

# Public perceptions of animal husbandry and welfare: how to respond properly?

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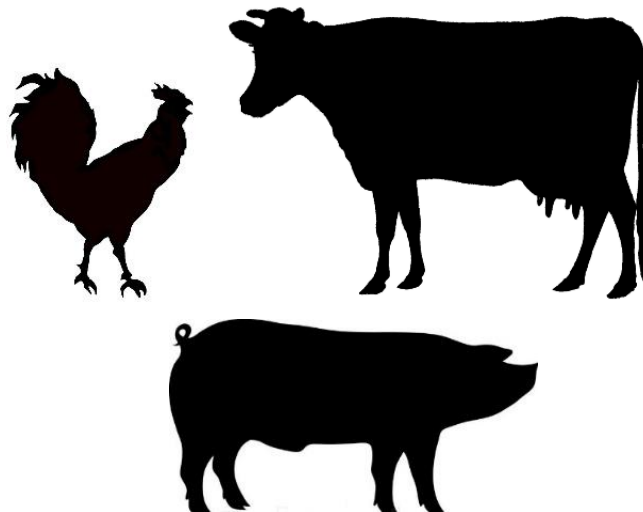
MARKETING FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

ONE Conference

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## **(Public) Criticisms towards livestock farming**

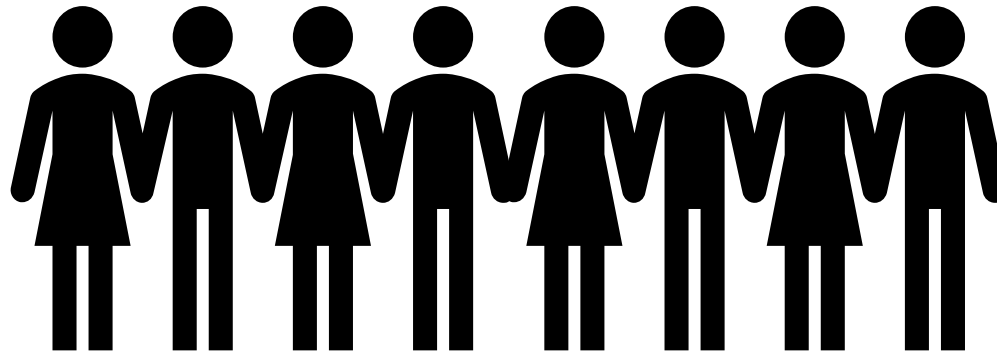
Increasing public concern about animal welfare in current livestock farming systems in several countries around the world (Kendall et al. 2006; Tonsor et al. 2009; Vanhonacker/Verbeke 2014)



## (Public) Criticisms towards livestock farming

It's all about  
profit...

...and animals  
don't count.

