

Certifying Quality

Negotiating and Integrating Animal Welfare into Food Assurance

edited by
Henry Buller
Emma Roe



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Part I

Constructing Quality: Negotiating Farm Animal Welfare in Food Assurance Schemes in the UK and France

by

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ARGUMENT

Labelling is *not* the way to achieve animal welfare. Labelling is the way to sell what we have achieved (Spanou, 2007; emphasis added).

Any product information system regarding the welfare conditions of animals in the processes of food production, whether it be a label, a certificate or written information, can only see the light of day on any eventual food packaging to which consumers might have access, if the relevant food chain actors accept it – or feel obliged to accept it – as functionally useful (whether economically, ethically, in terms of transparency and so on) to their own economic enterprise. Labelling, as the quotation above suggests, is the end point of a complex process of negotiation amongst food chain actors. The ‘consumer’ response to such product information systems, though obviously important in terms of its potential impact on purchase choice, is, we would argue, of less importance to the broader objective of raising animal welfare standards than the negotiations that take place *prior to* labelling. As the research undertaken in Work Packages 1.2 and 1.3 of SP1 has clearly demonstrated, the construction and negotiation of assurance schemes, certification procedures and industry standards, retailer assurance schemes, sourcing conditions, producer marques, NGO-run schemes and others have been critical in bringing welfare conditions into the market place. However, the fact that many of these regulatory processes are largely unseen by consumers (in part because they act predominantly as entry requirements to retailer shelves rather than elements in product segmentation, in part also because food chain actors prefer to focus their segmentation on other aspects of product quality) suggests that any research that is exclusively focused upon consumers and upon consumer-visible labels will yield only a very partial and imperfect picture of the market viability and impact of any new product information system. We argue therefore that the potential impact of any new product information system needs to be researched, not solely at the consumer end of the food chain, but crucially amongst the actors involved in *creating* food products and the standards by which they are produced. Here, we are in effect, expanding the notion of ‘consumers’ to include those food chain actors that ‘consume’ the raw materials of food production (in this case, animals) and transform them into human foodstuffs. Indeed, we maintain that it is at this level that the drive towards greater animal welfare will be achieved, if it is to be achieved through market means. As the research undertaken in SP1 has shown, food consumer demand alone is significantly constrained in its capacity to drive this agenda. Without research into how an appropriate label or information system is constructed and operated by food chain actors, ‘end of pipe’ consumer research, in isolation, is of little value to the practical implementation of market processes that promote greater animal welfare, whether they be voluntary or mandatory.

In short, the drive towards welfare assessment and the establishment of an information system (whether directly accessible to consumers through distinct labels or ‘internal’ to the food sector through forms of certification) needs to be assessed as a negotiated process within the food chain as a whole. Understanding the mechanics of the processes of assurance and/or certification scheme development is, we believe an essential task for the operationalisation of the Welfare Quality programme aims and is the central objective of this research.

THE AIMS

The research project has been a cross-comparative study of the United Kingdom and France. Its aim was to study a selection of existing assurance/certification schemes and to consider their position in relation to assurance scheme-led initiatives to improve animal welfare in the production of laying hens, table birds, pigs and dairy cattle, particularly those focusing on the use of outcome or animal based measures of welfare assessment. The research project investigated the mechanics and practices by which animal welfare is negotiated into assurance standards. Using a variety of methodological techniques (see Chapter 3), it has examined:

- the existing procedures for the development of assurance and certification schemes and procedures;
- the different approaches of such a system within the food chain (label, certification, rule book, guidelines, assessment visits and so on);
- the processes of negotiation ‘up’ and ‘down’ the food chain which lead to the development of assurance and certification systems;
- the development and introduction of new criteria of, and mechanisms for, welfare assessment, with particular attention being paid to the use of ‘animal-based measures’;
- how a welfare quality animal based information system might integrate within the context of other schemes, and assess the conditions and attributes of such a system that different food chain actors would seek to include (and/or to exclude);
- the perceptions of the impact of such a system on producers and other food chain actors.

In simple terms, the objective of this research has been to provide a comparative assessment of the mechanics and practices of assurance and certification scheme development in two EU countries, the United Kingdom and France.

3

METHODOLOGY

The six month research project, which ran from April 2008 to September 2008, has now concluded. It was structured around three methodological approaches:

1. interviews with selected food chain actors – specifically those individuals and institutions responsible for the construction and negotiation of product standards, certification, labelling and monitoring within the food chain;
2. work shadowing selected food chain actors and food chain fora where issues of certification, information systems and labelling are negotiated;
3. discussion panels on the use of welfare outcomes – sitting-in on or initiating some scheme discussion panels that include board members and users (producers, retailers).

The research for this project was completed in the summer and early autumn of 2008. The interviews and farm visits were carried out between April and June by Jacob Bull, Emma Roe and Henry Buller for the UK and between May and June by Caroline Godefroy for France.

Key figures were interviewed for each of the three certification schemes in the two countries (see Table 3.1). In addition, the UK research team shadowed an on-farm audit for each of the schemes, accompanied by an interview with the auditor. Unfortunately, this opportunity was not available for the French research.

The final report of the English research was completed in November 2008. This is available from the project team.

In France, interviews were held with parallel actors involved in the establishment of quality assurance schemes and on-farm assessment. As with the UK study, the research team also shadowed meetings of quality assurance scheme operators. The list of people interviewed by the French team is shown in Table 3.2.

The French report (in French) was also delivered in November 2008. This is available from the project team. The French research was carried out by a team at the Institut d’Elevage comprising Anne Charlotte Dockès, Florence Kling-Eveillard and Caroline Godefroy.

TABLE 3.1 Overview of people interviewed during the UK study.

	AFS	FF/RSPCA	SA
Interviews	Chairman NADFAS; Chairman of Assured British Pigs	Chief Executive; Head of Farm Animals Department; Technical Development Officer; Head of Sales and Marketing*	Food and Farming Director; Policy Director; Veterinary Advisor
Audit Shadowing	2 Dairy Units; 1 Pig Unit	Laying Hens	Mixed Farm
Panel discussions	AFS Technical Sub- Committee		Standards committee

Notes: AFS: Assured Food Standards; FF: Freedom Food; RSPCA: Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; SA: Soil Association; NADFAS: National Dairy Farm Assurance Scheme.

TABLE 3.2 Overview of people interviewed during the French study.

