What Breeding Goal Should Organic Dairy Farmers Pursue? Results from a Willingness-To-Pay Study Among Consumers in Denmark, Germany, and Sweden

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There is a growing public focus on negative consequences of dairy production, including carbon emissions, biodiversity loss, and limited welfare for production animals. Many of these concerns can be significantly mitigated through innovation, such as enhancing traits in breeding goals. However, enhancing traits to address one issue may compromise the ability to effectively tackle other problems. For example, there may be a negative correlation between traits that help to limit carbon emission per kg milk and those that improve animal welfare. The organic dairy sector, in particular, is at a strategic crossroads, needing to identify the most important potential breeding goals to implement. This study aims to determine what organic consumers in three European countries—Denmark, Germany, and Sweden—are willing to pay (WTP) for four specific breeding goals. Questionnaire data were collected by the survey bureau Norstat (appr. n=1500 per country). WTP was studied for two products: organic cheese and organic milk. The four traits in the breeding goals were: Lower carbon emission (CARBON), Better animal welfare (WELFARE), Higher milk yield (YIELD), Healthier dairy products (HEALTH). WTP for the different attributes were estimated in random parameters logit models using the software NLOGIT 6. In all countries, and for both products, WELFARE, turned out to be the goal consumers were willing to pay the most for. HEALTH and CARBON had the second highest WTP while the WTP for YIELD was very limited. In Denmark and Germany, we found a positive relation between organic consumption and WTP for WELFARE and CARBON. In Sweden, a similar relation was not identified. Our results leave no doubt that, when innovating through breeding, organic dairy breeders and farmers should prioritize traits that enhance the ability of dairy animals to experience good welfare in organic production systems.

Farmers' perspectives on grazing: a comparative study across eight European countries

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Grazing has been demonstrated to generate multiple benefits, including increased farm profitability, biodiversity conservation, cultural landscape maintenance, and improved animal welfare. However, the extent to which these benefits are realised is contingent upon the grazing intensity and how grazing practices are implemented, which are influenced by regional contexts and farmers' attitudes. This study investigated livestock farmers' perceptions on grazing as part of the EU-funded project Grazing4AgroEcology (GA 101059626) across eight European countries: France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, and Sweden. In Italy, two regions – South Tyrol and Sardinia – were selected to represent Alpine and Mediterranean environments. To achieve insight into farmers' perspectives, a comprehensive online survey was administered in 2023 in the respective national languages. The survey was disseminated through multiple channels, including newsletters, agricultural journals, and social media, yielding approximately 1,500 valid responses. It assessed farmers' perspectives on key aspects of animal husbandry, the perceived importance of external influences, and the primary constraints and incentives associated with grazing adoption. The results reveal significant regional differences in how farmers approach grazing and provide critical insights for policymakers, educators, and agricultural stakeholders. By identifying the factors shaping farmers' decision-making, these findings can support the development of targeted interventions to mitigate barriers and enhance the adoption of sustainable grazing practices.