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Study says consumers value animal welfare more than sustainability

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Consumer preferences for meat and dairy products place a higher emphasis on animal welfare than on environmental concerns, according to a new study. While sustainability remains a significant consideration, factors such as taste, quality, and animal welfare dominate purchasing decisions.

The study, which surveyed 3,192 participants across five European countries—Czechia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK—found that consumers valued information on product labels about animal welfare, food safety, and health and nutrition over environmental aspects like carbon footprint and food miles. This insight suggests that producers can effectively market sustainably produced foods by highlighting these preferred attributes.

Participants rated the importance of 18 different factors when shopping for meat and dairy products on a scale from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important). These factors included:

- General attributes: freshness, quality/taste, healthy eating, nutrition, price, processing, special offers, convenience, and brand familiarity.

- Animal welfare attributes: animal welfare, outdoor-reared/free-range, and pasture-fed.

- Environmental sustainability attributes: locally produced, sustainable packaging, food miles, carbon footprint, and organic.

- Social sustainability attributes: Fairtrade or fairly paid producers/farmers.

The study revealed that across all surveyed countries, freshness, quality/taste, and animal welfare were consistently prioritised, while environmental factors had a lesser impact on purchasing decisions, although sustainability labels were still considered useful.

Dr Andy Jin, a co-author of the study and Senior Lecturer in Risk Management at the University of Portsmouth, noted the complex interplay of factors influencing consumer behaviour. He emphasized the importance of comprehensive labelling strategies that go beyond environmental considerations to meet consumer demands effectively.

These findings are valuable not only for consumers but also for policymakers, producers, and retailers in the food industry aiming to cater to the growing demand for more sustainable products.

Read online: https://nuffoodsspectrum.in/news/17/21103/study-says-consumers-value-animal-welfare-more-than-sustainability.html

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