Quality schemes	All schemes	CCP	Labels rouges	Agriculture Biologique
Beef			Interview with representative of Fil Rouge; Shadow meeting and group discussion with ODG;* Shadowing of and group discussion with General Assembly of Fil Rouge	Interviews with IE GRAB and SETRAB
Pork	Interview with IFIP	Interview with Cochons de Bretagne	Interview with de representative of Sylaporc; Shadowing and group discussion with General Assembly of Sylaporc	
Poultry	Interview with ITAVI		Shadowing of and group discussion with General Assembly Synalaf	

Notes: CCP: Cahier des clauses particulières; Fil Rouge: Fédération interprofessionnelle des viandes Label Rouge; ODG: Organismes de défense et de gestion des labels rouge bovins-veaux-agneaux; GRAB: Groupe de recherche en agriculture biologique de Basse-Normandie; SETRAB: Syndicat européen des transformateurs de produits de l'agriculture biologique; IFIP: Institut du porc recherche et expertise pour la filière porcine; Sylaporc: Syndicat des labels porcs et charcuteries; ITAVI: Institut technique de l'aviculture; Synalaf: Syndicat national des labels avicoles de France.

REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

A synthesis report of the results of the project, drawing on the results of both the UK and the French research was submitted and presented to the Welfare Quality Advisory Committee in Copenhagen in September 2008 (Buller and Roe, 2008a). An amended version of this report was also presented at the WelfareQuality/Assured Food Standards meeting in London in November 2008 (Buller and Roe, 2008b).

In addition, it was decided to produce a ‘hard-hitting’ policy relevant report as the principal issue of this sub-project research. The report entitled ‘Certifying Welfare: integrating welfare assessments into assurance procedures: a European perspective – 25 Key Points’ was duly produced by Henry Buller and Emma Roe from the research material and presented at the Welfare Quality Integration Meeting in Paris, December 2008. It is included as Part II of the current volume.

Finally, the results of the UK study under this research were presented at the Welfare Quality project ‘Knowing Animals’ conference, held in Florence in March 2009 (Roe and Buller, 2009).

RESULTS

Details of the individual schemes investigated can be found in the two national reports. The theoretical and methodological positions adopted by the UK and the French research teams are also laid out in detail in the two national reports. The specific purpose of this Final Report is to report on the findings of the research undertaken in the two countries and the comparative messages that can be drawn from them.

5.1 EXISTING PROCEDURES FOR WELFARE STANDARDS

In both of the countries investigated, input-based requirements dominate assurance scheme standards. There are a number of reasons for this. Input-based requirements are easier to measure and assess. They implicitly offer information, or point the way, to producers about how to remedy problems, something animal-based measures are not felt to do. With input-based measures, producers know what is needed to be done, what specific actions need to be undertaken, to meet and comply with standards. The process of farm auditing becomes a reasonably straightforward assessment of whether such objective and quantifiable standards are met.

Within standard boards, schemes are often characterised by these input-based criteria; they provide an accessible profile to the scheme, which is both outward (the public, consumers and other food chain actors) and inward (producers) facing.

Moreover, input-based standards reflect, and are largely drawn from production systems, whose overall design and management becomes both reflected and integrated in the nature and focus of the subsequent standards. While standards define the system, the system also defines the standards. Significant changes to one, will have potentially significant implications for the other.

Here then, we observe the close relationship that operates between system design, welfare science and market forces. Different assurance schemes, however, draw upon these three aspects differentially. Schemes that distinctively privilege farm animal welfare, such as the UK Freedom Food or the Soil Association schemes are seeking to draw on the ‘best’ welfare science to support their scheme development. The French Organic scheme

similarly draws on advances in welfare science but links this, perhaps more closely, to the ethical commitment of the individual farmer rather than to prescribed scheme standards. Professional schemes, such as the UK Assured Food Standards or the French *Cahier des clauses particulières* are arguably more system focused, incorporating hygiene and herd health concerns into standard regimes that have to be responsive to the needs of the industry and yet can also reinforce its market position. On both sides of the Channel, incremental, rather than radical, changes to standards and to assessment mechanisms are advocated: ‘we are open to new proposals but they have to be practical’ maintained one of French interviewees (French Report, 2008, p. 5).

Finally, a common concern has been that standards serve not only to assess conformity but also to validate good practices and, from the French schemes in particular, ‘quality’ production systems. For many farmers and scheme operators, the objective of assurance should not be solely to seek changes in practice, in response both to scientific knowledge and to consumer concern, but also to recognise and thereby valorise those practices that are considered beneficial to the welfare of farm animals. As the parameters of welfare assessment change, they should move, where appropriate, in both directions, seeking improvement and change as well as confirming and validating existing practices considered to be of welfare benefit.

5.2 THE CURRENT USE OF ANIMAL-BASED MEASURES

It is fair to say that, to date, the use of animal-based assessments of farm animal welfare in both British and French assurance schemes has been limited. However animal-based measures (hereafter ABMs) exist and are increasingly being adopted, both formally (as a commercial requirement) and informally (through experimental introduction), within current standards. Requirements for the French ‘Good Husbandry Charter’ (Confederation nationale d’élevage, 2007) for dairy and beef cattle include a series of mandatory body lesion and injury assessments and minimum conformity levels as well as basic scoring for body cleanliness. Similar assessments are used more informally in the UK as likely indicators of resource-based non-compliance but are not, as yet, formally integrated into assessment scoring. Feather pecking in laying hens, aggressive behaviour in pigs and mastitis in cattle are mentioned in the relevant standards though assessment procedures for these indicators are not yet specified. That said, the certificatory bodies consulted clearly intend to develop ABMs within existing schemes.

In the UK, the Bristol Welfare Assurance Programme (BWAP) with 5 ABMs, for example, is being considered for inclusion in the Soil Association standards; currently they use it informally as an approach to raise farmers’ awareness about welfare issues. The RSPCA uses 3 ABMs to informally benchmark farmers within the Freedom Food scheme, but the results are not included within any assessment criteria. The Soil Association currently sees

ABMs largely as a tool to educate about welfare improvements and to encourage improvements in husbandry practices. Where ABMs are employed formally, they are generally used as single measures. It would appear from this research that ABMs have emerged to date principally as specific targeted instruments, acting alongside more conventional forms of welfare and farm assessment. They are not seen as a replacement for more conventional means.

5.3 THE PRACTICE OF ASSESSMENT

The increasing use of assurance schemes focuses attention not only on the parameters of assessment, their elaboration and their rationale, but also on the practice of assessment and on-farm auditing. Changes to assessment criteria, such as the introduction of animal-based measures, will have a significant impact upon the practice of assessment ‘on the ground’. Consequently, an important part of this research has been the investigation of auditing procedures as they are performed both by trained auditors and assessors and by the producers themselves.