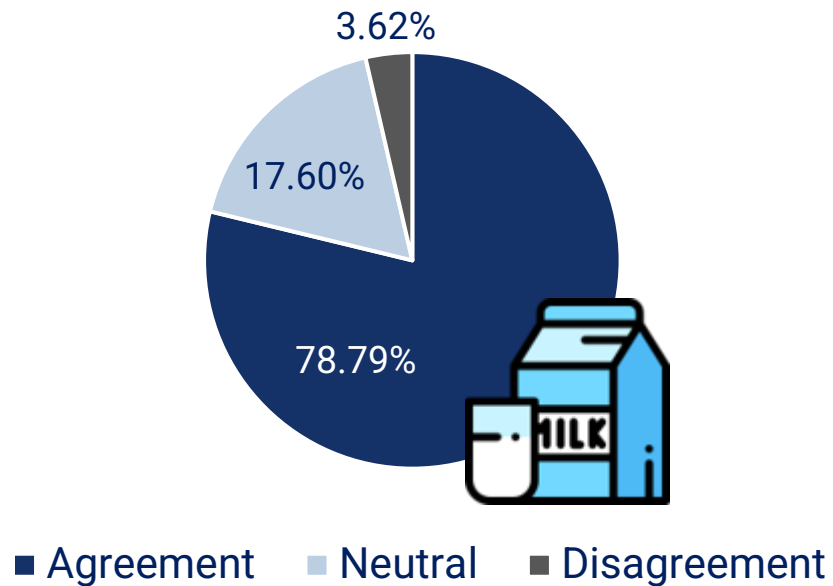


# Perceptions of farming systems: the case of cattle



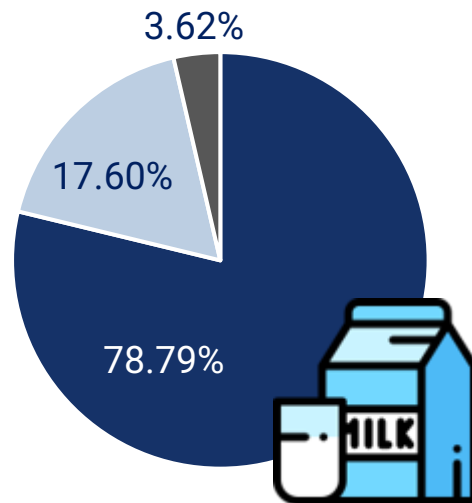
# Perceptions of farming systems: the case of cattle

Husbandry conditions for dairy cows should be improved.



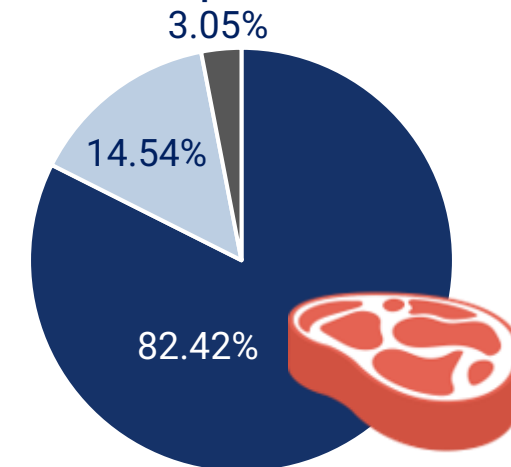
## Perceptions of farming systems: the case of cattle

Husbandry conditions for dairy cows should be improved.



■ Agreement ■ Neutral ■ Disagreement

Husbandry conditions for beef cattle should be improved.



