Norway and in the Netherlands.

METHODOLOGY

In Italy 12 pig farmers took part in the meetings, coming from the four Northern Italian regions, Lombardia, Emilia-Romagna, Veneto e Piemonte, where most of the Italian pig production is concentrated. The selection of farmers was carried out taking into consideration:

1. a group of pig farmers who have collaborated with CRPA in previous studies;
2. by calling pig farmers associations to obtain a representative sample for the Italian Northern regions where the large majority of the Italian pig production is located.

Each farmer was compensated through a reward of €100 per day plus the reimbursement of the travel costs. Social and animal scientists were also present at the meetings as experts to give presentations to farmers.

During the first meeting the animal scientist Paolo Ferrari of CRPA gave a brief explanation of the WQ project and the role of the participants; afterwards the social scientist of the University of Pisa Diego Pinducciu addressed the meeting on relations between animal welfare and consumers (Session 2). Then the animal scientist Elisabetta Canali of the University of Milan introduced the farmers jury into the Welfare Quality Assessment Tool (Session 3).

During the second meeting Paolo Ferrari gave a presentation for Session 4 whereas the animal scientist Valentina Ferrante of the University of Milan gave three presentations within Sessions 5, 6 and 7.

A professional facilitator, Franco Torelli, chaired the meetings to manage and encourage the discussion; two other CRPA researchers were involved too in order to transcribe the actual content of the verbal discussion. All the sessions of the meetings were double tape recorded.

The 12 farmers taking part in the meeting and the characteristics of their farming activities can be summarized as follows (Table 1):

1. the owner of a farm in Veneto concerned with the production of boars and gilts on behalf of Goland genetics;
2. the owner of a Lombard closed cycle pig farm serving the meat industry;
3. the owner of a Lombard farm managing a partially closed cycle pig rearing system using its own genetic stock of Landrace and Duroc pure breeds;

TABLE 21.1 Outlook on the farming system of the farmers involved in the meetings.

	Farming system	No. of sows and/or fattening pigs	Gender	Region
1	Closed cycle	6,000 sows	M	Veneto
2	Closed cycle	1,200 sows	M	Lombardia
3	Partially closed cycle	1,600 sows	M	Lombardia
4	Closed and partially closed cycles	850 sows	M	Lombardia
5	Closed cycle	750 sows	M	Emilia-Romagna
6	Reproduction open cycle	1,500 sows	M	Emilia-Romagna
7	Closed cycle	500 sows (organic)	M	Piemonte
8	Closed cycle	60 sows (organic)	M	Emilia-Romagna
9	Closed cycle	400 sows	M	Emilia-Romagna
10	Closed cycle	1,500 sows	M	Veneto
11	Closed and partially closed cycles	2,000 sows	M	Lombardia
12	Partially closed cycles	500 sows	M	Lombardia

4. the owner of two pig fattening farms, one closed and the other open cycle, also located in Lombardy;
5. a farmer from Emilia-Romagna with a closed cycle pig farm, also a member of a ham-producing business;
6. an operator involved in activities conducted by a consortium of co-operatives based in Emilia-Romagna;
7. a vet, president and consultant of a co-operative in Piemonte, made up of 10 organic farms rearing pigs by the closed cycle system;
8. the owner of an organic pig farm in Emilia-Romagna including an adjacent abattoir, a processing plant and a farmhouse with shop and restaurant;
9. the owner of a closed cycle farm in Emilia-Romagna producing finished pigs which are partly processed and sold to the end consumer in a shop the farmer had opened about one year ago;
10. the owner of a closed cycle pig farm serving the meat industry and operating in the genetic stock sector, importing boars and gilts from Denmark;
11. the owner of two sows farms, one using open and the other the closed cycle systems, concerned with the pig genetics business in Italy who, in recent months, had been working as the manager of a Rumanian farm;
12. a vet and owner of a open cycle system in Lombardia.

RESULTS – DAY 1

22.1 INTRODUCTION: BRIEF EXPLANATION ON THE WQ PROJECT AND ROLE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The meeting started with a short introduction of the facilitator who presented the frame of the meetings and created the conditions in which the farmers would feel free and welcome to speak out their viewpoints and concerns. The facilitator welcomes all the farmers and introduces himself as the facilitator. He said he will ask everybody to introduce himself and after that will give the floor briefly to the project leader in order to explain the backgrounds of the WQ project.

The CRPA researcher Paolo Ferrari started the meeting by explaining the Welfare Quality Project, the backgrounds and the objectives, describing the aims of the discussion group that had been set up.

22.2. FARMERS' VIEWS ON ANIMAL WELFARE AND INTRO ON SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

As the first stage of work of the meeting, the facilitator asked the participants to write down on post-its the factors capable of influencing good living conditions for the animals. The factors identified by respondents are listed in Table 22.1.

Here most of the farmers underline that good environmental conditions are essential for the welfare of pigs, which allow satisfying growth and production results. Through correct feeding and drinking pigs should not suffer hunger and thirst. Only in the second place comes the human–animal relationship.

The operators were then encouraged to discuss the problems highlighted in written form.

In the first place two currents of thought emerged. One was that the factor of fundamental importance for the welfare of animals was their freedom from constraint and thus a farm

TABLE 22.1 Definitions of animal welfare: issues brought forward by farmers on the Post-its.

Issues to define animal welfare	Nr. respondents
Good environmental conditions	6
Living, growing and production without limiting physical and health problems	5
Not suffering from hunger and thirst, correct feeding	3
Good relationship between animal and human	2
Identifying animals' habitual activities, attempting to accommodate them as much as possible and limit cause of stress	2
Sufficient space for the individual animal and good housing comfort	2
Ensuring a minimum level of social interaction	1
Putting the animal into a condition which will ensure maximum production over the long term	1
Making the farm as close as possible to the animal's natural state	1
Respect for the animals	1
Reduction of logistics problems connected with animal transport	1
Animal welfare closely connected to the well-being of the farmer	1
Possibilities for reproduction	1
The animal must not be conditioned by any man-made constraint	1
The correct symbiosis between the animal, environment and feed	1

mimicking the natural state would be the best solution from this point of view. For the others, however, animal welfare was part of a set of aspects which could be measured and controlled and which at the same time should not cause the farmer economic problems.

In this context, it was stated that if pigs were transferred from an intensive farm to the natural state they would not survive. Giving animals freedom would also entail significant structural and management changes without being certain of achieving the foreseen productive results.

A number of farmers sustained that intensive farming had brought about a series of benefits, allowing control of the animals and control of diseases of many different types meaning that meat quality had increased. On the contrary, outdoor extensive farming, close to the natural state, means that pigs are left to fight for themselves in the woods and are subject to the laws of natural selection.

In outdoor farming, excess of heat and cold are critical and the pigs definitely have a better life inside the farm building with a controlled micro-climate.

At this point a farmer stated that from his experience, the comparison of outdoor reared pigs with intensively kept pigs demonstrated performance parameters (i.e. birth rate, death rate) three times higher than for outdoor pigs.

Outdoor farming would not even be consistent with the human population dynamics in that it would lead to a reduction in meat production. It was important instead, from the animal welfare point of view, to optimise existing farms.

One participant emphasized that the concept of animal welfare had originated in Northern Europe, in particular in Sweden and in Norway where populations are much smaller than Italy. Only 10% of the European population is able to afford observance of animal welfare requirements, whereas the other countries have to concentrate first on feeding the human

population. It would be difficult to successfully rear sows outdoor in Southern Europe because that practice requires enormous space, which is available in the Northern Europe (Denmark, Sweden, Norway) but not in the Po River Valley.

There were also those with intermediary positions according to whom animal welfare was the right balance between the ideal of the animal in its natural state and the needs of intensive farming. What was important, from this point of view, was not to be blinded by an ideal vision that might lead to decisions which in reality serve for nothing.

In this regard, a couple of intensive conventional farmers maintained that when animals have water and proper ventilation during transport, there was no point in having breaks, letting all the pigs out of the lorry and then reloading them soon after; indeed this was the cause of high stress levels. Mention was made of the conference on animal stress, held in Hanover in 1992 where hormonal development in animals had been explained. From this scientific information it was argued that there was no sense in having breaks in transport journeys, creating as they did only greater stress to the animals concerned.

In the long term, it was productivity that was the factor indicating whether the animal was well or not. Some parameters, such as sows' replacement rate, are actually extremely good indicators of animal welfare. Furthermore, no initiative can be separated from the need for an adequate income for the farmer (in other words, everything must be economically feasible).

One conventional farmer stated that mediation strategies and decisions are put into practice in some intensive farms. For example, on his farm pregnant sows are allowed to live in the woods guaranteeing higher fertility rates and better state of health for the animals. Farrowing, however, takes place in normal crates to ensure the survival of the piglets.

Different environmental conditions can thus guarantee the same level of animal welfare. Some structural strategies are extremely expensive while others cost nothing while still ensuring animal welfare. Some farmers consider animal welfare all the time while carrying out the various tasks involved in running the farm. It is a question of mental attitude that in some circumstances costs nothing. If the farmer's decisions take account of both animal and worker welfare (many parameters identified as indicators of animal welfare depend to a large extent on the well-being of the workers), the farmer will obtain advantages as well.

A number of problems were raised at this point which continued to emerge over the course of the two meetings.

First of all, the question of commercial barriers was considered of great importance. In Italy farmers are required to comply with strict rules but then meat is imported from other countries like Brazil which are not subject to controls. The vision of animal welfare must thus be global and not restricted to the local level. Great contradictions arose as in the case of the ban on GMO produce in Italy while the consumption and sale of these products was not banned. This means that there is a high level of discrimination against farmers.

Another problem that was identified was the checks by the AUSL (Local Health Authority) vets. They are used to inspect the farms with a check list concerning welfare and bio-security and with measuring instruments to assess a number of parameters but often the assessment was too subjective. Later on, when the WQ instrument was examined, the difficulties arising from subjectivity were referred on a number of occasions.

Moreover, those conducting the checks always went to the same farms with few difficulties. It would be better not to aim always at the highest standards but rather seek to bring all farms to the same level.

Another consideration which was raised in a number of occasions, was the timing of the organisation of this conference to listen to farmers' views. It would have been better to talk to the farmers and invite them to a discussion group prior to drawing up the animal welfare regulations.

In this way it would have been possible to avoid important errors in the provisions such as the rule requiring breaks in transport for the animals to be unloaded or the requirement that drinking troughs should be available everywhere, leading to an absurd waste of water. Given that there were computerised systems for the provision of water in the right amounts it was incomprehensible that the regulations did not permit their use.

22.3. CITIZEN'S VIEWS ON ANIMAL WELFARE AND COMPARISON OF APPROACHES

The expert presented the results of citizens and consumer surveys and the facilitator then stimulated discussion between the participants on the report.

Some participants questioned the sample used for the survey particularly in relation to the not clear and the insufficient numbers of some groups, especially 'urban mothers' and 'rural women'.

Considerable concern was expressed in relation to the following factors arising from the presentation of the consumer surveys. Consumers' statements were just backing with dogmas that seemed to demonstrate that the information provided to consumers by the mass media was false. The main concern was that the surveys would have an influence on the regulations. Consumer information was more important than regulating production. Another farmer stated, however, that the survey presented was a fairly correct mirror of the European reality. It was to be expected that those interviewed did not know some things. In the collective consciousness, organic production is prized not because the consumer has knowledge of the reality of an organic farm but because he or she associates it with the positive images provided by the mass media. Farmers only represent a small

proportion of the European population. Ninety-seven per cent of the European population do not deal with agriculture.

Serious doubts were also raised in relation to the questions put to the consumers in the survey, considering them to be too tendentious. It was well known that responses are greatly influenced by the way in which the questions are put. For example, it isn't possible to ask whether one wants an GMO product without explaining that GMO involves the reduction of the use of pesticides. If consumers are not properly informed they cannot make objective choices.

