

Department of Agricultural Economics
University of Pisa

**Consumer Concerns
about Animal Welfare
and Food Choice
Report on focus groups
Italy**

Mara Miele and Vittoria Parisi

Copyright

This online paper may be cited or briefly quoted in line with the usual academic conventions. You may also download it for your own personal use. This paper must not be published elsewhere (e.g. mailing lists, bulletin boards etc.) without the author's explicit permission. But please note that

- if you copy this paper you must include this copyright note
- this paper must not be used for commercial purposes or gain in any way,
- you should observe the conventions of academic citation in a version of the following form:

Mara Miele, Consumer Concerns about animal welfare and the impact on food choice - Report on focus groups Italy, published by University of Pisa.

**Consumer Concerns about Animal Welfare and Food
Choice
EU FAIR CT 98-3678**

**Report on focus groups
Italy**

Mara Miele and Vittoria Parisi

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
General concerns about food.....	3
Concern about animal welfare.....	3
Meanings of animal welfare.....	3
Sources and reliability of information.....	3
Responsibility.....	3
Advantages and disadvantages of higher animal welfare.....	3
Willingness to pay.....	3
Farm animal production systems.....	3
SECTION I	3
Introduction	3
1.1 Aims of the focus groups.....	3
1.2 The literature review revisited.....	3
1.2 Discussion Guide.....	3
SECTION II	3
Method	3
2.1 The Focus Group Method.....	3
2.2 Pilot focus group.....	3
Mery.....	3
2.3 The Procedure.....	3
2.5 The Analysis.....	3
SECTION III	3
<i>CONCERNS ABOUT FOOD RELATED ISSUES</i>	3
3.1 Nature of consumer concerns.....	3
<i>CONCERNS / HEALTH / HORMONES</i>	3
3.2 Meanings of animal welfare.....	3
3.3 Information.....	3
3.4 Responsibility for animal welfare.....	3
3.5 Advantages and disadvantages of higher animal welfare standards.....	3
3.6 Willingness to pay.....	3
SECTION IV	3
<i>FARM ANIMAL PRODUCTION SYSTEMS</i>	3
4.1 Eggs.....	3
4.2 Chicken.....	3
4.3 Pork.....	3
4.4 Beef.....	3
4.5 Veal.....	3
SECTION V	3
DISCUSSION.....	3
SECTION VI	3
CONCLUSION	3
6.1 Implication for in-depth interviews.....	3
SECTION VII	3
PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS	3
REFERENCES	3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

General concerns about food

- Consumers in Italy are spontaneously concerned about food safety, health and quality.
- Italian consumers are particularly concerned about ‘unnatural’ and ‘risky’ chemicals used as animal feed additives, such as antibiotics and hormones.
- Health concerns are especially relevant to consumers if in the household there are small children, this is remarkably evident in the case of eggs and fresh meat (beef).
- The role of media campaigns is crucial to address consumers concerns: in the Italian case this is clearly evident for BSE and salmonella.

Concern about animal welfare

- Both from literature review and from focus groups discussion it emerged that Italian consumers spontaneously very seldom prompt animal welfare among their concerns about food.
- When asked about animal welfare, consumers refer to animal welfare as an indicator of healthier and tastier products.
- Animal welfare, as a concern, is legitimised through association with human health and safety.
- Italian consumers expressed particular concern over battery cages and veal crates. Least concerns about dairy products.
- In the Italian case the number of animal friendly produced products is very limited and the organic products represented almost the only experience that consumers had of ‘animal-friendly’ produced products. As a consequence of that, only the consumers living in cities and towns in which these products are available could say why they were interested in them. For the organic products the most quoted attributes have been healthiness, better quality and better taste.
- Consumers used the concepts of ‘natural’ and ‘humane’ to describe the ways in which farm animals should be treated.

Meanings of animal welfare

- Consumers in Italy measured the welfare of animals in terms of closeness to natural condition.
- Most consumers believed that if the natural condition is not reproducible for farm animals, at least they should be treated ‘humanely’ and should be kept in production systems well managed and strongly regulated and controlled.
- A number of consumers in Italy associated animal welfare with organic production and perceived the modern-intensive production techniques as the most unfriendly for animals and the most risky for consumers.

Sources and reliability of information

- Italian consumers received most of their information from the media, especially in occasion such as food scandal (BSE, Dioxine, Salmonella) but, as a recent phenomenon, received information also from specific animal rights movements campaigns (such as LAV).
- Most consumers felt that they were not well informed about animal production systems. Many of them suspected that this lack of information was a deliberated choice of food industry in order to keep consumer unaware of the way in which food is produced and declared that the Government should provide objective information in this field. Retailing companies have also been blamed for not providing sufficient information on this issue.
- Most consumers could not express opinion on who they would trust most. The reason of this difficulty is the lack of products experience. In the case of organic products they expressed trust in the EU certification system.

Responsibility

- The issue of responsibility created some discomfort among the participants. They tended to assume theoretical responsibility but claimed that, as individuals, they were powerless to make any substantial changes.
- Responsibility was attributed to big producers adopting intensive rearing systems, and to a lesser degree to big retailers. Small producers have been defined as the subjects that most likely would guarantee the higher animal welfare to farm animals.

Advantages and disadvantages of higher animal welfare

- There was a consensus that consumers would benefit from improved animal welfare through the improved quality, safety and taste of the products.
- Italian consumers feared that improved welfare would result in increased costs which would be passed on to the consumer.
- Participants in Italy claimed that improved animal welfare would lead to reduced use of chemicals, and reduced pollution of the environment.

Willingness to pay

- All the participants to the groups, declared that they were willing to pay more in principle for improved animal welfare. The lack of availability of animal friendly products on the actual markets made this statement very hypothetical, and most participants could not say how much more they would have been prepared to pay for it.
- The consumers who said they would pay more, they believed that the products would have better quality and safety.

Farm animal production systems

- Most of the participants disapproved of the battery cage system for laying hens, stating that it was ‘cruel’ and ‘unnatural’ and that reminded a “concentration camp”. The barn system, with increased space allowance and access to natural light, was considered more acceptable but the vast majority of consumers expressed a preference for free-range production, as long as disease was controlled.
- The indoor broiler system was generally perceived as ‘packed’ and ‘unhealthy’. Most of the participants preferred the free-range system and believed that it would provide better quality products.
- All the participants disapproved of the tethers and stalls for sows, describing them as ‘unnecessary’, ‘cruel’. There was also objection to the restriction of the farrowing crate. The loose housing system was perceived to be a reasonable compromise. The outdoor rearing was perceived as the most ‘natural’ and, therefore, the ideal system. The indoor finishing did not present any significant problems.

- There was generally less concern for the beef systems, although there was a general preference for the outdoor system. Most of the concern related to BSE and cattle feed.
- Many of the participants thought that the veal crates should be banned. There was a great deal of concern about the inadequate diet, separation from mothers and other calves and restricted movement. The grouped housing system was preferred, but a number of participants objected to the production of veal per se.

SECTION I

Introduction

This section describes the objectives of the focus groups, the most relevant information from the previous report on literature and the design of the Discussion Guide.

1.1 Aims of the focus groups

The aims of the second stage of the project were the following:

- To understand what animal welfare actually means to consumers in Italy.
- To provide initial indications of the nature of consumer concerns about animal welfare in Italy.
- To aid the design of the semi-structured interview schedule to be utilised in Stage III of the project.
- To test certain aspects of the methodology applied in Stage III of the project.

In the second stage of the project focus groups discussion has been used to investigate the two points listed above and in order to get enough information for the design of the in-depth interviews with consumers.

Particularly, the focus groups were meant to understand consumers concerns about animal welfare in the context of food production. In the Italian context, as it is reported in the literature review, this topic has been little investigated and, more remarkably, till very recently, the few studies conducted in this field have shown that there was little concern about animal welfare, generally, and least concern in food production. This qualitative stage of the project aimed to verify whether the consumers concerns about animal welfare had changed, how consumers would express such a concerns and how much it would have an impact in food choice.

1.2 The literature review revisited

In the first report on the Italian case it was underlined the limited number of studies conducted in this field, both by public institutions (universities) and private enterprises (food retailing chains). It was also pointed the limited presence and very recent introduction of “animal friendly produced “ foods in the Italian food markets and the scarce relevance given to this topic by the mass media, at least up until the time of the BSE scare (1996).

