COMPARATIVE
FOCUS GROUP
REPORT

Consumer Concerns
About
Animal Welfare
And The Impact On
Food Choice

EU FAIR-CT98-3678
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Consumer Concerns about Animal Welfare and the Impact on Food Choice

This report presents the comparative findings of the focus groups from the five participating countries – the UK, Ireland, Italy, France and Germany. Section I details the overall aim of the focus groups and the key findings from the Comparative Literature Review (Harper and Henson, 1998). Section II describes the methodological background to focus group research, including qualitative epistemology and the evaluation of qualitative research methods. It further reviews NUD*IST as the tool of analysis. Section III presents the key comparative findings relating to concerns about food in general and animal welfare specifically. Section IV outlines the participants’ responses to video clips of intensive and extensive versions of production systems for eggs, chicken, pork, beef and veal. Section V discusses the key variables that affect consumer concerns about animal welfare and the impact on food choice, including gender, age, socio-economic status, region, children and pets. Section VI concludes the report with implications for the next phase of the project.
Section I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims of the focus groups

The aim of the focus groups was to determine the nature of consumer concerns about animal welfare and the impact on food choice both within and between the participating countries. The focus group texts were analysed to reveal similarities and differences amongst the UK, Ireland, Germany, Italy and France. The design of the groups aimed to elicit understanding of the ways in which gender, age and socio-economic status affect these concerns. The discussion guide was piloted and designed to generate consumer-based definitions of both animal welfare and their concerns, or otherwise, about it. This part of the project also aimed to identify areas for further exploration during the in-depth interviews.

1.2 Key findings from the Comparative Literature Review

There were some consistent and predictable similarities amongst the participating countries from their national literature reviews (Harper and Henson, 1998):

- In each of the countries, there was quantitative evidence to suggest a high level of reported consumer concern for animal welfare.

- Consumers were, however, also concerned about other product characteristics such as quality, cost, health benefits or detriments and safety. In many cases, these concerns superseded concerns about animal welfare and, in the cases where animal welfare was a significant concern, it was often as an indicator of these other attributes.

- Where factors affecting the nature and level of consumer concerns about animal welfare were given, it was clear that gender was a consistent predictor of attitudes towards animals and willingness to pay for improved welfare. Women were
predominantly more concerned with animal welfare, and more likely to be willing to pay for improved welfare, as compared to men.

- In all participating countries there were higher rates of vegetarianism in the young and this fact affected the attitudes of the young to animals. Young people were more likely than older people not to eat meat for ethical rather than health or financial reasons.

- The relationship between level of education and socio-economic status was likely to be co-determinant. Having a higher level of education was likely to improve the socio-economic status of that person and enable them to be more willing to pay for improved animal welfare, than people of a lower educational standard or lower socio-economic status.

- The role of pet animals as members of human families, as honorary humans, necessitated a consistent and determined anthropomorphism. As the boundaries were broken down between perceptions of pet animals and farm animals, it was suggested that pet owners would be amongst the first segment of consumers to recognise the issues of sentience and potential suffering in farm animals.

- Consumers of organic food were likely to be concerned about animal welfare, as they were about the environment and health issues. They were also more likely to have a higher socio-economic status, be able to pay the premiums on organic food and report that they were willing to pay more for improved animal welfare.

- The vast majority of animal-based products were still produced in intensive systems throughout the five countries, but the market for ‘animal-friendly’ products was identified as a growing one.

- It was not clear to what extent measures of willingness to pay were actual measures of willingness to pay for improved animal welfare, or improved human welfare.
Section II

METHOD

This section reviews the development of qualitative research methodology and focus groups in particular. It addresses the theoretical framework and the criteria for evaluating qualitative research. NUD*IST is introduced as the analytical tool employed in this study.

2.1 Qualitative research

Science has long held onto the principles of logical positivism and deductive reasoning. Quantitative research has traditionally aimed to reproduce these principles. Indeed, positivism consists of:

Methods that take the external world as extant and reproducible through scientific or logical means. (Manning and Cullum-Swan, 1994:463)

Positivism and its partner, quantitative research, have long been criticised as simplistic and naïve in application to social issues. The idea that psychological variables, called 'attitudes', exist and are inherently stable has informed research which aims to be generalised to populations.

Qualitative methods, including focus groups, are, on the other hand, motivated by research questions aimed at exploring human experience and, therefore, require verbal or textual interaction and interpretation. Here, hypotheses emerge from the data. Sampling, in contrast to statistical sampling, is purposive or theoretical, aimed at maximising or minimising differences. In qualitative research, the researcher herself is the instrument for data collection. The data is analysed for theoretical transferability, not generalisability, and the analytical approach is generally inductive, rather than deductive. Data are selected to fit the research questions, however, the theoretical assumptions which guide the formulation of the research questions are continually assessed through the dynamic relation between the researcher and the data. The methodological qualitative paradigm is influenced by the theoretical social constructionist paradigm.
Social constructionism is rooted in the sociology of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). A dominant view is that as the social world is socially constructed it, therefore, can not be directly accessed, it is always shaped by social and cultural forces, which exist above and beyond the individual. This extreme constructionist approach is the diametric opposition to the realist approach, which states that there is one true, accessible world. The pragmatic view between these two extremes is described by Brown (1977:93) as:

The dichotomy between the view of perception as the passive observation of objects, which are whatever they appear to be, and perception as the creation of perceptual objects out of nothing is by no means exhaustive. A third possibility is that we shape our percepts out of an already structured but still malleable material. This perceptual material, whatever it may be, will serve to limit the class of possible constructs without dictating a unique perspective.

The object of study here is consumer concerns about animal welfare and the impact on food choice. Given that it is explicitly stated that consumer concerns are the focus of the research, then it is highly appropriate that this investigation begins with qualitative methods, which allow the participants to speak for themselves, to identify, define and prioritise their concerns, and relate them back to their food choice, within a broadly pre-defined conceptual framework previously identified through the literature review and the formulation of research questions.

Social life is shaped by social processes which are ultimately socio-cultural products (Gergen, 1985). Consequently, cultural structures will determine beliefs and behaviour whilst the rules, or conventions, are continually being negotiated and renegotiated by the participants. Focus groups allow the researcher to explore these processes of negotiation at work. Indeed, qualitative research is a generative process, which grows through the analysis of representations of reality – here focus group discussion transcripts. The ways in which reality are perceived, interpreted and represented by consumers are to be explored. Concepts emerge from the critical exposure of contradictions and fragmentations found in the structure of belief systems and behaviours based on, or in opposition to, those expressed beliefs, or concerns. The analysis of discursive texts, presented here, aims to reveal the dimensions of the
participants’ constructions of reality, and to determine why and how some constructions are privileged to the detriment of others.

