Impact of personal values and personality on motivational factors for farmers to work with farm animal welfare: a case of Swedish dairy farmers

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Abstract

In this study, we sought to explain why dairy farmers give importance to various use and non-use values of animal welfare. In particular, we examined how the farmers could be segmented according to the relative importance they give to various use and non-use values in animal welfare and whether this segmentation could be explained by farmers’ personal values and personality traits. Based on a latent class analysis using best-worst scaling data on 123 Swedish dairy farmers, three segments of farmers were found: animal-centred, human-centred and business-orientated. These groups were related to measures of farmers’ personal values and personality traits in a point-biserial correlation and a hierarchical multinomial logistic regression analysis. The results suggest that the segmentation is related to personal values, but not to personality traits. This finding is important from a policy perspective, because the existence of different segments of farmers who are motivated by different values in animal welfare indicates a need to approach different farmers in different ways if policy is to succeed in improving animal welfare. It also indicates a possibility to influence the segments to improve animal welfare by measures that are sensitive to value dynamics of the farmers.

Keywords: animal welfare, best-worst scaling, non-use values, personal values, personality traits, use values

Introduction

In many countries there is increasing public concern about the welfare of farm animals and poor farm animal welfare (FAW) is often considered a negative externality of food production. In the US, Lusk et al. (2007) report that 62% of representatives of US households believe that the welfare of farm animals should be taken into consideration, even in situations where humans are suffering, and 64% believe that farmers and others in the food supply chain put their own profit considerations ahead of the treatment of farm animals. Similarly, Ingenbleek and Immink (2011) report in their synthesis of consumer views on FAW in the European Union (EU) that consumers are concerned about the welfare of farm animals. It has been shown that people play dual roles, as consumers and citizens (eg Vanhonacker et al. 2008; Alphonce et al. 2014), and that as citizens individuals may have strong preferences for FAW, but as consumers they may express behaviours that are not consistent with these preferences (Krystallis et al. 2009). Nevertheless, the FAW-related concerns expressed by the public cannot be overlooked. The causes of these increasing public concerns are many and varied and include increasingly industrialised primary production processes (D’Silva 2009), concerns about food safety (European Commission 2002; Evans & Miele 2008), food quality concerns and the bonds between humans and pet animals (Evans & Miele 2008).

Thus, for farms and other businesses in the food supply chain, the welfare of the animals used in food production is of particular significance. McInerney (2004) suggests that farmers may recognise two types of economic value from managing their livestock: use and non-use values. Economic value is defined as “a weighting that people place on something, and reflects the benefit (pleasure, satisfaction, gain, virtue, advantage) — or what economists call ‘utility’ — that they gain from it” (McInerney 2004; p 5). Use values refer to economic value derived from the direct use of the livestock through the production process, whereas non-use values refer to economic value derived from the welfare of the animal, irrespective of the possible present or future use the producer derives from the animal (McInerney 2004; Lagerkvist et al. 2011). The taxonomy of non-use values in FAW developed by Lagerkvist et al. (2011) includes five distinct dimensions: existence values; pure non-use values (ie continued availability (Freeman 1993); bequest values (ie preserving the good for the use of future generations); option values; and paternalistic altruism (value derived from others’ use of the good). Thus, the total economic value farmers derive from managing their livestock can be expected to be based on either use values or non-use values, or from a mix of use and non-use values, depending on farmers’ individual preferences for these values.