ANIMAL WELFARE ACCORDING TO NORWEGIAN CONSUMERS AND PRODUCERS: DEFINITIONS AND IMPLICATIONS*

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Introduction

Growing concern about animal production, coupled with recurring food scares, largely explains the increasing attention given to animal welfare as a specific object for public policy and market intervention. National and European legislation on this issue has increased and tightened (Veissier et al. n.d. referred by Bock and van Huik 2007), while private schemes promoted by producers and retailers have multiplied. Buller and Morris (2003) suggest that the intensified efforts to regulate farm animal welfare indicate a renewed consideration of what farm animals actually are, and how and by whom their welfare can be defined.

The objective of this article is to present the definitions of animal welfare that emerged from a study of Norwegian consumers and producers. In doing so, two questions will be addressed: 1) How do consumers and producers define good farm animal welfare? 2) How do consumers and producers view the role of animal welfare regulations and labelling? An important theoretical discussion framing our analysis of these questions comes from studies showing how the concept of nature has been reasserted within the contemporary food supply chain through the development of high quality products (Murdoch and Miele 1999; Miele and Bock n.d.; Buller and Morris 2003). Murdoch, Marsden, and Bank (2000) and Goodman (2003) among others refer to this tendency as a "turn to quality". Alternative food networks, such as those involving organic production, farmers' markets and slow food, represent examples of this trend. The aim of these initiatives is often to re-establish a relationship between producers and consumers, through food that is natural, local, genuine, and produced with care. Recent studies on the development of alternative food networks indicate that there may be different ways of understanding nature among actors along the food supply chain (Klintman 2006; Singer and Mason 2006). This suggests that consumers and producers may have different understandings of what naturally produced food is and also of what a good animal life is (Te Velde, Aarts, and Van Woerkum 2002).

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In recent years, animal welfare has been turned into a quality attribute. At the same time, it is becoming more regulated. Regulations and standardisation may in themselves have an impact on how production animals and values related to food are perceived. An interesting example of how the meaning of food may change has been shown in studies of alternative food networks and their expansion to meet a higher consumer demand (e.g. Murdoch and Miele 1999; Guthman 2005; Kaltoft 1999). Studies of organic production, for instance, have shown how organic regulations and food labels have transformed the meaning of organic production from an ethically-oriented and diversified praxis – to become a more standardised food quality attribute in the market (Guthman 2005; Kaltoft 1999).

A discussion of the effects of making animal welfare a food quality attribute appears particularly relevant in the case of Norway. Previous studies have indicated that, contrary to what has happened in other European countries, Norwegian producers have not faced a problem of consumer distrust (Berg 2002; Torjusen 2004; Kjærnes, Harvey, and Warde 2007). Consequently consumer demand for alternative food products has been lower. Studies conducted by Lien and Døving (1996) and Nygård and Storstad (1998) suggest that the two actors at the opposite ends of the chain, producers and consumers, have much in common in their views of quality of farm products. Norwegian agriculture, being relatively small-scale and spread out across the rural areas of the country, may evoke characteristics such as "local" and "natural". However, these qualities have rarely been communicated explicitly through branding. The knowledge that food has been produced in Norway has been sufficient to elicit these associations among consumers.

However, Norwegian agriculture is undergoing changes. It is being transformed to face a new reality of higher competition envisioned as a result of future WTO negotiations and the prospects of a possible future EU membership (Nygård and Storstad 1998; Almås 2004). What makes the Norwegian case particularly interesting is the fact that the question of animal welfare has been primarily governed and regulated by the issuing of public regulations that going often beyond EU standards (Bock and van Leeuwen 2005). Hence, animal welfare is an "invisible attribute" of Norwegian products, as opposed to the situation in many other European countries (e.g. France, Netherlands, the United Kingdom), where private marketing schemes using food labelling communicate animal welfare as a differentiating factor (Bock and van Huik 2007). Although there are still few instances of animal welfare labels and schemes in Norway, this tendency is emerging here as well. Public bodies promoting organic products and retailers seeking niches (Dulsrud and Vramo 2006) may be regarded as the main driving forces, being motivated by a perceived consumer demand for such products. In a Norwegian context, introducing food quality as a marketing attribute can be interpreted as a strategy to face greater competition.