Most of less recent studies conducted in Italy on animal welfare of farms animals are very technical studies oriented to assess the impact of the welfare of specific animals (bovines for beef production, pigs for cured ham production) on the quality of the product for human consumption: tenderness and colour and the meat in the case of bovines, taste and ageing performances in the case of pig for cured ham production.

Nevertheless, during the last ten years, there are signs of growing concerns about animal rights and animal welfare issues. This change has been promoted it has been intensified the number of campaigns, promoted by Environment or Animal Rights/Welfare Associations against the commerce of fur coats, for closing zoos and banning the use of animals in circus shows, it is remarkably grown the number of public initiatives, with nation wide TV campaigns promoted by the government against dogs' abandonment (typical phenomenon at the beginning of each summer) and dogs' rearing for fights (Pit-Bull). In 1991 a new national regulation (L. n. 282/91) on stray dogs and cats and pets' rearing was approved, which has been followed by several more specific regional regulations on the same matter, and in 1993 there has been another important regulation, L. n. 473/93, which modified the article 727 of the Italian Penal Code, and declared that animal mistreatments is a crime punishable as violence towards "living organisms" instead of the previous definition of crime against "human moral".

Recently the animal welfare issue has risen concerns in the cosmetics production, and it has grown remarkably the market for the “against animal testing products”, such as the ones offered by Body Shop chain.

Most interesting are the results of some recent research conducted by Eurogroup for Animal Welfare that concentrate attention on consumer concern about animal welfare and food habits. This surveys show that Italian consumers are less concerned about animal welfare than north European consumers.

1.2 Discussion Guide

The British partner on the basis of the findings of the five national reports on literature review proposed a discussion guide to explore consumer concerns about animal welfare and the impact on food choice; this discussion guide has been translated, tested and successively broadly revisited by the Italian team and successively with the other partners. It was evident since the first pilot group that the topic was more unfamiliar to Italian consumers than to the British or Irish consumers, and the discussion guide entailed a level of knowledge of (or interested in) the topic not always present in Italian consumers. A video of various intensive and extensive production methods for different animal-based food products was also prepared in collaboration with the other partners and the description of the different system of production has been prepared by the British partner in collaboration with Eurogroup for Animal Welfare. The video description has been translated into Italian and tested with the video itself and the focus group guide in two pilot groups at the Dept. of Agricultural Economics of the University of Pisa.

SECTION II

Method

This section describes and evaluates the focus group method. The pilot group results are presented and the procedure for the following four groups is described. Demographic data on the focus group participants is presented here. The analytical technique used to examine the focus group transcriptions is also outlined.

2.1 The Focus Group Method

Focus groups discussion is one of the most adopted research method in marketing, political science and other social sciences, to obtain information on topics not well, or not yet, investigated. It is generally used for identifying similarities and/or differences in consumers, to determine the language used to define specific products and services and to generate a range of hypotheses on the subject matter. Usually the focus group discussion is used as first stage of an investigation and it followed by other types of inquiry, such as surveys or interviews, to better grasp the relevance of the issues listed or elicited in the group discussion and the quantitative aspects of the research. Group discussions can be used also as interpretative tools at the last stage of a research for understanding and interpreting quantitative data already collected.

Focus groups discussions have been used in the present project, at this stage, because they tap into human tendencies, and on the assumption that attitudes and perceptions relating to the concept of animal welfare are developed in part by interaction with other people. Moreover, we hoped to promote a self-disclosure among participants by creating a non-judgemental and permissive environment, in order to unravel the meanings of animal welfare for the different groups of consumers and to reach a better understanding of the range of issues comprise in the concept of animal welfare.

Therefore the main purpose of the group discussion was to provide a richness of data about consumers opinions, perceptions and attitudes towards the products labelled as “animal friendly” produced, contrasted with the standard animal based products.

2.2 Pilot focus group

The main objectives of the pilot focus group were:

- to check the discussion guide prepared by the Reading group after the first meeting by taking in account the suggestions of the other academic and industrial partners,
- to check the video about the production techniques.

During the first meeting it was agreed to run a pilot focus group with only women, belonging to the broad age group of 30-60 years old.

The pilot focus group has been run in Pisa in January the 19th, 1999. It has been held at the University, meeting room of the Department of Agricultural Economics. The length of the discussion was about 2 hours and a half.

The recruitment involved 10 women, belonging to different socio-economics groups (A –B and C) and to the age group 30-60 years old. We decided to include some people with pets since in the literature review it was listed as a possible factor affecting the relevance of animal welfare.

Only 7 women decided to participate to the group.

In order to create an informal environment refreshments and candies were provided. Various animal products (organic or free-range and conventionally produced) have been displayed on the table in order to stimulate the discussion.

We double recorded the discussion, and transcribed it later.

Pilot focus group Pisa n. 1

	Gender	Age	Occupation	Number of children	Pets
Mery	Female	46	Secretary	1	yes
Concetta	Female	46	Computer scientist	1	yes
Annamaria	Female	46	Housewife	1	no
Bruna	Female	36	University employee	1	no
Maria	Female	40	Cleaning lady	0	no
Monica	Female	38	Librarian	2	no
Maria Grazia	Female	53	Administrative employee	1	no

The discussion guide consisted of two parts: a series of questions around specific topics; and a video showing a series of production techniques for tree species.

The first part of the discussion guide aimed to promote a debate about the following points:

- Level and nature of consumer concern about food production and more specifically about animal products.
- Meanings associated with the term “Animal welfare”.
- Level of concern about animal welfare for animal reared for food production, and eventual difference among species.

- Impact of concern on animal products purchasing choice.
- Willingness to pay for products obtained with higher animal welfare standards.

The video has been proposed to identify what visual representations consumer hold about animal welfare; to help finding more refined definition of animal welfare; and to check consumer information about rearing systems.

Key finding of the pilot group:

- None of the participants has spontaneously addressed “animal welfare” among the concerns in food production techniques.
- Among the concerns have been listed: hormones, antibiotics, chemicals, animal feed, Salmonella and BSE.
- Animal welfare has been defined important for human health or well-being and for quality;

ANNAMARIA:

io sono preoccupata perché credo che il benessere animale corrisponda poi al nostro benessere
I am concerned since I believe that animal welfare affects our well-being.

This point has been widely shared.

- The video has been considered interesting but, at times, intolerable, as in the case of goose force feeding for production of “foie gras”, in the case of the veal crate system and in the case of battery cage for hens.

The opinions expressed in the first pilot group have been quite homogeneous. It has been difficult to conduct the discussion about the meanings of animal welfare: even though most of the participants prompted “natural condition” they did not articulate this definition (they could not say “why” natural condition was considered better than other methods, they just considered this issue self-evident).

None of the participants showed a specific knowledge about animal production techniques or had previously paid attention to this topic. All of them declared to be interest in knowing more about this issue and lamented a lack of information, by the media but also by the supermarket chains that do not adequately inform consumers.

The comments to the video were very homogeneous as well, and all the participants declared to prefer the outdoor systems of production for all the species. On the battery cage system, the force feeding and the veal crate system most

participants have agreed that they should be banned, or, that consumers should stop buying this products for protest.

Given the high homogeneity of opinion in the first focus group we decided to run a second pilot focus group. We followed the same procedure but we decided to broaden the target of consumers in order to have more chances of finding people holding different opinions.

We recruited 10 people (women and men); age group 25-60 years old; socio-economic group A-B. We included some people with pets and a “strongly opinionated person”(member of an “animal rights” group) as discussion catalyst. To the second focus group participated 7 people.

Pilot focus group Pisa n. 2

	Gender	Age	Occupation	Number of children	Pets
Antonella	Female	34	Freelance researcher	0	yes
Marco	Male	50	University employee	2	no
Assunta	Female	28	Unemployed	0	yes
Sara	Female	40	Translator	0	no
Aniello	Male	31	Military employee	0	no
Diego	Male	30	Freelance researcher	0	no
Ezio	Male	57	University professor	0	no

With the second focus group we obtained a wider range of opinions. Some participant clearly declared that they were not concerned at all about animal welfare, and in general, men showed less sensibility to this topic than women and less “willingness to pay” for higher animal welfare standards in food production.

