

# EATING WELL, EATING FARE: FARM ANIMAL WELFARE IN FRANCE

Henry BULLER\*  
Christine CESAR  
University of Exeter

## Introduction

The post-structuralist literary critic Eugenio Donato saw two competing rhetorics in French food; the rhetoric of the ‘soil’ and the rhetoric of the ‘spice’ (Gopnik, 2000, p. 155). The former is bound up in the traditional and individual characteristics of place and product, enshrined in the concept of ‘*terroir*’ and linked to distinctive regional French cultures of food production. The latter, more open, embraces otherness and the exotic, France’s *ouverture* to different gastronomic and food influences. Reviewing the last few years, Gopnik (2000) concludes that “the “soil boys won easily” (p.158) going on to announce that “the *terroir* movement has a green, organic, earth conscious element that is very good news” (p. 158). Gopnik and Donato are primarily concerned with *cuisine*. Yet, within France, the dualism between a discourse of spatially and culturally (and indeed ecologically) embedded food ‘quality’ on the one hand and the global flows of an international and liberalised agro-food sector on the other, extends far beyond the *Menus du jour* of the better Parisian restaurants. Perennially associated with gastronomy and locally grown good food and wine, France is also a leading player in international bulk food trading, benefiting from a highly favourable subsidy regime under the Common Agricultural Policy to produce and export a range of animal and plant-based commodities. These two food sectors arguably co-exist in France as in no other State creating both a unique juxtaposition of socio-cultural constructions of food, its place and its qualities, and a characteristic political landscape of food chain actors that include some of the largest agro-food and retailing corporations in the world and yet also some of the most passionate defenders of food localism.

Gopnik (2000) links the rhetoric of the ‘soil’ with the agenda of sustainability. While, like others (Morris and Buller 2003; Winter 2003; Hinrichs 2003), we might contest automatic assumptions of inherent sustainability in local food production, our interest in this paper is to investigate how the related agenda of farm animal welfare maps onto this complex topography of French food production and consumption. For many, the gastronomic traditions of France would appear to suggest that farm animal welfare is not a major consideration for producers and consumers alike. Singer and Mason, in a recent work (2006) refer to the ‘Paris exception’, where dietary (and ethical) commitments are necessarily suspended when visiting the supposed food capital of the World. In France, *Foie gras*, *cheval* and veal, the *bêtes noires* of the international welfare lobby are, if no longer common, nonetheless still the accepted products of animal husbandry. Within French veterinary services, the term ‘*bien-traitance*’ (‘well treated’) appears to be gradually replacing the term ‘*bien-etre*’ (literally ‘well being’, the most common translation of the English term ‘welfare’) for farm animals (Lafon, 2005), a lexical shift that French animal welfare organisations, such as the *Protection Mondiale des Animaux de Ferme*, regard as significant

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\* Author for correspondence: h.buller@exeter.ac.uk

backward step away from more animal-centred focus towards mechanisms of treatment. Moreover, French government resistance to a toughening up of recent European Union (EU) animal welfare legislation and the general base-level conformity to existing standards reinforce this sense that farm animal welfare is less important in France when held in comparison with other EU Member States, notably the UK and the Scandinavian countries.

Yet recent surveys of consumer and citizen engagement with issues of animal welfare suggest the contrary. Eurobarometer's 2005 poll shows the French in general expressing a high level of concern for farm animal welfare. Some 64% of the French respondents to the study believed that farm animal welfare did not receive enough importance in national agricultural policies, a higher proportion than was found in either the UK or the Scandinavian states (Eurobarometer 2005). Research under the EU financed 'Welfare Quality' programme makes a similar point, French people registering high levels of expressed concern for this issue (Kjaernes et al. 2007). Such an apparent paradox, even inconsistency, between, on the one hand, levels of expressed concern amongst the French survey respondents cited above and, on the other, broader categorisations of French society's consideration of animal welfare invites comment and analysis.