In reality, on-farm assessment is a combination of different evaluative procedures. The checking and verification of records (medical records, feed records, livestock documents, mortality records, receipts and dockets, codes of practice and so on) can take a considerable amount of time in itself but is an important element in the audit process.

Although standards and the relevant *cahiers de charge* are available at the assessment, these themselves do not always constitute the basis of the auditing procedure, which usually takes the form of checklist (or, though less frequently, simple note-taking) to be completed by the auditor or assessor. As the British research makes clear: ‘whilst standards are the driving force behind the audit, they do not define it in the way that it is conducted, and neither are they physically present as a point of reference’ (UK Report, p. 26). In both the British and French examples pursued in this research, the on-farm assessment usually lasts around two hours.

In addition to the verification and checking of documents, on-farm audits generally include both visual and measured assessment procedures. We have noted, particularly in the UK research, the importance, for some schemes, of what we might call the ‘farm gate assessment’. While the ideals of assurance standards suggest an objective audit, the actual process of auditing is a highly personal and subjective process. In each of the three assurance schemes a ‘general feel’ for the farm, or a first impression, was identified as key to the audit. On one audit we were told that the audit began at the farm gate (UK Report, 2008, p. 27).

Adopting the position of the consumer or visitor to the farm, an auditor may deliberately seek to gain a general impression of how the farm, and the animals, might look to an outsider; recognition and acknowledgement perhaps of the fact that farms are themselves, increasingly consumer-facing, even within the context of what are often lengthy supply chains.

The more traditional component of the on-farm audit includes the measurement, counting and assessing of resources, animals and other input elements, the ‘concrete elements that can be easily compared’ in the words of one French respondent. In general, these more overtly ‘objective’ procedures allow the relatively straightforward translation of animal welfare science to farm management scenarios. Moreover, the ‘results’ are quickly determined and are easily discussed with the farmer.

The outcome of the audit procedures investigated is generally a list of non-compliances (if that is the case) that are to be rectified within a defined period.

Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that the audit process is not punitive. Part of its function is to act as a mechanism by which best practice, as defined by agreed standards, is conveyed onto farming practice through the procedures of auditing. The audit becomes a process of reiteration by which norms become embedded into farming practice.

A final point to emerge from this part of the research is the influence that the personal experience of the auditor can have upon the auditing process and upon the farmer’s own relation to, and feelings about, the assurance scheme and its value. Hence, although UK auditors are not allowed to give advice, a standard written in terms of ‘input standards’ is fortunately often self-explanatory. The discussion with the farmer, as in the French examples as well, is often about contextual details about the farm. From the UK report:

Many of the auditors have agricultural backgrounds, either farming themselves or have long-term experience of the organic movement (for example). This history and background allows the auditor to discuss the issues surrounding the audit in a meaningful way (UK Report, 2008, p. 29).

5.4 NEGOTIATING STANDARDS

A key concern within this subproject has been the means by which welfare standards move through the supply chain, between farm, certifying body, processor, retailer and so on. The central dynamic observed in both the UK and France has been the overall increase in welfare provisions within assurance schemes. Welfare concerns are becoming increasingly mainstream as NGO-led schemes (in the UK) and producer-led schemes (in France) become more well known. In general, food processors and retailers are observed to follow

the initiative of NGOs and other bodies by gradually incorporating welfare components into their own schemes once their legitimacy, validity and consumer relevance have been demonstrated.

The research conducted here identifies two distinct models by which welfare criteria and standards move through the supply chain: on the one hand, the ‘escalator model’ by which standards move vertically into the mainstream; on the other, the ‘competitive model’, where standards move horizontally into different market opportunities.

The ‘escalator model’ might be seen most evidently in those cases where initial concern for a particular issue, often initially championed within an NGO-led scheme, is gradually adopted by more and more, increasingly mainstream actors and assurance schemes, leading to its generalisation and, occasionally, legal change. A most obvious example of this might be the gradual move away from intensive battery systems for laying hens, leading ultimately to the EU ban on all but enriched cage systems. Beyond this, many schemes, run by professional and producer groups, actively keep an eye on what is being done within the more specialist welfare assurance schemes in the assumption that some of the parameters employed or being experimented with in these later schemes will ultimately become mainstreamed.

The ‘competitive model’ is equally prevalent. Here different brands and assurance schemes actively compete to differentiate themselves from each other in the eyes of the consumer. Previous research carried out within Welfare Quality SP1.2 has already demonstrated how variations in the number and quality of animal welfare-related standards in the bundle of quality-related auditing that assurance schemes provide can be an important scheme differentiator, not only in the eyes of consumers but also retailers and other relevant food chain actors.

Significantly, we believe that, as the various components of welfare become increasingly accepted by food chain actors and thereby standardised in assurance procedures, it will be the procedures of assurance and on-farm assessment (their validity and transparency) that increasingly differentiate schemes in the eyes of informed consumers and retailers. The challenge for future welfare assessment is to make assessment tools sufficiently flexible, sufficiently fair and sufficiently animal centred, across a wide range of animal and environmental contexts, across a wide range of brand demands and across a wide range of social and cultural situations to be operationable.

5.5 THE FUTURE OF ANIMAL MEASURES

5.5.1 STRENGTHS AND POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF ANIMAL-BASED MEASURES

As we have seen above, a number of NGOs (and one UK supermarket chain) are currently looking at ways of formally including ABMs in their assurance schemes. While a number of professional bodies are also increasingly recognising the need to address ABMs as the next stage in the development of welfare assessment, ABMs are nonetheless problematic for assurance scheme bodies and their associated actors. Discussing the future adoption of ABMs (including those currently being experimented with as part of the Welfare Quality assessment tool) in welfare assessment schemes with assurance scheme actors, this research has identified a number of specific concerns.

Cost of ABMs. From this investigative research, it would appear that the cost of employing animal-based measures in on-farm welfare assessments is likely to be significantly higher than more conventional input and resource measures. Some experimental ABMs would require more than one assessor to be present. Furthermore, the time taken to conduct them would mean fewer assessments could be undertaken in a single day, something that would also have cost implications.

Length of Time of Assessment. If the average time to conduct the audits and on-farm assessments investigated in this study is around two hours, assessments involving a significant number of ABMs will require considerably more time. Many of those currently involved in assessment procedures and schemes are concerned that this will have implications for the practice of assessments on farms, on the relationship between the assessor and the farmer, and on the overall cost of assessments.