- Two of the participants have spontaneously addressed “animal welfare” among the concerns in food production techniques.

- Among the concerns have been listed: fat and cholesterol, environment, hormones, antibiotics, chemicals, animal feed, Salmonella and BSE.
- Animal welfare has been defined important for animal rights and human health or well-being.
- Moreover a high standard of animal welfare in food production techniques has been pointed to as a goal for a “better or more civilised society”.

The presence of the “strongly opinionated person” has enabled us to unravelling the meanings of animal welfare and to reach better definitions. Even though there were a certain degree of difference in opinions, once again most people agreed on defining animal welfare as “natural condition of life”. One of the explanation for this definition was that:

MARCO

Quando gli animali sono liberi nel loro ambiente naturale probabilmente non sono sempre felici (...) ma questo fatto fa parte della loro vita naturale, se soffrono non è per causa nostra
When the animals are free in nature maybe they are not happy all the time, but that is how they should live; their eventual suffering is not our responsibility.....

So the issue of “animal suffering” it was not considered per se a lack of “welfare” but rather the issue of “responsibility for suffering” became a focus of attention and it has been pointed as a sort of “human failure” to coexist with other living organism.

The participants of this focus groups had a better level of information about animal rearing and production techniques and were more familiar with some of the organically produced products displayed on the table. All the organically produced animal products have been pointed as the highest animal friendly produced products, while the foie gras and battery cage eggs have been pointed as the most “unfriendly”.

Most people did not mention any animal welfare concern for dairy products.

The reaction to the video has been less strong by some participants (two of the three men), at the same time others have defined it intolerable (younger women). It has been difficult to make the participants to articulate preferences or concerns about the single techniques of production. The comments to the video were very short and limited to express approval, for all the outdoor systems, tolerance for bovines, disapproval and concerns for indoor broiler production, and pig production, (the only exception was the loose house system) strong disapproval and

worries for the goose forced feeding, battery cage system and the veal crate system. Some participants declared that they should be banned and this opinion has not been challenged by anyone, not even the one who previously announced to be not concerned or interested in animal welfare issues.

2.3 The Procedure

After the pilot groups we decided with the other partners to revise the first part of the discussion guide (see Appendix), which needed to be shortened. We also decided to cut from the video the goose force feeding (that it is relevant only in France and, to a lesser degree in Italy) and other parts because the video was too long and could have been misleading. Accordingly, we revised also the video description (see Appendix), that in the Italian translation was too long, and did not match with the length of the video.

In March 1999 we conducted a series of 4 focus groups. We decided to run 2 focus groups in Florence (middle size city in the North-Centre of Italy) and 2 in Rome (largest Italian city, in the Centre-South of Italy). Given the low level of general interest towards this issue we opted for two cities in order to maximise the chance to have groups with people holding different opinions.

Recruitment criteria:

Group 1: All Male, aged 25-39, higher education/socio economic status.

Min. 2 with children, from a town.

Group 2: All Female, aged 25-39, higher education/socio economic status. Min. 2 with children, from a city.

Group 3: All Female, aged 40-65, higher education/socio economic status. Min. 2 with children, from a city.

Group 4: All Female, aged 40-65, lower education/socio economic status. Min. 2 with children, from a town.

In all 25-39 years groups, 3 participants in 20's, rest in 30's.

in all 40-65 years groups, 3 participants in 40's, 3 in 50's, rest in 60's.

The recruitment has been done by two specialised agencies (one in Florence, the other one in Rome).

We asked to exclude from the participant people working in the agricultural sector or food business, people working in market research and everybody who had

participated to a focus group during the last three years. Vegetarians as well have been excluded.

All participants received a small incentive (IT. L. 50.000).

In the following tables are listed the characteristics of the participants to the focus groups:

Focus group Roma n. 1

All Female, aged 40-65, higher education/socio economic status. Min. 2 with children, from Rome.

	Gender	Age	Socio-economic status	Occupation	Number of children	Pets
M. Luigia	female	45	High	Manager Monopolio Stato	1	no
M. Letizia	female	57	High	Retired (teacher)	1	no
Paola	female	44	High	Small private enterprise (leather fashion house)	2	no
Rossella	female	48	High	Ingegner (mining)	0	no
Francesca	female	64	High	Antique shop keeper	1	yes
Rossella	female	49	High	Administrative employee	2	no
Giovanna	female	62	High	Music teacher	2	no
Ada	female	60	High	Manager public sector SIAE	0	no
Rosangela	female	55	High	Private Kindergarden owner	1	no
Colomba	Female	52	High	Publisher	0	yes

Focus group Roma n. 2

All Female, aged 25-39, higher education/socio economic status. Min. 2 with children, from Rome

	Gender	Age	Socio-economic status	Occupation	Number of children	Pets
Daniela	female	36	High	Housewife	1	no
Roberta	female	30	High	Professional translator	0	no
Simona	female	29	High	Accountancy consultant	0	yes
Anna	female	28	High	Employee Alenia	0	no
Graziella	female	32	High	Housewife	1	no
Rossana	female	39	High	Teacher	2	no
Monica	female	31	High	Manager Arrow	1	no
Serena	female	25	High	Lawyer	0	no

Focus group Firenze n. 1

All Male, aged 25-39, higher education/socio economic status. Min. 2 with children, from a town.

	Gender	Age	Socio-economic status	Occupation	Number of children	Pets
Leonardo	male	35	High	Employee	0	yes
Leone	male	39	High	Pharmaceutic inspector	2	no
Rocco	male	40	High	Librarian	0	yes
Alessandro	male	28	High	Teacher	0	yes
Gianfelice	male	28	High	Student	0	no
Marco	male	40	High	Employee FS	2	yes
Massimo	male	28	High	Employee	0	yes
Giorgio	male	27	High	Employee	0	no
Giuseppe	male	38	High	?	1	no

Focus group Firenze n. 2

All Female, aged 40-65, lower education/socio economic status. Min. 2 with children, Florence.

	Gender	Age	Socio-economic status	Occupation	Number of children	Pets
M. Grazia	female	53	Low		0	no
M. Vittoria	female	44	Low	Unemployed	0	no
Lucia	female	45	Low	Employee	2	yes
Paola	female	48	Low	Teacher	0	no
M. Pia	female	61	Low	Physiotherapist	2	no
Mariangela	female	50	Low	Housewife	2	no
Patrizia	female	44	Low	Architect	1	no
Stefania	female	40	Low	Housewife	1	yes

2.5 The Analysis

All 4 focus groups have been quite successful as regarding participation (between 8 and 10 participants for each group) and willingness to contribute to the discussion. The length of each discussion has been 2 hours. The revised discussion guide enabled to introduce earlier the theme of animal welfare in food production techniques and the video resulted more balanced. Most participants showed great

interest in the video, nevertheless it did not succeed in making the participants articulating their preference or disapproval for each system, rather it lead them to make a rank of the various systems. In all groups the discussion around the video did not last more than thirty minutes.

The group discussions have been double tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The formatted transcription has been entered in NUD*IST. The texts have been coded by using over eighty free nodes. The line has been used as unit of analysis. Successively an index tree it has been built by identifying the main themes (see Appendix). The Index Tree has been exported in Inspiration and from the visual map obtained it has been revised twice.

NUD*IST it has been first used to explore gender, age, socio-economic status, education, region, pet ownership and children as factors that may affect consumers concerns about animal welfare and the impact on food choice. Subsequently it has used to identifying consumer representations and meanings of animal welfare and knowledge of animal rearing techniques.

Section III

Concerns About Food Related Issues

This section is focused on the concerns elicited by the participants to the focus groups about animal welfare. It attempts to specify the nature of such concerns, and the way in which it has been expressed.

3.1 Nature of consumer concerns

The initial discussion guide question introduced the very general theme of concerns in food production. It allowed spontaneous responses which would give an idea of the relevance of animal welfare issue to consumers in the context of food. Most participants spontaneously prompted concerns about general issue of food quality and safety.

Spontaneous animal welfare concerns have been prompted very sporadically and mainly in relation to human health. But higher concerns have been listed after seeing the video. The issue of knowledge and information on animals reared for food production has been a central theme of all the focus groups and most

participants admitted that their low concern about animal welfare was linked to a lack of knowledge of industrial way of rearing animal for food production.