Our contention in this paper is that farm animal welfare is, indeed, a major and growing concern amongst French food chain actors and consumers but that such concern is often expressed in a distinctive and characteristic way in France. This, we argue, derives from particular socio-cultural constructions both of food and of farming. Drawing in part upon a wide-ranging research project into animal welfare in Europe (see below), we argue that farm animal welfare in France is closely seen as a component of product quality within the food chain rather than a distinct and independent ethical engagement on the part of consumers. As such it implies a closer degree of connectivity between consumers of animal products and the processes of food production leading to what some suggest is a potentially more 'legitimate' (Vialles, 1999) form of carnivorousness. In the following section of this paper, we explore the background to this contention drawing upon the work of Elias, Bourdieu and others to argue that a distinctive set of attitudes toward animal products in France has been significant in impacting upon the ways in which discourses of animal welfare are mobilised. We follow this by reporting on the results of an empirical investigation into the description and labelling of welfare conditions on food products and consider the role of animal welfare in the construction of food product 'quality'.

### **The animal consumed**

At a recent annual dinner of meat producers in France, guests – including ourselves – were invited to identify the nature of the meat served for each of the courses. The answer sheet, placed at each guest's plate, revealed a range of possibilities; brain, liver, pancreas, stomach lining, kidneys and tongue as well as an impressive list of more conventional cuts, *bavette*, *onglet*, *filet*, *entrecote*, *gite* and so on. Bourdieu (1979) and before him, Elias (1939) have famously linked forms of social distinction – largely based upon, and driven by, the 'social capital' of income, wealth and power - to the consumption of different animal products; offal being traditionally a meat of the poor and thereby an object of necessity, the better cuts, favoured by the bourgeoisie, the objects of choice (Bourdieu 1979). The role of different patterns of social differentiation and structure upon food and food consumption has been explored by Goody (1982) for whom the persistence of a strong social hierarchy in France

prompted the emergence of distinctive food cultures (and notably '*haute cuisine*'), while the more homogenous or, as he names it, 'hieratic' social structure of England led to the development of a rather indistinguishable and undifferentiated food culture (see also Murcott, 2003).

However, food cultures are not static. For Mennell (1985), changes in both appetite and the manner of eating, incorporating the gradual rejection of offal by modern society, can be interpreted as part of Elias' (1939) broader 'civilising process' (Regnier et al. 2006). While Elias himself (1939) saw the gradual abandonment of the medieval practice of cutting up entire animals (often with their heads intact) and birds (often still in their feathers) at the dinner table as reflecting a combined social and psychological process of distancing from the material reality of animal life and death (see also Buller and Morris 2003). He writes:

The curve running from the carving of a large part of the animal or even the whole animal at table, through the advance in the threshold of repugnance at the sight of dead animals, to the removal of carving to specialised enclaves behind the scenes is a typical civilisation-curve (1939, p. 103).

Offal, it is often claimed, reminds us too readily of the animal from which it came, particularly its life and death (Mennell, 1985). Yet, as Vialles (1998) acknowledges - and as our annual dinner bears witness - offal still has its *amateurs*, particularly in France, for whom taste and quality define such foods as civilised delicacies. Vialles (1988) sees the issue of offal as lying at the centre of continuing debate around societal attitudes to meat eating (and, for us, provides a key to considering differential approaches to the issue of farm animal welfare). It offers a good demonstration of the "interaction of 'moral' and social grounds for food avoidance" (Mennell, 1985 p. 310). Many people eat meat but not all meat eaters will consume offal.

Central to our analysis in this paper is the distinction, drawn up by Vialles (1988) between two categories of meat eater; the '*sarcophages*' and the '*zoophages*'. The former are defined as those that seek to 'forget' or occult the obvious relationship between meat and animal. For such consumers, often constituting the majority in Western, urbanised society, only certain parts of the animal – those that are most anonymous – are edible and even these are required to be effectively 'de-animalised' (Fischler, 2001), not only through processing and butchering (Blondeau, 2002) but also through their nomenclature (Méchin, 1992). They become, as Vialles puts it, 'substances' which are "defined by their culinary destination" (1988) and not by their animalian origin, a definition explicitly adopted by British – and other - food retailers.

We are no longer in the business of selling pieces of carcass meat. We must make our customers think forward to what they eat rather than backwards to the animal in the field (British Meat, 1987, quoted in Fiddes, 1991, p. 96).