Repeatability of ABMs. A concern amongst many farmers in particular is the degree of repeatability of certain ABMs. Will ABM yield consistent results? This becomes an issue of reassuring farmers of the validity of the techniques and of defending them. Again, this has implications for the on-farm role of assessment practitioners.

Quantification of ABMs. A further concern of assurance scheme actors is the quantification and scoring mechanisms used to translate the findings of animal-based assessment procedures into standards. Being used to the relative simplicity of numerical scoring for input/resource measures, actors are not always convinced that measures such as body scoring and avoidance scoring can be easily converted into valid compliance factors and/or a simplified algorithm or compliance score.

ABMs As Merely Revealing Existing Resource Issues. It is believed that in certain cases, animal-based measures appear to reveal problems in animal management that are more

readily discernable through standard input- and resource-based measures, making the additional cost and resources of ABMs, in certain cases, questionable.

Difficulties of Achieving Compliance. A key issue for many of those interviewed is that of achieving compliance with standards derived from animal-based measures. As their name suggests, these are measurements of the consequences, or outcomes, for the animal, of husbandry management techniques. Producers, and their representatives, often feel a lot ‘safer’ with assessments of their techniques, of the resources and of management, over which they have direct control, than with assessments made on the consequences, for the animal, of these actions. This, it would appear, is a significant mindset that needs to be overcome if animal-based measures are to become more widespread.

Issue of Generic Welfare Failures. Drawing on from the above point, it can be argued that certain husbandry systems exhibit generic welfare problems (such as those associated with intensive dairy farming). Animal-based measures may reveal these and make compliance very difficult for individual farmers.

ABMs and Product Quality Rationales. A particular concern amongst French farmers and producer organisations is the articulation of welfare criteria in scheme *Cahiers de charge* and quality rationales. Many French assurance schemes, particularly those associated with a particular production system or labelling initiative such as Label Rouge, are based upon the protection and valorisation of product (and production system) ‘quality’. Assurance criteria are similarly articulated around the quality rationale and any assessments based upon welfare outcomes would need to fit into this overarching assessment paradigm.

Mistrust of Animal Behaviour Assessment. In both France and the UK, the research teams encountered considerable mistrust, amongst farmers and producers, towards certain animal-based approaches to the assessment of welfare (notably those relating to social behaviour and human/animal relations). Branding these as ‘subjective’, ‘science fiction’ and ‘entirely irrelevant to animal farming’, one might foresee some resistance to their adoption as the basis of standards within assessment protocols.

ABMs and Animal Health Legislation. There was some concern that ABMs were in places in danger of duplicating animal health legislative requirements.

A Pervading ABM Ideology. There is a sense that ABMs are becoming the new (untested) orthodoxy amongst some advocates of expanded welfare criteria within existing assurance schemes. While this advocacy is certainly driving ABMs forward, many actors from the agricultural profession encountered in this research expressed concern that they are being pushed into adopting them before the practicalities and the scientific basis for them have been fully ascertained.

However, ABMs are also perceived by many actors, including farmers, as both valid and necessary components of on-farm welfare assessment. In addition to the more customary arguments for animal-based, rather than resource-based, measures of an individual animal’s welfare, the following attitudes have been revealed by this research.

- Integrated assessment (using both animal-based and resource-based measures) is seen as a means of granting additional validity to existing schemes, of providing greater assurance of the welfare of animals. It is seen by many professional actors as an additional reinforcement for their competitive position at the international scale.
- ABMs as a means of identifying limitations in resource-based measures. For many of the people encountered in this research, there are clear disparities between compliance with resource-based welfare protocols and the visible welfare of the animals concerned. As many scientists argue, resource-based measures are not always a good way of assessing the actual welfare of individual animals. With the drive to greater transparency, with concern for exposés of husbandry conditions, more integrated approaches offer a more immediate way of dealing with visible signs of welfare disadvantage (such as, for example, feather pecking, tail biting, lesions, lameness, dirtiness and so on).
- A further argument for the development of a more integrated approach is as a mechanism for progressive market segmentation and consumer reassurance. The NGOs promoting the inclusion of ABMs in integrated welfare assurance compete, to some extent, with each other over their use.
- The fourth reason we identify is more of a management one: adopting ABMs within welfare assessments as a means of benchmarking farms and stock management practice. Here, they are not intended as a component of compliance but more as a way of monitoring developments both in husbandry practice and the introduction of husbandry technologies (and genetic adaptation of breeds) and in broader issues of welfare compliance. An example here might be Tesco's 2008 decision to monitor the lameness of their dairy herds.
- A fifth reason, one that is linked to the above, is that of introducing specific and highly targeted ABMs to deal with specific problems (such as, for example, tail biting). This is, for the moment at least, one of the more common reasons for their use, as ABMs have not generally entered into the norms of welfare assessment. Hence, certain organisations are looking to introduce one or two ABMs into their existing assessment procedures, first, on a very experimental basis and, second, as a means of addressing specific welfare issues.
- Finally, it is worth mentioning the adoption of more integrated assessments as a means of generating discussion of welfare and welfare assessment (both on and off the farm) and critically anticipating legislation – or at least ensuring the fullest compliance with existing legislation. From our discussions, it is clear that ABMs to some extent represent the cutting edge of welfare assessment (whether one likes this or not) and many bodies, NGOs, professional bodies and the like, are looking at how they might respond to this.

5.5.2 DELIVERING ANIMAL-BASED MEASURES

The introduction of ABMs to welfare assessment raises the question of when and how such measures are applied and assessed. Our research has revealed a number of different actual or potential assessment strategies and choices:

- integrating ABMs into standard farm assessments or keeping them separate?
- making more use of abattoir-led ABMs in welfare assessment and assurance conformity;
- increasing the use of vet visits in ABM assessment;
- shift from collective system-based responsibility to individual management responsibility;
- raising the importance of self-assessment for certain issues (such as lameness in dairy cattle);
- selective use of ABMs – as specific accompaniments to more conventional measures;
- use of breed selection to meet ABM targets and/or criteria;
- offering the variable potential of ABMs and strategies across different product sectors, with certain sectors lending themselves far better than others to the use of ABMs.

The tentative exploration of the introduction of ABMs into current welfare assessment in various schemes indicates how the issues (outlined above) produce significant impediments to their formal usage. Those we spoke with discussed how, if the impediments are resolved, the gradual deployment of ABMs in welfare assessment is likely to have a significant impact upon the practice of on-farm assessments and inspections. The following issues are identified by the research.