General concerns about food

There were a number of spontaneous responses to the first question that focused on human health, origin of production, price, and loss of quality. The other concerns have been prompted sporadically. Nevertheless, it seems that the possible impact on human health and on the quality of the products are listed and quoted so often also because they are considered more legitimate or appropriate than other issues, like animal rights, to the majority of the groups participants. This fact can be linked to the composition of the discussion groups. Three of the four groups were only with women between 25 and 60 years old, who represented a good example of the traditional “good mothers” or “wives” in charge of the food for the family.

Environmental protection or animal rights concerns are considered a “luxury”, or “less legitimate issues” in food production, and the people who hold these opinions feel less free or keen to prompt them.

List of Concerns

Concerns/Origin

Concerns/Price

Concerns/Freshness

Concerns/Environment

Concerns/Health

Concerns/Health/Hormons
Concerns/Health/Salmonella
Concerns/Health/Chemicals
Concerns/Health/Antibiotics
Concerns/Health/BSE
Concerns/Health/Animal feed

Concerns/Animal Welfare

Concerns/Hygiene

Concerns/Loss of taste

Concerns / origin

This concern has been prompted spontaneously in all groups and it has been widely shared. Most people referred to country of origin as a proxy of “quality, guarantee, control and safety of the products”. Country of origin has been mentioned also as resource for helping in the purchasing process when other information (e.g. on animal feed, way of rearing, presence of antibiotics in animal feed, control on presence of hormones in animal feed) are not available.

LUIGIA, female, 45, ABC1

anche la provenienza, tutto: geografica, allevamenti, tecnologia, mi preoccupo molto della...(provenienza), se posso, dove riesco, cerco di comprare quello di cui perlomeno riesco a sapere la provenienza.

Origin, about everything: country of origin, way or rearing, technology...I am very concerned about origin, and when I can, I try to buy at least the products I manage to know where they come from...

ROSSELLA(1), female, 48, ABC1

Io credo che più che altro sia importante stabilire la provenienza di ciò che si compra perchè bene o male la bistecca si mette su una piastra a 300C, insomma si cuoce, l'importante è sapere da dove viene, come è cresciuta.

I believe that the most important thing is the origin of the food we buy, because, in a way or another, the steak is cooked at 300C, the important matter is to know where it comes from and how it has been reared”

ROSSELLA(2), female, 49, ABC1

.. diciamo che già una cosa del genere, cioè che sia carne italiana e non importata dall'estero, ti invoglia....

...let's say that such a fact, that it is Italian meat and it does not come from abroad, makes you feel better...

GIANFELICE, male, 28, ABC1

...riguardo alla produzione io vedo (più importante) la provenienza, più che altro per la qualità e il gusto. Mi preoccupa un pò meno che sia stato maltrattato o meno, perchè si sa, se (l'animale) viene ucciso, ha sofferto.

...concerning production I see (more important) origin, more than anything for quality and taste. I worry less about animal welfare, because if the animal has to be killed it is inevitable that he will suffer.

Concerns / health

Health concerns, specifically relating to hormones, antibiotics, salmonella, BSE and animal feed were the most remarkable part of the overall expressed concerns about

food. Among the different products, eggs have been listed the most for salmonella, and the highest concern has been expressed by the participants with children. All types of beef offal, especially liver, have been identified as risky products for antibiotics, chemicals (preservatives, pesticides, additives), animal feed. For this reason these products have been defined unsuitable for children.

Concerns / health / hormones

The use of growth hormones was also viewed as potentially harmful, primarily to children.

ADA, female, 60, ABC1

...a me preoccupa un po' l'uso degli ormoni negli allevamenti, quello mi preoccupa molto...ma è vero che la carne rossa è sempre più piena di estrogeni, ormoni e cose varie?

I am very worried about the use of hormones in animal rearing....it is true that that the red meat is full of hormones and similar chemicals?

STEFANIA, female, 40, pets, C2DE

... bambine che già a dieci anni sono già in fase di sviluppo, e ciò è dovuto alla loro dieta alimentare e quindi è stato detto che succhi di frutta, latte, carne ecc...sono pieni di estrogeni

...nowadays little girls 10 years old become women and this is due to the hormones in milk, meat, fruit juice... all of them are full of estrogens.

Concerns / health / salmonella

The concern about salmonella once again was very much expressed as concern for children.

GRAZIELLA, female, 32, children, ABC1

...per la salmonella, perchè io ho un bambino piccolo, di tre anni, la pediatra un giorno mi ha detto di stare attenta alle uova comprate dal contadino perchè la salmonella si ferma sul guscio, non è all'interno. A questo punto sono più consigliabili le uova confezionate che quelle del contadino perchè (quest'ultime) sono a rischio....sono sicuramente più genuine, ma....

...for salmonella, because I have a small child, three years old, and his doctor recommended me to pay attention to eggs, especially the ones that you buy directly from the farm. Salmonella stays on the shell and does not go inside, therefore are safer the one that you buy in package (...because they have

been check or treated) rather than the previous ones. The farm eggs may be more genuine but they are more risky.

COLOMBA, female, 52, pets, ABC1

...con le uova c'è il problema della salmonella, c'è sempre questa voce che circola.

...regarding eggs there is the problem of salmonella, there are always talks about it.

Concerns/Animal Welfare

The concern for animal welfare it has been prompted spontaneously only sporadically, but once that the subject has been introduced, it lead to a broad discussion. Animal welfare concern has been expressed mostly for the battery cage of eggs production and mostly by participants who had chance to received specific information on this matter. Actually, the LAV (Italian anti-vivi-section league) during the month in which we ran the focus groups was campaigning for the abolition of the battery cage system and the media (TV and national press) gave some attention to this issue.

GIORGIO, male, 27, ABC1

Una cosa che ho visto in televisione, in dei documentari, trasmissioni televisive (.), una cosa che mi ha dato molto fastidio sono gli allevamenti di galline per la produzione di uova. È una cosa che mi ha colpito veramente tantissimo, che ritengo uno sfruttamento (.), non so neanche come definirlo, uno sfruttamento dell'uomo verso un animale inferiore, che non si può ribellare; viene chiuso in una gabbietta che sarà 50 per 50 o anche più piccola. E lei ha soltanto il collo fuori, mangia e fa le uova, mangia e fa le uova...

I saw a program on TV on battery cage system for eggs production. Something really disturbing, upsetting. I have been really impressed, I believe that it is an extreme case of exploitation. I cannot even define it. An exploitation of men over an inferior animal that cannot revolt.(Hens) are kept locked in a small cage, 50x50 cm or less; hens can only keep their necks outside the cage for eating and laying eggs, eating and laying eggs...

GIANFELICE: male, 28, ABC1

...più che altro è la questione della produzione che tende a moltiplicare e a portare avanti questo sfruttamento. Io mi ricordo (.), io vivevo a Matera e i miei nonni avevano la campagna e non c'era nessuno sfruttamento; avevano moltissimi animali, di qualsiasi taglia, dalle carni bianche alle carni rosse, e non vedevo nessuno sfruttamento. Certo, piangevo, come gli altri miei fratelli, quando li prendevano e li uccidevano, ma poi li mangiavamo (.) e a mio avviso è la questione della produzione

delle diverse e varie carni che ci sono, dei grandi supermercati che richiedono un quantitativo superiore a quello di 5-10 anni fa.
...more than anything there is a problem of production, (producers) tend to increase and to keep on exploiting(...) I used to live in Matera (South of Italy) and my grandparents had a farm and there was no exploitation. They had many animals, for for red meat and white meat production but I did not see any exploitation. Of course I would cry like my brothers when it was time to catch and kill them, but later I would eat them.. to me it is an issue of excessive production...nowadays supermarkets ask for higher quantity of what they used to offer five of ten years ago.

MASSIMO, male, 28, ABC1, pets

.. io ho visto altri filmati ancora peggiori dove vengono uccisi gli animali in un modo orripilante, veramente, che passerebbe davvero anche la voglia di mangiare la carne. Ma il fatto è che uno deve vivere, e quindi mangia carne perché (.) l'ha sempre fatto, poi. Però, ecco, secondo me potrebbe essere fatto in un'altra maniera il discorso di allevare un animale, perché sono animali ma, diciamo, sono anche come noi.