In the following section, we will briefly describe the research design and methods used in our study. Then we will go on to describe how Norwegian consumers and producers define animal welfare. Finally we will discuss our findings in light of the two questions posed by the article.

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Methodology

The article draws primarily upon data collected as part of a European research project on animal welfare, Welfare Quality.[1] This project incorporates qualitative studies of the perceptions and opinions of producers and consumers on animal welfare, as well as an analysis of the retail system and a population survey.[2] In the present article we use qualitative data on consumers and producers from the Norwegian segment of the study. Focus group discussions were utilised to collect information about consumers' views, while semi-structured interviews were conducted with individual producers. The difference in the methods is due to the different aims of these inquiries as part of the larger study mentioned above.[3]

Despite the difference in the methods used for gathering our data, we have chosen to analyse both consumers' and producers' points of view on animal welfare by posing the same questions to the data material. Joint analytical categorisation has been developed and utilised. Furthermore, although the research design for both consumers and producers distinguished between different groups of consumers (i.e. urban mothers vs. rural women) and different types of producers (cattle, poultry and pig), this article is mainly intended as a comparison between *consumers* and *producers*. In many respect it presents "the overall picture" – at the possible expense of overlooking intriguing differences and nuances among actors in the two categories, but hopefully for the benefit of identifying interesting contrasts and similarities between the two types of actors[4].

The consumer study is based on seven focus group discussions conducted during the winter of 2005. In choosing focus groups, we used selection criteria such as place of residence (i.e., urban or rural dwellers), gender, family structure (i.e., mothers, young singles) and age. More specifically, the focus groups consisted of: urban mothers, young singles, couples without children (empty nesters), rural women, seniors (over 55 years of age), vegetarians/political consumers and one consisting of rural hunters. Five to eight participants took part in each group. Two researchers moderated the discussions by posing a few key questions. Our main aim being to investigate consumers' views on farm animal welfare in the context of consumption, questions were addressed accordingly. Focus group discussions, thus, usually started with questions such as: "Where do you usually buy your meat?". Gradually, questions more directly related to human/animal relations and definitions of animal welfare were introduced (i.e. "Do you think about the animal your food comes from? What do you mean by animal welfare?"). Evaluation of information about animal welfare was also discussed, based on examples from existing products/labels. Each discussion was taped and fully transcribed. The analysis, supported by the use of Nvivo software, was initially based on broad pre-planned codes (i.e.

[1] Welfare Quality® is a research project co-financed by the European Commission, within the 6th Framework Programme, contract No. FOOD-CT-2004-506508. The text represents the authors' views and does not necessarily represent a position of the Commission, which will not be liable for the use made of such information. For the more information about the natural and social scientific aspects of the project, see www.welfarequality.net.

[2] See Roex and Miele (2005); Kjærnes, Miele and Roex (2007); Evans and Miele (2007).

[3] For more information about how the overall study was conducted, see Evans and Miele (2007) and Roex and Miele (2005), and the country reports for Norway: Skarstad and Borgen (2007a); (2007b); (Forthcoming) and Terragni and Torjusen (2007).

[4] For this reason, we will in the text refer generically to consumers and producers.

shopping practices; eating practices; knowledge; preferences, dilemmas and barriers; responsibility). In addition, specific codes were generated directly from the data set, using words or expressions that recurred frequently or that appeared particularly relevant for the purpose of analysis, such as "good conscience" or "bad conscience", "natural", or "human".