Some farmers mistrusted even the way of data collection stating that they had used this method to obtain the responses they wanted from consumers.

A number of participants stated that consumers do not consider animal welfare in a product and that Italians were very little concerned with the issue. Italian consumers are concerned with social problems, although this is not always evident in their actions. One farmer recounted that his farm had, on the instructions of a big supermarket chain, started a small line of GMO-free products but it had never been commercially successful. He had then tried another chain but with the same results. Consumers will say that they approve the concept of animal welfare but when it comes to it they are not prepared to buy a product costing 30% more. It is no surprise that the most popular shelves in supermarkets are those with the lowest priced products.

Taking this as their cue, many of the farmers asked why the presentation of the survey had not taken account of the price factor. According to many of the participants the main and most succinct element to measure consumer preference was price. It was affirmed that, 'the average consumer cannot afford to buy an ham which costs from €25–30 per kg'.

Furthermore, many dairy farms producing milk for organic Parmigiano-Reggiano had had to stop production because the consumer did not recognise the economic difference. The same was true for farms producing GMO-free milk. The initiative started by Coldiretti involving the direct sale of fruit and vegetables which then had been unsuccessful because the products were too expensive.

The presentation of the survey results seemed to provide a clear picture of the consumer's egocentric vision, thinking more of him or herself than of the animal.

The CRPA animal scientist summarised the doubts and queries arising from the discussion of the consumer survey as follows:

1. some questions were effectively leading questions (directing towards a specific response);
2. some questions were superficial and obvious;
3. there had been an analysis of the theoretical concepts at the expense of an assessment of conduct in the real world;

4. probably no selection criteria had been applied in relation to the consumers' skills and knowledge;
5. the questions had not touched on the product prices.

The consumer expert stated that the telephone survey had been conducted by an agency and that it had been based on a questionnaire designed for short answers. The sample had been made up of the six levels representing the different views present in society.

So far as the skills of the interviewees were concerned, minimum requirements had to be met. Some had to be meat consumers, others vegetarians and yet others politically active. The concept of animal welfare had been raised in the focus group and not forced on it.

According to the expert the perception of animal welfare had grown over recent years as also the preparedness to spend more for it. This was the reason behind the setting up of GAS (Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale – Collective Purchasing Groups) in the search for quality products. Other factors influencing purchases are lack of time and the lack of information.

22.4. THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO FARM ANIMAL WELFARE

At this point the expert Elisabetta Canali presented the latest developments of scientific opinion on animal welfare.

The facilitator sought to stimulate questions on the talk that had just been given. With regard to direct and indirect assessment parameters, some farmers considered that if the animals were healthy it was not necessary to look at other aspects. As a consequence, if the animal is not lamed (direct parameter) there is no need to check the flooring (indirect parameter). In other words, if the direct parameters have been met the person making the assessment does not need to check the indirect ones.

This meant in turn that the check list should be drawn up on the basis of the animal's health status. The problem is that the legislator normally does not think of these problems, missing the substance of the question. It was also claimed that less skill was required to check the indirect parameters.

A discussion started in relation to freedom of movement and the alternatives of sows in cages and sow free to roam. On the one hand, the farrowing cages are useful to prevent problems connected to the biting and squashing of the piglets and on the other, the freedom to move increases the pigs' state of fear. It has been demonstrated that when animals in a free range system (which is considered a good practice by the European Commission to improve animal welfare) conflict between animal was much greater notwithstanding the

availability of greater space, leading to wounds and lameness. A number of participants thus wondered whether these rules (connected to indirect parameters) were valid given that animals in crates do not create these problems. In addition, sows in individual crates are healthier than free range sows from the point of view of injuries and reach higher reproductive parameters. If the animals were in groups it is more difficult to see if one has health problems.

In general terms the direct parameters identified by the expert were considered indisputable. The scientific nature of the research was also appreciated but doubts remained as to the ethological approach in that it is not possible to require that behaviour should be natural in an intensive space restricted housing system.

The questions and doubts emerging during the discussion were then put to the expert:

1. the research was concerned with both direct and indirect aspects while the welfare regulations only made reference to indirect parameters, so the immediate question was whether research of this kind has an influence on the legislators;
2. different tests have shown that in restricted and protected environments the animals have longer lives and less problems meaning that they probably do not need much space.

With regard to the first question, the expert Paolo Ferrari replied that researchers prepare their reports by processing all the scientific evidence collected during the research. These reports are then sent to the European Commission but this does not mean that they are taken into consideration. He agreed that it was better to assess the animal and its reactions rather than just taking measurements to make it easier for the checking systems to be compared between different countries. The financing provided by the European Commission to the Welfare Quality project was seeking to proceed in this direction. There was a change of perspective aimed more at the animal and not indirect measurements.

With regard to space and crowding, the expert stated that there is competition between the animals in more spacious environments but this competition is undoubtedly greater when there is little space. Anyhow in homogeneous groups of pigs of the same size fighting goes on until a hierarchy has been established. In nature there is certainly fighting but in a natural context the animals have the space to run away while in pens there is no way of escape. A minimum space allowance is therefore useful to prevent an excess of aggression.

The majority of research demonstrates that the greater the density and numbers of the groups, the more aggressive the behaviour. In single cages there are other problems, such as stereotypical behaviour.

A couple of farmers, basing their comments on what had been said by the expert, maintained that if you put 10 pigs in a restricted space, they continue aggressive behaviour indefinitely whereas if 50 pigs are put in the same area, within 48 hours hierarchies have been established. In other words, in large groups of animals the degree of aggression is going down.

22.5 SESSION 4: INTRODUCTION INTO THE WELFARE QUALITY
ASSESSMENT TOOL

The expert, Elisabetta Canali, introduced the WQ instrument to the meeting and the facilitator then started up the discussion on the contents.

The first point of discussion of interest was the fact that all the farmers agreed on the assessment of parameters such as the sufficient availability of water, feed, oxygen, adequate temperature and ventilation. This is comprehensible as all these parameters refer to health and growth conditions, which the farmers relate most to animal welfare. The problem raised by some farmers is that according to them the vets often do not have the competence to carry out these checks. The experts Elisabetta Canali and Paolo Ferrari then emphasized the fact that the European Commission would not have invested an important budget on a subjective system. The basic idea has been to create a welfare assessment protocol in which all parameters are objective. The problem of the assessor is crucial, hence there is a need for the same training throughout Europe and for periodical check of the assessors' capacity to assess qualitative parameters and for update their training level.

For some farmers the changing of the mentality of the veterinary system is an unequal battle and those responsible for carrying out checks may misinterpret the regulations.

RESULTS – DAY 2

23.1 INTRODUCTION

Eleven farmers took part in the meeting because one of the participants at the first meeting was unable to attend the second one.

The Experts Valentina Ferrante and Paolo Ferrari had also taken part, explaining the methods and procedures characterising the WQ Assessment Tool.

The facilitator Franco Torelli also took part in the meeting as well as two CRPA researchers with the job of recording on the one hand the actual content of the verbal discussion and, on the other, to get general information on attitudes and non-verbal communication between participants.

The Facilitator summarized the subjects dealt with in the first day and introduced the issues to be covered in the second. With reference to the objectives of the two meetings, some participants raised doubts on the ultimate purpose set for this work and the relationship between these meetings and the activities of the legislators in the animal welfare field, showing mistrust regarding policymakers/government.

On this point one of the participants expressed his thanks for the opportunity given to the farmers to put forward their opinions but considered that this pig farmers' jury had been organised too late because the European commission had already enacted animal welfare legislation.

The CRPA expert noted that the European commission had enacted a number of directives requiring farms to observe specific requirements in the area of animal welfare but emphasised that the WQ research project had further main objectives:

1. the collection of information from farmers, consumers and all players in the supply chain to create a traceability system linked to animal welfare;
2. to identify the problems and strategies connected with welfare in the livestock production chains (pigs, cattle and poultry);
3. to set up an animal welfare assessment tool based on scientific principles.

The European Commission is, in fact, investing significant resources in animal welfare including to protect the European livestock production with respect to imported products. It is obvious, however, that prior to imposing barriers on incoming products it is necessary to specify the characteristics of the products that would be admitted and identify the European systems used to measure animal welfare. To such end it had become of crucial importance to validate an animal welfare assessment system.

The WQ assessment system was thus designed to ensure traceability and create a certification system at a European level in the same way as in organic produce. It would be a voluntary system entailing the training of vets responsible for carrying out the requisite checks. At the end of 2009 at the end of the WQ, an assessment protocol will be drawn up taking the opinions emerging from this and the preceding discussion groups together with other similar initiatives conducted in other European countries.

The participants emphasized the fact that it was of fundamental importance that the accreditation of the certifying companies should be carried out at EU level. For some, the example to follow was that which had been set by the PDO and PGI products where checks were more effective than for organic products. Not everyone was in agreement on this point. Some expressed critics concerning the too high number of certification bodies for organic products, which interpret the organic regulations differently and in this way generating unequal treatment of organic producers.

Starting with the way checks are carried out on farms today, one farmer expressed his concerns over the great differences between one region and another and in some cases, between one district and another in the nature of checks carried out.

23.2. MEASUREMENT OF THE CRITERIA IN THE WQ ASSESSMENT TOOL

At this point the facilitator asked the participants to give in the results of the work they had carried out individually between the first and second meetings with regard to the measurements of pig welfare and to the importance to be attributed to the 12 criteria and possible measurement procedures for them. A detailed review of the results is provided in Table 23.1.

The facilitator noted that the factors obtaining the highest score were the ‘comfort around resting’ and the ‘absence of disease’ followed by ‘absence of prolonged thirst’, ‘absence of injuries’ and ‘absence of pain induced by management practices’ (Table 23.2). The two criteria ‘expression of social behaviour’ and ‘expression of other behaviour’ appeared to be considered less important than the others. The discussion then started.

TABLE 23.1 Results from the homework: measurements mentioned by the farmers.

Principle	Criteria	Measurements mentioned by the farmers
Good feeding	1.	Good physical characteristics of the animal (body condition score) Swollen abdomen The provision of two or three meals a day Pigs peaceful and calm Checking of feed quantities
	2.	Periodical checking of plant Inspection of trough in the presence of the operator Good physical condition of the animal Failure to eat feed Minimum of 2 drinking troughs for each group Wet pens for the drinking zone Checking of trough capacity Cannibalism
Good housing	3.	Sufficient space to lie down No injuries Peaceful
	4.	Checking temperature and ventilation The pigs must not be huddled together and must not be panting Pigs lying down Assessment of sleep in pig groups
Good health	5.	No injuries Space available per head Reactivity to stimuli
	6.	Good gait Frequent inspections to check the animals
Appropriate behaviour	7.	Assessment of body temperature and liveliness of the pig Visual assessment of body condition score, breathing and faeces Assessment of mortality and times given pharmaceutical products Good appetite
	8.	Assessment of natural movement Absence of pain-induced behaviour Assessment of posture/calmness
	9.	Assessment of peacefulness during repose Observance of hierarchy Degree of conflict in the pens Pigs lying down between meals Are the pigs grubbing and sniffing?
	10.	Assessment of willingness to provide milk Fearful behaviour (running to far end of the pen) Absent-mindedness
	11.	Assessment of how calm the pigs remain when a human enters the pen The pigs crowd up to humans Pigs showing curiosity Pigs' normal behaviour
	12.	Assessment of silence in the pigsty Constant nervousness and movement Pigs lying down between meals Very curious if a human enters the box Peacefulness and rest in group

One farmer stated that this result was to be expected in that social behaviour is an aspect not much known to conventional farmers who are mainly concerned with the other criteria (absence of hunger, thermal comfort and absence of disease). The animals in conventional farms are not assessed from a behavioural point of view. Mistakenly, the ethological aspects are not seen as scientific, behaviour being considered a subjective parameter whereas, on the contrary, it has a scientific foundation. Organic farmers however, consider behavioural criteria as being extremely important.

TABLE 23.2 Results from the homework: importance given to the criteria.