■ Agreement ■ Neutral ■ Disagreement

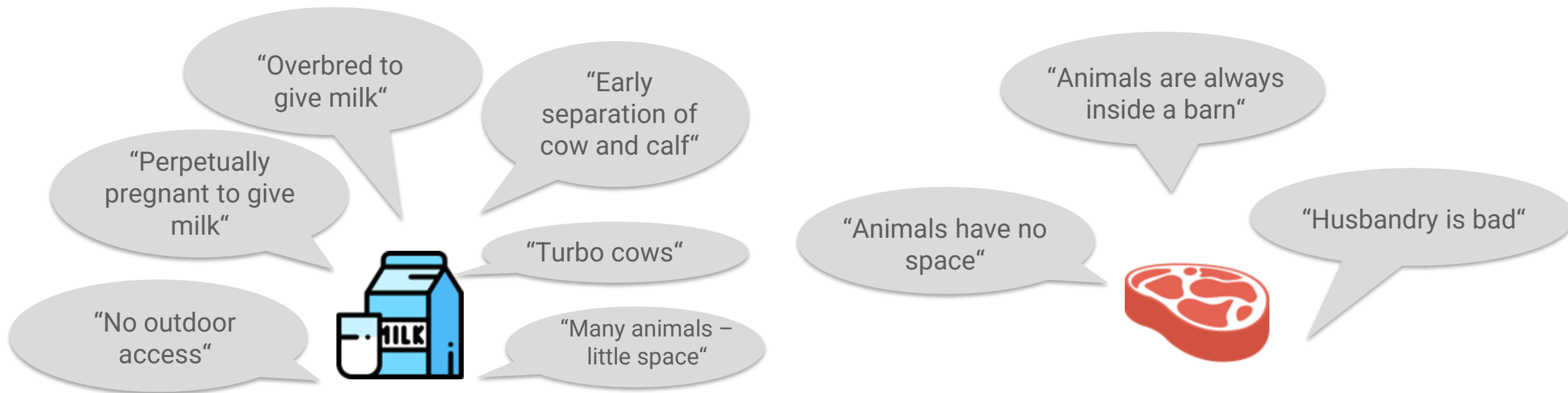
## OPEN QUESTION

# Perceptions of farming systems: the case of cattle

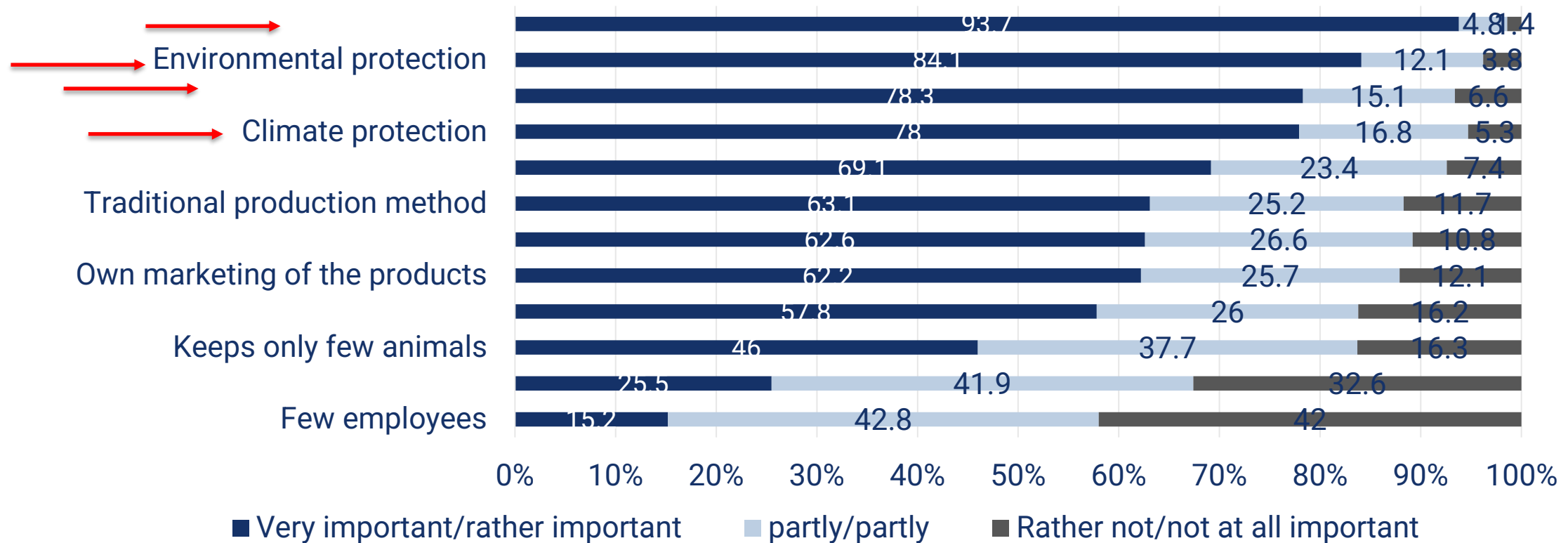


## OPEN QUESTION

# Perceptions of farming systems: the case of cattle



# The ideal animal farm: How important are the following aspects?



## Sector's strategies to encounter the criticisms

**“It is because people don't know anything about livestock production!”**

**→ Knowledge-deficit-hypothesis** (e.g. *NASEM, 2017*)

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## Sector's strategies to encounter the criticisms

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**→ Knowledge-deficit-hypothesis** (e.g. NASEM, 2017)

→ Assumption that experts in the field are right and lay-people are wrong

**Is this a successful strategy?**



## Information deficit

- Informing the public about animal production and current practices is good to increase transparency
- It can raise awareness for topics related to animal food production

**But: Increasing knowledge in the public will not increase acceptance for farming practices that are contrasting peoples' values and attitudes**