The second category, the '*zoophages*' are fundamentally different. These are the unrepentant carnivores, who, for Vialles (1988) recognise and, to a certain degree, embrace the animality of their food. For them, farm animals are there to be eaten and images of living animals in no way detract from this for their 'destiny' is unequivocal and unambiguous (Blondeau 2002). For many '*zoophages*', the consumption of offal thereby represents the high point in the animality/food linkage. Certainly, such a

'zoophagic' approach was evident at the meal referred to above and, to a degree, France as a whole might be characterised by the relative importance of the *zoophage* position. Comparing the meat eating habits of Germany and France, Wiesner-Bourgeois (2004, unpaginated, our translation) maintains of the former: "One disguises the meat in the form of sausages, meat balls ... that is the attitude of the 'sarcophage'", while "In France, however, we are still zoophages, though not as much as our ancestors".

In a market research survey of French meat consumers, Cazes-Valette (2004) seeks to identify the comparative importance of Vialles' two categories. Using, as her variable, consumers' recognition of the animal in the meat they eat, she announces that "*zoophages* are ... predominant in the French population" (p. 31). She notes equally that at certain moments, notably feast-days, that relative '*zoophagie*' might increase with the acquisition and preparation of specialist meat products. Similarly, she marks a creeping '*sarcophagie*' as the list of the edible moves away from the classic farm animals to those such as rabbits and horses that occupy a more complex positionality in human-nonhuman relations. Significantly, Cazes-Valette (2004) concludes that French consumers in general are characterised by their love of meat and by the importance they place in meat quality. Other studies too draw the link between the importance in France of red meat and the '*zoophage*' position (for example, Glandières 2003). Although we are wary of adopting too essentialist and uncritical a position in the light of these findings, both the importance of this *zoophagie* and its translation through concern for quality of the eating experience are critical to an understanding of how the issue of animal welfare becomes articulated within French food chains.

Our objective in the following section of this paper is therefore to identify how concern for farm animal welfare is expressed by French food chain actors and to explore how a *zoophagic* emphasis within France gives that concern a distinctive character. We draw in this section from a major research project into farm animal welfare entitled 'Welfare Quality'<sup>1</sup> whose broad aims are to bring together societal concerns and market demands, to develop reliable on-farm monitoring systems, product information systems, and practical species-specific strategies in order to improve farm animal welfare. As one part of that research, we have specifically investigated how discourses of animal welfare move through the food production chains in France, involving producers and manufacturers, retailers and consumers (Buller and Cesar, 2008). We argue here, that such discourses are, in France, strongly influenced by the *zoophage* tradition.

### Method and Approach

There are a growing number of surveys of consumer attitudes to farm animal welfare (for example Eurobarometer 2005), many of which reveal an almost classic separation between expressed concern and actual purchasing behaviour. However, little research has focused upon how discourses and claims of higher welfare are employed by producers, manufacturers and retailers as a form of advantageous market segmentation and therefore, sales or price advantage, in response to perceptions of actual or anticipated consumer demand. Yet an increasing number of retailers, manufacturers and producer groups are making such claims either through specific advertising, label information, certification, quality assurance or other forms of discourse (such as

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<sup>1</sup> Welfare Quality© is an EU funded research project (FOOD-CT-2004-506508) about the integration of animal welfare in the food chain: from public concern to improved welfare and transparent quality.

images or statements of corporate social responsibility). Across Europe, references to, or claims of, beneficial and improved conditions of husbandry (outdoor or grass-fed, organic feed, longer life, hormone or growth accelerator free and so on) or such anthropomorphic characteristics as ‘happiness’ and ‘freedom’, that often go over and above minimum legal requirements, are appearing on a growing number of animal products suggesting that higher welfare conditions can be a viable selling point.

In order to identify these discourses and claims, to investigate the manner in which they were framed and to explain them in the context of distinctive national traditions and concerns, we undertook a survey of animal-based products available in a representative sample of major retail outlets within six European countries (France, the UK, Italy, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands) through 2004 and 2005. We focused specifically on products that made some reference of claim about animal welfare either on the packaging or as part of any certification or assurance procedure.

The research in France was undertaken in 31 supermarkets from a variety of locations in the Paris region. The research encompassed several stores for each of the major retailers (*Auchan, Carrefour, Intermarché, Leclerc*), more specialist chains (*Monoprix, Système U*), discount food stores and three organic supermarket chains. In each store, an inventory was made of all the fresh animal based products on sale which made reference in their labeling, packaging or display, to the animal welfare conditions relevant to their production. Canned goods and pre-prepared dishes were not sampled. Rough estimates were made of the relative proportion of shelf space occupied by these products but this was not undertaken in a systematic manner and has not been included here.