Principle	Welfare criteria	Certainly important	Less important	Un-important	Blank
Good feeding	1. Absence of prolonged hunger	7	3		
	2. Absence of prolonged thirst	8	2		
Good housing	3. Comfort around resting	9	2		
	4. Thermal comfort	7	3		
Good health	5. Ease of movement	4	6		
	6. Absence of injuries	8	2		
	7. Absence of disease	9	1		
	8. Absence of pain induced by management procedures	8	2		
Appropriate behaviour	9. Expression of social behaviours	2	5	2	1
	10. Expression of other behaviours	3	3	3	1
	11. Good human–animal relationship	7	3		
	12. Absence of general fear	6	3	3	

Note: Data from 10 respondents.

From another point of view, however, for conventional intensive farmers, it is of fundamental importance to satisfy the animals' primary needs (hunger and thirst) and to guarantee appropriate environmental conditions (temperature, relative humidity and ventilation) while appropriate behaviour represented a secondary aspect. In other words, it was agreed that the analysis of pigs' behaviour may be useful for the assessment of animal welfare but the majority attaches priority to the satisfaction of primary needs.

Furthermore, two farmers stated that today's pigs are the results of years of genetic improvement and selection. As a consequence, some natural behaviour 'of the past' might no longer be significant and, in particular, not act as indicators of animal welfare. The expression of natural behaviour is likely to lead to a bucolic idea of animals behaviour which no longer exists.

Not all participants were backing this view and of these in particular the organic farmers. They considered that the concept of animals in the open was not part of a bucolic vision and that genetic selection had only started 50 years ago meaning that it had not ruled out natural behaviour. As a consequence, an approach using behaviour could be a valid tool even in an intensive farm as a means of assessing animal welfare.

Others emphasized the fact that it was not possible to claim a priori that pigs were better off in the open rather than a closed environment – it depended on the specific situation and the satisfaction of particular requirements.

As genetic selection is concerned the expert noted that many studies had been conducted from the 1960s onwards, demonstrating that genetics had only changed some forms of behaviour but it had not eliminated the need to express them and hence animal welfare was closely linked to the possibility of expressing such forms of behaviour. If this is not possible this leads to frustrations, which tend to lower immune defences and consequently to provoke health problems (conditioned diseases).

A discussion then started on this point with reference to what elements should be contained within the concept of animal welfare. For example, in nature animals fight to eat, to

copulate, to live and it is normal for the weakest to be left out. Must animal welfare consist in ensuring the expression of all these natural and social forms of behaviour, including the negative aspects? If animal welfare is considered in ideological terms, farms should also eliminate artificial insemination because it is not natural.

Other farmers drew attention to the fact that pigs are income-generating animals and hence the concept of animal welfare must be adapted to the concept of intensive farms where it is not possible to indulge in the bucolic, theoretical and idyllic vision. As a consequence, a criterion like a comfortable temperature was extremely important because, if not satisfied, feed yield is reduced and hence increased production costs.

Concerns were raised about the risk that the concept of animal welfare would become an extreme ideology if considered in a purely theoretical perspective. For example, the law on animal welfare requires the introduction of objects into the box to play with but in reality the pigs are only attracted to these objects for a short time and then they lose interest.

In Northern Europe the human–animal approach is different from the one prevailing in Southern Europe because the concept of animal management is different. In Southern Europe, the animal welfare is taken into account, but in the end pigs remain only animals for the creation of income. For many farmers, the criterion of animal welfare is not seen in terms of the living conditions of an animal but in monetary terms.

Another farmer added that it was no accident that animal welfare in Italy was seen as a business. The goal is that of being able to differentiate the product by its label. This was a similar situation to that involving GMO. Supermarkets looked for GMO-free products for the sake of their image and to sell more. It was all based on market logic.

In this regard an organic farmer drew attention to the fact that the lowering of quality standards for cured ham is having seriously deleterious effects on pig farming. He was worried about the fact that lowering these standards a strategy based on differentiation may be compromised.

If farmers were able to receive €3.50/kg rather than €1/kg, greater attention could be given to animal welfare. In current conditions the level of animal welfare was conditioned by this and it was unlikely to improve. It was also added that, if the problem of farmers' margins was not dealt with and resolved, in 10 years there might be no more farmers.

A question was raised at this point which was to be taken up again later: the mandatory or voluntary nature of the assessment system under consideration. Opinions were diverse in that for some, this system, structured as it is at European level, will undoubtedly have a mandatory function. According to others, the WQ assessment system must be a kind of quality system that is not mandatory and so far as possible adapted to the different situations in order to obtain a general improvement and without punitive effects.

23.3. TRANSLATION OF MEASUREMENTS ON ANIMALS INTO FARM SCORES

The CRPA expert explained how criteria were measured in practice and the measurement structure, noting that the assessment is made on a representative sample of animals whose numbers would vary in relation to the size and complexity of the farm.

One of the first comments concerned the size of the sample and the reliability of the criteria. One of the limits of the system was the fact that the sample, if it was to be truly representative, would have to be very large requiring the allocation significant resources. To this would be added a complexity in the management of the mechanism connected to the need to make the actual measurements with an objective tool.

It would, moreover, be of fundamental importance to give attention to the frequency with which the assessments should be made because many parameters are affected by seasonal considerations. Thus, in some farms where natural insemination is still practised, if checks are carried out during that period there is no doubt that sow injuries would be extremely high, penalizing the farm's final score.

In a farm where there are some sows with very bad injuries, if these are culled just before the checks, it might give a positive picture that does not reflect the true situation.

On an intensive farm, it sometimes happens that the workers, even when well-trained, leave the gate to the different pens open. In this way, two groups of pigs are mixed up which will fight continuously for about ten days. If the checks are effected only at that time the final score would be incorrect.

A number of farmers expressed the view that it was absolutely indispensable for the quality of assessors to be uniform in their evaluation. On this point, it was hoped that the assessment should not be carried out by public vets. It would be interesting for the same assessment to be made by different people and for it to be repeated in different seasons. The problem would arise in relation to the interpretation of numbers in that the assessment of many parameters is subjective.

Another farmer thought that it would be important for the assessors to use common sense and they should not be have a prejudice against intensive farms.

Appreciation of the tool as it had been explained was also expressed. As a quality system it seemed to represent an excellent mean for a general assessment of the farm. Important is that it will remain a voluntary system. One farmer thought that it would be appropriate to apply the WQ assessment tool to outdoor pig farms too in order to check the actual welfare of pigs raised outdoor.

23.4. FROM PARAMETER SCORES TO CRITERIA SCORES AND TO FARM SCORES

The expert Valentina Ferrante gave an example of how the calculation and weighting of scores was effected, emphasizing that the WQ assessment tool had been developed for intensive farming and it would have to be recalibrated if applied to other kinds of farms.

She also noted, in response to points raised by a number of farmers, that the method assigned a negative score if there were too many sows that had been culled and the recentness of the culling was also taken into consideration.

A number of participants expressed appreciation of the system, for example the way in which the calculation method had been drawn up and its detailed design. It was stated that an assessment system of this type could be very useful in identifying critical problems in the farm to be dealt with subsequently. One farmer described it as a versatile and universal tool that would be appropriate for other kinds of farms, not just intensive ones.

It was emphasized nonetheless that the average Italian farm did not have such a high percentage of injuries. More generally, there was agreement on the fact that Italian farms did not have scores as low as that identified in the example. It would in any case be important to assess the presence of serious injuries (which the expert had defined as an injury involving the muscle, not just skin deep) and not the average number of injuries.

Some doubts were expressed in relation to the distinction to be made between more and less serious situations. An example was given of a farm where 75% of the animals were without injuries as compared with a farm where 25% of the animals had slight injuries and 25% serious injuries. They would both obtain a score which was much the same (47 and 45 respectively). The penalty imposed on the second farm would thus be too light.

For some the scores from 0 to 50 were too closely grouped with respect to the range from 50 to 100. It was necessary to establish whether the purpose of the system was primarily to impose penalties or to give rewards.

The experts emphasized that these were only simulations, explaining that the scores have still not been finally defined. The Farmers Jury observations could be very useful for defining the scores to be used. The WQ system should in any case act as a stimulus for working better with a view to increasing the knowledge and degree of care exercised by the workers as well to avoid the occurrence of situations that might penalize the farm when the checks are carried out.

A couple of farmers expressed the view that, whatever the eventual path chosen in reaching a farm assessment system, it must be as transparent as possible because the farmer must always be able to understand the underlying mechanism. At the same time, the system

must be extremely detailed so that it could be applied to all the different situations encountered.

23.5. FROM PARAMETER SCORES TO CRITERIA SCORES AND TO FARM SCORES

At this point the expert Valentina Ferrante explained how the scores for the individual criteria were transformed into the aggregated score for the four principles. She also explained the concept of a possible compensation between low and high scores on the four principles (good feeding, good housing, good health and appropriate behaviour). This has been introduced because the WQ assessment tool is conceived to be a stimulus for improvement and not coercive in nature. She also emphasized that the score assigned to each criterion derived from many different measurements. As a consequence, even if one of the parameters is not meeting the threshold this does not mean that the score assigned to the whole criterion will be negative.

The facilitator summarised the fundamental concepts on which opinions were sought:

1. the importance of an individual criterion with respect to another and when averages should be calculated;
2. the importance of parameters with low scores (whatever they are) as compared with those with high scores;
3. the alternative between a fixed threshold for the whole of Europe or variable from region to region;
4. the alternative between fixed thresholds over time or variable in accordance with the period of the year;
5. the alternative between a limited system of compensation (to avoid an evening out of very high scores against very low scores) or an more accentuated system of compensation (where very high scores are compensated by very low score).

With regard to the issue of compensation of scores between criteria and principles and the relative importance of the individual scores, a substantial number of the farmers disagreed with the application of compensation only when it is done partially. In particular the organic farmers were against a system of compensation, but they were backed also by some other conventional farmers. They were, however, in favour of a weighting system in such a way that priorities might be assigned to some of the 12 criteria (e.g. it would be reasonable to consider thirst to be a more serious problem than hunger). In this way it would help farmers to understand the most critical factors to monitor and hence requiring the greatest attention. But, given that many parameters are to be analysed, only one with a negative score should not weigh too heavily on the total score.

On the contrary, one farmer, backed by some others, was in favour of the greatest level of compensation possible – if improvements are to be obtained it is necessary to give the opportunity to continue working. One participant stated that this assessment system had goals and envisaged actions for prevention and improvement entirely consistent with a Quality System.

One farmer objected to the contrary, however, that if the aim was to achieve the greatest level of animal welfare (in other words excellence for each criterion) it was better not to allow compensation. If, however, the aim was to keep farms as they are today then compensation would be justified.

Turning then to the questions whether there should be a fixed threshold throughout Europe or variable from region to region whether it should be fixed over time or variable depending on the period, the opinion on both was that the thresholds should be absolutely fixed. Since this was a public assessment system, application should be the same for all countries.

At this point the discussion moved spontaneously to two aspects which had already been raised before and clearly considered of importance by the farmers. The first was concerned with the relationship between the WQ assessment system and current European legislation on animal welfare. Are there overlaps? If a farm obtains WQ certification will it be considered as satisfying the directive on animal welfare?

The experts confirmed that the minimum Community regulations in force were implemented in this tool. The starting point for the various animal species had thus been current legislation. Since it was a voluntary system it had the necessity to be severe. As things stood the WQ protocol and the animal welfare regulations were complementary in nature. One did not exclude the other. The two were distinct from each other and the conditions did not exist to make the assessment system coercive.

The WQ assessment system should be seen as innovative because it does not just consider instrumental, plant and management aspects but also parameters measured on the animal. It thus seeks to establish a relationship between the problems of animal welfare and the housing system. The aim of this system is to collect the useful data able to identify the causes of the problems.