# If it is not about knowledge: Reasons for criticisms

## Changed human-animal relationships:

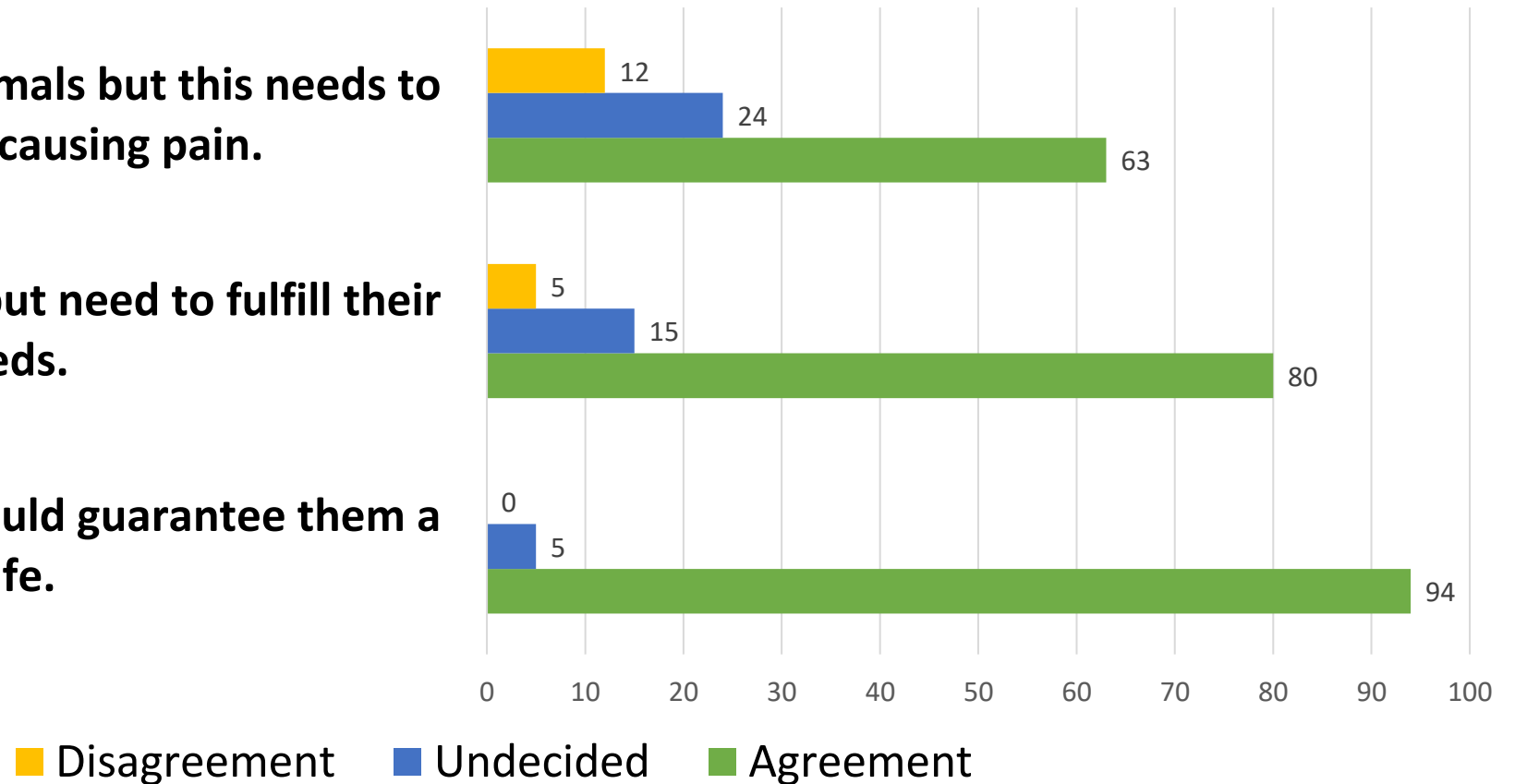
- Demands for an ethically correct treatment of farm animals have increased
- Anthropocentric attitudes (“man as the crown of creation”) are not supported on a broad basis anymore (*Hoelker et al. 2018*)
- Experiences with pets change values and attitudes towards animals (*Busch et al. in preparation*)
- New scientific knowledge about emotional, cognitive and social abilities of animals
- New scientific knowledge on genetic similarities between humans and animals
- Fear of being negatively affected through animal farming, e.g. antibiotic resistance, zoonosis (*Busch et al., 2020*)

## How should humans treat animals?

**We are allowed to kill animals but this needs to be done without causing pain.**

**We can use animals but need to fulfill their needs.**

**If we use animals, we should guarantee them a good life.**



1,049 German residents questioned in August 2017

Hoelker et al. 2018

## Conclusions on how to position the sector

- Knowledge on current farming practices in the public is low
- When made aware: many of current farming practices lack public support
- Consensus for most people: Animals can be used but a good life needs to be guaranteed
- A “good life” can mean different things for the stakeholders, especially for people from inside and outside the sector

## Conclusions on how to position the sector

- Find consensus about what a good life includes and reposition livestock farming through taking a more active role  
→ Stop wanting to educate the public but rather acknowledge public demand
- Role of science: transdisciplinary projects to find evidence for “a good life and good treatment of animals”, including public opinions and ethics



# Thank you very much!



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