This initial survey and subsequent analysis of claims and references was followed by a series of interviews with those food chain actors (from retailers back to producers) involved in these particular product lines. The aim here was to examine, in detail, first, how improved animal welfare practices were introduced into production chains and why and, second, to explore the construction and choice of the welfare claims and references made in response to assumptions about consumer practice. In total, some 65 semi-structured interviews were carried out (30 with retailer actors, 33 with producers and manufacturers).

### **Differentiating animal welfare friendly foods**

Given perceptions of the relatively low importance of farm animal welfare in French food production chains alluded to above, there are a surprisingly high number of food products available in French retail outlets that openly refer to the welfare of the farm animals concerned. Indeed, the absolute number of such products identified during the course of the research exceeds that of those other participating States more readily associated with a heightened public concern for animal welfare (Table 1). Furthermore, such information is found relatively evenly across the three different label types; those established by the food producers and producer groups, and thus embedded in husbandry practice, those affixed by the retailers as a method of store branding at point of sale, and those applied by the manufacturers, the traditional source of product information.

**Table 1. Absolute numbers of food products on display in surveyed retail outlets identifying the welfare conditions of farm animals concerned, by country and by label type, 2004.**

Country	Producer label	Retailer label	Manufacturer label	Total
France	43 (22%)	62 (31%)	93 (47%)	198 (100%)
United Kingdom	12 (10%)	53 (44%)	56 (46%)	121 (100%)
Norway	47 (41%)	2 (2%)	64 (57%)	113 (100%)
Sweden	42 (62%)	9 (12%)	17 (26%)	68 (100%)
Italy	4 (5%)	31 (40%)	42 (55%)	77 (100%)
Netherlands	25 (10%)	51 (22%)	161 (68%)	237 (100%)

Source: Welfare Quality© SP1.2 research, national teams in the six countries, 2004.

Looking at the distribution of animal-based product types carrying welfare claims, it is clear that France again displays a highly distinctive profile (Table 2.) in the relatively high weight given to welfare labelling in beef and, in contrast, the relatively low importance given to eggs against, for example, the UK. Nevertheless, in real numbers, there are significantly more pork, egg and dairy products carrying welfare claims in France than in the UK. Again, we are confronted with this apparent paradox between, on the one hand, evidence of a relatively high level of welfare labelling and, on the other hand, a commonly-held belief that welfare is a relatively low priority for French consumers.

**Table 2. Relative proportion of each type of animal-based products carrying a welfare claim identified in retail outlets, by country, 2004.**

Country	Pork	Eggs	Dairy	Beef	Chicken
France	<b>17%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>14%</b>
United Kingdom	<b>25%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>16%</b>
Norway	<b>7%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>9%</b>
Sweden	<b>32%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>10%</b>
Italy	<b>1%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>29%</b>
Netherlands	<b>18%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>2%</b>

Source: Welfare Quality© SP1.2 research, national teams in the five countries, 2004.

These results, to some extent, reflect the overall structure of the French agro-food sector and the place held, first, by characteristic quality labelling schemes such as *Appellation d'Origine Controllee* and *Label Rouge* and, second and more recently, by the growth of the organic sector. Such schemes, most of which are initiated by producers and producer groups on the basis of traditional, distinctive and locally specific farming practices, increasingly make welfare claims (though this is, as yet, far from being universal) as being intrinsic to traditional production methods and

husbandry practices and are frequently associated, in the minds of consumers, with perceptions of better animal lives (Poulain et al. 2007). They account for a significant proportion of notably beef/veal and poultry sales in France; approximately 1% of all pig production, 6% of egg production, 20% of veal production, 18% of dairy/cheese production, 60% of beef producers and around 35% of poultry producers (Vasseur et al., 2005).