2.2 Grounded theory

This research enters the tradition of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) both in the research process and the analysis of textual data. Grounded theory involves the systematic open-ended classification of data, which, in turn, gives rise to concepts, which propel the analysis. It is, quoted from Pandit (1996):

...inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory should stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:23).

‘What is relevant’ to the study of consumer concerns about animal welfare and the impact on food choice, at the initial stages of the project, is presented in this report. The multi-layered process of abstraction of data, simultaneously, explores previously identified concepts and generates new ones. The analysis proceeds from low-level descriptions to in-depth exploration which, at every level, are referenced by other categories from the analysis. This allows a continual comparative analysis, which ensures a conceptually rich theoretical account of the data.

Pandit (1996) has described the three basic elements of grounded theory as concepts, categories and propositions. Theory is developed from the conceptualisation of the data, rather than directly from the data itself. Pandit cites Corbin and Strauss (1990:7):

Theories can’t be built with the actual incidents or activities as observed or reported; that is, from “raw data”. The incidents, events, happenings are taken as, or analysed as, potential indicators of phenomena, which are thereby given conceptual labels. Only by comparing incidents and naming like
phenomena with the same term can the theorist accumulate the basic units of theory.

Here, the focus group transcripts are the "raw data", which, in turn acts as 'indicators' of the phenomena - consumer concerns about animal welfare and the impact on food choice.

Categories are defined by Corbin and Strauss as:

... higher in level and more abstract than the concepts they represent. They are generated through the same analytic process of making comparisons to highlight similarities and differences that is used to produce lower level concepts. Categories are the "cornerstones" of developing theory. They provide the means by which the theory can be integrated.

Here, concepts, which emerge from the critical abstraction of the data, are themselves merged, through analytical interaction, into categories, which translate the data into the skeletal theoretical account. Categorisation unifies the data in preparation for its reification through propositions.

Propositions are described by Pandit (1996) thus:

The third element of grounded theory are propositions which indicate generalised relationships between a category and its concepts and between discrete categories. This third element was originally termed 'hypotheses' by Glaser and Strauss (1967). It is felt that the term 'propositions' is more appropriate since, as Whetten (1989, p. 492) correctly points out, propositions involve conceptual relationships whereas hypotheses require measured relationships. Since the grounded approach produces conceptual and not measured relationships, the former term is preferred.

The propositions to be presented here are the "conceptual relationships", which manifest themselves as patterns of continuity and discontinuity, of consensus and contradiction. The conceptual relationships are those richly diversifying discursive textures, which are the emblem of sound qualitative research.
2.3 Evaluating qualitative research

Evaluation is a key concern in qualitative research. The traditional method of evaluation is derived from the quantitative paradigm and centres on the concepts of reliability and validity. Qualitative methods assume that the measurement of people's 'attitudes' is indicative of a direct relation between the subject and the stimuli under investigation. The hypothesis-testing model is inappropriate at this stage of the research. Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) suggest a number of practices to ensure the generation of good, relevant theory. These include the importance of the fit of the data to the theory; the integration of theory at diverse levels of abstraction; reflexivity; documentation and theoretical sampling.

Reflexivity is a key concept in qualitative research, it is the continual, complex interaction between the researcher and the data. With reference to this, Banister et al (1994:13) have suggested:

Subjectivity is a resource, not a problem, for a theoretically and pragmatically sufficient explanation. When researchers, whether quantitative or qualitative, believe that they are being most objective by keeping a distance between themselves and their objects of study, they are actually producing a subjective account, for a position of distance is still a position and it is all the more powerful if it refuses to acknowledge itself to be such.

An independent assessment of the credibility of such empirical research rests, then, on the match of the theory to the data, the design of the study, the recognition of the parameters and relevance of the data, the transparency of the analysis and the traceability of the conceptual and theoretical development. The use of NUD*IST in the analysis of data provides assurances in these directions.

2.4 The focus group method

The focus group method is distinct in qualitative research, it is not simply the sum of individual interviews, although it is often treated as such. Focus groups rely on more than individuals' beliefs and opinions. Significantly, they are designed to generative a
productive group dynamic. 'Productive' does not mean 'consensual', indeed, conformity can invalidate the findings of such a group discussion and the moderator has to be aware when conformity effects are taking place. Rather, the group should be encouraged to express a diverse range of views, which may be discussed, debated and, ultimately, reconciled. Reconciliation may mean 'agreeing to disagree'. It is at that stage that the moderator should have succeeded in eliciting all possible avenues of thought. The ways in which individuals within a group express themselves and defend their point of view, within the parameters of certain homogeneity, is of great interest to the qualitative researcher. The discourse generated is as 'true to life' as possible, the moderator's influence is minimal, and the discussion flows through the dynamics of group interaction.

2.5 NUD*IST and analysis

The analysis aimed to maximise the data and to retain the context and integrity of the discourse. All the groups were transcribed. The texts were formatted for NUD*IST. Each researcher used the literature reviews, the research questions and the discussion guide to guide their analysis. Of course, other themes emerged during the preliminary analysis and all of these were coded as free nodes. Virtually all the text was coded, and many parts of the text were multiple coded. Pandit (1996:6) calls this 'open coding'. He describes this process as:

...that part of analysis that deals with the labelling and categorising of phenomena as indicated by the data. The product of labelling and categorising are concepts - the basic building blocks in grounded theory construction.

The free nodes were used as the basis for further analysis and abstraction. At this stage related themes were catalogued into sub-themes. Themes have been defined as:

...bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which are often meaningless when viewed alone. (Leininger, 1985:60)
Patterns begin to emerge from the combination and classification of themes. This leads to a reorganisation of the free nodes and the construction of the index tree. Pandit describes this as ‘axial coding’:

Whereas open coding fractures the data into concepts and categories, axial coding puts those data back together in new ways by making connections between a category and its sub-category (i.e. not between discrete categories which is done in selective coding). Thus, axial coding refers to the process of developing main categories and their sub-categories. (Pandit, 1996:6)

The researcher identifies concepts, which relate back to the research questions and those which inform or expand the research questions. Through NUD*IST’s copy and merge function, the original text coded under the free nodes is re-coded under the index tree.

The final stage involves ‘selective coding’. Pandit describes it as:

Selective coding involves the integration of the categories that have been developed to form the initial theoretical framework. (Pandit, 1996:6)

Concerns have been expressed about the use of computer programs in the analysis of qualitative data. Indeed, Kelle (1997:1.1) goes so far as to suggest that:

...many qualitative researchers...have felt unease about the prospect that the use of computers could alienate the researcher from their data and enforce analysis strategies that go against the methodological and theoretical orientations qualitative researchers see as the hallmark of their work.