The producer study was carried out in the period 2004-2007. During this period, qualitative interviews were conducted with 60 pig producers, 60 cattle (dairy and meat) producers, and 61 poultry (egg and broiler) producers. The research was conducted in three phrases for each type of production. In the *first phase*, we developed and collected statistical information on the average number of animals per producer, the geographical distribution of the producers, and whether their production was organic or conventional. This information was used to develop a matrix for selecting a sample of producers that were more or less statistically representative according to these variables. An important objective of the research design was to maximise variation in the sample with regard to participation in animal welfare schemes. Thus, in order to maximise variation, organic producers were over-represented. Overall, the sample covers the population of Norwegian pig, cattle and poultry farmers as a whole fairly well. In the *second phase*, the data was collected through semi-structured interviews with mainly open questions. A total of seventy-one face-to-face interviews were conducted on-farm, while the rest were conducted by telephone. A common interview guide was used for all interviews, but with some adaptations. This guide included questions on producers' definitions of animal welfare, as well as their views on animal welfare regulations and schemes, on control and transport, and on the role of other actors in the food supply chain, including consumers. Almost all of the interviews were tape-recorded, and thorough notes were taken during the interviews. Some of the interviews were fully transcribed. In the *third phase*, the material was analysed. The presentation of producers in this article is partly based on three reports written as deliverables in the Welfare Quality project (see Skarstad and Borgen 2007a, 2007b, forthcoming). The data material was generally characterised by fairly similar types of answers to the various questions posed, witnessing to an already well-established discourse on many of the issues raised. The analysis for these reports was performed by a providing an overview and partially summing up the type of responses given to the questions. For this article, additional analyses have been conducted. Since "nature" and "care" emerged as categories defining consumers' perceptions of animal welfare, we have particularly investigated how and to what extent nature and care (and variants thereof) were invoked by producers.

Framing human–farm animal relations through food: how consumers define a good life for farm animals

The primary objective of this section is to discuss how Norwegian consumers define animal welfare, as well as how they evaluate animal welfare when purchasing food. Previous studies indicate that living conditions of farm animals raised in Norway are generally regarded by consumers as satisfactory; animal welfare issues are not a concern among consumers, and killing animals for food is largely accepted (Lien, Bjørkum, and Bye 1998; Berg 2002; Lavik and Kjørstad 2005; Kjærnes and Lavik 2007). However, this does not mean that Norwegians are not interested in animal welfare issues or that they do not have ideas about what constitutes a "good life" for farm animals (Bugge 1995;

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Guzman and Kjærnes 1998; Guzman 2003). But what is a good life and how are animal welfare concerns influencing purchasing practices?

Eating meat with a clear conscience: Freedom, care and nature

Guided by the idea that consumption practices could give us valuable insights into how people define animal welfare, we started the focus group discussions by asking what consumers eat for dinner and where they shop for their food. Concerns about animal welfare were seldom explicit in the description of the family meals. However, some consumers made statements such as: *I never eat …* or *I prefer to buy … (i.e. I never eat chicken; I prefer to buy free-range eggs)*. This usually fuelled the discussion within the group, providing us with information about how animal welfare was discursively framed. Particularly relevant for our analysis were expressions such as *eating meat with a clear conscience*, used to describe positive experiences of eating food of animal origin. The following two examples show how *eating meat with a clear conscience* was framed.

> *We eat [moose] meat with a clear conscience. You know that the animal has been born and lived in freedom and suddenly it gets a bullet that it barely notices. Well, there is a big difference compared to animals that are forced to stand in stalls and that only get out a couple of times a year.*
>
> *It is all a question of conscience. But cows that come from a farm where the farmer has a personal relationship to his animals, where he takes care of them, the place is clean, he feeds them, milks them, and doesn't overfeed them – these cows are much happier than the ones kept for mere production, and only for profit.*

These statements exemplify two ways of defining animal welfare. In the first one, the idea of eating meat with a clear conscience was associated with the idea of animals having lived in freedom. Although moose are not farm animals, it is not uncommon for Norwegians to have access to this kind of meat. Previous studies (Bugge 1995; Guzman and Kjærnes 1998; Berg 2002) have also indicated that moose tend to represent the ideal farm animals are compared to. The definitions of good animal welfare that emphasise the importance of freedom often tend to include the idea of animals *living as close to nature as possible*, in terms of both being free to have access to a natural habitat and having the freedom to follow natural instincts.