Our point here, one that we develop in the following section, is that many of these seeming welfare claims are closely associated with certified and assured product ‘quality’ systems, rather than with specific actions to improve the quality of farm animal lives. What is therefore characteristic of French animal welfare discourses is that these are largely generated by producers and producer groups to reflect processes and practices of production designed to yield an animal product whose quality is primarily assessed in terms of the eating experience. Although animal welfare has not been part of the traditional discourse of husbandry in France, it has become so partly because producers and producer groups are able to gain additional legitimacy as food actors and additional value for their production systems and husbandry styles – particularly those that are clearly distinguished from intensive indoor systems – by drawing attention to the welfare benefits of their farming practices as a component of product quality. These discourses are then adopted by retailers for eventual sale, making explicit the link between food product and animal husbandry. This, we would argue, is substantively different from those countries where welfare conditions are, to a large degree, imposed by retailers upon their supply chains as a warranty of corporate ethical responsibility.

### **Animal welfare as food quality**

Many of animal welfare claims relating to meat and dairy products in France are framed in terms of product ‘quality’. Here, quality is a complex and relational composite. Interviews<sup>2</sup> with food chain actors in France, implicated in such production chains reveal the primacy of the eventual consumption rather than the welfare of the animals per se.

“Above all, it is the quality of the product, taste quality, reference to the locality and the traceability of the product – knowing the name of the farmer and what the animals have been fed on. In the two meetings we had with consumers, no one asked about welfare” (Interview: Breeders’ group representative, *Label Rouge* pork, 2005).

“The key word for me is quality. You can’t get by without this. It’s a chain and each link is important. So if you want a decent product then you must have a well-treated animal, so welfare is part of the quality. If the slaughter is badly done, then this has repercussions above and below that particular link in the chain. The animal has to be well treated in the abattoir. It concerns all the links in the chain, this key notion of quality” (Interview: Supermarket meat buyer, 2005).

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<sup>2</sup> All interviews were undertaken in French. All quotations here have been translated by the authors.

Here, Welfare claims are ‘bundled’ with other concerns to convey a sense of quality that extends beyond the product itself to encompass the processes and the place of production as the following examples, taken from product labels and brand websites, demonstrate:

“The quality of life of our cows: whether in the stable or outside in pasture, they live in the calm, in a spectacular and spacious environment (...) Good conditions at milking, in a clean and welcoming milking parlour, our farmers avoid stress to respect animals' well-being” (Milk Cooperative statement, undated).

“For the evaluation of good husbandry practice, the controls, undertaken by our veterinary advisory service concern the respect of several criteria including welfare and hygiene of animals, respect for the environment” (Interview: Meat manufacturer, 2005).

“When happy, a cow gives a better milk which is why our camembert comes only from farms which voluntarily adhere to our quality assurance scheme , ‘*La route du Lait*’ which guarantees the welfare of the animals” (Dairy cooperative statement, undated).

“They feed naturally amongst the Norman apple orchards and grasslands and receive daily and attentive care” (Dairy Cooperative statement, undated).

“Raised in the open air, the hens find grass and insects on the extensive grasslands that the farmers make available to them (Poultry farming cooperative statement, undated).

These product label and website statements, all of which are generated by producers and producer groups (rather than by retailers) reveal clearly how animal welfare is coming to be portrayed as being embedded in a wider range of constructed ‘goods’; the landscape and the rural environment, nature and naturalness, the work of the farmer and, finally, health – both that of the animal and, by extension, that of the consumer. Buying products so labeled, is to buy into a beneficial rurality, implicitly allied to better tasting food. This latter association is fundamental. Many of the retailer buyers interviewed in the course of this research acknowledged that the taste of the product remains the single most important criteria for their consumers (after price) and that higher welfare standards on their own made little, if any, difference to the gustative qualities of the product and could not, therefore, be a basis for higher prices. Moreover, for some, the value placed upon taste (as distinct from more specific animal welfare claims) is a distinctive feature of French consumption.

“In the beginning we want to promote a good poultry product and for that, the taste is the strongest argument for us to sell and for the consumer to buy. But, where the welfare aspects are put first as in other countries, then taste is noticeably less important” (Interview: Manufacturer of poultry products, 2005)

As a result of this association with taste, farm animal welfare claims are predominantly couched in terms of ‘longer’ animal life, grass feed, free movement and a sense of animal ‘contentedness’ in nature; all of which become interpreted as



components in the improved final taste of the meat. Significantly, it is in those sectors (milk, eggs and pork) where the standardization of animal breeds had virtually obliterated any intrinsic product distinctiveness by taste that welfare – as a component of ‘quality’ – has become most developed as a criterion of product segmentation.