This is a serious concern if the ‘methodological and theoretical orientations’ are inflexible and dogmatic. The new breed of computer assisted qualitative data analysis allows the researcher to extract the strengths of various research ‘orientations’ to synthesise her own interpretation of the data, unrestricted by orthodoxy one way or the other.
Section III
CONCERN ABOUT FOOD-RELATED ISSUES

This section examines the spontaneous and prompted responses by group participants, across the five Member States, to the general questions from the Discussion Guide. On the whole, the groups expressed similar types and degrees of concern about the production of food. More differences arose from specific discussion of concerns about the production of animals for food. A number of themes were persistent across groups, such as the health benefits and detriments of food, genetically modified food, quality and price. Within the groups there was consensus and dispute about the relative importance of each issue. On some issues there was a general agreement where the groups found the process of convergence relatively easy. On other points, and particularly in relation to animal welfare, consensus was less forthcoming. Participants challenged, defended and reconciled their differences through a variety of techniques, which often defined the group dynamic. Indeed, where there was some degree of consensus, such as in the case of the primacy of quality and value for money, these issues were of no direct relation to animal welfare issues. Consumers invariably used animal welfare as an indicator of other, more important, attributes. Concern for animals was expressed, but was systematically justified through reference to anthropocentric concerns about the human benefits of food.

3.1 Issues and concerns about food

Spontaneous responses to being asked about issues to do with food were similar across the groups and the countries. Group participants expressed spontaneous concern about health issues, specifically BSE and the use of inappropriate animal feed, the use of growth-promoting hormones and antibiotics, pesticides, preservatives and other additives, hygiene, swine fever (Germany), salmonella and e-coli (Ireland), fat, cholesterol and shelf-life (UK), and, with the exceptions of France and Italy, genetically modified food. They also mentioned legislation, standards, assurance, labelling, packaging, the origin of food, imports, price, environmental pollution (France) and factory farming.
A number of issues emerged from the spontaneous responses. The consumers were invariably concerned about the health and nutritional aspects of food. Where they were concerned about production methods and systems, their concern was focused on 'unhealthy' and 'unnatural' additives, chemicals and growth promoters, which ultimately would affect not only the health of the consumer but also the aesthetic quality and the taste of the product, most notably meat.

On a number of points but especially in relation to biotechnology, consumers expressed concern at the lack of information provided and their lack of understanding of the risks. On the subject of GMOs, the participants expressed concerns about 'interfering with nature', but also felt that they were not in an informed enough position to evaluate the potential disadvantages, or advantages, of GMOs. Where the participants did express some understanding of the topic, they also did not think that there was a significant risk associated with the consumption of GM food, or, if they did identify a risk, were generally unconcerned, stating that risk was part of life.

Participants who expressed concern over one issue, such as GM food, were likely to be concerned about other issues such as BSE. BSE had caused some consumers to stop eating beef or to be careful with the origins of the beef they did buy. They also expressed a concern for their children, which, in some cases, motivated them not to buy GM food or beef for their children. In the UK, especially, the issue of BSE served as an anchor for the more recent issue of GM food. Consumers related their concerns about GM food back to their concerns about BSE, in terms of rearing animals 'naturally' and not 'interfering' with nature.

Having children made consumers more aware and, subsequently, more concerned about food-related issues. Their responsibility to their children ensured that they tended to be more careful with labels, often because their child had some kind of food allergy. The participants expressed great concern about the health of their children and, consequently, the type of food they consumed. In some instances, participants felt they were being educated about certain issues by their children, especially if their children were concerned about animal welfare or were vegetarian.
Animal welfare did feature in the spontaneous responses, but was superseded by the other concerns. Where it was a concern, factory farming was invariably mentioned. Battery cages for laying hens and veal were most likely to be spontaneously mentioned. The participants' knowledge of battery systems was generally well informed, although some concerns about veal were based on inaccuracies about the production method. In the UK groups a number of participants did not eat veal for welfare reasons, but also because of the taste, price and availability of this product. The fact that veal was the product of young calves was disapproved of by a number of female participants. Other participants did eat veal, though mostly abroad, few cooked veal at home. Veal was less of a concern in France, where it is consumed regularly.

A number of the participants bought free-range eggs, less bought free-range chicken, and few looked specifically for out-door reared or organic meat. Indeed, a number of participants questioned the concept of organic meat. Purchasers of these products were likely, unsurprisingly given the premiums, to be in the ABC1 groups. While purchasers of these products cited welfare concerns as motivation for their purchase and consumption, they also significantly mentioned taste, quality, health and appearance of the product. In the UK, improved taste was not only cited as a reason for buying free-range products, but also viewed as an indicator of production over and above the packaging or labelling. Also, on the subject of cost, UK participants believed that cheap food should be widely available, and that low-income families should not feel pressurised into buying premium products.

When questioned about animal production for food, the participants reiterated their concerns about factory farming, but also expanded on notions of 'suffering', slaughter, transport, 'natural' production methods, 'humane' rearing and killing, lack of space, freedom to move, 'natural' behaviour and the economic trade-offs of animal welfare-friendly production methods. Concern about the welfare of animals produced for food was likely to be affected by whether or not participants already bought free-range products, whether or not they had pets, and the level of concern that they had for food issues generally. Factory farming was also described as a business and the cost-effectiveness of free-range systems was often discussed in the UK groups.
3.2 Meanings of animal welfare

Concerns about animal welfare focused on three primary areas: production methods, transport and slaughter. For each of these areas, the idea that the animals should not be treated ‘cruelly’ and should be treated ‘humanely’ dominated the discussions. The concept of ‘nature’ was crucial to the participants understanding of the way in which the animals should, or should not, be treated. The ‘natural’ served as an axiom to justify everything from the meat-eating habits of humans, to the use of certain systems of production. The ‘natural’ remained a vague and monolithic vindication for the use of animals for food.