- The shift towards increasing use of ABMs potentially challenges the traditional role of the inspector/assessor with respect to interaction with the farmer/stock person. The on-farm audit is the critical ‘event’ in the process of assessment. Assessors are not allowed, at least under UK legislation, to provide specific advice on the meeting of conditions. They must simply evaluate and assess, the information then being used to tally a conformity or non-conformity. Yet, the relationship to the producer is fundamental to how the audit is conducted. Auditors may play on a sense of shared responsibility; they are there from say an NGO run scheme and the farmers have also bought into the scheme. Auditors may adopt a more overtly sympathetic approach if problems are identified that are not necessarily the farmer’s fault. Alternatively, auditors may maintain an entirely distant, professional detachment, preferring to work without the farmer present.
- Resource-based measures lend themselves more readily to ‘objective’ and numerical assessment procedures than do ABMs, which are seen by many producers (rightly or wrongly) as more inherently ‘subjective’ or ‘impressionistic’. An important role for the assessors and auditors thereby becomes the legitimation, through practice, of these potentially contested approaches.

- A shift in rationale of assessment from judging conformity to identifying welfare problems. At the level of the assessment, one of the most profound changes associated with the use of ABMs becomes the practical implications of the shift of attention from the resources and management procedures of husbandry to the animal bodies themselves and to animal behaviour, where the connection between management activity and animal welfare has to be established.
- The importance of the ‘general impression’. We believe that the ‘general impression’, will play a greater role in those assessment procedures that employ an integrated combination of animal- and resource-based measures than is currently the case with solely income-based assessment. Certainly, we observe its use primarily amongst assessors associated with those schemes that are actively seeking the integration of ABMs.

However, it is important to stress again that, for the moment, ABMs are not formally incorporated into the vast majority of current assessment procedures.

LESSONS FOR THE WELFARE QUALITY ASSESSMENT TOOL

Welfare assessment is unlikely to become an independent, stand-alone procedure. As the research conducted in SP1 clearly demonstrated, on its own, farm animal welfare does not sell products (Buller and Cesar, 2006; Roe and Higgin, 2007; Roe and Buller, 2008c). Welfare assessment currently operates, and is being developed, as a component of broader quality assurance, involving a range of on-farm practices, resources, equipment, impacts and so on. Significantly, where assurance bodies (chiefly NGOs, at least within the UK) are beginning to explore or employ ABMs, they are doing so, first, in a tentative and experimental way and, second, by seeking to introduce only a *small* range of additional measures into existing assessment procedures.

Furthermore, accepting that a major impetus for assurance schemes (and the assessments that underlie them) is market competition and consumer fidelity – and is hence, largely *product driven* – we might assume that certain welfare issues (such as, for example, lameness) are likely to be given greater prominence than others in the development of certain assurance schemes and in consumer attention. This would mitigate against the easy implementation (and marketability) of a tool that derives a single algorithm, itself derived from composite protocols, as its end point. It also raises the issue of equivalence across different species systems.

Assuming that the Welfare Quality tool will operate within and/or alongside existing assessment procedures and assurance schemes, a critical implementation issue for the Welfare Quality tool is going to be the flexibility and adaptability of the protocols tested to the practical, evidential and management needs of existing assurance schemes and assessment procedures. This, we believe, will necessitate a possibly significant reduction or restriction in the overall number of measures applied – something already acknowledged in the testing of the poultry and beef cattle components of the Welfare Quality tool (Butterworth et al., 2008; Forkman and Keeling, 2008; Winckler et al., 2008). The key issue here is how far that restriction might feasibly go without damaging the coherence and reliability of the Welfare Quality tool. As such, we might envisage a series of different implementation scenarios for the Welfare Quality tool (ranging from the full stand-alone assessment tool to a range of individual measures and including such alternatives as a ‘lite’ version, tailor-made and targeted protocols, an assessment/follow up model, various degrees of self-assessment – for example, regarding levels of lameness in dairy cattle – and so on) (Buller, 2009).

Although, few if any ABMs are formally included in current assessment practices for assurance schemes at present, the Welfare Quality assessment protocols provide a sound scientific and practical rationale for their greater use. Our research shows that many of those actively seeking greater use of ABMs in assurance schemes are uncertain as to how to go about this; how to assess animal outcomes in scientific terms, how to operationalise such assessment in practical terms. Informally, assessors are using certain ABMs – often as indicators of resource deficiencies. A number of assurance scheme standards mention such concerns as feather pecking in poultry, tail biting in pigs and mastitis and lameness in cattle, but currently lack the mechanisms for accurately (and reliably) assessing their extent. Here the Welfare Quality assessment tool has, potentially, a ready audience if such protocols can be easily translated into existing assessment procedures.

A critical issue here though is viability and repeatability. We have noted in this research that, for many practitioners in the agri-food sector, the case for the ‘repeatability’ and therefore the validity of certain ABMs has yet to be made. We have observed a significant mistrust of certain animal-based assessment procedures in France and a similar concern in the UK that some of the behavioural assessments proposed lack credibility (or are not assessing behaviour that the farmer has any control over or influence on). The eventual ‘roll out’ of the Welfare Quality tool, or components of it, will provide scientific assurance on these points. While the experience of the assessors testing the Welfare Quality tool suggests that the farmers concerned responded positively to the protocols, were they to be judged non-compliant on the basis of these protocols within a formalised assessment framework, they might, understandably, require reassurance over the legitimacy of the procedures, both in scientific and in practical farm-management terms. The Welfare Quality tool – and the animal-based protocols derived from it – should be aspirational rather than punitive, which has implications for their integration into assurance schemes based largely upon tick-box, resource-based compliance assessment.

A further issue is that of the time taken to conduct the assessment. Our observations revealed a growing concern amongst farmers in general over the increasing number of farm visits, inspections and assessments and a growing pressure on certain schemes to combine visits/assessments as much as possible. The Welfare Quality tool incorporates resource/management-based measures, as well as farmer interviews, that might be covered by existing assessment procedures (both protocols and interview questions). Although, the various reports on the current testing of the Welfare Quality protocol all suggest that on-farm assessment was not perceived as intrusive by the farmers concerned and required little input from them (Scott et al., 2008; Winckler et al., 2008), the other side of the coin is the time spent by the assessors and the costs thereof. Our research shows that assessors, often remunerated on a per-assessment basis, seek, where possible, to carry out two or even three per day. With the exception of the Welfare Quality poultry assessment (4 hours), this would not be possible with the current time-span recorded for the WQ assessment tool (5–8 hours for dairy and beef farms, 5–6 hours for sows and growing pigs). Furthermore, if the WQ tool were to be integrated into existing assurance scheme assessment procedures, the time-span would be considerably longer (though certain measures would be common to both).

