

Exploring circular animal feed concepts from a consumer acceptance perspective

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Transforming towards a more circular food system requires involvement of all relevant stakeholders. In the Dutch Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Project RENEW, farmers, feed production, resource management and catering companies, NGOs and researchers from both natural and social sciences joined up to develop new circular feed concepts. The aim is to develop an integrated food system design to valorise side flows from retail and food services as feed for non-ruminant livestock (poultry, pigs). Consumer acceptance is an important condition to develop these concepts that are economically attractive, beneficial to the environment and safe for animals and people alike.

A multi-method approach was applied to gain insights on awareness and attitudes of consumers towards animal feed practices and their conditions for acceptance of using side flows as ingredients for animal feed as well as their propensity to buy and consume meat and eggs from circular fed animals. In focus group discussions different variables that influence consumer acceptance of circular feed were explored. After that various concepts to communicate on circular-fed meat & eggs and their sustainability aspects were developed in co-creation sessions in which both consumers and food chain stakeholders participated. Finally, the attractiveness of these concepts, of what will and will not work was tested in a consumer survey (N=1500), launched by end 2022. During all stages of the research, all partners of the project closely collaborated in the design and interpretation of results. The qualitative and quantitative findings provided an overview of variables influencing consumer acceptance of circular feed, including a lack of knowledge and low interest in food and animal production systems in general and in feed production more specific. It also delivered insights on the effects of various ways to inform consumers on the use of circular feed, for example with regards to terminology used, and visual cues.

The results of the project contribute to the scientific foundation in support of the safe application of side flows as animal feed, by delivering new insights on consumer acceptance in combination with economic feasibility and climate impact.