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THE FRENCH SOCIETY'S VISION ON LIVESTOCK FARMING SYSTEMS

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Abstract: For several years, French livestock farming has been questioned by society. Those questions concern its environmental impact, sanitary risks or animal treatment and ask, more generally, livestock farming's place among a society that is more and more concerned about its alimentation. Critics reflect different expectations towards agricultural systems: 25% of the French population want a gradual disappearance of intensive farming systems for the benefit of under official quality signs (organic, AOP, etc.) or implementing alternative practices; 10% want the development of intensive farming to increase the production and be more competitive; and between them many want a gradual but not radical improvement of the intensive system, with stronger environmental and animal welfare requirements.

Introduction: Over the last century, livestock has experienced important changes in France (Roguet et al., 2015). Impacts on natural and human environment, and the growing sensitivity of the population to animals living conditions led to a more and more radical criticism of some farming practices, from the different arenas of the French society (NGOs, citizens, political, media...). Such challenges concern livestock in its operation, organization or even in its principle. The aim of this paper is to provide a better understanding of the diversity of society's expectations towards livestock farming systems and especially organic farming, based on many qualitative studies and a PhD in Sociology conducted from 2014 to 2018.

Material and methods: To understand debates on livestock farming and analyse representations of farming systems, the project ACCEPT, funded by the CASDAR and led by the French Pork and Pig Institute (IFIP), has been carried out between 2014 and 2018. Both qualitative and quantitative studies were conducted, aiming to identify subjects of controversy about livestock farming in France, all animal productions considered, and to describe the diversity of actors and arguments.

Around seventy semi-structured interviews were conducted, in France and five other UE countries. Professionals from livestock sectors (inter-branches, trade unions, development actors and farmers), from NGO in environment and animal protection (employees and administrators), journalists and retailers were interviewed to gather their point of view on the controversy related to livestock farming. In parallel with this qualitative work, and quantitative survey on French citizens was conducted in 2016 (Dockès et al., 2017) to measure their images of the sector, their satisfaction regarding livestock farming and some potentially painful or restricting practices to animals. The survey was done by the French Institute of

Public Opinion (IFOP) on the internet with a panel of 2,000 representative citizens of the French population (using the quota method). Frequency tables, cross analyses of population segments, multiple correspondence analysis (MCI) and an ascending hierarchical classification (AHC) were built to evaluate profiles among the French population. All analyses have taken into account the weighting of individuals in order to guarantee results that are representative of the French people.

Results: Issues related to livestock farming (Table 1) are not the same for the different animal productions and systems.

Table 1. Topics of controversies on livestock farming in France and relevant debates

Environment	Animal welfare	Health risk	Organisation
GHG emissions	Definition	Use of antibiotics	Intensive system
Water pollution	Living conditions	Risks of epizooties and zoonosis	Geographical concentration
Animal feed (soya, GMOs)	Painful interventions on the animal		
Natural resources use (water, land)			
Disturbances (odors, noise)			

Intensive farming appear to crystalize critics against agriculture. Opposition against systems perceived as industrial seems to grow within the French society. Indoor systems (mainly pigs and poultry) are at the heart of debates about animal welfare. All NGOs encountered show a strong opposition to intensive farming that they define as a mode of production aiming to increase yield (concept of productivism) by high animal densities, high consumption of inputs (water, medicines, fertilizers...) and confinement of animals in buildings. They criticize intensive rearing in its many negative effects on the environment, animal welfare, food safety, working conditions of farmers and employment. Environmental NGOs are in favor of agro-ecological systems, re-associating crops and livestock; animal protection NGOs support farming systems adapted to the animal, consistent with their natural behavior, that is to say, with more space per animal, an absence of painful practice and, if possible, access to the outdoor.

Taking into account qualitative works and quantitative data, a typology of behaviours and expectations of citizens regarding livestock farming and all its sectors has been drawn (Picture 1). Five profiles have been identified and described (Delanoue et al., 2018). 10% of our sample could not be allocated to a category.

The “Abolitionist” profile, that represents 2% of the sample, corresponds to people who eat very few or no animal products. 80% of them are women and under 25 are over-represented. Their behaviour meets their activist engagement (usually, they are member of an animal protection association) and most often, they share an antispecist philosophy: they reject any form of animal exploitation by human beings and are choked by animal slaughter. They also appear to be concerned about environmental issues.