I saw TV programs even worse of those (Battery cage for eggs production) were it was shown how animal are sloughtered, it is disgusting, you would really stop eating meat. But you have to live and therefore you eat meat because you always did so. But to me animal could be reared in another way, because they are animals, but they are like us.

Concerns/Price

The issue of price has been prompted in all groups. The main concern has been about a fair “quality-cost” rate. Questions about the motivation for much higher costs have been mentioned for organic products and free range eggs, among the products displayed on the table. The discussion has been articulated around issues of trust in the private labels or public institution devoted to ensure the control on the production techniques. Concern has been elicited more than everything on the guarantees that such products are effectively produced as it is mentioned in the labels.

DANIELA, female,36, children, ABC1

Io non sono d'accordo. Io che non guardo mai I prezzi quando faccio la spesa, queste (uova allevate a terra) invece sono andata a vedere quanto costavano, perchè dico, un uovo è un uovo, come mai tutta questa differenza?

...I do not agree. I never pay attention to food price when I go shopping, but for these ones (free range eggs) I went to look for

the price, because, you know (....) an egg is an egg, why do they cost such a higher price?

GIUSEPPE, male, 38, ABC1

Io aggiungerei anche una cosa, il rapporto qualità/prezzo, perchè ci sono dei prodotti magari estremamente validi, sani e buoni e tutto...però il rapporto qualità/prezzo non torna, perchè è più del doppio, per cui io personalmente mi dirigo sì verso (I prodotti di qualità) però sto anche attento ad un altro aspetto (il prezzo).

I would like to add something, the quality-price rate, because there are many very good products, healthy and tasty and everything...but the price-quality rate is not right, because they cost more than the double. Therefore I tend to buy quality products, but at the same time I pay attention to the issue of price as well.

Concerns / Freshness

Freshness has been widely mentioned as a desirable characteristic of food, but it has been prompted also as a concern for eggs and milk:

GIANFELICE, male, 28, ABC1

La freschezza è la cosa più importante per il latte, e anche la provenienza delle uova e la data di scadenza.

Freshness is the most important aspect of milk, and also origin and sell by date information for eggs.

Concerns / Environment

The issue of environmental pollution connected with animal husbandry did not represent a focus of attention of the participants to any groups. A discussion about environmentally sound agricultural practices and way of rearing animals it appeared in all groups in connection with the purchasing of organic products, as a desirable characteristic. Nevertheless one of the participants mentioned environmental pollution as his main concerns in food choice.

ALESSANDRO, male, 28, ABC1, pets

...per me è un problema di inquinamento.
...to me it is a concern about pollution.

Concern / loss of taste

Aside from the safety and other characteristics of food, there was also a general concern for quality, more precisely for loss of taste of industrially produced food.

This concern was expressed both as a nostalgia for the traditional products (memories of childhood) or as desirable characteristics of organically produced foods. Also in the case of free-range eggs, or farm-eggs, taste has been quoted as a motivation for purchasing such products.

PATRIZIA, female, 44, ABC1

...sul discorso delle uova io volevo dire la stessa cosa, ovvero che le rare volte che la fortuna di servirmi da un contadino, sento i sapori più buoni, perchè queste confezionate (uova) le trovo assolutamente insipide, indipendentemente che siano allevate a terra o no.

...about eggs I want to express the same opinion. The few times I am lucky to buy directly from a farmer, I found better tastes, because these packaged (eggs) are tasteless, no matter if they are free-range or not.

DANIELA, female, 36, ABC1

..ma il prodotto rispecchia (il prezzo.) perché, voglio dire, le spremute di arance della Fattoria Scaldasole sono ottime.

...The product is worth the price, because the Fattoria Scaldasole orange juices (organic brand) are the best.

GRAZIELLA, female, 32, ABC1

...dove si trovano? In posti tipo il Cisternino? [un negozio di Roma]

...where do you find them? In specialised shop like "il Cisternino?..."

DANIELA, female, 36, ABC1

...io li trovo anche nei normali banconi frigo. Comunque è affidabile, dà una certa sicurezza e tranquillità.

I found them in the regular supermarkets. They are reliable and give me a sense of guarantee and confidence.

DANIELA, female, 36, ABC1

...perché? forse anche un po' il nome, questa fattoria, un po' il discorso che faceva lei prima [indicando Graziella], tutti questi animali così. Invece, fattoria, uno può sperare che le cose siano un po' più naturali. Io sono cresciuta in una fattoria. E poi il prezzo, che è un po' più elevato, e per me è sinonimo di garanzia, di affidabilità, e poi comunque il prodotto risponde: li ho provati e sono veramente buoni. Questi yogurt, ad esempio, [indicando lo yogurt sul tavolo] non sono acquisi come gli altri.

... why (guarantee and confidence)? Maybe because of the name, Sun-farm (fattoria Scaldasole) for the things she (Graziella) was telling previously, of all these animals (in

industrial production). If it is a farm one can hope that things are more natural. I grew up in a farm. And also the price, which is higher, for me it is a guarantee.... And also I tried them and they are really good. For example these yoghurts are better, they are not "all water" as the others.

MARIA GRAZIA, female, 53, C2DE

...ma secondo me sono anche prodotti più buoni, questi, gli Scaldasole sono prodotti eccezionali!
...To me these products, Scaldasole, are excellent!

MARIA VITTORIA, female, 44, C2DE

...(prodotti biologici) hanno un sapore diverso, più vero...
...(organic products) have a distinctive taste, truer...

Concerns/Higiene

Hygiene was not a widely shared concerns, it has been spontaneously prompted only in one group, women over 40.

ADA, female, 60, ABC1

...a me sembra più igienica una confezione così piuttostochè il macellaio che tocca tutto..
..I believe this is a more hygienic package rather than the butcher who touches everything with his hands...

3.2 Meanings of animal welfare

The concept of animal welfare resulted unfamiliar to the majority of the participants. Only in two groups it has been listed as a spontaneous concerns (men and women 25-40). Definition of welfare for animal for food production have been elicited in each group only after careful probing (see list below). The discussion about this issue has been very animated in each group.

Welfare/Definitions :

Welfare/Definitions/Natural Condition of life
Welfare/Definitions/Feed
Welfare/Definitions/Animal health
Welfare/Definitions/Traditional
Welfare/Definitions/Higiene
Welfare/Definitions/Organic
Welfare/Definitions/Humane slaughtering

Among the definition of animal welfare it has sporadically mentioned also "Better - Best systems". By this definition the participants referred to well managed modern

animal farming systems (organised according to the standard set up by the national and the European regulation, as an improvement to the poor condition of life of the farm animals in rural area at the beginning of the century). In the discussion about animal welfare very often the participants to the groups were not able to propose their own definitions, but they were suggesting their attitude or fears. An example of these can be found in the numerous expressions of worries (worries about how animals are kept in intensive production; declarations that what is described or showed in the video is unacceptable/inhumane conditions of life) or by declaring that animal welfare is an “utopia” (better condition of life for animals reared for food production is utopic; modern agricultural science and technology are inevitably promoting only profitable systems with no regards for issues like animal welfare). The topic was unfamiliar to most participants and the answers were very much the results of what came to their mind at that moment. In every groups the majority of the participants admitted that they never confronted themselves with this issue previously.

When the discussion went on the possible advantages or disadvantages of higher animal welfare in animal rearing systems the answers were very much the same in all groups: among the disadvantages it has been listed only the higher cost for consumers; among the advantages it has been strongly shared the idea of “having products of better quality”, “healthier products for human consumption” and also better products from an environmental point of view.

Some participants honestly admitted that to them, animal welfare is not a relevant issue, that animal are for human consumption, and that is somehow “hypocrisy “ to pretend to care for animal welfare when animals are kept for producing food for human consumption.

Welfare/Natural Condition of life

MARIA PIA, female, 61, ABC1

...ma da come vivono la loro vita, in modo naturale, seguendo i loro istinti, ho visto che cercano di farsi il nido, che becchettano per terra i sassi...