For the French groups, animal welfare related very much to the concept of the ‘natural’, whether that be for animal feed or the expression of behaviour by the animals. The Italian groups expressed animal welfare as better management, conditions and prevention of inhumane treatment. Indeed, for the Irish groups, there was concern that there was insufficient legislation in place to ensure that animals were treated ‘humanely’. There was also the view that high animal welfare did not necessarily entail the use of extensive production systems. Humane rearing and killing was a dominant theme for the UK groups as well. Humane treatment has an inherently ethical meaning, it establishes the ethical parameters of an explicitly challenging issue. The challenge is to everyday ethics. In this case, producing animals for food is counterintuitive to a number of people who class themselves as ‘animal lovers’ (UK), and who have day to day contact with domestic animals in the form of their pets. The human position is an implicit welfare position. Animals can be justifiably bred, contained, treated, and slaughtered to serve humans as food – a point made in all the countries. The justification for this has a long ideological history involving, in many cases, the ‘naturalistic fallacy’, mind-body dualism and the pervasive secular and religious notion that humans are qualitatively different from animals, that they are in fact not animals. Therefore, animals may be treated qualitatively differently to humans. Human cannibalism is universally frowned upon. But the issue is more complex than humans versus animals.
This simplistic dichotomy is certainly the starting point, but the relationship between humans and their pets informs the issue of animal welfare and food choice more incisively. The ideologically homogeneous classification ‘animal’ is, in fact, a heterogeneous system of different animals for different purposes. Pets are ‘honorary’ humans. Neither fully animal nor fully pet, they occupy an anomalous position in human relations, which may result in special, eccentric or extreme behaviour by the human. The UK suffers particularly from the notion that some people prefer animals to people, and this is often demonstrated by the types of relationships that humans have with pet animals. The anthropomorphism of these pet species is, of course, a peculiar form of projection, these animals are often substitute humans and are often treated as such. Indeed, these animals are only acceptable when they act ‘like humans’, conform to human expectations, and look the part. This kind of appropriation has produced a distinct category of animals — pets.

So what of ‘humane’ treatment? ‘Humane’ crosses those anthropomorphic boundaries. The issue of euthanasia illustrates this point. Humans have the ultimate right — the right to life, so exonerated that suicide is, in some areas, illegal, and an affront to God. The sanctity of life rests somewhat on the mind-body dualism, which in religious terms, posits an eternal, divine soul, and in secular terms talks of the human ‘mind’, consciousness and a range of ephemeral descriptions which aim to separate the human animal body from the human mind. As a consequence of all this, even euthanasia to stop insufferable pain is largely illegal and creates great controversy. The idea that a human might consciously and rationally want to end his/her life is testament to the strength of the sanctity of human life. Conversely, putting a pet animal ‘to sleep’ is the dualistic nemesis. Pet owners faced with the undoubtedly difficult choice of allowing their pet to suffer or ‘putting it out of its misery’, invariably favour the euthanasia option. The proviso? It was more humane.

Treating someone or some animal humanely rests on the notion that they are actually being treated badly. It is humane to ‘put down’ a pet animal, presumably because the pain and suffering endured by that animal is too great, so great in fact that it justifies the ultimate sanction — ending that animal’s life. Farm animals must be treated humanely because ultimately they are to suffer not only the constraints of production,
but also the ultimate penalty – the loss of their life. Being humane assuages human fears that they are responsible for the animal's suffering. Starting from a position which states that humans are justified in rearing and killing animals for food requires a simultaneous defence of that position. That defence centres on the concept of 'humane'. But being humane is not enough. For those consumers with pets, and for others who entertain the thought that these animals may suffer, indeed they often state that the ultimate consequence of their consumption is the death of animals, then being 'humane' is inadequate. There is always the chance that the circular, self-perpetuating and self-justifying argument may be exposed for its own tautology. What is required is a psychological and behavioural strategy to ensure that the position that animals be justifiably reared, killed and eaten remains unblemished as an axiom, and unthreatened as a lifestyle. What is required is the active disassociation of the final product from the original animal.

There was a constant theme of disassociation. The physical, linguistic and ideological estrangement of the product (meat) from the animal of origin was a particularly salient theme in both the Irish and the UK groups. Consumers were keen to alienate the product from its origin in order to allow them guilt-free consumption. A number of participants stated that if they 'thought about it', they would not be able to eat the products. Indeed, the idea that meat was a literal transformation of a living animal into a consumable object was actively repressed. Not having to think about the origins of the product was a great leveller. It meant that food was just food - necessary, nutritious and delicious. It meant maximum choice, minimum effort and price. It meant a clear conscience. An inaccessible part of the brain knew it was an animal but was actively repressed by a conscious mind which persistently ignored the association by seeking out literal and linguistic manifestations, that did not require thinking about the transformation behind the scenes.

A number of issues arise from this strategy of disassociation. The first is an issue of change. The industrialisation and intensification of farming is a post-war phenomenon. In days gone by, farms were small, some of the participants recalled having chickens in their gardens. They did not like killing the animals, but it was the way it was done and they thought it healthier, more natural. In France, where this
type of farming persists, the issue of disassociation was much less prominent. Indeed, in one of the UK groups the idea that all farming in those days was free-range explains why animal welfare was not an issue until the 1960s. What went on behind the scenes was largely unnoticeable, partly because images and representations of farming as inherently wholesome persisted through the media and culture – children learning about farm animals do so from books which portray images of yesteryear. Also, what people do see, cows, pigs and sheep grazing outside all added the feeling of the status quo. Consumers did not see the expansion of production systems, the utilisation of new physical, chemical and biological technologies and, in an increasingly global market, the exact value of every pound of meat calculated. Farms where quickly being transformed into factories, leaving the consumer largely unaware. Demand grew, prices fell. Where once meat was a luxury, it became a staple food. The intensification of farming resulted in the objectification of animals. Producers predicted consumer concerns by going to great lengths to hide the systems and to disassociate the product from the animal. Meat was divorced from the animal body, packaged, sanitised and reinvented.

Aside from historical reasons, the processes of disassociation, which are generated in individual mind and consolidated in the collective consciousness, were required in the face of two parallel trends. Urbanisation removed people from animals and nature, but their desire for it remained, resulting in the massive expansion of pet keeping, and the proliferation of animal and nature documentaries. Consumers began to learn, not only from their own pets, but also from the increasing science of ethology, about the capacities of animals, particularly of mammals. Anthropomorphism of their pets grounded these scientific findings about the mental lives of animals. They also expressed great concern for ‘wild’ and ‘endangered’ animals. Animal charities cashed in on these sentiments. Campaigns against zoos, cosmetic testing on animals, and circuses revealed the depth of human concern about animal welfare – indeed, the Italian participants felt themselves better able to define animal welfare and their personal responsibility for it in terms of the fur trade, zoos and pets. But, significantly, it also revealed the extent. Farm animals were conspicuous by their absence.
So there are twin components to the process of disassociation. One is the original estrangement of the product from the animal – it was never associated and continues to remain disassociated. The second is once publicity emerged about the conditions of factory farming, those consumers who felt that it was either out of their hands or felt a certain sense of responsibility for what was happening, engaged in the active process of disassociation so as not to be continually reminded of the causes and the consequences of their consumption of certain products. To that end, disassociation remains an effective strategy, even resulting in a number of the UK participants stating that they could not watch documentaries about animals, fearful that what they may see would put them off meat. Indeed, animal-based products were consumed because they were ‘natural’, and where the conditions of production were a concern it was primarily due to the effect that production had on the quality of the product. Disassociation was at work again – higher welfare means a better product, not necessarily a better life for the animal. Animals' experiences of their own lives rarely entered the equation.

