

Press Release

Contact: Pauline Constant press@beuc.eu | Tel: +32 (0)498 57 31 65
Date: 27/02/2024
Reference: BEUC-PR-2024-006

EU consumers support new laws for better farm animal welfare, survey shows

A [new survey](#) carried out in 8 EU countries¹ shows that most consumers support better welfare for the animals raised for food and expect EU decision makers to act. BEUC and its members call on the EU Commission to heed consumers' concerns and fulfil its commitment on animal welfare, by proposing new laws and updating existing ones.

Main takeaways from the survey are:

- Almost 9 in 10 consumers support new laws to improve the welfare of farmed animals in the EU such as providing more living space, banning cage systems and mutilations.
- Consumers want to know more about how farmed animals are reared and need trustworthy labelling.
- The transition to higher farm animal welfare systems must be fair to farmers and consumers.

Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC, commented:

"With 9 in 10 consumers supporting new laws for better animal welfare, our survey confirms that the way we treat animals raised for food matters to people. It is high time the EU Commission delivered on its promises to revise EU laws on farm animal welfare.

"Just like it exists for eggs, 3 in 4 consumers would like information about how the animals were raised on products like meat and dairy, as they feel they do not know enough. On the other hand, few of them trust companies' claims on how well they care for animals. Industry should think twice before engaging in 'animal welfare-washing', as it can tarnish their brands' reputation for a long time.

"When moving towards higher animal welfare standards, the EU and governments must ensure that the costs of this transition are equitably shared across the value chain and not borne by consumers only. Nor should farmers be the ones bearing the brunt. Most consumers would like that the EU funds farmers to improve welfare practices and agree that food imports should go by the same rules.

¹ This survey spans Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. The field work took place in November 2023, polling 1,000 respondents per country. The sample was representative of the national population. It is a joint effort between BEUC, ICRT (International Consumer Research and Testing), and nine consumer organisations: Altroconsumo (IT), Consumentenbond (NL), CECU (ES), DECO (PT), Testachats/Testankoop (BE), Organización de Consumidores y Usuarios (ES), Tudatos Vásárlók Egyesülete (HU), Sveriges Konsumenter (SE) and Verbraucherzentrale Bundesverband (DE).

“Looking at the bigger picture, with most Europeans overconsuming meat, eating 'less but better' animal products would benefit not only consumers' health, but also the climate and animals. Consumers need a hand so healthier food becomes the easy option. Industry, retailers and the food service sector should do more to provide consumers with a broader range of affordable, healthy and convenient plant-based options.”

More findings:

- **Better labelling:** 3 in 4 (72%) consumers want method of production labelling to be extended to other products beyond eggs.
- **Lack of knowledge:** Over 6 in 10 consumers feel they have a low level of knowledge on animal welfare practices. The tests we ran confirm this and showed that they tend to both overestimate and underestimate welfare conditions.
- **Support to farmers:** Consumers agree (78%) that imports of animal products should be subject to the same welfare rules as those produced in the EU. A strong majority (74%) would like the EU to provide funds to farmers to implement higher animal welfare standards.
- **No to 'welfare-washing':** Consumers have low trust in animal welfare claims by companies and 84% would react negatively to welfare-washing.
- **Financial support needed:** 7 in 10 consumers are willing to pay more for higher animal welfare standards, yet to varying degrees (up to 5% only for half of those willing to pay more). While a very large majority of consumers considers it important to improve animal welfare standards, EU and national governments must ensure that the costs of this transition are equitably shared and not borne by consumers only.

Background:

- BEUC report *'Farm animal welfare: [what consumers want - A survey of Europeans' understanding and expectations](#)*, February 2024.
- [Put Change on the Menu](#) campaign for food environments that promote healthy sustainable diets with 'less and better' animal products.

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