...but from the way in which they (hens) live and behave, in natural way, following their instincts. I noticed that they attempt to nest, they peek and look for food and stones on the ground....

ROBERTA, female, 30, ABC1

significa crescere un po' più naturalmente, che corrisponda di più al suo istinto e non all'imposizione dell'uomo.

it means growing up in a more naturally, according to their instinct and not by men imposition...

GIOVANNA, female, 62, ABC1

..mettere l'animale nelle migliori condizioni di vita naturale, seguendo i suoi cicli naturali, non ridurlo ad una macchina che produce, facendolo rimanere un animale che però è utile all'uomo, quindi dargli lo spazio necessario, il mangiare sano, un po' di movimento (.) insomma, le condizioni igieniche per avere il meglio..

...create for the animals the better condition of natural life, according to his/her natural cycles, without making a machine of him/her. Let him stay an animal, but emphasise his/her usefulness, therefore provide him/her with enough space, healthy feed, room for movements... the hygienic condition for obtaining the best....

Welfare/Definitions/Feed

Very often the concept of animal welfare has been defined impossible to reach in real life for animal reared for food production. Given the main contradiction of rearing animal for human needs and not for the animal per se. While admitting the impossibility of reaching a real welfare for those animals, some of participant has attempted to point to conditions that would enhance the quality of life of the animals.

LEONARDO, male, 35, ABC1, pets

“ è un'utopia pensare al bene degli animali che nascono, vivono e muoiono in batteria, non è possibile, ecco l'unica cosa potrebbe essere quella di mantenerli il più possibile animali senza additivi vari, quella è l'unica forma di benessere che può essere concessa ad un animale che nasce ed è destinato solamente a diventare una bistecca”

“It is utopia to think that animal who live and die in a battery can have “welfare”, it is impossible. The only possible improvement would be to keep them alive with less chemicals as possible: that could be a type of welfare for an animal who is doomed to be a steak”

Welfare/Definitions/Traditional

LEONARDO, male,35, ABC1, pets

“ma se escludiamo gli animali domestici, i pochi che stanno bene sono quelli che magari vivono nelle fattorie in campagna, forse sono gli unici casi di animali che possono stare bene;”

“If we do not talk about the pets, the few animals that live well are those living in farms in the countryside, maybe those are the only case in which they live well”

ROSSELLA P, female, 49, ABC1

“per me già non deve essere un allevamento grande perché chiaramente un allevamento grande è innaturale per l’animale, quindi immagino un allevamento piccolo, con poche bestie ed il contadino che segue tutta la vita di questi animali; quindi dandogli un’alimentazione più naturale possibile e uno spazio un po’ più largo che negli allevamenti industriali. Certo è una cosa quasi impossibile perché un allevamento del genere sarebbe ridotto e quindi sul mercato accontenterebbe solo poche persone.... “

“ for me it should not be a large factory farm, because it is not natural for the animals. I imagine a small farm with few animals and a farmer who take care of them for all their life, feeding them with as more natural as possible feed, and keeping them in larger space than in factory farms.

Welfare/Definitions/Organic

PATRIZIA, female,44, C2DE

...dietro questa spiegazione (del marchio biologico) io spero che ci sia una condizione migliore (.gli animali) pascolano, vivono liberi per i campi, insomma in modo più naturale (.)

behind this label I hope that there is a better condition of life for animals... they stay free on fields, they eat grass....it is more natural..

Welfare/Advantages

The most frequently listed advantages have been “human health” and “better quality” (more precisely, better taste). Sporadically it has been mentioned a possible advantage for the environment, especially in the case of the intensive indoor production of pigs. All the advantages have been spontaneously prompted by the participants, who considered the link between animal welfare and human health as the most legitimate and important.

Welfare/Disadvantages

The only disadvantage listed has been the higher costs of the products. This disadvantage has never been spontaneously prompted, it represented an answer to a specific question in the focus group guide.

Welfare/Indifference

Some participant did not express themselves on this issue. They admitted that this issue never represented a concern to them because “animals *are for* human consumption” and did not contribute to the discussion. Only a few participants dared to admit their indifference to this topic. An example of this attitude is to be found in a quotation from Daniela, a young mother (36) from Rome:

DANIELA, female, 36, ABC1, child.

...a me la cosa che mi terrorizza è il prodotto chimico. Io sono una che ama mangiare, ama fare la spesa, e sarò impopolare se dico che l'animale è animale, e io comunque di animale mi nutro. Quindi questo benessere (non è qualcosa che mi interessa), ecco l'unico benessere che io ritengo valido per l'animale è che venga nutrito con cose naturali perché poi io mi devo nutrire. Mi devo nutrire bene io, i miei bimbi, quindi la cosa che più che mi preme in un allevamento è che gli animali siano nutriti con cose naturali. Quello che mi terrorizza è la cosa chimica perché con gli anni poi uno si avvelena e prende le malattie più strane. Ecco, poi per quanto riguarda il benessere dell'animale, l'animale è animale, nato animale, e dai tempi dei tempi deve nutrire. Punto.

What I am terrify about are the chemical products in animal feed. I love eating, I love shopping and maybe I will be unpopular by saying that animals are animals, and that I feed myself with animals. Therefore this welfare is not something that really bothers me. The only welfare I acknowledge worth guaranteeing to animals is that they will be fed with natural food, because I have to eat the products that they will produce. I want good and safe food for myself and my children therefore I am concerned that animals are fed on natural feed. I am terrified by the chemicals additives to animal feed because in the long run they will poison us and we can get the most extravagant diseases. So, regarding animal welfare, I say that animals are animals, they were born animals and since the beginning they have been for human consumption. Full stop.

Measuring Animal Welfare

The parameters used to measure animal welfare were closeness to “natural condition”, and freedom of move and express natural behaviour. This question found the participants unprepared to articulate complex answers: most participants just stated some simple answers as the following:

PAOLA, female, 44, C2DE

..l'animale più è libero più sta bene!

...to the animal, the more freedom the better...

3.3 Information

Most participants felt that they were little informed about production system and that the issue of animal welfare was very much neglected by the media.

Sources and reliability of information

None of the participants to the groups had a specific or technical knowledge about animal welfare issues or personal experience in this field. Only one participant affirmed that he had visited some modern poultry plans. Few participants could mention some source of information (TV programs, newspapers, leaflets, other mass media informations, supermarket chains information, animal rights movements' campaigns)

All of them expressed the desire for more information. Supermarket chains have been mentioned as responsible for not providing any information on this matter, and the general education system has been blamed for not considering this issue as an area of proper cultural development. Information has been defined as a key element for improving sensibility about this issue and the general lack of information on modern animal rearing systems has been interpreted as “strategically” managed by food industries and supermarket chains in order to keep consumers unaware of the way in which food is produced. This lack of trust in public institutions and private industries in providing information is well exemplified by Marco's quotation.

ROCCO, male, 40, ABC1, pets

..io non ho mai visto un allevamento, non ho idea di come possono stare le galline chiuse, come diceva quel ragazzo, comunque le ho sempre viste libere, non li ho mai visti, diciamo COSTRETTI, cioè ho sempre visto il contadino che nell'aria dava il grano ai polli, alle galline e queste galline giravano tranquille, cioè di un discorso del genere io ne sto a capire veramente poco, poi fra l'altro non sono neanche un grande mangiatore di carne...

... I never saw an intensive factory farm, I have no idea about how hens can stay in battery cages.....I always rememberd them free, at the traditional farm with the farmer feeding them with grains. Those hens were free and quiet..... this kind of system it is hard to judge for me, I never confronted myself with such a problem, and I do not consume very much meat...

MARCO, male, 40, ABC1, pets

..su questo tipo di argomento che riguarda i vari tipi di allevamento animale non mi sembra ci sia un'informazione adeguata. Io credo che non le facciano vedere in televisione perchè sono spaventose...

..on this issue it seems to me that we do not have an adequate information.I believe that they do not show this things on TV because they are horrible...

3.4 Responsibility for animal welfare

This issue created a kind of discomfort among the participants: some of them interpreted the question as a “reprimand” and became defensive. The majority simply found this issue difficult to deal with, because animal welfare did not represent a spontaneous or real concern to them. Many of them declared to feel responsible in principle, but at the same time they did not how know to express this feeling in the case of animal products (foods), while it was clearer in other cases (fur coats, animals in zoos, pets).