For the German groups, the participants defined animal welfare in terms of animal health and improved quality and taste in the final product. Indeed, this was also a common theme in the UK and Italian groups. Where participants were concerned about the production of animal-based products, they were invariably concerned primarily about the potential health implications for humans and the effects on the quality of the product. In the German groups there was also the use of the ‘natural’ to define welfare. Animal welfare was also, interestingly, conflated with ‘organic’. The participants here, as well as in the UK groups, tended to define free-range and organic in the same terms – lack of ‘interference’ in terms of ‘chemicals’, ‘additives’, ‘hormones’ and ‘antibiotics’. The French participants were concerned that animal should not suffer ‘unnecessarily’. The German groups particularly noted that the meaning of animal welfare had changed over time, and that animals had been bred to be dependent on humans, which ultimately distorted the concept of animal welfare. Welfare was also inversely linked with disease for the German groups, and associated with a clear consumer conscience.
For the Irish groups, there was a particular claim that children had a role in educating their parents about issues to do with animal welfare. Children also reacted strongly to fictionalised and cartoon representations of animals in popular films such as *Lion King* and *A Bug’s Life*. In the UK, one group referred to the impact of the animated film *Babe* on children’s consumption of pork.

### 3.3 Sources of information

The group participants unanimously gained most of their information about these issues from the media – television, newspapers and magazines. There was also information from specific organisations, the Government, and that from their own experiences.

The Italian and UK groups felt that they were ill informed about these issues. The UK groups also tended to feel that certain issues were sensationalised for financial reasons. For the German groups, the media were generally regarded as being credible and trustworthy, whereas retailers were considered unreliable. The French consumers, on the other hand, expressed a high level of distrust of the media. A number of German participants also gained information from friends in farming and tended to buy local produce. Amongst the UK groups, a number of participants used the way things used to be done as a point of comparison. Their beliefs and attitudes about animal welfare were moulded by the their experiences as children and their observation of changing in lifestyle from one generation to the next.

Participants in all groups and all countries expressed a very high level of cynicism about the credibility of labels. The UK groups expressed high levels of cynicism about the labels on products, stating that they were usually marketing aids. In Ireland, the participants thought that their Department of Agriculture should provide more information, especially in relation to issues such as BSE, and should carry out random checks on producers and processors. Credible inspection was a key issue for the UK groups as well. Given their mistrust of the labels, they said that an independent body would only assure them. One participant suggested a Government kite-mark to assure
standards. The Irish participants, as well as the French participants, tended to trust their local butchers over the supermarkets. Indeed, trust had been identified as an important factor during the pilot groups. In the UK, participants expressed their lack of trust in companies and, simultaneously, commented that they were too trusting of the Government. Trust in the available information and the relevant institutions were bound to affect consumers’ understanding and involvement with animal welfare issues. In the case of the UK and Ireland, whilst there was a general distrust of Governmental bodies, there was the desire to establish an independent authority to accredit production methods and the labelling of the final product.

3.4 Responsibility

Throughout the groups there was a consensual view that humans had the right to raise and kill animals for food. This is unsurprising as the group participants were all purposively sampled to be consumers of a range of animal-based products. A number of issues arose from this axiom. In terms of animal welfare, there was a general view that animals should be treated humanely whilst they were alive and at the time of their deaths. However, the meanings of ‘humane’ varied widely from those who thought it really did not matter because the animals were not conscious and therefore could experience suffering, to those who used anthropomorphic sentiments to state that ‘animals have feelings like us’.

Ideas about responsibility for animal welfare ranged from farmers and the Government to consumers. Overall, the participants were reluctant to assume responsibility themselves, instead they claimed, in the case of the UK and France, that responsibility had been taken from them by the Government, and in the case of Ireland that premiums on certain products meant that the average family could not afford those products and, therefore, were not responsible for their production. The French, too, were reluctant to assume individual responsibility. Conversely, where the participants did feel a sense of responsibility, such as in some of the UK groups, they aimed to buy free-range products. Again, their ability to acknowledge a sense of responsibility was thwarted by the higher prices associated with free-range products.
In the Irish case, various animal welfare organisations, such as the ISPRA and CIWF, were held responsible. The Irish participants also felt that the local vet could provide a degree of assurance through formalised procedures.

For the German groups, there was a sense of consumers' indirect responsibility, which was again affected by the price of the free-range products and the lack of trustworthy information. The German consumers commented on the role of legislation in ensuring high levels of animal welfare, but also stated that individuals they could buy less meat and be more critical of the meat that they did buy. The French also attributed responsibility for animal welfare to legislation, as well as to the producers.

3.5 Advantages and disadvantages of higher animal welfare

Consumer
For the Irish participants there were advantages of higher animal welfare for consumers. These advantages included increased disease prevention, through the decreased use of antibiotics, increased quality and safety of food, and increased animal productivity. The German participants also identified improved human health as an advantage of higher animal welfare, through a reduction in the use of antibiotics, and the incidences of salmonella, BSE and swine fever. The French participants associated improved animal welfare with improved food quality and safety. The Italian consumers valued the perceived health and quality advantages, as well as believing that such extensive systems contributed to environmental protection. In terms of disadvantages, the Irish participants noted that the higher animal welfare products tended to be smaller and, like the UK, Italian and the French groups, more expensive than their intensively produced alternatives. The Germans also commented on the relation between improved animal welfare and increased costs to the consumer. They also noted that with increased cost, there would be decreased flexibility and more planning would be required for shopping. The UK participants also commented that, as consumers, they wanted convenience and availability. In Germany, it was also mentioned that consumers would have to eat less animal-based products because of the decrease in the animal population, which was generally regarded as a good thing.
Farmer/producer
The Irish participants believed that their farmers should be supported to produce 'green' food, and that they would benefit from improved standards and education about animal welfare. Increased income to the farmer was also cited as an advantage by the German participants, who stressed that a legislative approach would improve animal welfare and, subsequently, assure farmers' income. On the down side, the Irish said that higher animal welfare would result in increased labour costs and would be expensive for the farmers. Some of the UK participants disputed the idea that higher animal welfare would result in increased costs. They cited the relation between supply and demand, stating that with increased demand, prices would fall. The Irish participants also questioned the effect that higher animal welfare and the associated costs would have on the national and international markets. Furthermore, the German groups stated that higher animal welfare might lead to a decrease in German competitiveness through the higher production costs.

