

Public attitudes towards the use of animals for food production in Taiwan

Public opinion survey report

Environment & Animal Society of Taiwan

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Conducted by the Election Study Center, National Chengchi University

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Chapter 1: Preface

1. Research context and purpose

Previously, foundational surveys on public attitudes towards the use of animals for food production has not been conducted in Taiwan, so the public's awareness and opinions on these issues – or their views on the role companies or government should play on issues – is unknown in the epistemological sense. The primary purpose of this survey is thus to fill in these unknowns and provide foundational information for the development of animal protection in Taiwan, and to act as a base for future research or advocacy. The study examines the Taiwanese public's perception of animals used for food production using four prominent animal welfare issues. The survey explores respondents' understanding of these issues and the ways in which industrial farming impacts both animal welfare and the quality of animal products, in addition to respondents' own consumption behavior and their views on corporate and government responsibility.

Chapter 2: Public awareness of animal welfare issues

1. Public awareness of battery cages

The description of battery cages provided in the survey is: “There is a method of raising laying hens known as ‘battery cages’ which involves raising 2 to 4 laying hens in a metal cage slightly larger than an A4 sheet of paper, in which the [birds] are unable to spread their wings.”

Table 2.1 – Have you previously seen or heard of battery cages as a means of raising laying hens? (*survey question 2*)

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	385	35.9
No	686	63.9
No response*	3	0.3
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: declined to answer.

Table 2.2 – Do you think this form of farming causes laying hens to suffer? (*survey question 3*)

	Responses	Percentage
Definitely	515	48.0
Yes	331	30.8
No	58	5.4
Definitely not	16	1.5
No response*	154	14.3
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer

2. Public awareness of sow stalls

The description of sow stalls provided in the survey is: “There is a method of raising sows in which they are raised in a metal stall about the same size as their body, completely unable to turn around.”

Table 2.3 – Have you previously seen or heard of sow stalls as a means of raising sows? (*survey question 7*)

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	294	27.4
No	779	72.5
No response*	1	0.1
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: declined to answer

Table 2.4 – Do you think this form of farming causes sows to suffer? (*survey question 8*)

	Responses	Percentage
Definitely	719	67.0
Yes	231	21.5
No	29	2.7
Definitely not	11	1.0
No response*	84	7.8
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer

3. Public awareness of dairy farming practices

The description of dairy farming practices provided in the survey is: “The majority of dairy cows in Taiwan are raised inside sheds where dairy cows continue to produce milk during pregnancy. Taiwan’s hot and humid climate means dairy cows are often too hot to eat yet still produce milk, making them prone to malnutrition and illness.”

Table 2.5 – Have you previously seen or heard of this form of dairy farming? (*survey question 11*)

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	311	29.0
No	757	70.5
No response*	6	0.5
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: refusal to answer

Table 2.6 – Do you think this form of farming causes dairy cows to suffer? (*survey question 12*)

	Responses	Percentage
Definitely	577	53.7
Yes	303	28.2
No	45	4.2
Definitely not	19	1.8
No response*	129	12.0
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer

4. Public awareness of fish binding

The description of fish binding provided in the survey is: “Some fish vendors bind fish into a crescent shape by passing a thread through the fish’s lips [and tying it] to the fish’s tail, causing the fish to slowly suffocate to death.”

Table 2.7 – Have you previously seen or heard of the practice of fish binding? (*survey question 15*)

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	428	39.9
No	643	59.8
No response*	3	0.3
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: declined to answer

Table 2.8 – Do you think the practice of fish binding causes fish to suffer? (*survey question 16*)

	Responses	Percentage
Definitely	688	64.1
Yes	236	22.0
No	55	5.1
Definitely not	13	1.2
No response*	82	7.6
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer

5. Comparison of awareness levels

Table 2.9 – Comparison of public awareness of animal welfare issues

	Laying hen battery cages	Sow stalls	Dairy cows	Fish binding
Aware	35.9	27.4	29.0	39.9
Unaware	63.9	72.5	70.5	59.8
No response	0.3	0.1	0.5	0.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2.10 – Comparison of public awareness of animal welfare issues

	Laying hen battery cages	Sow stalls	Dairy cows	Fish binding
Will suffer	78.8	88.5	81.9	86.1
Will not suffer	6.9	3.7	6.0	6.3
No response	14.3	7.8	12.0	7.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Chapter 3: Public awareness of health effects, food safety and product quality

1. Public views on the raising of laying hens in battery cages

Table 3.1 – Operators of battery cage laying hen farms often add antibiotics to feed or drinking water to prevent the hens from falling sick. Do you think this affects the safety of egg products? (*survey question 4*)

	Responses	Percentage
Definitely	531	49.4
Yes	331	30.8
No	82	7.6
Definitely not	23	2.1
No response*	107	10.0
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer

Table 3.2 – Large-scale, intensive forms of farming like battery cage farming may provide the conditions for viruses and pathogenic bacteria to propagate and mutate. Are you concerned such forms of farming will also affect human health? (*survey question 5*)