The general imagery to which claims contribute stands well outside purely scientific understandings of animal welfare. Again from the labels, websites and information sheets investigated, a range of evocations emerge, including: ‘honesty’, ‘purity’, ‘naturalness’, ‘cleanliness’, ‘tradition’, ‘peace’, ‘respect’, ‘freedom’, ‘liberty’, ‘mountains’, ‘wild’, ‘family’ and ‘countryside’. Collectively, these reinforce the notion of farm animal welfare as an implicit component of quality rather than an explicit ethical commitment. Indeed, acknowledging the possibility of the latter is somewhere that some food chain actors simply do not wish to go as the following quotation reveals.

“We try not to let consumers think about the issue of the live animal and they don’t want to think about a live animal when they buy veal. We know that we mustn’t show the head of a live animal ... For our marketing strategies, we play on the pleasure of eating, variety of foodstuffs, nutritional balance and so on – far more than any relation to the actual animal. We just don’t dare go there because we know that can draw criticism for the fact that we sacrifice the animal, or that there are constraints, not necessarily very attractive ones, that are placed on the animal on the farm for reasons of economic production” (Interview: Veal manufacturer, abattoir, 2005).

Where ethics do begin to play a more overt role, however, is in the gradual enrollment of animal welfare into a wider set of environmental sustainability discourses particularly amongst those major retailers and manufacturers conscious of the criticisms of non governmental organizations and others regarding their general environmental impacts.

“The various articles and programs on the conditions of animal husbandry and of slaughter have increased people’s sensitivity to these issues and to sustainable development. I have assimilated all of these into conditions that respect the environment, mankind and the animal. That is my position, that animal welfare is part of sustainable development. This is certainly how we have approached it. What we are trying to do is be coherent with respect to sustainable development in terms of respect for man, the animal, the environment - that’s it. It is an engagement of the company more than a message to our clients” (Interview: Quality Manager, Supermarket Chain, 2005).

“Consumers are beginning to pay attention to issues of environment, fair trade... I put animal welfare in with all that: the welfare of the planet, of the environment, of animals, of biodiversity and so on. What we must do is ban the bad practices but that is going to take a lot of doing” (Interview: Abattoir manager and food manufacturer, 2005).

While this relationship of animal welfare to environmental sustainability is far from being clear (Buller and Morris, 2007), the gradual assimilation of the former into the latter is a marked trend in retailer and manufacturer commercialization strategies though it is arguably more an element of identifiable corporate social responsibility than a means of facilitating individual consumer choice and hence direct ethical engagement. Critically, the idea here is to create a broader ethical framing within which individual consumers are, to some extent, absolved of the need to make ethical choices themselves.

## Conclusions

This paper has argued that the construction of discourses and claims about farm animal welfare in France is closely linked to notions and representations of food quality, particularly in terms of gustative experience. This we maintain reflects the importance of the *zoophage* tradition in French meat consumption, where the eating of animals is acknowledged and, to a certain degree, celebrated with less of that degree of distanciation that ‘protects’ the contemporary consumer from the harsher realities of meat production. Producers engaged in the production of quality animal based products, often through some specific labeling and certification mechanism, have been keen to draw upon welfare discourses to enhance the overall attractiveness and distinctiveness of their products to consumers. As such, claims about animal welfare rarely stand independently as distinct factors of market segmentation and indeed few food chain actors would want to see this develop.

In this way, animal lives are still very much part of an overt quality discourse suggesting a generally uncritical and uncontested acceptance of their essential ‘meatiness’. This is a view we ally with the *zoophage* position. Where claims are made, animals, and their welfare, are generally embedded in spatially distinctive, often outdoor-based production systems, whether they be under *Label Rouge* or *Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée* quality schemes, organic, or merely other, uncertified, forms. The welfare of the animals is seen as integral to the quality of the final product. Thus knowledge of those welfare prescriptions become part of knowing the product itself. The animal’s life, in its lived sense, as well as its material sense, is thereby indistinguishable from the product. The consumer (advertently) consumes that life and the better the life, the better the consumption. As Singer and Mason (2006) point out, this is emerging as a strong line of defense for proponents of a more enlightened meat-eating, such as Fearnley-Whittingstall (2004) for whom knowledge (and acknowledgement) of animal lives (and, ultimately, deaths) stands as a form of legitimation.