The second statement associates animal welfare with the idea of a caring and personal farmer-animal relationship. In this definition, living in a clean environment and receiving proper nourishment are essential, but not sufficient. Personal contact between the farmer and his animals, and the farmer perceiving his animals as individual beings rather than as part of a mass, were regarded as indicators of good animal welfare. *Farms that don't have thousands of cows are nicer*, and it is good to think of farm animals being *patted and stroked.* When animal welfare was primarily an expression of care, the idea of nature was often used to indicate the normal development of animals (i.e. how fast it grows, or how big it becomes) in contrast to abnormal (unnatural) growth. Cows that are bred to become *mountains of meat and that cannot stand up because their bone structure is too weak*, and hens forced to lay *eggs that are bigger than nature intended*, are

examples of what was referred to as "unnatural". The ideal, in this case, was the natural relationship between animals and humans in small-scale production: *For those of us who have grown up on farms, and who have seen and know what it means to run a farm, it is the most natural thing in the world to have animals, and for them to be slaughtered.*

Whether good animal welfare was associated with *freedom* or with *care*, and whether *nature* was interpreted as a characteristic of the landscape or as a characteristic of the type of production, a core dimension emerged in the focus groups: animal welfare implies that animals are regarded – and treated – as animals, not as food.

> *[The animals] are not just chops. They have their own lives until they become our food.*
>
> Or, *[The farmers] cannot refer to animals they have a relationship to as if they are food. They are responsible for the care of a living being, with the respect due to any living creature.*

The fact that animals are sometimes thought of as "food" while they are still alive was regarded as a sign that things have gone too far. Maintaining a distinction between the animal as a living being and its final purpose as food was generally considered both to assure a reasonable standard of life for the animal and to make the food acceptable to eat: *they are animal until they die, but after that they are just food*.

Animal welfare when shopping for food: trust, distrust and responsibilities

A separation between the animal and the food emerged clearly when looking at the purchasing and eating practices. The focus groups' discussion suggested that people tended not to *visualise that it is an animal when frying my cutlets*. As mentioned above, animal welfare as an explicit concern was almost never mentioned spontaneously when talking about everyday eating. Largely reflecting what has emerged in other studies (Bugge and Døving 2000; Bugge 2005), for most consumers organising meals was a question of time management, household finances, family preferences, a need for variety, and a desire to provide healthy meals for family members. The prevalence of discount shops offering a limited range of choices, combined with lack of specific labels related to animal welfare (Roe and Marsden 2007), may help explain why Norwegian consumers tended not to establish an explicit relation between food, the animal it came from and that animal's welfare. Other explanations are possible, however. The idea of having to make choices among products because of animal welfare reason was not taken into consideration, as products associated with poor practices were simply not expected to be found among the goods available on the market. The fact that food products are Norwegian was sufficient.

> *As long as it is produced in Norway, you can be reasonably sure that it is good enough. I think that, on the whole, [animals] here have a good life. The farms are smaller and not as industrialised as in the rest of Europe.*

As documented by a number of previous studies, trust in Norwegian food characterises Norwegian consumers (Berg 2000; Kjærnes et al. 2007; Torjusen 2004). The Norwegian consumer (Halkier et al., 2007) tends to rely on the assumption that responsibilities for food are allocated elsewhere than in the market mechanism of supply

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and demand: regulation, control, and extensive farm subsidies are regarded as efficient mechanisms for protecting consumers and assuring reasonably good standards in food production. The following conversation within one of the focus groups exemplifies this approach: *I think it's largely a question of trusting the authorities. So in a way, I count on these eggs being safe and a result of good animal welfare*. … *I agree with you. I mean, it's like it can't be all that bad. It must be possible to buy regular brand-name eggs without supporting animal maltreatment*.