To date, the Welfare Quality tool and its different species variations have been and are being tested scientifically for validity, reliability and feasibility as measures of welfare in relative (scientific) isolation. We firmly believe that they also need to be tested as components of assurance scheme assessment as one important option of implementation. This would entail working with existing scheme assessors and allowing their ‘on the ground’ experience of on-farm assessment to feed into the tool’s design. Such worthwhile collaborative effort could form the basis for a future research project.

We note also that, for a number of species (notably beef and pigs), the developed protocol is ‘not yet particularly feasible in outdoor farms’ (Scott et al., 2008; see also Winckler et al., 2008). Given that many of the organisations experimenting with ABMs actively promote outdoor and free-range systems, this may be an impediment to the wider take-up of the WQ assessment tool.

What is nevertheless clear from this research is that ABMs and a more integrated approach that combines input and output measures are coming and are growing, because of concern over the limitation of purely resource- and input-based measures, because of increasing consumer interest and the need to respond to that interest (particular consumer interest in the relative ‘naturalness’ of farm animals) and because of the sense (whether anthropomorphised or not) that farm animals should lead a life worth living (FAWC, 2009). But also because the science is saying that ABMs are a truer way of assessing welfare. The NGOs are experimenting with ABMs and, as we have seen so often, the NGOs, where they have direct purchase on consumer interests, do frequently drive the agenda here, with retailers and food processors following (we have seen this with ‘green consumerism’ and ‘organics’ and ‘fair-trade’ and so on). So, given that a more integrated approach is coming, Welfare Quality, which has been working on just such an integrated approach, is going to be extremely well placed to direct and influence the manner in which future integrated assessment schemes are developed and rolled out.

Second, although there is a growing acknowledgement of the need for integrated, more ABM-focused assessment, few of the actors involved are confident in their knowledge of how to go about doing it. There is a great deal of uncertainty and little real on-the-ground experimentation. While some NGOs and some producer groups, and one or two retailers, are looking at ABMs and a more integrated assessment (although they have some way to go), the processes are uncertain and the scientific basis for the assessments being played around with still experimental – the subject of doctoral theses and experimental protocols rather than distinctive labelling schemes. Here Welfare Quality represents an enormous potential of scientific expertise and practical on the ground experimentation – a sense of legitimacy and validation not just for ABMs individually, and their actual use as assessed welfare parameters, but for an integrated assessment system.

Third, the real issue is going to be how the various assessment protocols that constitute the Welfare Quality tool are employed. And here we need to think carefully about the strategies of an eventual roll-out of the assessment tool. Our research has focused on existing assurance schemes with a view to looking at how an integrated assessment scheme such as the one we are actively developing in Welfare Quality would fit in with the issues and

concerns of current assurance schemes and assessment protocols. We have reported on what relevant actors see as the difficulties involved. Looking beyond that, however, and to the growing (but by no means universal) support for an EU-wide welfare label, then the context is admittedly somewhat different. But of course, that raises a whole series of different questions. An assurance scheme is only as good as its assessment.

Part II

Certifying Welfare: Integrating Welfare Assessments into Assurance Procedures – A European Perspective: 25 Key Points

by

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WELFARE ASSESSMENT: POINTS 1–6

Point 1

Assurance schemes, whether sponsored by NGOs specifically seeking to promote higher standards of farm animal welfare, or supply-chain actors seeking to respond to consumer concerns or to meet legal responsibilities for higher and more transparent production standards, will continue to be the most effective way of improving farm animal welfare in the near future. More flexible than legislation in both driving standards upwards and in responding to local conditions, assurance schemes linked to product segmentation and brand positioning can facilitate favourable market responses to the additional cost of meeting higher welfare levels.

Point 2

With the growing use of assurance schemes in the food sector, scheme membership is shifting *from* being a means of producers and other food actors gaining additional product value through quality labelling to a more generic entry requirement to retailer shelves, though there are significant variations across Europe in the scale and pace of this shift. However, to be effective as a mechanism for innovation and the driving of welfare standards upwards, there needs to be a market advantage to additional compliance.

Point 3

Across Europe, the use of assurance schemes in promoting higher levels of farm animal welfare is highly variable.¹ While in the UK, most domestic pork and poultry is produced, transported and slaughtered under assurance schemes, elsewhere the proportions of animal products produced under assurance schemes is far less, either because legislative regulation is considered sufficient or because of the later development of assurance. Nevertheless, in many countries assurance schemes are clearly growing as a means of quality regulation,

¹ There is no Europe-wide definition of an assurance scheme. For the purposes of this report, and the research that underlies it, we define an assurance scheme as a formalized voluntary scheme; it incorporates: first, a set of verifiable standards of production; second, criteria for inspection; and third, third-party certification, which producers can join to assure customers, whether consumers or other food chain actors, that certain standards have been maintained and complied with in the production process.

which has clear implications for their utility as mechanisms for improving farm animal welfare.

Point 4

Different national profiles emerge concerning the objectives and institutional framing of assurance schemes across different EU states. In France, the more visible assurance schemes are predominantly organised around the notions of gustative quality and locational provenance. In the UK, while these are emerging as criteria in certain areas, notions of production chain transparency, brand protection, food (and thereby human) health and animal health are the principal concerns, along with market position and product segmentation. Similarly, while regionally specific producer groups are among the major assurance scheme developers and operators in France, retailers and national professional bodies dominate in the UK. Integrating welfare assessments into existing schemes needs to take into account these varying scheme objectives and the different institutional frameworks within which they operate.

Point 5

Higher welfare animal products, carrying a label/logo of an assurance scheme, are generally sold to consumers as quality items, thereby generating a higher price. Yet, only parts of the animal carcass are explicitly valorised as such. Other cuts and carcass parts may enter more standard product chains where there is no additional value to be created explicitly from their higher standard. While this means that there are potentially a lot more animal products conforming to higher welfare standards within the market than specific labelling would indicate, it also suggests that a degree of such segmentation is essential if higher prices obtained for 'quality' products are to act as a motor for adopting higher standards as a whole. In other words, once the price differential is removed, there will be less incentive to be innovative in seeking higher welfare standards.

Point 6

Finally, our substantial comparative review of the role and place of farm animal welfare in food retailing across Europe clearly demonstrated that, while welfare conditions were a growing component of many assurance schemes, they were very rarely, if ever, the sole criteria around which products were segmented, identified or labelled or deemed in conformity. Welfare is perceived as a component of, amongst others, quality. Welfare conditions, and thus welfare assessments, thereby have to be integrated into, and be compatible with, schemes that contain a variety of different quality objectives.

