

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 I 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 the 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 carelss.
- 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.