On the contrary, scepticism was often expressed about the efficacy of market mechanisms in resolving animal welfare issues. As claims of better animal welfare are often associated with higher prices, the suspicion of being "conned" sneaked in: *Is it really that much better, or am I just being duped into buying something that is more expensive?*

Summing up, Norwegian consumers tended to express satisfaction with the current way of dealing with animal welfare issues, which does not demand specific responsibility or the need of a reflective attitude in the act of purchasing.

When animal welfare was an explicit issue in purchasing practices, eating game was frequently mentioned as a strategy for coping with the ambivalence of eating meat from domesticated animals[5]. Furthermore, meat from farm animals living in accordance with the definition of good animal welfare mentioned above, were preferred (i.e. lamb). An interest in – and an awareness of – the existing few welfare-friendly labeled products often reflected an interest in health and quality issues, suggesting a shift of focus from the animal to the product. Meat from animals that had had a good life was for instance preferred as safer and tastier. As said in one focus group: *To be honest, when I go shopping and I see it says 'organic eggs', to be completely honest, I don't think 'oh, these hens have had really nice lives'. I think that they are healthy products for me*. Or, as commented by another: *I think free-range products taste much better. So we buy free-range chickens and other products along those lines. I think it's important that the animal that's going to end up on my plate has a good life before it gets there.*

Framing human–farm animal relations through production: how farmers define a good life for farm animals

Compared to consumers, farmers viewed animal welfare much more in terms of the economic and technical aspects of operating a production unit, confirming findings in a previous study of Norwegian farmers (Risan 2003). In recent years, new official regulations have been issued for the production of cattle, pigs and poultry. According to most producers, good animal welfare meant ensuring a set of conditions within certain technical, regulatory and economic limits or societal limits. Recurrent elements mentioned by producers as important for good animal welfare were providing enough food and water, providing good ventilation, maintaining proper temperature and climate, keeping the animals healthy and clean, maintaining a dry lying area, providing good litter, and generally taking good care of the animals.

[5] On the concept of dealing with ambivalence when eating meat, see also Schipper et al. (2006) and Te Velde et al. (2002).

> *Good animal welfare means that the hens have access to food and water and the right temperature, humidity and so on. So that they will thrive, and then they will produce well too.* (poultry producer)

As the quotation shows, economic considerations were brought in as an important part of many producers' definitions of good animal welfare, as well as in their definition of being a good farmer (see also Burton 2004:197). Good animal welfare was emphasised by many as necessary to achieve good production results. Moreover, some held the animals' performance as an indicator of good welfare. Consequently, many producers – especially pig or poultry farmers – considered taking care of the animals and achieving a high yield as mutually reinforcing goals (see also Borgen and Skarstad 2007).

> *You have to take good care of them. You are dependent on that if you want to make a good living.* (pig producer)

A majority of the farmers considered the welfare of their own animals and of animals in general in Norwegian animal husbandry to be basically good (see also Storstad and Bjørkhaug, 2003).

Nature in the producers' discourse

Another study, part of the Welfare Quality project, identified two types of definitions of animal welfare among producers: the first group of farmers referred to animal welfare in terms of the provision of the animals' basic biological needs, good animal health and high zootechnical performance; the other group defined animal welfare on the basis of the animals' opportunity to express natural behaviour and focused on comfort (Bock and van Huik 2007). Most Norwegian producers belonged more or less to the first category. However, some producers used the phrase "natural behaviour" or similar expressions when defining animal welfare. As many of them were organic producers[6], this supports the findings of previous studies showing that organic producers generally employ the latter type of definition (cf. Bock and van Huik 2007; Segerdahl 2007; Lund, Hemlin, and Lockeretz 2002). In addition, some production systems or technical devices were associated with allowing the animals to live more "freely". The biggest change in Norwegian husbandry in recent years is the transition from individual stalls with tied-up animals or enclosures for small groups, to group-housing or free-range systems. Group housing was introduced in the pig sector in 2000. For cattle, the transition period lasts until 2024. For egg producers, the transition period for the abolishment of conventional cages is set to end by 2012, as for other European countries[7]. Egg producers and some cattle producers who favoured free-range systems emphasised the possibility of movement and interaction with other animals, or more "natural behaviour":