The other subject arising was that of the centrality of the welfare of an animal with respect to the score on a single criterion. According to a number of farmers the first thing to look at is the animal. If the animals are feeling well, it is, according to them, not necessary to wasting time on measurements concerning troughs, drinking systems, etc.

According to the radical view of some farmers the legislation should indicate how the animal should be living and the individual farmer should then be responsible for the method to obtain that goal. This objective of well being of the pig should be compulsory, but not the means to achieve that end.

One farmer noted that even the ISO system had evolved to the extent that emphasis had changed from non-conformities in relation to individual processes to the achievement of the final goal.

23.6. POSSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WQ ASSESSMENT TOOL

The facilitator introduced the presentation of the use of this tool to provide both feedback information to the farmer and information to the consumer. The expert explained the use of the instrument from the point of view of information management and related marketing, sale and product labelling strategies.

With reference to the possibility of supplying information to the farmer, the opportunities provided by the tool were considered very important as a means of improving the knowledge of the farmers themselves and highlighting information with a bearing on decisions on the running of the farm. The WQ system must thus be an instrument for communication with farmers. The latter must be informed not only of the score awarded to the farm concerned but above all, of what the critical problems were.

The opinions regarding the relationship between animal welfare and consumers were very different. The consumer is sensitive to animal welfare only in theory – at a commercial level he or she is not prepared to pay more. The Italian market is not yet ready for this.

The experiences in this field seem to indicate that when an attempt is made to differentiate a product with a premium price, soon after this feature becomes a standard and the premium price is lost. There is thus only an increase in costs without obtaining an effective economic return.

A number of different farmers agreed that the strategy of setting out information on food labels aimed at the consumer was not appropriate (very risky and with little advantage).

It was also noted that there are difficulties in communicating a brand or certification to the end consumer because no indication of the originating farm is given at the moment of the purchase in the shop: farmers remaining anonymous. The supermarkets resist labelling of this type because it would give the farmer too much bargaining power.

The labelling of beef is different as it had been a reaction to the BSE scandal and an answer to the consumer's desire to know the origin of the meat.

23.7. REFLECTIONS ON THE INTERACTION PROCESS AND EVALUATION OF THE MEETINGS

At the end of the meeting the facilitator asked the participants whether the two days of discussion had led to a change in opinions in relation to the factors guaranteeing animals good living conditions.

The participants did not change significantly their opinion on animal welfare but they wanted to ensure that a number of concepts were given special emphasis. Of these, the following factors had a role of particular importance.

- They are concerned about the possibility that the drawing up of the WQ protocol, the guidelines and the legislation on animal welfare will result from the kind of questions posed in the consumers research of Welfare Quality, where the questions were too tendentious and subjective.
- It is appropriate that the assessment system should force change, above all on those farms which fail to meet minimum requirements. The protocol should not be used to improve best practice but rather increase the average and eliminate the worst.
- Relations between the WQ assessment system and current legislation. The WQ certification would be extremely useful if it makes it possible to counteract possible objections raised by local Animal Health Authorities in charge of farmers' compliance with legislation on animal welfare.
- Relations between this system and policy. The use of the WQ certification could become dangerous if it would be converted into a compulsory certification because European-wide checks would be extremely burdensome and labour intensive.

With respect to the last points, the experts replied that the use politicians will make of this protocol does not fall within the competence of the researchers and the Community Action Plan makes reference to the idea of setting up a voluntary labelling system.

CONCLUSIONS TO PART III

24.1 DEFINITION OF ANIMAL WELFARE

When asking the Italian pig farmers a definition of animal welfare, most of them will associate it primarily with the good health status of the pigs, good growing conditions and absence of hunger and thirst in such a way that the pigs can express their productive performance as much as possible. If you feed and drink the pigs appropriately and guarantee good environment conditions animal welfare according to all pig farmers will reach adequate levels.

The question if the pigs express their natural behaviour has been judged much less important. Many farmers were even arguing that given the strong genetic selection the actual behaviour of pigs is not comparable to the behaviour of their ancestors. However, on this specific point a distinction has to be made between conventional farmers and organic farmers in the group. Organic farmers underline the necessity that pigs express their appropriate natural behaviour in open spaces, whereas several conventional farmers defend the individual crates as then they are more controlled and healthy and not subjected to the aggressiveness of other sows when their housed in groups. Also outdoor systems were questioned by these farmers as pigs would suffer cold, whereas pigs would be better off in controlled indoor housing systems. Of course also intermediate positions have been put forward, like trying to find a balance between the ideal natural state of the pig and the necessity to raise pigs creating an adequate farm income.

24.2 CITIZENS' VIEW ON ANIMAL WELFARE

Many shared the opinion that consumers do not know much about how pigs are raised. Moreover, in Italy the concern about animal welfare among citizens is not very high according to the farmers. They are convinced that price remains the most relevant factor of decision. They are then concerned about the possibility that the drawing up of the Welfare Quality protocol, the guidelines and the legislation on animal welfare will be too much influenced by rather ignorant citizens. Then they denounced the serious risk that

when in consumers' surveys the questions are posed in a suggestive and tendentious way, the obtained results will be biased towards a final outcome which might be manipulated by the researcher. In short: pig farmers expressed a significant mistrust towards consumers and citizens and their view on animal welfare.

24.3 SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO ANIMAL WELFARE

Group housing has been questioned by many as a way to raise animal welfare. Several farmers are in favour of individual crates as in this way a better health status of the sow can be reached. This view is in line with their conviction that the definition of animal welfare is associated primarily with a healthy status in good environmental conditions. In group housing sows can express more their appropriate natural behaviour, but they start to fight and get injured; hence, their welfare goes down. This has been the view of the large majority of pig farmers in the group.

24.4 WELFARE QUALITY ASSESSMENT TOOL

The assessment of availability of water, feed, oxygen, adequate temperature and ventilation are unanimously approved by the pig farmers as these parameters directly relate to the health and growth status of the pigs. These measurements guarantee the necessary condition to express a good productive performance which is the ultimate goal of the pig farmer.

As the evaluation of the 12 criteria is concerned the average scores on the principle 'good health' is highest, followed by 'good housing' and 'good feeding' with 'appropriate behaviour' having the lowest evaluation score. The difference between conventional and organic farmers here is that the organic farmers attach much more value to 'appropriate behaviour' as factor expressing high animal welfare.

The WQ Assessment system has been judged positively as it may be used to improve management of the pig farm. Most pig farmers fear however its application by veterinarians as they doubt if it will be applied objectively. Therefore the system must be as transparent as possible, in order that the pig farmer may always be able to understand the underlying mechanism.

Also the moment of assessment is crucial, as in certain times of the pig production cycle or season sows and fattening pigs may express a better animal welfare status than in other moments. This creates the necessity to assess more than once a year.

A compensation of scores between criteria and principles should not be too much accentuated according to most of the pig farmers. Important though is that some criteria may have a higher weight in the evaluation than others. This proposal goes in the direction of a recommendation versus a kind of weighted average. Some were going even further stating that if the pigs are assessed healthy and in good state it will not be necessary to ‘waste’ time and assess also all the other criteria such as availability of water nipples, sufficient feed in troughs, etc.

Throughout Europe threshold levels have to be fixed in order to create the same conditions among countries.

24.5 POSSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WQ ASSESSMENT TOOL

There is some scepticism about the feasibility to introduce the system in Italy as according to many consumers are more sensible to price than to animal welfare. It might be taken up as a voluntary system in order to differentiate and create a market segment with a premium price, but if the system would become a mandatory standard it will only create an increase of costs and the pig farmers will not be better off anymore.

Part IV

Farmers' Juries: A Synthesis

by

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INTRODUCTION TO PART IV

25.1 THE CHOICE OF METHODOLOGY

It is not enough to simply ask farmers if they would accept the Welfare Quality[®] tool or not without first explaining its complexities and how it works. We need to know what underpins their reasoning and motivation and how their individual and collective opinions develop. In all three countries we therefore used a method that imitates the way in which farmers might develop their opinion in real life – in response to information input and in exchange with other farmers and their organizations. Of course this imitation has limits: the scale of the research is small and the groups of farmers involved selective; the period of time is short; the information provided is one-sided and limited to the general features of the Welfare Quality[®] monitoring tool ; the role of organizations is barely included and the role of policymakers, society at large and the media excluded. However, this method also has important advantages through the close and in-depth interactions with their peers.

Although the term ‘jury’ gives the impression that the participants act like a trial jury and are asked to take a decision, this was not the case here. We used the term ‘discussion meetings’ rather than ‘juries’, in order to avoid giving the farmers the idea that they were involved in decision-making.

Juries are considered a qualitative research method in the social sciences. They are generally used to explore issues we know little about and to understand the influential aspects of phenomena. In the present study they will reveal the different opinions that exist, and their underpinning ‘logics’. We do not expect to learn how many farmers adhere to which opinion or that will accept the tool.

The reliability and scientific quality of qualitative methods, such as juries, is grounded in the transparency of the research process. Thus, it is important to explain the design of data-collection and analysis in detail so that others can check the likelihood and credibility of our results.

25.2 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In all three countries, we focused on one farm sector and allowed for variance among participants with regard to subsector (breeding, fattening, integrated), production method (organic, conventional), region, gender and age (see Table 25.1). All of us selected participants using the so-called snowball method via our contacts in the farming community. In addition, we sought farmers who were interested in discussing animal welfare and willing to invest two full days in our project. Several of the participants in all three countries were actively engaged in farmer organizations so we were able to probe personal and organizational opinions. All of us reimbursed farmers' travel expenses and the costs of their replacement at the farm.

Programme for the Farmers' Juries

Day 1: The definition of animal welfare

- Session 1 What do farmers define and perceive as a good life for animals?
Inventory of opinions and discussion among farmers.
- Session 2 What is animal welfare in the eye of animal scientists and citizens?
Two short presentations and discussion among farmers about differences and correspondences.
- Session 3 What is new about the Welfare Quality[®] assessment tool?
A short introduction into the tool: the principles and criteria and the logic of animal-based assessment.

Home-work for farmers: how would they measure the fulfilment of criteria by way of animal-based measures? And how important are the different criteria for them?

Day 2 The Welfare Quality[®] assessment tool

- Session 4 The measurement of criteria.
Discussion with farmers based on their homework and the presentation of the measurements used in Welfare Quality[®].
- Session 5a Translation of measurements into farm scores.
Expert presentation; interactive exercise and discussion.
- Session 5b From parameter scores to criteria scores and farm scores.
Expert presentation; interactive exercise and discussion.
- Session 6 Implementation strategies: management advice and product information.
Expert presentation and discussion.
- Session 7 Reflection on the process.

All juries took place during two full days in October and November 2008, with a break in between of two weeks that also served as a period of reflection. In the Netherlands and Italy a professional facilitator was hired to chair the session, in Norway the researcher chaired

TABLE 25.1 Outlook on the farming system of the farmers involved in the meetings.

	Farming system and no. of pigs	Remarks	G	Region
1	1100 breeding pigs (sows)	Wants to grow to 1600 breeding pigs	M	East
2	Closed system, 400 sows	Rents storage and stables, 1 worker	M	Centre
3	Closed system	Family farm (runs the farm with husband)	F	South
4	650 sows, 500 fattening pigs	Also young cattle, political active	M	East
5	650 sows, own maize land	Partnership with parents, young farmer	M	North
6	250 sows, 1600 fattening pigs	Wants to grow to 400 sows and 3000 pigs*	F	South
7	4000 fattening pigs	Family farm, without successor	M	West
8	Fattening and breeding	Also poultry production, 5 workers	M	Centre
9	300 sows, 900 fattening pigs	Partly organic, 1 full-time worker	M	North-East
10	400 sows, 200 fattening pigs		M	East
11	400 sows	Partnership with wife	M	South-East
12	400 sows	Successor unknown (children too young)	F	East
13	300 sows, location has to change	Farm situated in zone for "extensification"	M	East

Note: * This farmer has a so called 'zichtstal'; visitors are welcome to view the pigs through big windows.

the session. All meetings were audio-registered and transcribed by several reporters. In the three countries, in addition a researcher was present as well as one or two animal scientists involved in other projects of Welfare Quality®.

