PERCEPTION OF ANIMAL WELFARE BY MEAT RETAILERS IN SPAIN

Gustavo A. María¹, Genaro C Miranda de la Lama¹, Morris Villarroel²

¹Animal Production & Food Science, University of Zaragoza, Zaragoza, ²Animal Production - Etsia, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Madrid, Spain

The aim of the study was to analyze how meat retailers perceive ANIMAL WELFARE in a typical medium sized city (500,000 inhabitants) in Spain. A total of 740 surveys were completed with meat retailers (210 butcheries and 160 supermarkets) in the city of Zaragoza in Aragón (NE Spain). Each retailer was surveyed twice during 2008 and 2010. The survey included questions about their perception of ANIMAL WELFARE, their knowledge about the topic and the commercialization and acceptability of welfare friendly products (WFP). The data were processed and analyzed using the FREQ and CATMOD procedures of SAS statistical package. The effect of year and retailer type was analyzed, as well as the answer class within each question. In general supermarkets were more aware about ANIMAL WELFARE issues and were more critical regarding their perception about ANIMAL WELFARE in Spain ($\chi^2$ p< 0.05). The trend observed across years in meat retailers of their perception about ANIMAL WELFARE issues was significantly biased in a positive direction (p< 0.05). Less than 40% of retailers surveyed had received some type of information about European Welfare regulations (from regional authorities). However, the majority of the retailers (>60%) consider the EU regulations about ANIMAL WELFARE to be useful and necessary. This opinion was more significant in the supermarkets ($\chi^2$ p< 0.05). More than 85% of the retailers answered that their customers never asked about WFP and more than 75% believe that their customers will not pay more for a product to improve ANIMAL WELFARE. Approximately half of the retailers sold some type of WFP in their shops. This proportion in the supermarkets was close to 60%, but in the butcheries was significantly ($\chi^2$ p< 0.05) lower (< 40%). However, WFP represent a low proportion of their total commercialization (< 10%). The demand for WFP rose slightly between 2008 and 2010 in supermarkets but declined in butcheries. More than 60% of the retailers said that their customers demand WFP. However, the main reason is quality (not welfare). In general the perception of meat retailers was positive and they were sensitive about ANIMAL WELFARE issues. The WFP represent a very low proportion of total business but the tendency in supermarkets is positive. The main reason to buy WFP is quality and the second reason, although much more infrequent than the first, was ANIMAL WELFARE.