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## **How best to improve farm animal welfare? Four main approaches viewed from an economic perspective**

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### **Abstract**

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*Looking at the issues from an economic perspective, we examine four approaches to the improvement of farm animal welfare: legislative initiatives, and initiatives driven by producers, consumer choice (labelling), and food companies (Corporate Social Responsibility; CSR). We take as our starting point the assumption that to obtain the best possible improvements in animal welfare, a combination of all four approaches will be needed. The main focus of the paper is to show that (and how) economics and other social sciences can play an important role in determining how to design and implement these approaches most effectively. We argue that insights from animal welfare science on what constitutes an improvement in animal welfare, and how such improvements are best measured, are a necessary input to the economic analyses. Economic analyses can guide the form and extent of welfare legislation so as to set decent minimum standards of animal welfare. To exploit producer-driven animal welfare opportunities, understanding the relationship between animal welfare, productivity and other product or production characteristics is essential. To make best use of initiatives driven by consumer choice and CSR, the focus needs to be on, not simply aspects of animal welfare for which consumers are known to be willing to pay, but also other welfare dimensions viewed as essential by animal welfare experts. Finally, recent, rapid developments in the marketing of animal welfare-friendly products have demonstrated the need for more knowledge about the ways in which consumers perceive the different kinds of information used in labels and CSR strategies.*

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**Keywords:** animal welfare, consumers, corporate social responsibility, economics, legislation, stakeholders