The same protocol was followed in all three countries and the input by experts was basically the same. It was translated into the appropriate languages and presented by different national experts, all working in Welfare Quality®. This standardized approach maximized comparability across countries, so any differences in the findings are likely to reflect differences between the three countries and farming communities.

Data analysis proceeded as follows. First of all we composed a complete transcription of all sessions based on the notes taken during the sessions. In national reports we summarized what farmers said and discussed but also described and reflected upon the interaction process. We then summarized and compared farmers' opinions and also tried to get insight into the way the interaction process evolved. We compared the opinions presented and the questions raised and searched for agreements and collisions of opinions; we also tried to follow if some of the farmers more strongly influenced the process of opinion building than others and in which direction. The latter was indeed the case in The Netherlands where two farmers active in farmers' organizations repeatedly called upon the other to 'close the lines' and collectively oppose to issues that were experienced as threatening (see Chapters 28 and 29).

25.3 THE FARMERS

In the Netherlands, 12 farmers in total participated in both meetings. One farmer could unexpectedly only attend the first meeting. The farmers differed in subsector, production method, farm size, age, gender and region (see Table 25.1). In this way, we tried to grasp

personal and farm differences that might potentially influence the farmers' attitude, although we never aimed at giving a representative picture of Dutch pig farmers.

In Norway, seven farmers attended the two meetings, three men and four women. They had different kinds of farms, most with mixed productions (pigs and milk cows and cereals), and were involved in different stages of pig production (see Table 25.2). We also tried to enrol a profiled organic pig farmer in the area, but he refused after a one hour discussion: he was very interested in the WQ scheme as such, but did not want to be confronted with the conventional farmers. He knew several of them and had had his quarrels with them.

In Italy pig farmers took part in the meetings, coming from the four Northern Italian regions, Lombardia, Emilia-Romagna, Veneto and Piemonte, where most of the Italian pig production is concentrated. The selection of farmers was carried out taking into consideration a set of pig farmers who collaborated with CRPA in previous studies and calling pig farmers associations to get a representative sample for the Italian Northern regions where the vast majority of Italian pig production is situated, differing in characteristics of farming activities (see Table 25.3).

TABLE 25.2 Outlook on the farming system of the Norwegian farmers involved in the meetings.

	Farming system/number of pigs	Remarks	G	Region
1	Closed circuit, 140 sows	Family farm, also some grain		Vestfold
2	Fattening, 200 piglets	Family farm, mainly milk and beef		Vestfold
3	Closed circuit, 70–80 sows	Family farm, also beef and grain		Vestfold
4	Breeding, 20 sows	Family farm, also grain and horses		Vestfold
5	Closed circuit, 95 sows	Family farm, also grain		Vestfold
6	Closed circuit, 50 sows	Family farm, also grain		Vestfold
7	Breeding and fattening, 20 sows	Family farm, also grain		Vestfold
8	Closed circuit, 100 sows	Family farm, also grain		Vestfold

TABLE 25.3 Outlook on the farming system of the Italian farmers involved in the meetings.

	Farming system	No. of sows and/or fattening pigs	G	Region
1	Closed cycle	6,000 sows	M	Veneto
2	Closed cycle	1,200 sows	M	Lombardia
3	Partially closed cycle	1,600 sows	M	Lombardia
4	Closed and partially closed cycles	850 sows	M	Lombardia
5	Closed cycle	750 sows	M	Emilia-Romagna
6	Reproduction open cycle	1,500 sows	M	Emilia-Romagna
7	Closed cycle	500 sows (organic)	M	Piemonte
8	Closed cycle	60 sows (organic)	M	Emilia-Romagna
9	Closed cycle	400 sows	M	Emilia-Romagna
10	Closed cycle	1,500 sows	M	Veneto
11	Closed and partially closed cycles	2,000 sows	M	Lombardia
12	Partially closed cycles	500 sows	M	Lombardia

The Structure of the Report

The report is structured along the main research questions. They include the following:

Chapter 26: Farmers' definition of animal welfare and response to the definition of scientists and citizens.

Chapter 27: Farmers' response to the logic and the criteria of the Welfare Quality Assessment Tool.

Chapter 28: Farmers' response to the measurements of animal welfare.

Chapter 29: Farmers' response to the calculation of animal welfare scores.

Chapter 30: Farmers' attitude towards implementation.

Chapter 31: Reflection on the process and conclusions.

Chapter 32: Recommendations.

In each chapter we will briefly summarize and analyse farmers' reactions taking into account also how the process evolved and how farmers built their opinion in interaction and in the course of the sessions as a whole.

FARMERS' DEFINITIONS OF ANIMAL WELFARE

We started the first day of the jury workshop by discussing with farmers about their notions on animal welfare (26.1). We then invited experts to introduce the view of animal scientists (26.2) as well as of citizens (26.3) and invited farmers to react to those ideas.

26.1 FARMERS' POINT OF VIEW

In all three countries farmers were asked to write down on post-its which they considered important aspects of animal welfare. Among them were: animals feeling well; feeling safe; happy animals, feeling comfortable, good climate; peace, hygiene and regularity; sufficient space; fitness, good shape, healthy; low mortality rates; little aggression among animals; productivity; farmers working with pleasure gives more animal welfare.

As the above summary demonstrated that farmers did not only consider aspects of housing, body condition and health to be important but also positive emotions, social behaviour and human–animal interaction, without necessarily formulating it in this way. Notable was also that farmers often explained the importance of certain aspect through anthropomorphic arguments.

‘The animals notice if you work with pleasure. You have to approach them in a humane way. I always say that you need to consider them as babies, as it were your children. We want to eat from a clean plate. Well, the pigs also want to eat from a clean rearing trough’ (NL 12).

The Dutch farmers had expected that they would fully agree on the definition of animal welfare, but there was lively discussion and some disagreement about the significance of productivity and the extent to which citizens’ perceptions of animal welfare should be taken into account. Some farmers proposed time and again that productivity and animal welfare were one and the same thing.

‘If the animal does not feel well it will not produce well’ (NL 8).

Others did not agree at all. Production had nothing to do with welfare in their view. Some even pointed out that productivity could be too high and that this might damage animal welfare, although the farmers agreed that this risk was much higher in other sectors, such as broiler production or dairy farming.

‘For me the production does not relate much to welfare. If a sow produces five or 20 piglets is not because the latter animal feels better’ (NL 1).

A similar discussion took place among Norwegian farmers who elaborated on the economic side of animal welfare and the need to warrant the animals’ welfare.

‘If you are going to earn money, you have to treat the animals well’ (Norwegian farmer).

Norwegian farmers also claimed fulltime preoccupation in pig production to be better than to work part time, mornings and evenings. Besides, with more animals, it made more sense to work out monitoring routines (cost effectiveness). Enlarging the scale implies professionalization. On the other hand, ‘it can be too much, you have to have enough time to watch over all of the animals’, it was pointed out.

In addition, Norwegian farmers stressed that the environment and comfort it offered were important for health and welfare. Comfort meant care and time to care for the singular pig. Comfort was also important for the farmer. Interesting was also that of the importance of good routines for emergency slaughtering were discussed extensively among the Norwegian farmers. Most important, however, was their agreement about the significance of natural instincts and needs. Nesting was mentioned as one such instinct. Freedom of movement was also brought up. In this context the pros and cons of fixation were extensively discussed. Several of the farmers wanted to fixate the sow after birth in order to protect the piglets from her. They then discussed how to solve these problems through the adaptation of housing systems and/or breeding programmes to select on ‘good mothering’. The welfare of farmers was also mentioned as important. Animal welfare should also have the farmers’ wellbeing in focus.

In Italy, two currents of thought emerged. In the view of some farmers, a farm mimicking the natural state in order to guarantee freedom from constraint would be optimal; others pointed out that animal welfare measures should not cause economic problems for farmers. In this context, it was stated that freedom for the animals would entail significant structural and management changes without being certain of achieving the foreseen productive results. A number of farmers sustained that intensive farming had brought with it a series of benefits, allowing control of the animals and dealing with diseases of many different types meaning that meat quality had increased. In outdoor farming, excesses of hot and cold are critical and the pigs definitely have a better life inside the farm building with a controlled micro-climate. As in the Netherlands, some Italian farmers expressed animal welfare is a question of mental attitude, which comes down to the personal relationship between the farmer and his animals. In certain circumstances this ‘taking care’ of the animals does not raise extra costs.

In the Netherlands, all farmers agreed that their perception of animal welfare had changed in response to citizens' concerns. They agreed that animal welfare was of utmost importance and it was their responsibility. They differed in the extent to which they wanted to take citizens' 'naïve' and 'false' expectations on board and allow them to define how they should handle animals. Most of them felt that citizens were too ignorant of what really mattered to farm animals and wrongly compared them to pets and wild animals. Some farmers also believed that citizens were misled by NGOs.

26.2 THE SCIENTIST POINT OF VIEW

In the second session, animal scientists briefly presented how scientists' definition of farm animal welfare developed through time starting with the Brambell report and moving to animal based measures. They summed up three ways of measuring animal welfare: management (which can be asked for), housing conditions (which can be checked), and the registration of characteristics on the animal itself (which is more difficult to measure), and emphasized that researchers on animal welfare now preferred to look at the animal itself.

In the Netherlands, farmers very much appreciated the trend towards animal based measures; in their view this was exactly how they approached animal welfare – looking at the animal. In their view this was the right, scientific and objective way of looking at animals. They also explicitly agreed with the animal scientist that an anthropomorphic attitude should be avoided as it wrongly compared animals and their needs to human needs. Looking at animals as animals was the right and objective way of looking at animals. But they also raised some questions, among which the following.

- How to take individual differences between animals into account in a standardized assessment method? Some animals are more aggressive than others.
- How to take into account that some so-called negative behaviour (e.g. aggression) is nevertheless natural behaviour, which as such is perceived as an important contributor to animal welfare?

In doing so, the Dutch farmers pointed at the practical paradoxes that animal farming entailed and came along with new regulations for animal welfare. They specifically referred to group housing, which addresses the natural need of herd animals but at the same time increases the risk of injuries as a result of rank fighting.

'Pigs have an order of rank and fight about it, depending on the different situations. Fighting you can only avoid by separating the animals, which is neither good as the pigs are herd animals' (4).

The Norwegian farmers were at first a bit sceptical towards the animal-based measures, but as the discussions evolved it turned out that most of them practices some kind of informal animal-based measures in their everyday husbandry practices. Most of the farmers seemed to agree that a combination of farm-based and animal-based measures would be good. A resource-based and experience-based system ‘hardwired’ in ‘legal regulations could serve to bring animal welfare up to 60–80% of the optimal level, whereas these animal based registrations could help us to come even higher’. But to totally abolish resource-based measures would be wrong, one farmer proceeded. He also questioned whether consumers would agree to such a policy. However, the farmers all seemed to agree that the animal-based measures could be a good supplement to current resource-based regulations.

Most Italian farmers agreed to the trend towards animal-based measures. Some of them added that the eligibility of pig farms for producing pigs should not be assessed by Public Health officers filling check lists to compare resource measures with EU minimum welfare requirements (i.e. square meters per head). On the contrary, the farms should be assessed through the measurement of animal-based parameters, which take into account management practices and the effective ability of farmers to provide good welfare conditions to animals.

26.3 THE CITIZEN POINT OF VIEW

We then presented Welfare Quality[®] results on citizens’ opinion. In the Netherlands, farmers were relieved that citizens’ opinion was more positive about farming than they had expected. At the same time, the presentation confirmed their belief that citizens were ‘naïve’ and ignorant and approached animals from a human ‘anthropomorphic’ point of view, which in their view was wrong and subjective. Farmers looked at animals in a zoomorphic way, i.e. they look at animals as animals – just like the scientists were doing.