Retailers
The Irish participants said that the retailers would benefit from improved animal welfare because they could use that to promote themselves. Again, the UK participants stated that there would be short-term costs, which would even out due to increased demand and the subsequent fall in prices. Other participants felt that the retailers would benefit overall because they would pass on the costs to the consumer, and market products with premiums whether they cost more or not.

Environment
The Irish, Italian and the French participants felt that higher animal welfare would result in a decreased use of chemicals, which would be an advantage to the environment. German participants commented that there was enough land in Germany for improved animal welfare, which would also improve the appearance of the countryside. In the UK, the issue of extensive farming requiring increased space was particularly important. A number of participants questioned whether people would be willing to give up land, thus affecting the environment, for free-range production.
3.6 Willingness to pay

In general, the group participants claimed that they would be willing to pay more for improved animal welfare. However, this claim was invariably substantiated by other claims - participants stated that they would be willing to pay a. if they could be assured that the product was actually produced to higher welfare standards and b. if the product was of a similar or improved quality to the intensively produced alternative. The exception to this was from the French who were generally unwilling to pay more for extensively produced products. They claimed that ‘natural’ production methods were inherently cheaper than intensive forms and, as such, felt that producers and retailers would be benefiting from premiums that did not result from improved animal welfare but from a cynical desire for profit. The Italian groups said they would be willing to pay more in principle, but were prevented from doing so by the lack of available animal-friendly products. In the Irish groups, some of the participants stated that they would be willing to pay up to 10% more, but the product would have to also be of a better quality and improved flavour. Their willingness to pay was also determined by the level of trust they had in the assurances given by the products’ labels. Some of the Irish participants also stated that the consumer should not have to pay more, a constant theme repeated in the UK and the French groups. A similar level of willingness to pay was found in one of the UK groups, where participants claimed they would be willing to pay a premium of 10-15%. However, they would have to be assured that the product was extensively produced, and that the product had additional attributes such as improved taste and appearance. Like the UK participants, the German ‘participants’ willingness to pay depended on the type of product and its initial price level. If they trusted the product, they would be willing to pay more for it. They also tended to accept that higher prices indicated better quality, whereas lower prices would be associated with factory farming. Some of the French participants believed that animal-based food was already too expensive and, therefore, would rather decrease their consumption than pay more.
Section IV
FARM ANIMAL PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

The aim of the video was to show the participants various types of production systems ranging from the most intensive to the most extensive. Care was taken when constructing and editing the video to ensure that the different countries could not be identified, even though films from the five participating were used. In the European Community, with free trade movement, it is not relevant or appropriate to associate particular production methods with particular countries. There are of course varying degrees of practice but, in principle, the participating countries are subject to EC law and individual countries do not tend to exceed the scope of European law. Reactions to the video varied widely within groups, between groups and between countries. The video aimed not only to present a variety of systems, but also to elicit consumer measurements of animal welfare, their knowledge and evaluation of different production systems. The video showed clips of eggs, chicken, pork, beef and veal production.

4.1 Eggs

Battery Cages
The predominant response to the battery system was negative. The German participants said that it was ‘irresponsible’ and ‘disgusting’. They were concerned about the lack of space, feather pecking and injuries to the hens. The Irish consumers were also concerned that the cages were ‘too restrictive’ and ‘not natural’. A number of Irish and Italian participants said the cages should be banned. In the UK, the cages were described as ‘inhumane’. Nevertheless, some German participants said that the eggs did not need to be manually gathered and were clean, whilst among the UK groups, one participant questioned the ability of the hens to be aware and, therefore, suffer from their environment. Another said that she did not ‘think of food as the animal’ and this disassociation allowed her to continue to buy and consume battery eggs.
Barn
A number of participants found the barn system to be a suitable compromise. In the Irish groups, the barn system was described as being a ‘balance’ between animal welfare concerns and cost. They approved of the increased space and thought it was more ‘natural’, but were also worried about the lack of daylight. The German participants also appreciated the increased movement associated with increased space, and also referred to the system as being more ‘natural’. But they also stated that there was not enough space, outdoor access, sunlight or fresh air. They commented that ‘light was needed by all living beings’. They also disapproved of the potential hygiene hazard associated with the birds’ droppings and were worried that the hens may eat their own excrement while scratching around on the floor. They also questioned who decided on the stocking density for barn hens. In the UK, one participant who usually bought free-range eggs was converted to the idea of barn having considered the idea that hens could pick up disease from other animals in the free-range system.

Free-range
There was a generally positive response to the free-range system. A number of the UK participants thought that the free-range hens looked healthier. The German and Italian participants thought it was more ‘natural’, allowing the hens to express their instinctive behaviour. The Irish consumers also thought this system was more ‘natural’ and that the hens seemed ‘happier’. Conversely, some participants were concerned about the possibility of the hens picking up disease, especially in the UK and Ireland. There was also the issue of cost-effectiveness, with the German and Irish participants stating that it would require more land and, therefore, would cost more.

4.2 Chicken

Indoor barn system
The barn system was considered to be too ‘cramped’ by the Irish participants. The German and UK groups echoed this sentiment. Some of the German participants thought this system was ‘cruel’ and ‘disgusting’. The lack of space was thought to lead to health problems which would require medical treatment. One of the UK
participants likened the system to a ‘prison’. However another participant felt that this system was not as bad as the battery cage system, and was more akin to the barn system for laying hens. Some of the Irish participants also believed that, although they preferred the outdoor system, that the indoor barn system could be improved through less crowding and access to the outside.

Outdoor system
On the whole, the participants preferred the outdoor system for broilers. Among the German consumers, there was the idea that the chicken would have stronger muscles, through exercise, and therefore better meat quality. The German groups expressed doubt that the outside system would result in more disease than the indoor system, stating that animals in close proximity were much more likely to catch any disease present. The Irish and the Italian participants also felt that this system was more ‘natural’, and that the birds were ‘healthier’. However, they also thought that this system would be too expensive and, therefore, not viable in the long term. They said that farmers should be subsidised to improve animal welfare, and that there was a need for consumer education about these issues. Irish participants claimed that they would be willing to pay more but they would have to trust the producer. Participants in the UK stated that because they ate a large quantity of chicken it would not be viable to pay premiums for free-range chicken. A few participants did buy free-range chicken, adding that they thought it tasted better and was healthier.

