



As part of our vision to be a positive force for change, we've produced a series of factsheets to help our customers better understand sustainability issues, and what we're doing about them.

Overview

Farm animal welfare focuses on ensuring animals are kept in conditions that support their health, comfort and ability to exhibit natural behaviours throughout their lives. It considers standards relating to housing, nutrition, veterinary care, handling and transport, as well as practices at slaughter. For food businesses, prioritising animal welfare is a fundamental element of responsible sourcing and sustainable supply chains, helping to manage risk, meet evolving customer expectations and drive ongoing improvements across livestock production systems.



What's the problem?

Modern farming systems have delivered affordable and reliable food, but in some cases, this has involved practices that can compromise animal welfare.

Welfare challenges such as limited space, close confinement systems, fast-growing breeds, lack of environmental enrichment and inconsistent standards across global supply chains can have serious consequences for animals' physical health and behavioural wellbeing. Restricted movement can prevent animals from expressing natural behaviours, while high stocking densities may increase stress, aggression and disease risk. In poultry and pigs, rapid growth rates can contribute to lameness and other health issues; in dairy systems, poor housing or management can impact mobility and overall condition. Where enrichment and appropriate husbandry are lacking, animals are more vulnerable to injury, chronic stress and compromised immune function. Complex supply chains can also create risk of non-compliance, reputational harm and misalignment with customer expectations.

Increasing public awareness, evolving regulation and customer commitments mean that food businesses are under growing pressure to demonstrate how animal welfare risks are identified, managed and improved.

Jargon buster

Higher welfare systems: Farming approaches that go beyond legal minimums, e.g. Better Chicken Commitment, RSPCA, Red Tractor Enhanced or free range.

Enhanced welfare systems: A level in between conventional farming and higher welfare farming. These animals may have one of two areas improved, e.g. be provided with more space, but not enough factors to be considered higher welfare.

Basic welfare system: Farming which meets or slightly exceeds legislation e.g. Red Tractor

Environmental enrichment: Materials or structures that allow animals to perform natural behaviours, such as rooting, perching or foraging.

Our targets and plans

We've a clear ambition to improve farm animal welfare across our own brand range, recognising that meaningful change requires action at every stage of the supply chain. Our targets focus on working with suppliers to get an animal welfare policy in place, requesting regular reporting against key welfare criteria, and encouraging robust due diligence throughout the supply chain, regardless of how far removed we may be from the farm. By setting clear expectations, increasing transparency and working collaboratively with suppliers, we aim to drive continuous improvement in animal welfare standards and support responsible sourcing across all species.

What can you do?

- Consider animal welfare when specifying products and menus, balancing welfare, cost and availability.
- Ask questions about sourcing standards and assurance schemes used for meat, dairy and egg products.
- Create a comprehensive animal welfare policy and require your suppliers to also do this.
- Communicate clearly and honestly about welfare standards, progress and challenges across the supply chain.

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