

# FOOD: ANIMAL WELFARE LABELLING

**i** Many consumers would like farm animals to be reared in better conditions and are willing to pay higher prices in return. But it is currently hard for consumers to tell, when shopping, whether a cow, pig or chicken has had a good life. A new official animal welfare labelling scheme aims to change that by clearly indicating how an animal has been reared.

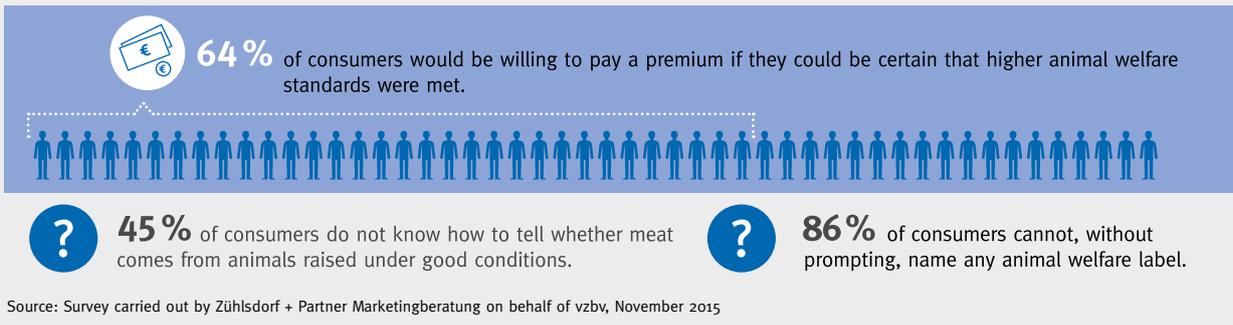
In 2016, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) launched a consultation process for the creation of an official animal welfare scheme. In discussions with stakeholders – including the Federation of German Consumer Organisations (Verbraucherzentrale Bundesverband – vzbv) – twelve key points were agreed. One of them establishes that the development of the criteria for awarding the welfare labels should be based on science and should take the experience of animal welfare organisations into account. Another was that products carrying the label must be checked by certified organisations. Based

on the twelve points, the BMEL published a proposal for a two-tier animal welfare labelling scheme in April 2017. The new system consists of a basic level and a premium level and will initially apply only to pork products. Both levels meet animal husbandry criteria that exceed the current statutory standards to a greater or lesser extent.

**!** An official national animal welfare label must meet consumers' expectations of higher animal welfare standards. Regrettably, the government's proposal do not currently meet these criteria.

## CONSUMERS ARE WILLING TO PAY FOR ANIMAL WELFARE

Consumers would pay more for better animal welfare, but feel they don't have enough information and guidance.



## VZBV'S POSITION

**👍 Clear official two-tier animal welfare labelling system:** The criteria for the premium level must satisfy the highest standards of animal welfare. The organic food standard or the premium standard of the German Animal Welfare Federation (Deutscher Tierschutzbund) set the benchmark in this regard. In order to be credible, the requirements for the basic level must at least be significantly higher than the mandatory minimum standard.

**👍 European welfare labelling for all animal products:** Numerical codes currently inform consumers about the living conditions of the hens producing eggs. An equally simple form of labelling should be introduced for meat – preferably at EU level. The German government should take the lead with a national animal welfare labelling scheme, and press for a common solution at EU level.

**👍 Lay down and comply with statutory minimum standards for all farm animals:** At present, some types of farm animal, such as dairy cattle and turkeys, are covered only by the general requirements of the Animal Protection Act. For these animals too, detailed rules must be laid down governing the rearing conditions. Existing rules must be systematically enforced and compliance checked.

**👍 National livestock farming strategy:** The German government needs a binding national strategy for improving and promoting animal welfare. The strategy presented by the BMEL in July 2017 contains important discussion points. However, we still require a clear set of objectives and a specific timeframe, as well as information on where the money required to improve standards will come from.

## FACTS AND FIGURES

**i** Although there are a number of specific rules and prohibitions in place to protect farm animals, in some cases these are almost universally ignored. For example, the routine docking of pigs' tails is banned across the EU. This rule is not enforced either in Germany or in most other EU Member States: 98 percent of conventional farmers dock their pigs' tails. However, 85.9 percent of consumers believe farmers should comply with existing laws. 72.8 percent of consumers say they would still be opposed to the practice even if it meant the price of pork would be around 7.5 percent higher.<sup>1</sup>

**i** According to a report by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (Deutschland wie es isst – Ernährungsreport 2017 – How Germany Eats – Food Report 2017), 82 percent of consumers would like to see greater transparency in the area of animal husbandry – in the form of labelling or information on the packaging indicating the method of farming.<sup>2</sup>

## ❖ NO GUIDANCE ON MEAT PRODUCTS



Franziska is horrified by the thought of animals suffering in the food production system. She is prepared to pay more for a cut of meat that comes from an animal that has been reared humanely. But in the supermarket she is uncertain. How can she tell whether the animal has really had a good life? The many quality seals and labels on the packaging confuse more than they clarify.

### Make shopping easier

Back at home, Franziska is determined to find out more, and goes online to do some research. She discovers that in addition to the 'Bio-Label' for organically farmed produce, there are also some animal welfare-specific labels for non-organic products. But she hasn't noticed any of these at the meat counter. As she reads more about the criteria required, it also becomes clear to Franziska that what is being marketed as better farming by some of these labels doesn't match her idea of animal welfare. She wishes there were higher standards, and government enforcement of them. Franziska is pleased to learn that the government plans to introduce an animal welfare labelling system. It could finally make buying meat from farms with higher welfare standards easier. But consumers have to be made aware of it, she thinks.



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<sup>1</sup> Representative survey by Zühlsdorf + Partner Marketingberatung on behalf of vzbv, <http://www.vzbv.de/pressemitteilung/umfrage-verbraucher-wuerden-fuerschutz-mehr-zahlen> (German only)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/Broschueren/Ernaehrungsreport2017.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](http://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/Broschueren/Ernaehrungsreport2017.pdf?__blob=publicationFile), page 20-23 (German only)

verbraucherzentrale

Bundesverband