[6] Organic animal husbandry, which requires outdoor access, constitutes only a small part of Norwegian animal husbandry. In 2004, 0.16 per cent of breeding sows, 2.13 per cent of dairy cows, and 1.68 per cent of laying hens aged more than 20 weeks were organic (Rogstad 2005).

[7] Norway is not part of the EU, but is required to implement animal welfare regulations issued by the EU pursuant to an amendment to the EEA agreement (Veggeland 2002).

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> *[What matters is]… that the animals can satisfy their needs and follow their natural instincts; that they don't have to stand on chicken wire and try to dust bathe on chicken wire – that's not good; and that they are able to perch and be outside. You can see that the hens really enjoy themselves when they are out*. (poultry producer)

Most producers, however, did not refer explicitly to the animals' need to express natural behaviour. Some of them pointed out that animal husbandry can never be natural. A few pointed out that nature in such a context is an "empty phrase". Thus, most located farm animals within their current production and not in nature.

> *For me, in my situation as a farmer with production animals, animal welfare means that the animals thrive as much as possible within the limits I can offer them. It would probably be best for the animals to walk around freely, not to produce milk at all and to be with their calves, but I cannot offer them that. I have to keep them tied up […] but I do what I can so they will not suffer, get hurt, or get sick.* (cattle producer)

Egg producers who defended the use of cages emphasised that hens are safer and less vulnerable to pecking and cannibalism in cages than in free-range systems. Also, some claimed, contamination and disease are easier to control in cages:

> *It is probably not exciting to sit in a cage, but in a 3-hen cage at least you are safe.* (poultry producer)

The effects of animal welfare regulations

The farmers' views on the implementation of group housing or free-range systems brought up not only the issue of what a natural, good life is, but also the question of the future of Norwegian agriculture and the effects of making animal welfare a regulatory object. Most egg and dairy producers still keep their animals in conventional cages and in tied-up systems, which means that large investments and changes need to be made in the coming years. Many of the cattle producers were positive to a transition to loose housing. Some, however, feared that loose housing would imply the end of small-scale agriculture – forcing many producers to quit because of the large investments necessary to implement this change.

> *You will get industrial-scale agriculture like they have in England. (cattle producer)*

Egg producers who keep their hens in cages raised similar concerns. Moreover, a few of the producers that were interviewed associated loose housing with a more detached relationship between farmer and animal, since it brought to mind a larger-scale, more professionalised system of agriculture. As indicated in a previous study, producers seldom discuss the human-animal relationship. Exceptions are when the human-animal relationship is made relevant as a political issue or when it can be referred to through anecdotes and funny stories (Risan 2003). When we asked the producers to describe their own relationship to their animals, their descriptions varied from being 'professional' to 'very close'. Pointing to the greatest problem or challenge, however, some cattle and pig

producers in particular shared the consumers' concerns about "industrialisation" and "factory production" (see also Brandt and Bolsø 1992 referred in Storstad and Bjørkhaug 2003), with reference to the lack of contact between human and animals in such production.