8

WELFARE ASSESSMENT: POINTS 7–12

Point 7

To date, welfare assessments included within existing assurance schemes, whether those run by NGOs, retailers or professional bodies, are focused, almost exclusively, upon management and resource criteria. The tried-and-tested assessment of such criteria has developed generally alongside the growth of minimum standards legislation, the technology and infrastructure of animal husbandry and the science of both welfare and welfare assessment. As such, they have become placed centrally both within the legitimacy and profile of schemes (and thereby the market position occupied by the associated products and brands) and within farm management practices and investment programmes. Changes to assessment procedures need to articulate with these more established concerns.

Point 8

The practice of welfare assessment within assurance schemes formally combines document verification and confirmation with on-site assessment of compliances (whether through ‘tick box’ audits or otherwise). However, in practice, the largely subjective ‘general feel’ of the farm is also an important element of assessment (and can be based upon significant assumptions about how consumers might perceive farm practices).

Point 9

Critical to the audit process is the relationship of farmer to auditor or assessor. Auditors are ‘not the police’ and, depending on the nature of the assurance scheme, their relationship to farmers can vary between professional detachment (for the larger, industry schemes) and more collective engagement (more associated with voluntary schemes to which both farmer and auditor have a commitment).

Point 10

Under conventional assessment procedures, the objective is to ensure conformity to standards and to seek resource- and management-based remedies to any identified resource and management problems that might threaten compliance to pre-established standards.

We might refer to this as a compliance model, where both standard levels and assurance procedures are generically determined.

Point 11

A tension exists within auditing procedures between, on the one hand, the need for integrated and comparable cross-species and cross-system information and, on the other hand, the need to specify issues arising from specific systems or species. In practice, some systems (for example dairy, pigs and poultry) are more intensively audited than others (for example, lamb and beef). Maintaining sufficient flexibility across systems and species is a real challenge for any generic assessment scheme

Point 12

It needs to be remembered that, as assurance schemes are becoming an important element in market segmentation, brand positioning and consumer fidelity, the procedures, technologies and personnel of assessment and auditing also become factors of competition and, in effect, marketable resources.

THE GRADUAL INTRODUCTION OF ANIMAL-BASED MEASURES: POINTS 13–18

Point 13

Despite the dominance of resource- and management-focused welfare assessment measures within assurance schemes, recent years have seen a considerable growth in interest in developing and applying animal-based measures (hereafter ABMs) as formal (as a commercial requirement) and as informal (through experimental phases about their usefulness).

Point 14

To date, practical examples of the use of ABMs within assurance schemes are limited. Requirements for the French ‘Good Husbandry Charter’ for dairy and beef cattle include a series of mandatory body lesion and injury assessments and minimum conformity levels as well as basic scoring for body cleanliness. Similar assessments are used more informally in the UK as likely indicators of resource-based non-compliance but are not, as yet, formally integrated into assessment scoring. Feather pecking in laying hens, aggressive behaviour in pigs and mastitis in cattle are mentioned in the relevant standards, though assessment procedures for these indicators are not yet specified. In the UK, the Soil Association is assessing the possible use of five ABMs for cattle and hens, drawn from the Bristol Welfare Assurance Programme (BWAP). The RSPCA are developing a smaller number of ABMs to informally benchmark farmers within the Freedom Food scheme, but the results are not included within any assessment criteria. BPEX is currently looking at various animal-based measures on an experimental basis. Finally, the supermarket chain Tesco is experimenting, under their ‘Sustainable Dairy Project, with the training of their dairy farmers in the use of mobility scoring for lameness in dairy cattle. Other professional bodies and food chain actors are also actively exploring the potential of ABMs in future assurance scheme development. It is important to note, however, that ABMs are emerging as specific targeted instruments, acting alongside more conventional forms of welfare and farm assessment. They are not seen as a replacement for more conventional means.

Point 15

Animal-based measures are perceived by an increasing number of actors as both valid and necessary components of on-farm welfare assessment. In addition to the more customary arguments for animal-based, rather than resource-based, measures of an individual animal's welfare, the following attitudes are revealed:

- ABMs as a means of granting validity to existing schemes, particularly for those promoting additional welfare commitments but who nevertheless feel vulnerable in the market place relying solely on resource or management-based measures;
- ABMs as a means of identifying limitations in resource-based measures;
- ABMs as a mechanism in market segmentation and consumer reassurance;
- ABMs as a means of (and as an internal scheme management mechanism for) recognising, benchmarking and validating good husbandry and stock management practice;
- ABMs as a valuable additional (rather than replacement) and targeted component of assurance for those schemes that seek to differentiate themselves in the market;
- ABMs as a means of generating discussion of welfare and welfare assessment.

Point 16

ABMs are nonetheless problematic for assurance scheme bodies and their associated actors. A number of specific concerns might be identified:

- the cost of carrying out on-farm animal-based assessments;
- the resources, in time and in personnel, needed for assessment;
- the repeatability and assessor confidence levels associated with animal-based assessments;
- the subsequent quantification of ABMs;
- periodicity and seasonality of assessment (winter vs. summer assessment, age of stock, at which point in an animal's life is its welfare assessed?);
- the problem that ABMs are felt to merely reveal existing resource issues (for example, lameness in pigs being 'caused' by the nature of the flooring) would be more accurately and more effectively identified by resource-based measures;
- difficulties (time, money and the accurate identification of causes of failure) of achieving compliance;
- issue of generic welfare failures, where consistent and/or high rates of 'failure' reveal and call into question the wider system or breed selection;
- environmental, genetic and other 'causes' of non compliance lying beyond management- and resource-based remedies;
- ABMs and product quality rationales, where statutory or regulatory definitions of 'quality' preclude measures unrelated to the taste, health and gustative properties of the product;
- mistrust, amongst producers and others, of the pertinence of certain animal behaviour assessments;

- ABMs and the possibility of duplication with animal health legislation;
- the reductionism of specific animal-based assessments to a single farm-based algorithm;
- difficulties of employing ABMs in conveying information to consumers – a critical concern for food chain actors as few of the ABMs would, it is felt, yield ‘consumer friendly’ messages;
- unacceptability of penalising producers for welfare problems that originate in off-farm practices or events or ‘Acts of God’.