4.3 Pork

Tethers/stalls
The pregnant sows in tethers or stalls produced the greatest amount of concern and disapproval across all groups. It was described as ‘cruel’ and ‘battery pigs’ in the UK, ‘terrible’ and ‘unnatural’ in Germany, and ‘unnecessary’ in Ireland. On the whole, the UK participants were unaware of these production systems and found them disturbing. In Germany and the UK, a number of participants believed that pigs were ‘sensitive’, ‘intelligent’ and capable of suffering. An Irish participant likened the systems to a ‘prison’, and amongst the German participants there was the idea that improved animal welfare would lead to a decrease in disease. They also likened the
system to ‘hospitalisation’ and suggested that the stress endured by the pig would affect the taste of the pork. They further stated that aggression was a natural coping method for stress. There was generally less concern from the French participants for pig production in terms of animal welfare.

**Farrowing crates**
The Irish participants were concerned that the sows did not have enough room, although they did recognise that the crate prevented the sow from crushing her piglets, and ensured the safety of the handler. The German participants likened the crates to ‘prison’, although they conceded that that the pigs looked healthy and clean. On the other hand, they thought it was inevitable that the sow would lie down and crush her piglets if she was in a confined area.

**Loose Housing**
The Irish participants thought that the indoor loose housing system was more ‘natural’ and provided more space and straw. There were mixed responses from the German participants. Some thought the pigs looked ‘happy’ and that this was a good compromise, whereas other thought the pigs were ‘crammed in’ and looked ‘unhappy’. Again, there was a positive correlation between welfare and stress. The UK participants also found this system to be good ‘compromise’.

**Outdoor rearing**
The German participants thought that the outdoor system was ‘natural’ and improved the welfare of the pigs. The meat was also considered to be leaner because of the increased amount of exercise the pigs received outside. Likewise, the Irish preferred the outdoor system and thought it was the most ‘natural’, but would rely on increased space, suitable soil and climate. The UK participants also generally preferred the outdoor system, but one consumer expressed concern that pesticide use and environmental pollution would affect the pork. The Germans also pointed out that the farmers might themselves pollute the environment.
Finishing indoors
The UK groups felt that the indoor finishing system was adequate and that the slipperiness of the floor could easily be addressed. The Germans, on the other hand, were concerned about the floor.

4.4 Beef

Outdoor system
The Irish participants claimed that the outdoor system for producing beef was the most common in Ireland. They said that the advantage was grass to eat rather than bone meal, which they felt carried the risk of BSE. The major problem was the climate. The Germans, too, thought that there were welfare advantages of the outdoor system because of increased movement, although concern was expressed about the suitability of this system for all breeds. For the UK groups there was less concern for either of these systems generally. One participant commented that the cows could not be guaranteed good grass every year. Overall, they preferred this system but there were comments about there having to be benefits for the consumer as well as for the animal, and the expectancy that animals would not have a 'wonderful lifestyle' because they were going 'to be killed at the end of the day'. Moreover, the Italian participants were generally less concerned about welfare in relation to beef production.

Indoor system
The Irish participants thought that this system was more appropriate for countries with limited land space. They were concerned about the feed, the lack of space and the concrete floor. They recognised that it would be easier to manage the animals and there were financial benefits of this more intensive system. Overall, they believed it would be more acceptable if there was more space. The Germans thought that this was an unusual system and that it was also bad practice. Among the UK participants, there was also concern about 'unnatural' food, but overall, the participants felt that it was not as bad as the pig or chicken systems. The Irish thought that the outdoor
system was ideal as long as there was indoor shelter in the winter. They commented that it would be 'healthy' and 'natural'.

4.5 Veal

Veal crates
The veal crates generated a great deal of disapproval. A number of UK and Italian participants thought it should be banned. Some of the Italian participants believed that consumers should exert pressure for the banning of such systems. In Ireland, the main concerns were about the diet and lack of freedom. In Germany, the participants were worried about disease, the use of hormones and antibiotics, and the fact that the 'young need their mothers'. In the UK, much of the disapproval was focused on that fact that the animals were too young to be taken from their mothers. There were also other participants who either did not 'think about it', or who stated that the conditions did not matter because the calves were ultimately 'bred to be killed'.

Grouped housing
Many participants thought that this system was better because the calves had more freedom of movement, and social contact. However, they still questioned the need for veal and the use of an inadequate diet.
Section V
DISCUSSION

5.1 Gender

The Irish and UK groups demonstrated similar types of gender differences. The male participants were more analytical and the female participants were more emotional. In the Irish case, the men were more concerned with their lack of knowledge and lack of control over food production. The women, on the other hand, were more concerned about issues of trust, they also expressed concern over a wider variety of issues within their groups. In the UK groups, men and women had similar concerns but expressed them in gender-specific ways. Women referred to their children and pets much more often than the men did. They were also more likely to describe themselves as ‘animal lovers’. However, the UK report also identified that there were female participants who were equally cynical and unconcerned about animal welfare issues. For the German participants, it was the content of the concerns, and indeed the presence of any concern, rather than the style of expression, which signified gender difference. The female German participants were more interested in food generally, which was explained largely due to the fact that they had household responsibilities directly related to food. The women also expressed more of a ‘conscience’ and guilt associated with eating meat, whereas their husbands were described as liking meat more than they did. Interestingly, there was no discernible gender difference in the Italian groups, whereas the French groups were affected by gender. The French female participants expressed more concern for animal welfare, although as in the other cases this gender difference was significantly affected by age, socio-economic status and region.

5.2 Age

In the Irish groups, the younger age range participants were more aware and concerned about new methods of food production, such as GMOs. They were also more likely to make explicit trade-offs between animal welfare and cost, and to be
concerned about labelling. The most significant difference in the UK groups was the degree to which the older participants reminisced about the 'olden days'. These participants invariably believed that animal welfare was a modern problem and that in prior decades all farming was free-range. A corollary to that was that they thought that, in those days, food was healthier. In general, they believed that the current generation's diet was unhealthy, being based largely on convenience and processed food. For the younger German participants, convenience food was seen as a benefit and, again, the older group tended to romanticise the past. The younger French groups were also more favourable towards animal welfare and less anthropocentric than their older counterparts.

