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The willingness of conventional farmers to participate in animal welfare programmes: an empirical study in Germany

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Abstract

In recent years, poor farm animal welfare (FAW) has been a continual focus of public criticism and, in many European countries, large segments of society have repeatedly demanded higher FAW standards. In spite of these demands, there are hardly any products from pure animal welfare programmes (AWPs) on the market. Given this background, farmers are a very important stakeholder group for the successful implementation of such programmes, but little is known about their attitudes towards the introduction of AWPs. For this study, 657 conventional farmers in Germany were questioned about FAW and AWPs via an online survey. Three clusters (farmer groups) were identified with respect to their attitudes towards AWPs and, based on these clusters, various target groups were determined for participation in AWPs. Cluster A (the ‘sceptical animal welfare opponents’) (n = 204) is characterised by strong opposition to AWPs and higher welfare standards in livestock husbandry. Farmers in this cluster will probably not take part in AWPs, especially because they do not consider AWPs profitable. Cluster B (the ‘undecided’) (n = 229) have diverse attitudes towards AWPs. As they do not reject the enhancement of animal welfare standards, these farmers may someday become willing to participate in AWPs. Cluster C, (the ‘market-conscious animal welfare friends’) (n = 224) have the most positive attitudes of the sample towards AWPs. However, even these farmers have diverse attitudes towards the monetary effects of AWP. Overall, they constitute the most important potential target group for AWPs as they indicate the highest willingness to take part in these programmes. The empirical results have important managerial implications and provide a starting point for the design of tailor-made strategies to increase the market penetration of AWPs.

Keywords: *animal welfare, attitudes, cluster analysis, factor analysis, farmers, Germany*