Farmers also remarked that citizens had wrong and exaggerated expectations of animal farming that did not guarantee animal welfare. As an example they referred to citizens’ romantic and false idea about small-scale, organic farms where the animals enjoy living.

Against this romantic image they pointed at the fact that it was actually at the professional, successful and modern farms that animal welfare was better assured. For the farmers management was most important.

In addition farmers underlined that citizens wanted all kind of nice things for animals but then as consumer were not ready to pay for anything. It was, moreover, extremely difficult in their view to reach the wide public as they had too little interest in farm reality.

'Who are the ones who come to an open day on my organic farm? It is a small group of people who like to have a nice day out of the house. The consumers are those who buy the meat. The distance to this anonymous group of consumers, those you do not see on your open day, is big. I would like to come into contact with this group of consumers' (9).

In Norway, farmers felt reassured that consumers' seemed to be predominantly pleased with the treatment of farm animals and convinced that animal welfare was well taken care of.

'Animal welfare is good in Norway, people don't seem to worry' (Norwegian farmer).

The farmers wondered if this could be translated to a greater willingness to pay. Interestingly, the farmers seemed to split on whether a differentiation of the market was good or not. Some of them saw the opportunities that labelled products could offer on the market but also for informing consumers. Others objected and pointed out that uniform standards should guarantee good animal welfare in all Norwegian farms.

The Norwegian farmers agreed that strict legal regulations were important also to assure sufficient animal welfare across Europe. They knew that the UK, Sweden and Denmark had implemented strict regulations whereas in other countries (such as Italy) local and traditional production was successfully marketed.

'I visited Italy a couple of years ago, to look at Parma production – which is very popular, but we would not have been allowed to produce under those circumstances, with narrow pigsties and wooden floors' (Norwegian farmer).

Others pointed out that this kind of tourism often resulted in a unrealistic and romanticized picture of modern agriculture and husbandry.

In the view of Italian farmers, the survey among citizens reconfirmed the fact that consumers were uninformed and repeated unproven common sense beliefs promoted through the mass media. Their main concern was that the surveys could result in more and more stringent regulations. Like in the Netherlands, Italian farmers expressed doubts regarding the research methodology and consequently the validity of the results. Farmers considered the questions in the survey as too suggestive and providing no information about the arguments in favour of technological innovations, such as GMO and pesticide reduction. They also extensively discussed the paradoxical behaviour of consumers who worried about animal welfare but did not buy animal-friendly products for economic reasons.

'Consumers will say that they approve the concept of animal welfare but they won't buy the product if it costs 30% more. It is not at random the most popular shelves in supermarkets are those with the lowest priced products' (Italian farmer).

In conclusion, we can say that farmers felt akin to the scientists and said to share their animal-based and 'objective' point of view. Perceiving animals as animals meant among others that health and bodily fitness were considered as important aspects of welfare and warranted by providing good feeding, housing and health care. Many farmers perceived the opinion of citizens and the importance they attached to positive feelings and social and natural behaviour as romantic and exaggerated and proof of their lack in knowledge. In their view, citizens should know more about the reality of modern animal farming. This would help to get rid of the bad image that animal protection organizations were sketching of modern animal farms. The farmers expected information to have a positive influence on citizens' attitude. In their view, citizens 'misunderstood' or 'misperceived' what they saw. Information and promotion were, hence, closely related for farmers.

FARMERS' RESPONSES TO THE WELFARE QUALITY[®] ASSESSMENT TOOL

In the third session we introduced the Welfare Quality[®] tool. The WQ expert on animal welfare introduced the four principles and 12 criteria, which should allow farmers to understand the logic of the WQ Assessment Tool and its difference to other monitoring tools. The session should prepare the farmers the farmers to do their 'homework' in between the meetings, and to discuss the WQ Assessment Tool the second day in more detail.

In the Netherlands, generally speaking, all farmers agreed with the principles and criteria as being relevant and important. For what concerns the relative importance of the criteria it became clear that the last principle was considered as least important as it was not important for survival. Most farmers did, however, underline that social behaviour was important, although it might result in fighting and, hence, injuries.

'One should be very much aware of how things get interpreted. Pigs have to be able to show natural behaviour, but also to meet the criteria of absence of disease and injuries. But diseases and injuries are part of the natural behaviour of the animals. Fighting the order of rank in the group is natural behaviour as well, but simultaneously it results in injuries. You should pay attention to how the criteria are going to be used' (NL 11).

Their doubts mainly regarded other natural behaviour, positive emotions and human-animal relationship. In their view here again animals' needs were exaggerated and wrongly compared to human needs. One should also keep in mind that animals were kept for economic purposes.

They also wondered how these aspects could be measured in any objective way by outsiders who do not know the animals and their 'normal', regular behaviour given the specific conditions at that farm and this specific group of animals.

Norwegian farmers were somewhat sceptic about the validity of the measurements of fear, given that it was supposed to be based on letting strangers (auditors) into the sty. The pigs are naturally very wary and a stranger would automatically make them scared, they assured.

Other issues raised were pigs living indoors or outdoors, the use of nose rings in parts of organic farming, and the production of social hierarchies. In general, farmers reasoned animal welfare to relate to the economic performance of the farm.

In Italy, all farmers agreed on the assessment of parameters such as water, food, oxygen, temperature and ventilation as they all related to health and growth. They wondered, however, if a veterinarian had the competence to carry out the checks. In a somewhat different manner compared to the Netherlands, the objectivity of measurement and validity of results was put on the table here as well. Many Italian farmers worried that assessor might misinterpret the results and assessment regulations. They pointed at the need for providing the same training throughout Europe for future assessors and for regular checks of the assessors' capacity to assess qualitative parameters.

We also asked the farmers to do some home-work before the next meeting. They received a table with principles and criteria and were asked to add animal based measurement which they would want to use for checking the fulfilment of the criteria. We also asked them to define which principles and criteria were most important to them as farmers (see Tables 27.1–27.3).

TABLE 27.1 Perceived importance of principles and criteria in the Netherlands.

Principle	Welfare criteria	Certainly important	Less important	Un-important	Blank
Good feeding	1. Absence of prolonged hunger	12			
	2. Absence of prolonged thirst	12			
Good housing	3. Comfort around resting	10.5 ¹	1.5 ¹		
	4. Thermal comfort	10.5 ¹	1.5 ¹		
Good health	5. Ease of movement	5.5 ¹	6.5 ¹		
	6. Absence of injuries	9	3		
	7. Absence of disease	12 ²			
Appropriate behaviour	8. Absence of pain induced by management procedures	8.5 ¹	4		
	9. Expression of social behaviours	5	6	1.5 ¹	
	10. Expression of other behaviours	2	7	2	1
	11. Good human–animal relationship	8	4		
	12. Absence of general fear	7.5 ¹	4.5 ¹		

Notes: ¹ If farmers marked two options or put crosses half between two options we gave .5 to each options;

² One farmer (11) disagreed with the phrasing of the criteria: absence of diseases.

TABLE 27.2 Perceived importance of principles and criteria in Norway.

Principle	Welfare criteria	Certainly important	Less important	Un-important	Blank
Good feeding	1. Absence of prolonged hunger	8			
	2. Absence of prolonged thirst	8			
Good housing	3. Comfort around resting	4	4		
	4. Thermal comfort	3	4	1	
Good health	5. Ease of movement	3	4	1	
	6. Absence of injuries	5	3		
	7. Absence of disease	4	4		
Appropriate behaviour	8. Absence of pain induced by management procedures	5	3		
	9. Expression of social behaviours	2	6		
	10. Expression of other behaviours	1	6	1	
	11. Good human–animal relationship	3	5		
	12. Absence of general fear	5	3		

TABLE 27.3 Perceived importance of principles and criteria in Italy.

Principle	Welfare criteria	Certainly important	Less important	Un-important	Blank
Good feeding	1. Absence of prolonged hunger	7	3		
	2. Absence of prolonged thirst	8	2		
Good housing	3. Comfort around resting	9	2		
	4. Thermal comfort	7	3		
Good health	5. Ease of movement	4	6		
	6. Absence of injuries	8	2		
	7. Absence of disease	9	1		
	8. Absence of pain induced by management procedures	8	2		
Appropriate behaviour	9. Expression of social behaviours	2	5	2	1
	10. Expression of other behaviours	3	3	3	1
	11. Good human–animal relationship	7	3		
	12. Absence of general fear	6	3	3	

Note: Data from 10 respondents.

Concerning the importance of the different criteria, the Norwegian farmers seemed to agree that hunger and thirst were of basic importance. They also stressed the importance of comfort around resting, pointing to how e.g. extra straw for nesting could prevent sickness as well as reduce aggression and level of fear. Absence of fear was also highlighted by several. There was also a discussion about the importance of temperature, where they seemed to conclude that what really counted are the pigs' possibilities to find different temperature zones suited for their needs. For instance, cold un-insulated farmhouses may not be a problem (even in winterly Norway) as long as the animals have enough dry straw to hide within.

Still another digression was also interesting. A female farmer asked for whom the importance of the criteria was to be judged, the pigs or the farmers. 'It is clear', she said, 'that for us farmers, all of these are economically very important'. This perspective was also present in another discussion, where another farmer stated that she had often thought about for whom she was doing all the cleaning and tidying in the farmhouse: 'Obviously it's for us, the farmers, as the pigs don't care at all', she said.

In Italy the factors obtaining the highest score were the 'comfort around resting' and the 'absence of disease' followed by 'absence of prolonged thirst', 'absence of injuries', and 'absence of pain induced by management practices'. The two criteria 'expression of social behaviour' and 'expression of other behaviour' appeared to be considered less important than the others.

As Tables 27.1–27.3 show, farmers agreed that hunger, thirst, comfort around resting, thermal comfort and absence of diseases were important. They were less convinced of the importance of behavioural aspects and ease of movement. Most of the farms also considered pain, injuries and fear important indicators of welfare as well as a good human animal relationship. We can conclude that farmers agreed about the importance of aspects directly related to health and food safety as well as productivity and product quality, and that a majority of them also considered negative and painful feelings as important welfare indicators.

FARMERS' RESPONSES TO THE MEASUREMENTS OF ANIMAL WELFARE

During the second meeting of the jury workshop we focused on the monitoring tool itself. We discussed the homework of the farmers, which regarded their definition of the most important criteria and their measurement (already summarized in Chapter 27). We then proceeded with explanations of experts of the way the various criteria were measured in the monitoring tool.

The discussion proceeded differently in the three countries. As we will demonstrate below the discussion became passionate and defensive in the Netherlands, whereas Norwegian farmers discussed the subject in an open and friendly manner. In Italy, the discussion focused on differences between animal husbandry systems, which should be reflected in the way animal welfare was measured and monitored.

Although farmers in the Netherlands generally accepted the relevance of the criteria included in the monitoring system, they became increasingly worried and irritated when we explained the measurements more in detail. At the one hand they were disappointed as they had expected much more animal-based measurements; at the other hand they were not convinced that behaviour was actually the best way to measure certain criteria. They were also very concerned about the measurement of problematic situations that were very exceptional in their view. This regard the occurrence of prolonged hunger and thirst but also the comfort of resting measured on the occurrence of pressure points. Farmers reacted very emotional as such measurements in their view suggested a careless treatment of animals as farmers would let them suffer from hunger and thirst. First of all, it made no sense to them to measure something which would never occur. But, even more important, including it in a tool as a regular measurement would communicate in their view that such states were realistic and needed control. Farmers were very concerned about the risk of farmers being portrayed and perceived as cruel and careless.

When discussing the criteria of human–animal interaction and natural and social behaviour, it became nearly impossible to reach agreement about appropriate measurements, not with the scientists but neither among the farmers.

The farmers also discussed time and again how much depended on the context. How animal reacted was influenced by production system and the management style. For

instance, when farmers entered pens regularly, animals would react with less fear of an assessor than in a farm where farmers hardly ever entered the pen.