Point 17

The introduction of ABMs to welfare assessment raises the question of when and how such measures are applied and assessed. A number of different actual or potential integration strategies might be identified:

- integrating ABMs into standard farm assessments or keeping them separate;
- using ABMs as a statutory or mandatory requirement for specific voluntary welfare labelling or certification schemes;
- making more use of abattoir-led ABMs in farm assessment and assurance conformity;
- increasing the use of vet visits in ABM assessment or, where appropriate, in the delivery of advisory actions following assessment;
- making increasing use of new technologies of observation and monitoring;
- increasing deployment of self-assessment procedures for certain measures (coupled with associated farmer training);
- selective use of ABMs – as accompaniments to more conventional measures;
- use of breed and/or individual animal selection to meet ABM targets and/or criteria;
- variable potential of ABMs and strategies across different product sectors, but also across different countries and institutional contexts.

Point 18

The gradual deployment of ABMs in welfare assessment is likely to have a significant impact upon the practice of on-farm assessments and audits.

- The shift towards increasing use of ABMs potentially challenges the traditional relationship of the inspector/assessor to the farmer/stock person and arguably places a greater role on more discursive interaction. The shift in the focus of assessment from what the producer does (inputs) to the effects of what the producer does (outputs) critically necessitates processes of feedback in cases where the latter reveal failures in the former. How the feedback takes place, how ‘measurement’ is translated into improvement and through what mechanisms, will fundamentally alter the assessor–producer relationship.

- Resource-based measures lend themselves more readily to ‘objective’ and numerical assessment procedures (and therefore to algorithms) than do ABMs that can be seen as more inherently ‘subjective’, open to challenge and displaying lower confidence levels, and therefore less acceptable to farmers as the basis for determining compliance failure. Part of the role of the assessor will need to shift towards one of justifying the practices and responding to criticisms of the method. Moreover, the growing use of ABMs may well necessitate additional procedures for arbitration in cases of dispute over welfare failures.
- A shift in rationale of assessment from judging conformity in management and resources to identifying welfare problems of individual animals (and the causes of those problems). One of the principal challenges of animal-based measures is going to be identifying correctly those areas over which the farmer has responsibility, and which can therefore address any problems and those that are seemingly beyond his or her effective control. Where animal-based assessments reveal failures, or unacceptable scores, assessors are going to need to respond extremely sensitively.
- As the use of ABMs becomes more widespread within assurance schemes, there is likely to be a shift, within certain schemes, from a sense of collective responsibility, where farmer and assessor are working towards a shared goal in the promotion of a scheme or type of farming, to a greater sense of individual responsibility, under which farmers are charged with delivering acceptable welfare outcomes.
- The increased importance of the ‘general impression’. The high apparent ‘correlation’ between the general impression and Welfare Quality tool during test visits suggests that the ‘general impression’ can play a greater role in ABM assessment.
- The deferral of responsibility. By assessing outcomes rather than inputs, the issue of responsibility becomes paramount with possible ramifications for legal obligation and the exercise of ‘due diligence’.

INTEGRATING THE WELFARE QUALITY ASSESSMENT TOOL: POINTS 19–25

Point 19

Many of those actively seeking greater use of ABMs in assurance schemes are uncertain as to how to go about this, how to assess animal outcomes in scientific terms, how to operationalise such assessment in practical terms. Here, the science of the Welfare Quality assessment tool has, potentially, a ready audience. However, and crucially, the Welfare Quality tool needs to carefully consider the particular challenges of implementing ABMs in terms of how the science fits into the competing and often highly varied rationalities of marketing, farming and auditing across Europe.

Point 20

The Welfare Quality tool offers a comprehensive, integrated and holistic assessment procedure. The current development of, and experimentation with, animal-based measures by various food chain actors, however, suggests that a more selective and therefore partial set of measures is likely to be more immediately compatible with existing assurance schemes and procedures. How the single algorithm of the current tool could be subdivided into more specific sub-algorithms might accord with a more gradual and sectorally differentiated adoption of the tool by food chain actors.

Point 21

The Welfare Quality tool has, we believe, significant implications not only for the mechanisms and process of assessment but also for the practice and performance of assessment. Critically, the tool needs to be tested as a component of existing assurance scheme assessment and in parallel with existing advisory procedures. This would entail working with existing scheme assessors and allowing their ‘on the ground’ experience of on-farm assessment to feed into the tool’s design, its application and its validity as a means both of benchmarking good practice and of improving welfare on the farm.

Point 22

With its central and explicit development of animal-based, animal-focused measures, the Welfare Quality tool raises critically the issue of sampling and periodicity. The potential for animal-based assessment varies considerably with the stages of animal development, environmental factors such as seasonality and the cycle of production. For it to be a meaningful mechanism for assessing animal welfare, these issues need to be standardised as much as possible within different systems.

Point 23

The Welfare Quality tool potentially transfers a considerable burden of responsibility to the producer as the emphasis of assessment shifts from the provision of good welfare conditions to ensuring the quality of individual animal lives. This is arguably a paradigmatic shift (the second in a 200 year process that sees the assessment of human/farm animal relations move, first, from protection against cruelty to welfare and, second, from welfare to life quality). As such, it raises a number of broader social and legal questions with which the project needs to engage. It also has significant practical implications. As the focus of concern moves from the welfare standards inherent in systems and processes of production to the quality of life of individual farm animals, so those individual animal histories become a key focus. The inherent paradox of ABM assessment is that, once assessed, such individual histories disappear again into the summative assessment scores attributed to units and processes of production.

Point 24

The Welfare Quality tool is positioned as a component of potential market responses to consumer demand for greater information on the farm animal welfare conditions of animal-based products; the assumption being that greater, more accurate and more transparent information will lead more consumers to purchase products with higher welfare provenance. However, we need to acknowledge that the market is not necessarily a universal panacea for improving welfare standards and that the shift towards ABMs reveals market limitations in this objective: notably, its dependence upon 'ability to pay', its essentially hedonistic and non-cumulative nature, its avoidance of non-market-friendly aspects of the production process (notably slaughter) and its selective use of scientific evidence.

Point 25

One of the combined effects of the paradigmatic shift identified in Point 23 and the limitations of the market identified in Point 24 is a move towards the notion of farm animal welfare as a 'public good' over and above its current status as a private and thereby transferable (marketable) good. This might have major implications for its regulation and

governance and opens potentially the door for forms of remuneration as a public good (as is currently being experimented with in the Republic of Ireland, and elsewhere, under the Pillar 2 of the Common Agricultural Policy). In terms of implementation and ‘roll out’, the role and place of the Welfare Quality tool within the evolving policy environment needs to be carefully considered.

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