

# Farmer satisfaction and animal welfare – insights from a sample of organic multi-species livestock farms in seven European countries

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## Palabras clave / Términos relevantes

farmer welfare, animal welfare, multi-species, livestock, Europe

## 1) Key highlights

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- First insights into multi-species livestock farming, possibly a sustainable farming strategy
- High farmer satisfaction and perception of animal welfare in surveyed European multi-species livestock farms
- Farmers mentioned working with animals as one of their main reason for high satisfaction

## 2) Abstract

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For farming to become more sustainable it is not only necessary to find ways to reduce the impact of farming on soils and environment, but also to increase the satisfaction of farmers with their work as well as the welfare of their animals. In the media social sustainability is often connected to gender equality, work load or mental health status and the need for improvement. Farmers worldwide have a higher rate of mental illness and even suicide than many other occupational sectors.

Framed by a modernisation paradigm implemented in the European Agricultural Policy, most farms have become more specialised, focusing on one or two production types, compared to before when very diverse, mixed farms with many smaller production types used to be very common. The benefits of diversifying crop production are well documented, whereas the diversification in livestock production has so far rarely been investigated. To investigate farmer satisfaction and related aspects as an indicator of

social sustainability we interviewed 106 multi-species organic livestock farmers in 7 European countries characterising each farm by asking qualitative and quantitative questions, for example about management practices, products, workload and animals. In our non-representative sample of multi-species livestock farmers most were highly satisfied with their work, their income and their animals' welfare even though farmers often had physically taxing work, a high workload and experienced a high level of complexity in the farm management. Many farmers mentioned that they enjoy the complexity as well as working with their animals, especially with different species, and that they feel responsible for their animals' welfare. Farmers appreciated the diversity of tasks related to a multi-species livestock farming, as well as the opportunity to learn by e.g. participating in various training courses in a year. The high workload, often increased by farming with more than one livestock species, is distributed when needed among (available) family members or the farmers' social network (e.g. neighbours, friends or customers). Organic multi-species livestock farming could be a promising strategy for farmers to increase sustainability on various levels, including their own satisfaction and possibly their animals' welfare. However, currently it is unknown how many organic multi-species farms exist in Europe and a representative, and possibly comparative interview with both specialised and multi-species livestock farmers could reveal interesting insights and verify results found in our sample.

### **3) Image 1 (not compulsory)**

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### **4) Image 2 (not compulsory)**

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### **5) Would you like to be considered for a One Welfare Science slaM (OWSM) session? Yes / No**

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Yes

**6) Are you happy for your poster/oral presentation to be made free access 2 months after the conference via the One Welfare Website, YouTube and/or media channels? Yes / No**

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Yes

**7) Language in which you would like to present /submit your poster (English / Spanish)**

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English