> *Animal welfare is pretty good here, but it is under pressure. Probably because of the time squeeze. […] It is a lot easier having efficient farm buildings with loose housing because a lot of things take care of themselves – which means more time for the farmer to supervise. […] There isn't necessarily anything wrong with rational units […] but the consequences are much, much greater if you let things slide in a large operation. That is the danger of having a fully mechanised milking system: you get fooled into thinking you don't have to do anything yourself, just check the computer every now and then. But it is during milking that you have contact with the cows and can tell how they are doing.* (cattle producer)

The ambivalence about loose housing and the possible effects of more stringent animal welfare regulations show that they were met with scepticism by some producers. Others pointed out that costly and time-consuming regulations and demands for documentation should not make it impossible to run a production operation. Some emphasised the need for similar animal welfare regulations in Norway and other European countries; otherwise high costs would undermine Norwegian agriculture. However, many producers were also in favour of strict animal welfare regulations in light of the same goal: to ensure the survival of Norwegian agriculture. Many saw strict animal welfare regulations as a possible competitive advantage for Norwegian agriculture. Making animal welfare a food quality attribute of Norwegian products was therefore considered a strategy to meet greater competition from industrialised agriculture abroad.

As mentioned in the introduction, private animal welfare schemes are another possible strategy for improving animal welfare. However, when we asked producers whether they would consider joining a private animal welfare scheme with much more rigorous animal welfare regulations than the official regulations, in order to communicate good animal welfare through branding as a means of gaining market shares and achieving premium prices, many of them were sceptical and unfamiliar with this line of thinking:

> *I think that this shouldn't be necessary. If you have animals, the standards should be fixed: either you are allowed to produce food from animals, or you are not. As far as the consumers are concerned, I doubt that the majority care.* (poultry producer)

This scepticism was linked to several factors (see also Borgen and Skarstad 2007). First, it was claimed that there was no need for such schemes in Norway since animal welfare is already good. Second, it was argued that it would be better to have strict and uniform regulations to ensure good welfare for all animals. Third, a few farmers feared that differentiation according to animal welfare would create an A- and B-team among producers, making the ones not part of an animal welfare scheme less "trustworthy" in the eyes of consumers. Fourth and last, it was claimed that animal welfare could be just

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as good among producers who had not joined the scheme, and that schemes could open up for cheating. But there were also producers who would consider joining such schemes, because it would mean an extra challenge and be a way of attaining a better price.

Discussion

Eder (1996) (referred in Murdoch and Miele 1999) describes two views of nature that characterise the modern experience: the view of nature as a utilitarian object and a romantic view of nature as a source of ultimate goodness. Consumers, when imagining a good farm animal life, referred to a romantic view of nature, where animals could live freely. At the same time, they emphasised a close and caring relationship between farmers and their animals as important for animal welfare. What seems to characterise the consumers' narratives of a good farm animal life was the identification of farm animals both as cultural subjects belonging to society (Risan 2003), and as natural subjects (Guzman 2003) belonging to nature. Producers, on the other hand, anchored their idea of a good life for animals largely in their own daily practices. More strongly than consumers, producers linked animal welfare to the technical conditions necessary to ensure profitability and good welfare, a discourse that was also influenced by the official standards. Thus, they related more explicitly to animals as "utilitarian objects". With production framing their opinions, many producers seemed to hesitate to use nature as a category in defining animal welfare. Yet we found that both freedom/nature and care were dimensions that seemed to structure parts of the producers' discourse. A difference between the two groups, however, was that in the case of producers these dimensions were negotiated *within the limits* of their current, material economy to a greater degree. With the exception of some vegetarian consumers – in Norway constituting a very small group (Kjærnes and Lavik 2007) – the consumers' trust in Norwegian agriculture, and their praxis of eating meat, showed that consumers also ultimately shared an understanding of farm animals as 'objects of use' (cf. also Buller and Morris 2003). The consumers' lack of association between the food they ate and the animal it came from, can be interpreted as a way of handling the tension that might arise from operating with a "double structure" of relating to farm animals as beings both outside and within society.