‘Entering a box of an individual animal is entering their safe space. They react anxious’ (2).

Besides, one instance of fear did not mean bad welfare and should not be punished in their view. They also stressed the importance of timing. A valid assessment of welfare could never be based in a one-time assessment. After mixing, animals always fought which resulted in scratches. This could simply not be avoided in group housing and was part and parcel of the pig’s natural social behaviour. In that light one could see scratches even as proof of good treatment. In doing so they also stressed the interrelation between criteria: when fulfilling the welfare requirement of group housing, the score on ‘injuries’ would naturally raise. Sometimes it was therefore impossible to score well on multiple criteria. This was not the fault of the farmers. Therefore it was unfair to punish him with low welfare scores

In Norway, all farmers claimed to systematically employ some animal-based measures in their daily encounters with their animals. Most frequently observation of the individual animal was mentioned, whether this was related to enough feed, water, temperature (huddling behaviour), absence of injuries, sickness, fear, and so on. In order to check their constitution (enough feed), temperature, general fear or to calm the pigs down, farmers touched and scratched the animals.

‘It is impossible to stroke on every pig, but I do it systematically on young sows’ (Norwegian farmer).

The farmers also pointed to significance of resource based measures, like the size of the sties, the condition of the water nipples, the room temperature, the amounts of hay/straw, and so on. Some farmers thought that it might be best if the WQ tool would not include resource-based measures, but that requirements for buildings and facilities should still be included in, for example, the basic building regulations. When the facilitator asked about important omissions in the criteria and parameters presented, Norwegian farmers appointed the importance of stable groups had been mentioned as one such possibly lacking parameter.

The most interesting points came up when discussing the decision about when to take injured or sick animals out for emergency slaughtering. The problem is to know when ‘enough is enough’. A long time sick and suffering animal could become well the next day, on the other hand prolonged suffering should be avoided.

‘We try and we try, but finally we can’t stand it any longer’ (Norwegian farmers).

Norwegian farmers also pointed to the difficulty of observing whether animals were hungry or thirsty. If animals – of various reasons (e.g. temporary sickness) – don’t get enough to eat and drink for a couple of days, they just lay there and it is difficult to know

if they are content or just passive. This was considered as a problem in bigger entities, where it was impossible to closely watch them all. They also discussed the correctness and 'fairness' of the scores, pointing to cyclic and random variations in production during the year and in the production cycles. It would be unfair to be measured at the 'wrong time'. It would also be unfair to be measured when you happened to have one of these tail-biting pigs around. The farmers were very much concerned that such seasonal or random variations would be taken into consideration.

The discussion then gradually turned towards the working environment of the farmers themselves, the health risks involved and the need for protection, e.g. against dust in the farmhouses. 'No one is talking about our welfare', one of the female farmers noted.

In Italy, farmers appreciated the tool as a quality system that allowed for a general assessment of the farm. But they also worried about the objectivity and reliability of measurements. A number of farmers expressed the view that it was absolutely indispensable for the quality of assessors to be uniform. On this point it was hoped that the assessment should not be carried out by public vets. The Italian farmers extensively discussed the importance of social behaviour and its fitness for measuring animal welfare in different husbandry systems. They pointed out that was an aspect not much known to traditional farmers who were mainly concerned with the other criteria (absence of hunger, thermal comfort and absence of disease). For intensive farmers, it was of fundamental importance to satisfy the animals' primary needs (hunger and thirst) and to guarantee appropriate environmental conditions (temperature, relative humidity and ventilation) while behaviour of necessity represented a secondary aspect. Most Italian farmers considered social behaviour as a subjective parameter. They worried how such subjective measurement could be translated in objective scores. The organic farmers in the meeting, however, considered behavioural criteria extremely important. In the following the discussion centred on the importance of natural behaviour given the changes in the genetic constitution of pigs. What elements should be contained within the concept of animal welfare? For example, in nature, animals fight to eat, to copulate, and to live. Should animal welfare consist in ensuring the expression of these natural and social behaviours, including the negative aspects?

Italian farmers also worried about the size of the sampled animals. In order to be truly representative, the sample needed to be very large requiring significant resources. In addition, also the Italian farmers pointed at the need of repeated measurements because of seasonable fluctuations and the enormous impact of the timing of measurements. As example they referred to the unavoidable injuries after mixing or with sows after natural insemination. Not finding highly injured animals could also mean that these animals are culled just before the checks.

Other farmers drew attention to the fact that pigs were income-generating animals, and hence the concept of animal welfare should be adapted to the concept of intensive farms where it was not possible to indulge in the theoretical and idyllic vision. Concerns were raised that the concept of animal welfare would become an extreme ideology if considered in a purely theoretical perspective. For example, the law on animal welfare required the

introduction of objects into the box to play with but in reality the pigs were only attracted to these objects for a short time and then they lose interest. Italian farmers agreed that present markets constrained the development of animal welfare. If farmers were able to receive €3.50/kg rather than €1/kg, greater attention could be given to animal welfare. It was also added that, if the problem of farmers' margins was not dealt with and resolved, in ten years there might be no more farmers.

Italian farmers briefly considered the coercive or voluntary nature of the assessment system under consideration. Opinions were divided in that for some, this system, structured as it was at a European level, will undoubtedly have a coercive function. According to other farmers, the WQ assessment system should be a kind of quality system that is not coercive and so far as possible adapted to the different situations in order to obtain a general improvement and without punitive effects.

Summarizing, we may conclude that farmers demonstrated the following reactions:

1. disappointment that many measurements were still resource-based;
2. concern about the subjectivity and uniformity of measurements, especially concerning the criteria of social behaviour;
3. concern about the context dependency of results, depending on management style/routine, production system and the animals' (racial, individual) character;
4. concerns about the timing of measurements and punishment based on incidentally low measurements;
5. worry to be punished for situations that were difficult to avoid in intensive husbandry;
6. concern that criteria would be weighed equally whereas their priority was perceived to differ;
7. in Norway, farmers were very concerned about how to regulate emergency slaughtering;
8. in Italy, farmers stressed the need to take into account that pigs were income-generating animals and that the definition of animal welfare should be adapted to the context of intensive husbandry systems;
9. in the Netherlands, farmers felt offended by the suggestions that even the very basic of good welfare needed checking such as hunger and thirst and experienced increasing control as disrespect of their own professionalism.

FARMERS' RESPONSES TO THE CALCULATION OF ANIMAL WELFARE SCORES

This session focused on the calculation of welfare scores at criterion and principle level. The WQ expert explained the process of calculation and calibration, making use of examples and exercises in which the farmers could participate. The first two exercises dealt with scores on criteria level; in the first example farmers were asked to grade farms with varying percentages of animals with mild, average and serious injuries. The second exercise regarded the scoring of farms based on the percentage of pens with fearful animals. The third exercise asked for the calculation of scores based on different percentage of animals with prolonged hunger and thirst; it served to illustrate how scores as principle level and the potential trade-off between criteria.

Again the discussion developed differently in the three countries. Whereas the discussion was engaged but open and friendly, the Dutch farmers became even more angry and passionate when they were asked to participate in exercises that in their view lacked any relevance and portrayed farmers in a bad light.

Already the first exercises resulted in a passionate discussion among Dutch farmers about the denominations used. Farmers felt offended by the terms used as 'prolonged hunger' but most of all terms like 'injuries', 'fear' or even worse 'panic'. Some animals might sometimes have 'scratches' but never 'injuries', which in their view implied mistreatment. When the expert showed some examples and asked farmers to score them, they were astonished and angry. These were extraordinary examples in their view, very exceptional. The terms used were important to them as they depicted reality in a twisted way, feeding the general distrust towards farmers and modern animal farming. In addition, they feared that such terms would be misused by NGOs and the media. They forecasted headlines in the newspapers stating that '40% of Dutch pigs has injuries and live in fear!'.

Farmers did not like to participate in the exercise. They did not want to participate in an unrealistic example as it could be interpreted as an agreement with the measurement and confirmation that such bad situations were reality. The second exercise regarded the calculation of farm scores based on the percentage of pens with fearful animals. Farmers again started discussing the denomination of the concept 'fear', which they translated as 'anxiety' and something bad whereas it was often more about 'alertness' in their view – a concept with a positive connotation. Moreover, most farmers found the described

behaviour very normal. They also criticized the appropriateness and validity of the tests used.

They wondered how farms could be compared in this way. It very much depended on the farmers' routine and acquaintance of farmer and animals.

The Dutch farmers also refused to do the third exercises. One reason was that it would confirm the existence of prolonged hunger and thirst. But another important reason was that they did not like the idea of trade-off – as if less hunger could compensate for more thirst. They did not agree with such a principle – both should be okay. But they were also worried that a trade-off principle would evoke suspicion among the public.

In Norway, the farmers participated actively in the scoring exercises and discussed with a lot of engagement about what should be regarded as acceptable levels of e.g. tail-bites. They agreed that 2% tail-bites should qualify for top scores, while around 20% would be unacceptable. The same kind of discussion arose around the measuring of fear. The comparability across different farming systems and farm sizes and across countries were a concern also discussed here.

For what concerns exercises 1 (injuries on adult pigs): Norwegian farmers regarded 50% severe injuries as far worse than 100% moderate or light injuries. They also regarded 25% severe injuries to be unacceptable. When deciding scores on the parameters the farmers looked mostly into the animals being worst off. They added that it would be impossible to have no injuries. E.g. you often had to keep pregnant sows alive, even if they were injured. As such emergency slaughtering once again emerged as a safety valve and problem solver.

Regarding exercises 2 (translating the individual scores into farm scores), the animal scientist asked the farmers if some criteria were more important than others, and if criteria should be weighted differently. After a short presentation of how the WQ experts had weighted the principles, the jury-farmers very much seemed to agree with the experts on these judgments. Farmers however questioned the realism of the scoring, as the scores were very low.

In Italy, a number of participants expressed appreciation of the system, for example the way in which the calculation method had been drawn up and its detailed design. For what regards the first exercise farmers emphasized that the average Italian farm did not have such a high percentage of injuries. More generally there was agreement on the fact that Italian farms did not have scores as low as that identified in the example. It would in any case be important to assess the presence of serious injuries (which the expert had defined as an injury involving the muscle, not just skin deep) and not the average number of injuries. Italian farmers also discussed the distinction between more and less serious situations by comparing a farm with 75% of the animals without injuries to a farm with 25% of the animals slightly injured and and 25% seriously injured. When both would obtain a similar score (47 and 45 respectively), the penalty imposed on the second farm was perceived as too light.

For some the scores from 0 to 50 were too closely grouped with respect to the range from 50 to 100. Farmers wondered if the purpose of the system was primarily to impose penalties or to give rewards. Several farmers underlined that the calculation system needed anyhow to be as transparent as possible because the farmer should always be able to understand the underlying mechanism. But at the same time the system needed to be detailed and sophisticated enough to be applicable to all the different situations encountered.

Many of the Italian farmers thought that the 12 criteria should be weighed differently when calculating overall farm scores because there was an order of priority in the criteria to be observed (e.g. it would be reasonable to consider thirst to be a more serious problem than hunger). This would also help farmers to understand the most critical factors to be observed and hence requiring the greatest attention.

Most farmers agreed that it was best to define a fixed threshold throughout Europe. Since this was a public assessment system, application should be the same for all countries.

At this point the discussion moved spontaneously to deal with two aspects which had already been raised before and clearly considered of importance by the farmers. The first was concerned with the relationship between the WQ assessment system and current European legislation on animal welfare. Are there overlaps? If a farm obtains WQ certification will it be considered as satisfying the directive on animal welfare?

The experts confirmed that the minimum Community regulations in force were implemented in this tool. The starting point for the various animal species had thus been current legislation. Since it was a voluntary system it had of necessity to be severe. As things stood the WQ protocol and the animal welfare regulations were complimentary in nature. The other subject arising was that of the centrality of the welfare of an animal with respect to the finding on a single variable. According to a number of farmers the first thing to look at is the animal. If the animals are well it would be possible to avoid looking for non-conformities relating to the 12 criteria, thus avoiding wasting time on the measurement of troughs, drinking systems, etc.