By way of contrast, industrial animal production methods, such as intensive indoor feeding units, so successfully obfuscate animal lives and animal deaths both through their standardized technology and the anonymity of their labeling that they achieve an almost total negation of animality (Viailles, 2007). For many observers, it is this very negation that provides the backdrop for what are often extremely low, and even unacceptable, levels of animal welfare. It is upon this negation that the *sarcophage* position rests.

The question remains, whether the *zoophage* position or whether the *sarcophage* position is likely to have a greater impact upon driving the animal welfare debate forward. Both to some extent, as Vialles (1988), points out, represent a negation of the animal.

It is the attitude of the *sarcophage*, for whom identification *with* the animal leads to a refusal to recognise the animal within the flesh consumed ... It is the attitude of the *zoophage*, for whom identification *of* the animal in the flesh is possible because, in the eyes of the *zoophage*, the animal is already purely a source of food' (Vialles, 1988, emphasis in the original, our translation)

Both therein perform a process of de-animalisation, the *sarcophage* by a strategy of deliberate unknowing, the *zoophage* by objectification. Concern for farm animal welfare, however, necessarily re-animalises food and, through its engagement with animal lives, directly challenges the functional objectification of farm animals and demands engagement with the process by which they are transformed into food on our table.

Returning to the discourses that opened this paper, the *zoophage* tradition, and the discourses of animal welfare associated with it, find common ground with the 'soil' rhetoric. French concern for territorially embedded food quality, characteristic of that nation's gastronomy, has been, as we have shown in this paper, an important element in raising the profile (and value) of farm animal welfare in those production systems where both are intrinsically linked, such as extensive grass-based meat and dairy production. This has largely driven the proliferation of welfare claims and statements made on animal-based products. Yet in other, more intensive production systems, it has been *sarcophage* concerns that have driven the welfare agenda. It is noticeable, for example, that the veal sector in France has made significant and substantial changes to both its procedures and its commercialization strategies in response to animal welfare concerns. These include a collective decision to move away from showing pictures of live animals in publicity material for veal and their replacement by pictures of prepared veal dishes.

This paper has also explored the linkages between, on the one hand, discourses of quality and animal welfare and, on the other, notions of rurality, territorial specificity and environmental sustainability<sup>3</sup>. Sociologists and historians of food are fond of erecting an urban/rural distinction in tracing the development of food cultures. The common argument is that a more refined urban taste aesthetic gradually replaced peasant traditions (Bloch, 1954). Although, as Mennell (1985) points out, the interchange of regional cuisine and more elite gastronomy has been, certainly over the last 100 or so years in France, a more subtle interchange, it is notable that, in the product chains associated with high welfare claims, rural sustainability and local food cultures, we see what might be identified as a revitalized agrarian tradition. This is found not only in the nature of the food and in the food production processes, but also in a valorization of the role of the farmer as the guardian of his/her animals' welfare.

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<sup>3</sup> We acknowledge, of course that, in this paper, we have taken claims of improved welfare conditions at face value. There can be considerable distance between a 'claim' and a verified and certified action or actions.

We have deliberately left consumers out of the picture here. Our analysis has focused rather upon the constructed messages and discourses of welfare as they are associated with the products and processes of animal farming. It has become almost banal to state that consumers express a concern for animal welfare and that yet it is only for only a very small proportion that this concern actually impacts upon their purchasing behavior<sup>4</sup>. We have explored in this paper how animal welfare claims in fact find their way onto a wide range of products, albeit as part of a broader agenda of consumer demand. Their association with quality is, as Singer and Mason (2006) accept, an improvement over ‘factory farming’. It is also a process of re-animalisation, of cognition, and, as a result, the basis for a fuller recognition of the fact that the acquisition and eating of food should be an ethical engagement. Of France, Gopnik (2000, p. 165) observes: “Even their philosophers eat for pleasure”.

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<sup>4</sup> The principal exceptions to this being the purchase of Free Range eggs which, in Europe, has grown significantly in recent years, or the deliberate non-purchase of certain ‘notorious’ animal products such as *Foie Gras*.

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