

MAIN TAKEAWAYS

Some differences in levels of knowledge were observed between meat-eaters and non-meat-eaters or between those who were the most concerned about animal welfare and those who were the least concerned about the issue. But even among consumers for whom animal welfare matters more and among those who do not eat meat, only a minority were well-informed on current animal welfare practices. Moreover, knowledge of some of the most controversial yet widespread animal farming practices was low across the board.

For instance, in the EU, most male day-old chicks are culled at the hatchery with around 330 million killed every year.¹⁹ However, just **over a quarter (29%)** of respondents from countries where this practice is permitted are aware of this. Awareness is highest in the Netherlands, where **over half (55%)** know that this practice occurs, while only **1 in 10** Portuguese consumers could correctly identify it as a practice which takes place in their country.

Yet the practice of killing male day-old chicks is clearly a serious ethical issue for consumers. The recent Eurobarometer poll on animal welfare revealed that **three quarters** of EU citizens find this practice to be unacceptable, with over half saying it should not be permitted even if this incurs price rises for eggs.²⁰ Arguably, should knowledge of such practice become more widespread amongst EU consumers, the importance they attach to improvements in animal welfare standards could increase in parallel.

Even in countries where certain animal welfare standards are higher than

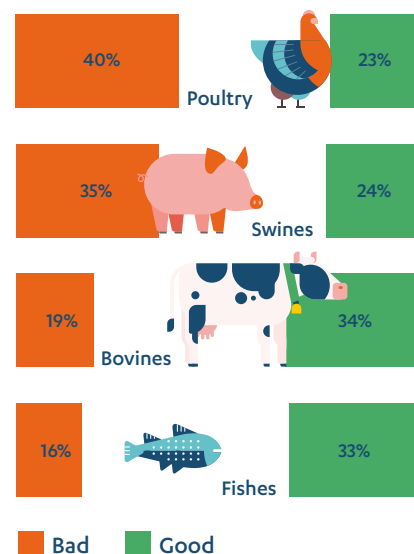
average, levels of awareness of the better standards appear to be generally low. In Sweden for example, one of two EU countries where the routine tail docking of pigs has been banned, only around **1 in 3** consumers are aware of this; most consumers either stating that they did not know if the practice occurred in their country (**43%**) or that they thought this practice did take place (**22%**). In Germany, which is the only Member State to have implemented a ban on the killing of male day-old chicks (since January 2022), only around **1 in 5** consumers can correctly identify this.²¹

The only statement for which a majority (**51%**) could correctly determine whether it was true or false was the statement *'Most pigs have access to the outdoors'* (which is false). **7 in 10** German respondents could correctly identify it as a false statement while in Sweden and Belgium **4 in 10** could do so.

In general, consumers perceive chickens and pigs to be the farmed animals with the worst welfare conditions

The number of respondents who think that the welfare conditions for chickens are 'bad' (**40%**) is almost double the number who believe such conditions to be 'good' (**23%**). On the other hand, more consumers felt that the welfare of beef and fish was 'good'. For example, **34%** said that the welfare conditions of cows were 'good' while **19%** felt that the conditions were 'bad'. German consumers were the most likely to believe that welfare conditions were 'bad' rather than 'good': **54%** of respondents from Germany felt that welfare conditions for chickens and pigs were 'bad'.

ACCORDING TO YOUR PERCEPTION, HOW ARE THE WELFARE CONDITIONS OF THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF FARM ANIMALS IN YOUR COUNTRY?



Consumers want clear and meaningful information on farmed animal welfare

In the EU, there is currently only one mandatory animal welfare labelling system: it applies to table eggs which are coded according to four different production methods (0 = organic, 1 = free range, 2 = barn or 3 = cage). However, our survey found that most egg-buying consumers have either not noticed this coding (22%) or have noticed it but do not understand it well (33%). While for organic and free-range eggs, a mention of the production method is generally indicated very prominently on the egg box packaging, this is obviously not the case for cage eggs – making it less straightforward for consumers to identify such eggs.