In other words, the legislation should indicate how the animal should be living and the individual farmer should then be responsible for the method used to obtain a particular type of pig. The end should be compulsory and not the means to achieve that end.

One farmer noted that even the ISO system had evolved to the extent that emphasis had changed from non-conformities in relation to individual processes to the achievement of the final goal.

Summarizing, we may conclude the following:

1. Dutch farmers were concerned about the denomination of the criteria that could be misused to portray farmers as cruel and careless;

2. Dutch farmers had difficulty to participate in the theoretical exercises, which seemed to confirm their earlier concerns and worries;
3. in Italy and Norway, farmers readily participated in the exercises and discussed the mechanisms of score calculation in an open manner;
4. in all three countries, farmers again expressed their worry if animal welfare could be measured in the same way across places and systems.

FARMERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION

During the final session we presented two possible implementation options to the farmers: using the assessment as a management tool for farmer or using it for informing consumers.

Dutch farmers questioned the possibility to get the monitoring tool implemented as there were already so many labels in use. They wondered if Welfare Quality had collaborated with the retailers. Also co-operation with NGO's and other interest groups was important in their view to make sure that they were satisfied with the monitoring results and would not bring up others issues again. They also wondered if consumers were interested in a label that measured just animal welfare. In their view, consumers were also concerned about health and safety, nutritional value, and environmental friendly production. They rejected the idea that the assessment tool could be useful as management information system as it did not deliver new information. The criteria were already fulfilled in most Dutch farms and feed-back therefore irrelevant. In addition many evaluations were too subjective as they depended on the judgment of a single assessor. And, as many things were measured at one point in time and out of context, the scores were not reliable enough to be used for management adjustments. And finally, what use would it have when it did not result in premium pricing?

'Who would tell me about the score on the lameness of my sows? You are going to organize a lot for that 5% of people that make a mess of their business' (9).

Norwegian farmers thought such audits have to be accompanied by some kind of guidance/counselling service, in order to prevent farmers given low scores to give up, she supplemented. Others added that Nortura (the farmers' co-operative) could do this counselling job. They have the necessary expertise and apparatus, and farmers are used to let them into their farmhouses. One farmer stated that he was positive to this attempt to develop one common European standard for animal welfare. Another farmer added though, that it has to be constructed such that it is realistically attainable to everyone in Europe, across different farming systems, to be fair.

Concerning product labelling, farmers were a bit more reluctant to accept this. 'I would not like to have a two star product with my name on it in the shops. I would feel ashamed', one farmer stated. Farmers also wondered if it would encourage farmers to improve animal welfare. One farmer answered that she thought so – at least it might motivate those with a middle score to improve for top scores. On the other hand, for those with the lowest

scores, the system might work counterproductively as a lot of these farmers would give up, as they realize that there is a too long way to the top.

Norwegian farmers were concerned with the potentially small size of a premium animal welfare market in Norway. Therefore, a quality assurance scheme like this should be included in already existing systems of e.g. Nortura or the normal veterinary inspection services, one farmer stated.

The discussion then turned to whether more imports could be expected to serve to mobilize consumers on these issues, and several farmers thought that might work. If there are more imports, focus will be on differences between the imports and the Norwegian products, and hence, consumers might more easily be mobilized. Another comment concerned the costs involved in this kind of assurance scheme. 'You need a heavy market actor to get involved to carry the costs of investments and development', one farmer noted.

In Italy farmers considered the possibility of supplying information to the farmer, as an important instrument for improving the knowledge of the farmers. The WQ systems should then inform farmers not only of the score awarded to the farm concerned but above all, of what the critical problems were.

The opinions regarding the relationship between animal welfare and consumers were very different. Most farmers thought that Italian consumers were not prepared to pay more for animal friendly products. The experiences in this field seemed to indicate that whenever an attempt was made to differentiate a product with a plus, soon after this feature becomes a standard that is taken for granted. There was thus only an increase in costs without obtaining an effective economic return. A number of different farmers therefore agreed that the strategy of setting out information on food labels aimed at the consumer was not appropriate (very risky and with little advantage). It was also noted that there were difficulties in communicating a brand or certification to the end consumer because no indication of the originating farm is given at the moment of the purchase in the shop, farmers remaining anonymous. The supermarkets resisted labelling of this type because it would give the farmer too much bargaining power.

Comparing the reactions of farmers across countries we may conclude the following:

- in all three countries, farmers believed that consumers could be informed about animal welfare by way of the WQ systems;
- they doubted, however, that it would convince consumers to actually buy and pay more for animal-friendly products;
- they were also convinced that a label should be implemented at European level with the support of all parties involved in the chain and relevant NGOs;
- for farmers it was only interesting if better results for animal welfare were rewarded by higher prices;
- Dutch farmers stressed that it had to be based in objective measurements and regard different aspects that relate to the production (not only animal welfare) and that are all of interest to consumers;

- Italian farmers considered the monitoring as a good instrument for informing farmers when not only the scores were communicated but accompanied by explanation of the critical problems present in their farm.

REFLECTION ON THE PROCESS

In the Netherlands, during the two days the sphere of the discussion changed. During the first day most farmers were open and did not hesitate to express their views and to differ in opinion. They also told us at the end of the first day how much they enjoyed discussing the subject and how much they appreciated being asked to participate in a research project in this way. The second day began with much more suspicion and defensiveness which grew during the day and with more detailed discussion of the various steps in the tool. They felt attacked and stigmatized, and there was hardly any disagreement among them anymore. This was reinforced by the fact that those farmers active in farmers' organizations called upon the others to form a united front against 'the others' who time and again made life difficult for farmers. In this process, they often referred to actions taken by NGOs in the Netherlands in the recent past and especially the roles of the Party for Animals and the media.

At the end of the second day, all farmers said that they had enjoyed the workshop and that they really liked discussing animal welfare among each other and with the WQ experts. They appreciated the interest of the experts in their opinion and their request to participate in the research while it was still going on. They liked how the experts approached them in their professional role as farmers. At the same time they experience the researchers as being from another world. It was very interesting to hear about the various approaches to animal welfare and the opinion of experts and consumers, but their own attitude and definition had not changed in the process.

Looking back on the two days of discussions the Italian farmers concluded that their opinions had not changed significantly. They also used the moment of reflection for stressing again the importance of the following matters.

- It was appropriate that the assessment system should force change above all, on those farms that fail to meet minimum requirements. The protocol should not be used to improve best practice but rather increase the average and eliminate the worst.
- Relations between the WQ assessment system and current legislation. The WQ certification would be extremely useful if it made it possible to counteract possible objections raised by local administration and control connected with legislation on animal welfare.
- Relations between this system and politics. The use of the WQ certification could become dangerous if converted into compulsory certification because European-wide checks would be extremely burdensome and labour intensive.

The juries functioned very well in Norway and seemed to be a pleasant experience for all involved. During the presentations and discussions the farmers constantly came up with concrete examples and considerations from their daily activities. The jury methodology was new to all involved in these meetings. It turned out to work very well: the discussions were lively, full of case stories and concrete examples, and the participants were highly engaged. There was also a friendly and including atmosphere all through the meetings. The farmers all turned from being curious but sceptic to mostly positive during the sessions. It was also obvious that they liked speaking about these issues, with the experts as well as with each other. They also became more confident on the experts as well as each other during the sessions.

There may be several reasons for this 'success'. First, the farmers turned out to be a relatively homogenous group, and they knew about each other (without being close friends). No big paradigmatic discussions about how animal welfare should be defined took place. Neither were there big differences in opinions about differentiation or the potential roles of consumers. Second, that the majority of the farmers were women may have given the conversations a more listening and less competitive form than would have been the case if men were dominating. This may also have been the reason why all – except one – farmers were well represented in the transcripts.

CONCLUSIONS TO PART IV

Based on the comparative analysis of farmers' juries in Italy, Norway and the Netherlands, we may conclude the following.

- All farmers were concerned about animal welfare, as entrepreneurs but also because they want to be good farmers. Treating animals well was part of their professional ethic and pride.
- Most farmers considered health and bodily fitness as the most important aspects of animal welfare although they acknowledged the importance of feelings of well-being and the social needs of animals. Animals' welfare could in their view be warranted by providing good feeding, housing and health care. Farmers differed in opinion regarding the significance of productivity and the importance of natural behaviour.
- Farmers defended their own practice and stressed the importance to monitor and evaluate animal welfare within the frame of an intensive husbandry system and the economic purpose of animal production.
- Farmers felt akin to the scientists and share their animal-based and 'objective' point of view animals. They considered the view of citizens as sometimes 'exaggerated' and romantic.
- Farmers liked the idea of animal-based measurements as it was close to what they do. Some measurements were less relevant in their view but in general they agreed that the principles and criteria made sense. They agreed that hunger, thirst, comfort around resting, thermal comfort and absence of diseases are important criteria. They were less convinced of the importance of behavioural aspects and ease of movement. Most of the farms also considered pain, injuries and fear important indicators of welfare as well as a good human animal relationship.
- Farmers were concerned about the measurement of animal welfare in the monitoring tool. They considered many measurements as invalid and unreliable. They considered the measurements as subjective, especially when feelings and human-animal relationship is concerned. But they also underlined the context dependency of results (management style/routine, production system and the animals' (racial, individual) character). They were also concerned about the timing of measurements which will influence the results. Finally they were worried to be punished based on incidentally low measurements and for results and conditions that were beyond their control.
- Farmers worried about the unpredictability of animal welfare scores when based on animal-based measurements, especially in the light of required investments. They stressed the importance of maintaining some resource-based measurements also for assuring the same level of animal welfare across countries.

- For Dutch farmers, the discussion about animal welfare and the monitoring of animal welfare was a highly political discussion. They experienced animal welfare monitoring as threatening their business interests. They were relatively open when discussing animal welfare as such but become careful and defensive when the monitoring of welfare was at stake. For that reason they were also very concerned about the denomination of the criteria and the inclusion of very basic aspects of good welfare. This implied that even basic animal welfare was under threat in Dutch farming, and allowed the misuse of the monitoring tool by NGOs to portray farmers as cruel and careless. The highly political character of the issue was also reflected in the political behaviour in the group. When called upon the need for group solidarity farmers gave up individual differences in opinion and confronted the Welfare Quality® team with one voice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- First of all, the experience with the Dutch farmers' juries tells us that language is very important. We have to be very careful which words to use for principles, criteria and measurements as they create a certain image. This also means that we have to be careful how to translate the terms into the various languages and the significance of certain words. They might seem neutral to us but they are not to farmers and not to citizens.
- We need to be aware that the media and NGOs are very active in some European countries and will try to use the assessment results for their own cause. Dutch farmers are realistic when pointing to the possibility of NGOs making use of 'catchy terms' like injuries. Therefore, we should try to find sufficiently neutral terms. Even a result with 'zero injuries' will probably not be interpreted as especially animal friendly by most consumers. In their view having no injuries should be the norm and not something to be evaluated as above the average and extraordinary.
- We need to provide sufficient and transparent information to farmers about assessment and evaluation procedures, their objectivity and timing. We have to be very clear as well about the significance of one-time measurements and the possibility of 'redoing' the assessment in some circumstances.
- We need to show farmers real results to convince them of the need for and benefits of assessment. We know that the real-life situation is not as fantastic as farmers believe and that there is room for improvement. Farmers are open to change and improvement once they are convinced of the need and possibility of change. For this we can call upon the professional pride of farmers and their own professional ethics in which taking good care of animals has a central position.
- We need to do further studies in order to better understand the impact of the welfare monitoring and of increasing levels of animal welfare on farms economics and efficiency. In fact most farmers stated that feasible measures to improve animal welfare would be welcome if they did not affect their income negatively.



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