3% of the population are ranked within the “Unconcerned” profile. Those people has neither an opinion nor specific expectations regarding livestock farming. These are people who badly know the way animals are reared, and who are not interested in having further information on the subject. Alimentation is not one of their concern. Young people and women are over-represented in this segment of the population.

The “Competitive” profile, which represent 10% of the population, regroupes people who appear to be satisfied with actual livestock farming methods and living conditions of animals in French farms. They support the intensive model, in its configuration and its practices, and hope to see its development and a productivity growth of French farms, so that incomes of livestock farmers and actors of the sector can increase. They do not oppose to organic farming, but consider that this production system is a market niche that will not help the sector to become more competitive. For them, French conventional value chains, which are subject to strict regulations, should be encouraged not to have to import products that do not necessarily comply such requirements, in order to meet domestic demand. The viability of farms remains a

priority for them and intensive farming is considered an economic profitability factor. Compared to the rest of the population, “Competitive” citizens are often men, who say that they know the agricultural sector and how animals are raised.

A quarter (24%) of the population fits within the “Alternative” profile. They strongly oppose to intensive farming and support alternative production systems, like organic systems. According to them, the French livestock farming is too intensive; they have a negative image of it, judge it as pejoratively industrial and are negative about a lot of aspects that concern it (impact on the environment, on employment, health security, traceability, etc.). They support extensive agriculture and/or with quality and origin certification (“Agriculture Biologique” [*organic farming*], “Label Rouge”, etc.). They support an agriculture that they consider as “peasant”: agroecological, with small-size and low-input farms (in terms of number of animals). They are in favour of a net decrease in the global production and consumption of animal products. The “Progressive” profile represents about half of the population (51%). It is composed by citizens willing a continuous and regular improvement of livestock farming practices but do not question livestock farming models or meat consumption. They appear to be concerned about environment preservation and animal welfare, but are not against any production system. Their points of view may vary a lot and this profile is less typical than are the other profiles: it regroups people who are interested in livestock farming and their alimentation, despite a level of knowledge on the way animals are raised which is quite low. This population is seeking reassurance arguments: it is facing a trust crisis towards agriculture.

Discussion: Regarding this project’s results, concerns expressed by the French society regarding livestock farming appear to be a heavy trend linked with alimentation, health and sensibility towards animals. Key points of this controversy run nowadays around several specific practices: an outdoor, day light and fresh air access for animals, the importance of grazing in cattle systems, the number of animals in farms, their density, animals’ lifetime, etc. On those matters, organic farming does bring answers to reassure society on agriculture. Farmers and livestock sectors are directly impacted by this situation: questions on livestock farming or production systems influence both farmers’ choices in their practices and the very attractiveness of the whole sector.

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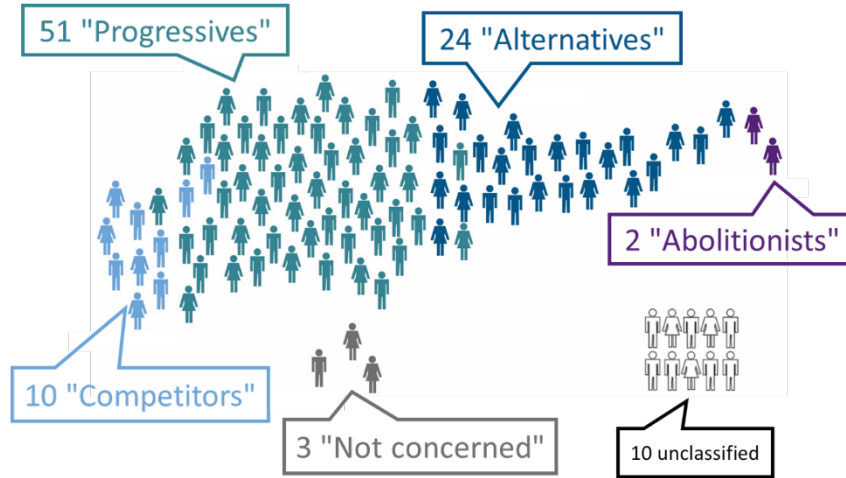
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Disclosure of Interest: None Declared

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Among 100 French citizens:



Picture 1. Typology of the behaviours of citizens towards livestock farming. Source: Ifop survey for ACCEPT project, analysis by The French Livestock Institute (Idele), June 2016