5.3 Socio-economic status

The ABC1 groups in Ireland demonstrated higher levels of knowledge and concern about a wider range of issues than the C2DE group. The ABC1 groups were more concerned about health, safety, hygiene and price issues, whilst the C2DE group was predominantly concerned about transport and legislation. In the UK, the main difference was financial; the C2DE group was less likely, unsurprisingly, to buy free-range and other premium products. They did, however, have similar areas of concern to the ABC1 older age range group. Both of these groups were female and they both tended to be nostalgic about the past, and use the past as a point of comparison for modern-day concerns and production methods. The lower income groups in Germany were more likely to shop in supermarkets and seek out bargains, however, this was complicated by the gender effect – even lower income women said they were willing to pay for free-range and organic produce, fitting in with their lifestyle choices rather than their socio-economic status. Also, those Germans with a higher level of education were likely to be willing to pay and cite health motives for their purchase of consumption of food. Again, socio-economic status did not have such a pronounced effect in Italy... In France, those participants with a lower income and lower education were less favourable to animal welfare and more anthropocentric in their higher socio-economic status counterparts.
5.4 Region

Neither the Irish nor the UK groups found any significant differences between the more rural and more urban areas. In Germany, region was also insignificant with personal experience and contact with farming having more influence on attitudes to animal welfare. The situation, however, was more pronounced in Italy and France. In France, the Britanny groups were affected by the region’s intensive production of pigs. The primary concern, however, is for environmental and water pollution, not the welfare of the pigs. In Italy, regional difference is the most prominent. The Northern city of Florence produced very concerned participants, whereas the larger, but more Southern, city of Rome produced participants who expressed less concern.

5.5 Children

For some of the Irish participants, their children were a significant source of information about animal welfare issues. Some parents did not feed their children beef because they were worried about BSE. The same finding emerged from the UK groups. Participants with children were very careful about reading labels and were sometimes reluctant to give their children beef or any GMO. This was reiterated in the German groups, where women expressed their concern for their children’s health, especially the younger, more health-conscious mothers – the potential buyers of animal welfare products.

5.6 Pets

For the Irish groups, there was no significant affect from having pets on concerns about animal welfare. But those who did have pets were likely to insist that animals had the right to be treated ‘humanely’. For the German groups, there were equal and contradictory ideas about pets in relation to farm animals. On the one hand, those participants without pets also expressed high levels of concern, and those participants with pets were equally likely to express concern about the cost of animal welfare. Pets had an effect on the Italian groups, and in France, pet possession also affected
consumer concern about animal welfare. The effects on reported concern are undeniable, but the impact on food choice is more ambiguous.

5.7 NUD*IST

All the researchers found NUD*IST time-consuming. This is an interesting comment on expectations of computer aided qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis by any method is time-consuming, thorough analysis requires thorough coding – concepts, categories and propositions necessitate a rigorous process of abstraction and synthesis. There was the general view that NUD*IST is a powerful tool, but the criticism of ‘alienating’ the researcher must be kept in mind. The tool is only as good as the operator, and the researcher must not think that he/she can use the tool as a substitute for the process.
Section VI
CONCLUSION

6.1 Meanings of animal welfare

There were common key concepts used to define animal welfare, most notably 'humane' and 'natural'. Participants generally believed that whilst humans had the right to rear and kill animals for food, they should do so in a humane way. Meanings of 'humane' was usually associated with being 'cared for', not suffering, and having as good a life and death as possible. Being humane, as previously discussed, sanitised the process of animal production and ameliorated any sense of guilt associated with the consumption of animal-based products. Allowing animals to express their 'natural' behaviour, to be fed with 'natural' food and to live as 'naturally' as possible further defined the concept of welfare. The 'natural', with all it associated sanctimonious meanings, provided a ready-made justification for disapproval of various systems and methods.

The participants felt generally ill informed about these issues. This led to one of two options, either they wished to be informed or they continued to engage in 'voluntary ignorance', either disassociating the product from its origin and/or ignoring information about the production method. There was variation amongst the countries in terms of trust. The German groups were more likely to trust the media than the French, Italian or UK groups, for example. But generalisations are impossible to draw on such purposively selected samples. All the groups mentioned the issue of labelling and many participants said that they did not trust the labels as credible sources of information. Only the Irish and the UK groups made suggestions for improving information – the Irish wanted Governmental intervention and the UK participants demanded an independent authority to provide unequivocal information to consumers.
6.2 **The nature of concerns about animal welfare and the impact on food choice**

It is clear, from this comparative analysis, that human desire for health, quality and safety supersedes concerns about animal welfare. Where animal welfare is expressed as a concern, the prioritised factors are used as indicators and justification for a high level of animal welfare. Often, animal welfare is both implicitly and explicitly traded against issues of cost, convenience and availability. Willingness to pay is obviously affected by these contingencies.

This is not to say, however, that expressed concern was always cynical and instrumental. Indeed, a number of participants, in each country, expressed genuine concern for the intrinsic welfare of farm animals. However, this fact needs to be contextualised. Participants were unlikely to mention spontaneously animal welfare when expressing their concerns about food production generally. Again, human health, safety and pleasure were the apex of concerns and, invariably, where animal welfare was expressed as a concern it was qualified by implications for human health. Unreserved, unqualified concern for animal welfare was rare.

Responsibility was an illuminating issue. While a number of participants expressed concern about animal welfare, claims of personal responsibility were less forthcoming. Indeed, the concept of individual responsibility was actively denied in cases where the Government was blamed for taking consumer responsibility away (UK) or where prices were so high for animal-friendly products that the price prevented the consumer from taking any action to assume responsibility (Ireland). There was, however, some sense of consumer responsibility expressed in the UK and German groups, with a number of participants claiming to buy free-range products. But others attacked this behaviour as 'tokenism' in the UK. Consumers were reluctant to attribute responsibility to themselves, when such a responsibility might necessitate spending more and less convenience. Indeed, the participants were likely to mention the Government and the producers as having primary responsibility for animal welfare, an attribution, which allowed them to continue to purchase, and consumer products relatively guilt-free.
6.3 Implications for interviews

A number of conclusions for the next phase of the project can now be drawn:

- Consumers are concerned about animal welfare primarily when animal welfare acts as an indicator of other, more important, attributes. This relationship needs to be explored further. The in-depth interviews will allow the factors, which determine this hierarchy of concerns, and the beliefs associated with the equation of 'good animal welfare equals good human health' to be examined.

- There was variation in concern for different species across different countries. In the UK and Ireland, great concern was expressed about the pigs, whereas this was much less of a concern in France. There was less concern for the cows generally, and variation between France and the other countries over veal. Within countries, there was concern for the mammals, such as the pigs, over birds, such as chickens. The relation that the different countries has with different species and the impact on concern for that species' welfare must also be investigated through the in-depth interviews.

- The most interesting of the factors, which affected concern, was the pet ownership. Whilst gender, age and socio-economic status are fairly predictable and inter-related determinants of concern, the relationship of pet ownership to concerns about animal welfare and the impact on food choice is less well understood. The in-depth interviews present the opportunity to explore this relationship in detail.

- Perceptions of responsibility and willingness to pay for animal welfare are related issues. The external attributions, made by the participants, need to be examined and evaluated in relation to willingness to pay.

- The relationship between expressed concerns and actual behaviour needs to be investigated further through an in-depth examination of consumer beliefs, habits, choices and other factors, which affect consumption.
Section VII
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