These attitudes are well exemplified in the words of Rossana and Monica:

ROSSANA, female, 45, ABC1

... beh, noi potremmo sollecitare altri. Io personalmente mi sento responsabile ma mi sento anche impotente.

“Well, we could enrol and mobilise other people. Personally I feel responsible, but I feel impotent as well.

MONICA, female, 35, ABC1

ecco, venendo a conoscenza di questi prodotti diversi, uno sente responsabile o sente che ha sbagliato. Ecco sapendo che può

comprare ad esempio le uova di galline che hanno, tra virgolette, svolazzato, e non averlo acquistate (.) si può fare più stando un po' più attenti (.) solo che nella realtà, vivere e correre al supermercato non consente, se non si è sensibilizzati dall'esterno, non viene neanche in mente di leggere uova (...*free range*.) uno non pensa fammi vedere queste uova come sono fatte, vede le uova”

...you see, when you know that these diverse products (organic, free-range...) are available, you feel more responsible and understand that you have been wrong. When you know that you can buy eggs from hens that had a better life (that had flown free) and you realise that you never bought them....well you understand that with a little attention you can improve...In everyday life we are in a hurry, we just go to the supermarket... and if you are not alerted by some outsiders, you never think about reading the label and look for.....free range eggs.

3.5 Advantages and disadvantages of higher animal welfare standards

The most frequent answer to this question was that there were more advantages than disadvantages for consumers in introducing higher welfare standards. The possibility of having to pay a higher price is the only disadvantage quoted.

Among the advantages “healthier products” and “higher quality products” have been the most shared issues. Somebody also mentioned that animal husbandry with higher animal welfare standards would have advantages also for environmental protection. Other subjects, such as farmers, retailing chains have not been prompted.

3.6 Willingness to pay

Prior to watching the video clips of various production systems, the groups were asked if they would be willing to pay more for products which had been produced to higher animal welfare standards. In principle everybody declared to be prepared to pay more for products obtained with higher animal welfare. Nevertheless given the limited number of products available it was difficult to assess how much could have been the acceptable price gap with the “conventional” products. The results were very much affected by location. The participants to the groups in Florence could use their experience of buying some organic products available in main supermarkets and specialised shops, and they expressed more concerns for high price gap (eggs 100% more expensive, yogurt 50% more expensive). Nevertheless organic products have been defined of superior quality by all the participants that

had experienced them. The participants to the groups in Roma lamented the total absence of these products on the market.

Section IV

Farm animal production systems

This section reports on the participants' responses to the video clips. A description of each system was read out (see Appendix). The participants were asked for their opinions about each system, their preference and whether or not they would be willing to pay for the product produced under their preferred system. The video clips covered intensive and extensive systems for eggs, chicken, pork, beef and veal (see Appendix). In all groups the video grasped the attention of participants, nevertheless it was difficult for them to articulate extensive answers to the questions. Sometime the answers have been considered self-evident, as in the case of the preferred system, and all participants pointed to the outdoors systems, sometimes it has been difficult to say how much more they would be prepared to pay, since it was a totally abstract hypothesis.

The comments on the video clips have been quite similar and all the participants declared to prefer the outdoor systems of production for all the species. On the battery cage system, and the veal crate system most participants have agreed that they should be banned, or, that consumers should stop buying this products for protest and exert pressure to obtain a different regulation.

After the video clip on eggs production everybody (literally) said the they liked better the third case, outdoor system. Some participant defined the battery cage system offensive and unacceptable and declared that they could not even imagine that hen were kept in that condition. The video clip on the veal crate obtained similar reactions.

4.1 Eggs

MARIA GRAZIA, female,53, ABC1

certo ma è come se noi vivessimo in un lager, senza aria (.)
...but it is as if we were in a concentration camp, not even air ...

4.2 Chicken

The outdoor system has been defined the more natural and ideal and the one that allow to have the best quality products. The indoor broiler system was generally perceived as 'packed' and 'unhealthy'. There was a general agreement on these issue, and the discussion went on 'how to identity the free range chicken'. Some participants declared that the quality of the meat (chicken) was much worse in the indoor system as in the case of Giovanna, Rossella P and Rossella.M. Others, like Francesca did not believe that you could make distinction between the meats, that you could not recognise from the taste the way in which the chicken has been raised.

FRANCESCA, female, 64, ABC1, pets

dal punto di vista umano la seconda [sistema allevamento polli da carne all'aperto], dal punto di vista pratico non è che viene alterata la caratteristica della carne del pollo (.)

The outdoor system is more humane, from a more practical point of view in the indoor system the meat that you get is the same.

GIOVANNA, female, 62, ABC1

...nel sistema al chiuso (la carne) è meno saporita, il pollo si fa delle ferite

(indoor system) the meat is less tasty, the chicken hurt and bite themselves...

ROSSELLA P., female, 49, ABC1

appunto, la qualità è diversa!
(outdoor system)... the quality is different!

ROSSELLA M., female, 48, ABC1

(sistema intensivo) poi la carne si stacca dall'osso, non si sviluppano in modo naturale

(Intensive system) ...and the meat does not stay with the bones, they do not develop naturally...

4.3 Pork

All the participants disapproved of the tethers and stalls for sows, describing them as 'cruel' and as an example of totally unjustified privation of welfare as in the words fo Massimo. There was also objection to the restriction of the farrowing crate. The loose housing system was perceived to be acceptable, for the possibility

to express natural behaviour and have some 'comfort' (Giorgio). Again the outdoor rearing was perceived as the most 'natural' and, therefore, the ideal system. The indoor finishing did not present any significant problems.

MASSIMO, male, 28, ABC1

... senz'altro il terzo, perché nei primi due casi l'animale non ha assolutamente benessere, mentre nel terzo caso è più vicino al naturale; per quanto riguarda la carne è chiaro che nel secondo caso l'animale è più controllato, mentre nel terzo caso vivendo in campo, all'aperto, non è che vai a vedere cosa mangia l'animale.

...absolutely (I like best) the third type, because in the first two cases animals have no welfare, while in the the third case (his/her life) is closer to natural condition; if you think about the meat (pork), in the second case (loose housing) the animal is better controlled, while in the third case, since it is outdoors you do not know what he is eating all the time.

GIORGIO, male, 27, ABC1

io la terza (.) ma anche la seconda [al chiuso senza gabbie], perché l'animale è più protetto e il suo spazio un poco ce l'ha, purtroppo mangerà quello che gli da l'uomo, ma se gli dà erba o mangimi controllati senza additivi anche il secondo come metodo si avvicina al metodo naturale.

For me as well the third is the best. But the second as well (loose housing), because the animal is protected (from atmospheric conditions) and can move around a bit. Moreover if it is fed with hay or controlled feed with non chemicals additives, even the second one is close to a natural method.

4.4 Beef

The video clip on beef production concerned less the participants, and compared with the other video clips, there were less declarations that what it was shown was an "unacceptable systems". It was almost at the end of the discussion and most participants did not engaged in long comments or discussion.

ROSSELLA P., female, 49, ABC1

per i bovini, il sistema all'aperto
for bovines, the outdoors system

MARIA GRAZIA, female, 53, ABC1

ecco ma come facciamo a sapere noi in quali sistemi sono stati allevate queste bestie? ad esempio io vedo carne Chianina, ma non è che la Chianina mi dice come viene fatta, è questo che mi chiedo(.)

I wonder how do we know from which system this beef come from? for example I see the Chianina meat, but the fact that is labelled as Chianina does not say exactly how it has been reared....

GIANFELICE, male, 28 ABC1

*Anche per i bovini quello all'aperto
for bovines outdoors system as well*

ROCCO, male, 40, pets, ABC1

*sicuramente.
For sure (outdoor system).*

4.5 Veal

The veal crate system has been considered unacceptable by all participants who declared that it should be banned. There was a great deal of concern about the inadequate diet, the separation from the mother, the restricted movement (Monica). The grouped housing system was preferred, but a number of participants objected to the production of veal per se. Especially in the case of veal production participants showed strong disapproval and used expression of uneasiness. Most of them felt deceived by the producers and the supermarket chains that did not provide information on the way in which calves (but also hens) are kept and showed resentment and lack of trust towards these subjects, as in the words of Graziella.