	Responses	Percentage
Extremely concerned	381	35.5
Somewhat concerned	515	47.9
Unconcerned	113	10.6
Extremely unconcerned	14	1.3
No response*	51	4.7
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer

2. Public views on sow stalls and the safety of pork products

Table 3.3 – Operators often use antibiotics to prevent sows from falling sick when raising sows in narrow metal stalls which restrict their movement. Do you think this affects the safety of pork products? (*survey question 9*)

	Responses	Percentage
Definitely	643	59.8
Yes	277	25.8
No	60	5.6
Definitely not	22	2.0
No response*	72	6.7
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer

3. Public views on dairy farming and the safety of milk products

Table 3.4 – This form of farming increases dairy cows' risk of disease and veterinary drug use. Do you think this affects the quality of milk? (*survey question 13*)

	Responses	Percentage
Definitely	636	59.2
Yes	311	29.0
No	37	3.5
Definitely not	19	1.8
No response*	70	6.5
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer

4. Comparison of public attitudes on farming methods and product quality

Table 3.5 – Comparison of public attitudes on whether antibiotics/veterinary drug use affects product quality

	Laying hen battery cages	Sow stalls	Dairy cows
Affects	80.2	85.6	88.2
Does not affect	9.7	7.6	5.3
No response	10.0	6.7	6.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Chapter 4: Public attitudes towards certified products and willingness to buy

Table 4.1 – Some people say that “Respecting animal welfare and producing eggs, meat, milk or fish in better husbandry conditions improves quality [of said products].” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? (*survey question 18*)

	Responses	Percentage
Strongly agree	576	53.6
Agree	363	33.8
Disagree	56	5.2
Strongly disagree	14	1.3
No response*	65	6.0
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer

Table 4.2 – Some people say that “Products which respect animal welfare during production are more beneficial to human health.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? (*survey question 19*)

	Responses	Percentage
Strongly agree	483	45.0
Agree	407	37.9
Disagree	92	8.6
Strongly disagree	25	2.3
No response*	67	6.3
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer

Table 4.3 – Products with animal welfare certification may be more expensive. Would you be willing to purchase [such products]? (*survey question 20*)

	Responses	Percentage
Extremely willing	340	31.7
Willing	472	43.9
Unwilling	101	9.4
Extremely unwilling	48	4.5
No response*	113	10.5
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer

Chapter 5: Public attitudes on government legislation to protect animal welfare

Table 5.1 – The European Union legislated a ban on raising laying hens in battery cages in 1999. Do you think it is necessary for Taiwan to legislate such a ban? (*survey question 6*)

	Responses	Percentage
Extremely necessary	220	20.5
Necessary	402	37.5
Unnecessary	215	20.0
Not necessary at all	47	4.4
No response*	189	17.6
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer

Table 5.2 – The European Union legislated a ban on raising sows in sow stalls in 1999.¹ Do you think it is necessary for Taiwan to legislate such a ban? (*survey question 10*)

	Responses	Percentage
Extremely necessary	328	30.5
Necessary	403	37.5
Unnecessary	165	15.4
Not necessary at all	40	3.7
No response*	139	12.9
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer

¹ Correction: The European Union legislated a ban on raising sows in sow stalls in 2001 (the United Kingdom enacted a ban on raising sows in sow stalls in 1999).

Table 5.3 – The European Union, New Zealand, Australia and Israel have all enacted animal welfare regulations or policies for dairy cows. Do you think it is necessary for Taiwan to legislate to protect the welfare of dairy cows? (*survey question 14*)

	Responses	Percentage
Extremely necessary	349	32.5
Necessary	461	43.0
Unnecessary	110	10.2
Not necessary at all	32	3.0
No response*	122	11.4
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer

Table 5.4 – The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) begun setting aquatic animal welfare chapters in 2008. Do you think it is necessary for Taiwan to set similar regulations? (*survey question 17*)

	Responses	Percentage
Extremely necessary	293	27.3
Necessary	401	37.3
Unnecessary	173	16.1
Not necessary at all	58	5.4
No response*	149	13.8
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer

Table 5.5 – Public attitudes towards legal protections for animals used for food production

	Laying hen battery cages	Sow stalls	Dairy cows	Aquatic animals
Necessary	58.0	68.0	75.5	64.6
Unnecessary	24.4	19.1	13.2	21.5
No response	17.6	12.9	11.4	13.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Chapter 6: Public attitudes towards corporate assurance of animal welfare

Table 6.1 – Do you believe assurance of animal welfare should be incorporated into standards used to assess corporate social responsibility? (*survey question 21*)

	Responses	Percentage
Very much should	422	39.3
Should	395	36.8
Should not	101	9.4
Very much should not	23	2.1
No response*	133	12.4
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer

Table 6.2 – Some people say “Companies that are willing to assure animal welfare are better able to garner support from consumers.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? (*survey question 22*)

	Responses	Percentage
Strongly agree	473	44.0
Agree	392	36.5
Disagree	102	9.5
Strongly disagree	22	2.1
No response*	85	7.9
Total	1074	100.0

*No response includes: depends, no opinion, do not know, and declined to answer