Thus, both consumers and producers viewed a good animal life as involving a balance between freedom, care and economy, which may suggest that domestic animals cannot be reduced to either nature nor society (cf. Tovey 2003). As observed by Leach (1964), some animals are too wild to be eaten, others are too close, others are too disgusting; only some of them are *good to eat*. This calls for a focus of what constitutes a *good relationship* to farm animals - making them good to eat, instead of a focus on whether farm animals are and should be used for societal purposes, or whether they should be protected and regarded as untouched nature. As we shall see in the next section, such good qualities are inherent in Norwegian agriculture for many producers and consumers.

The regulated animal

Our study largely confirms the mentioned alliance between primary producers and consumers (see Nygård and Storstad 1998; Lien and Døving 1996). In our study, this alliance was expressed through many consumers' and producers' common expression of their scepticism towards an industrialised, profit-driven system of agriculture. Although

there were some producers who did not believe that animal welfare is poorer in the EU, producers and consumers generally tended to converge around the idea that – all in all – farm animals in Norway have a better life than farm animals raised in other countries. Industrialised agriculture, as is the norm in *other* countries – with farmers showing little *care* for and having minimal contact with the animals, treating them as *objects* for the purpose of making *profit* – seemed to both many consumers and producers to be the most egregious example of a bad life for animals. Correspondingly, many expressed support of the small-scale agriculture they associated with greater animal welfare, although there were also exceptions – particularly among the producers.

The turn to quality production is often associated with the emergence of alternative food networks, that are being established as an alternative to industrialisation and commodification of food on a global scale (i.e. Murdoch et al. 2000). Our findings confirm previous studies linking quality production to the "local" dimension, supporting an analysis of animal welfare regulations as a way of promoting an alternative to industrialisation and globalisation. Murdoch and Miele (1999) and Murdoch et al. (2000) characterise the turn to quality as a movement from a generic, standardised production system towards forms of production that are more specialised and dedicated. But there are also important elements in our material that open up for another interpretation. These elements witness to the possible effects of making animal welfare "a regulatory object" for the purpose of establishing high quality food production. In Norway, animal welfare is likely to be transformed into a quality attribute in order to promote Norwegian agriculture in anticipation of increased international competition. Thus, animal welfare regulations are established not only as an *alternative* to a globalised and industrialised agriculture, but as a strategy for competitive advantage in a globalised world of large-scale operations (see also Borgen and Skarstad 2007). As we have seen, there were some –especially cattle producers – who feared that the issuing of more stringent animal welfare regulations would lead to a more industrialised and professionalised system of agriculture. They feared that the consequences of strict animal welfare regulations would be the demise of small-scale agriculture because high investment costs would make it difficult for smaller producers to continue. There was also scepticism among both consumers and many producers about making animal welfare a commercial attribute and a differentiating factor in the market. Findings from this study, indicate that consumers may not want animal welfare to become a market and consumer responsibility.

The transformation of much organic production – from a small-scale, ethically motivated activity into a more standardised, regulated and economically motivated activity – provides an interesting frame of reference for reflecting on the possible effects of making animal welfare a regulated food quality attribute (cf. Kaltoft 1999; Guthman 2005). The increasing relevance of regulations may imply a progressive transformation of the notion of animal welfare, from a practice based on farmers' experience into a notion of animal welfare that basically relies on following a set of rules. As a consequence, the connection with the animal as a bodily creature may be weakened: regulating animal welfare may tilt our perception of farm animals towards a more abstract and standardised notion, with animals becoming "well-produced food commodities" rather than "well-treated farm animals". As we saw, both consumers and many producers emphasised the importance of a good, close relationship between farmers and their animals. Regulations

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– if they turn animal welfare into merely a "food quality attribute" that is defined largely through technical prescriptions and results in large-scale professional agriculture (as might be the case in Norway) – may mean a shift away from many consumers' and also quite many producers' conceptions of what constitutes a good animal life in important respects. Paradoxically, animal welfare regulations may thereby contribute to redefining the divide between animal and food: making the animals become more "food", rather than fundamentally "animals". "The regulated animal" – if thought of as food all along – may then contrast with what has emerged as a main aspect of good animal welfare: that farm animals are animals, and not just food.

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