MONICA, female, 31, ABC1

*...questo vive da solo in queste celle...
this one lives on his own in this box....*

GRAZIELLA, female, 32 , ABC1

*....e poi la lingua!
...look at the tongue (the iron bars)
(expression of strong disapproval)*

ROBERTA, female, 30, ABC1

*...è un'agonia
it is agony...(expression of horror)*

MONICA, female, 31, ABC1 and SERENA, female, ABC1

*Poveracci, non riescono neanche a svilupparsi
Poor them, the cannot grow (develop)*

GRAZIELLA, female, 32 , ABC1

però veramente noi siamo all'oscuro di tutto!. Che ne so, a me è capitato, di andare da qualche parte e trovo uno stand di quelli dell'antivivisezione: fermi contro la pelliccia. Magari io compro un giacca di pelle, il montone, ed è scandaloso, mi dovrei vergognare. Io mi devo sentire in colpa perché porto un capo in pelle perché quell'animale per fare il visone l'hanno ucciso in un certo modo, ma a questo punto io mi vergogno di più a mangiare la carne. Davvero, mi vergogno di più perché mangio la carne e le uova!

But really we do not know anything about it! I happened to find, sometime, the LAV (anti-vivisection league) people campaigning against fur coats, and I gave my signature. And when I buy a leather jacket I feel guilty I think it is a scandal. I believe I should feel ashamed for buying leather cloths because an animal it has been killed for that...Indeed, now I feel more ashamed because I eat meat and eggs!

NUD*IST

The transcription of the focus groups discussion has been analysed with the help of the text analyses carried on with the program NUD*IST.

It was the first time that the Italian team used such a program and it took quite a long time to prepared the texts and learning how to use it.

At this stage it has been useful mainly for the identification of relevant items in the texts (the process of coding) but it slowed the process of interpretation. The potential benefits of using this program will be more evident when we will build up a large collection of texts from the interviews. If it were to be used only for the focus groups it is limited the help provided to the interpretation of the results.

Section V

Discussion

This section addresses the key variables that affect the concerns expressed by the group participants. These variables include age, location, lifestyle, and to a lesser degree, socio-economic status.

From the focus groups discussions the factors that most affect the nature and level of Italian consumer concern about animal welfare are age and cultural factors or lifestyle. Younger women and men showed higher concerns, better capacity to articulate answers on definitions of animal welfare, and higher information.

Participants to these groups showed more freedom to express less traditional opinions.

From literature it seems that gender is a factor that has a strong impact on the perception of animal welfare, but in our focus group with young men there were no relevant differences in the reaction and answers compared with young women. If we hold true the assumption that gender is a factor affecting animal welfare perception, a possible interpretation of the high concern about animal welfare emerged in the Italian “male” group can be location (Florence). The focus group with young women was in Rome.

From the focus groups it seems to emerge a regional variation in the perception of animal welfare, and from the literature review it seems confirmed that in the north of Italy is higher than in the South. This seems confirmed by the fact that in the focus groups in Rome (which is in the centre of Italy) it was clear that “animal friendly produced” foods are less available and less known than in Florence (centre-north), even though Rome is a larger city than Florence.

The socio-economic status emerged as less important than the other factors (age and location). Pets seem to affect the nature of animal welfare concerns (animal rights), but this issue needs further investigation.

Section VI

Conclusion

All the participants showed interest for the topic and interest for this type of research. The vast majority lamented a lack of information on this issue and perceived the focus group discussion as a “privileged” opportunity for improving their knowledge. Some of the participants suggested that this kind of information on animal husbandry should be introduced in primary school programs in order to strengthen consumer awareness of food production techniques. Many of the participants asked to be up-to-date about further outcomes and findings of the project.

The key findings of the focus groups, the pilot groups and the literature review are mainly the following:

- Animal Welfare is not a concern spontaneously addressed among the issues affecting consumers in food choice;
- Animal Welfare is a legitimate area of concerns when is perceived as affecting Human Health or product's Quality (better taste). Most participants to the groups tends to consider animal welfare a "luxury" and only the younger and less traditional people dare to express the opinion that animals reared for production have "rights" to better condition of life for their own sake.
- Most participants declared that they would welcome better condition of life for animals reared for production but at the same time expressed the opinion (or better the fear) that high animal welfare standards in animal production do not represent a workable option (not economically feasible). It is often defined as an "utopia". As a consequence they point to the need of changing consumption habits, and more precisely to the need for a decrease in meat consumption and the other animal products as well, as the only mean to show responsibility and interest for this issue.
- The meanings most often associated with animal welfare are "natural condition of life", "freedom e space", "traditional or non-industrial".

Level of concern: the higher level of concern, in connection with health concern, is about eggs, fresh meat (veal and beef) and sausages (pork). In the case of eggs is Salmonella.

6.1 Implication for in-depth interviews

Several issues have emerged from the analysis of the group discussions which will have implication in the design of the in-depth interviews:

- Life-style and demographic factors seem the most relevant variable to take into consideration.
- Quality and Safety have more relevance than animal welfare issue in food choice. As a consequence animal welfare becomes a focus of attention when is perceived as connected with these two areas of major concerns.
- Knowledge and information seem to affect the relevance that participants give to the issue of animal welfare. More information and knowledge of system of production lead to higher sensibility to animal welfare in food production.
- Organic production represented to the majority of the participants the only example of products with high level of animal welfare. The presence of organic

products in the shops of the region is crucial for giving some example of products. It also allows consumers to rely on their experience of the products and estimate their willingness to pay for these characteristics. In the case of organic products most participants pointed to the higher cost but they also acknowledged the superior quality and the higher price did not prevent them from buying these products.

- Information on this topic is considered very important and extremely scarce. The lack of information on production systems is perceived as a way to keep consumers unaware of some unwelcome or unacceptable way of rearing animals. The experience of the recent food scandals (BSE, Dioxine among the last ones) reinforced this interpretation of the limited information available on this matter and lead to a general distrust in food industries and big retailing companies.

Section VII

Problems and Limitations

All four discussion groups have been quite successful regarding participation, composition of the groups and willingness to engage the discussion. A few problems have emerged in the conduction of the focus groups:

- The low level of general concern towards this issue affected the way in which the focus groups discussion has been conducted: the participants tended to answer the questions with a limited knowledge on the matter and very often prompted issues not pertinent to the subject matter. Therefore a great deal of effort has been devoted to make the participant to talk about “animal welfare” when they would spontaneously talk about quality or safety. The opinions have been expressed in short sentences, and very seldom in a more articulated way.
- Two of the focus groups have been conducted in Rome. Even though Rome is the largest Italian city the market for food is very traditional and the presence of organic or animal friendly produced products is extremely limited. Also the presence of non food items, such as animal friendly produced cosmetics or body products (“against animal testing”) is limited. This fact affected the discussion: the general interest and knowledge of the participants on this issue was lower than the focus groups participants in Florence.

- After the four focus groups discussion it became evident the discussion guide has been designed on the assumption that the participants already had certain interest or information on this issue, and in the Italian case the level of interest and information was lower than in UK and in Ireland. Some question found the Italian participants to the focus groups “unprepared”(willingness to pay: most people did not know any animal friendly produced products, and they could express only a very abstract opinion; responsibility: this issue has been difficult to deal with)
- The structure of the report was based on the same assumptions.

References

Calder B. J. (1977) “Focus groups and the nature of qualitative marketing research”, *Journal of marketing Research XIV*, 353-364.

Carrey M. A. (1994) “The Group Effect in Focus Groups: Planning, Implementing, and Interpreting Focus Group Research”, *Critical Issues in Qualitative Research Methods*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miele M., Parisi V. (1997) *National Report on Consumer Concerns about animal welfare and the impact on food choice*, Report for EU FAIR-CT- 98_3678, *Consumer Concerns about animal welfare and the impact on food choice*, Pisa, November.

Stewart D. W., Shamdasani P. N. (1998) “Focus Group Research – Exploration and Discovery”, *Handbook of applied Social Research Methods*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

SYKES W. (1990) “Validity and reliability in qualitative market research: a review of the literature”, *Journal of Market Research Society*, XXXII, 289-327.