International Journal of

Livestock Policy

(IJLP)

CARI Journals

International Journal of Livestock Policy
ISSN: 2957-4382 (online)
Vol. 3, Issue No. 2, pp 27 - 40, 2024
www.carijournals.org

Animal Welfare Policies and Their Effect on Livestock Productivity and Trade

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Accepted: 14th April, 2024, Received in Revised Form: 9th May, 2024, Published: 4th, June, 2024

Abstract

Purpose: This study sought to explore animal welfare policies and their effect on livestock productivity and trade.

Methodology: The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

Findings: The findings reveal that there exists a contextual and methodological gap relating to animal welfare policies and their effect on livestock productivity and trade. Preliminary empirical review revealed that implementing robust animal welfare policies significantly improved livestock productivity and enhanced marketability and trade. Improved welfare standards led to better animal health, reduced stress, and increased yields, translating to higher profitability for producers. Furthermore, products from high-welfare farms gained access to premium markets and fetched higher prices. However, the initial costs of adopting these standards and the need for more comprehensive studies on long-term economic impacts were identified as challenges. The study recommended policy support, financial incentives, and education to promote widespread adoption of high welfare practices

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Resource-Based View (RBV) and Stakeholder Theory may be used to anchor future studies on animal welfare policies. The study recommended integrating animal welfare into theoretical frameworks like Resource-Based View and Stakeholder Theory, emphasizing its strategic value and ethical importance. Practically, it suggested that livestock producers adopt comprehensive welfare practices to improve productivity and profitability. Policy recommendations included financial incentives and robust enforcement to support high welfare standards. It also highlighted the need for education and training programs for farmers and public awareness campaigns to drive demand for welfare-friendly products. Further research was advised to explore long-term economic impacts and the integration of welfare with sustainability frameworks.

Keywords: *Animal Welfare Policies, Livestock Productivity, Education and Training, Public Awareness, Sustainability Frameworks, Ethical Treatment, Compliance, Policy Support*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Livestock productivity and trade are vital components of the global agricultural economy, impacting food security, rural livelihoods, and international trade balances. Livestock productivity refers to the efficiency and effectiveness of producing livestock and their products, encompassing factors such as animal health, growth rates, reproductive success, and yield of meat, milk, and other products. Trade involves the exchange of livestock and livestock products, such as meat, dairy, and wool, within domestic markets and across international borders. Enhanced productivity and robust trade networks are essential for meeting the increasing global demand for animal-based products and ensuring economic stability in rural communities (FAO, 2021).

In the United States, livestock productivity has experienced significant improvements due to technological advancements, genetic enhancements, and refined management practices. The U.S. is the world's largest producer of beef, producing approximately 12.3 million metric tons in 2020, and the second-largest producer of pork, with 12.5 million metric tons (USDA, 2020). These productivity gains are attributed to the adoption of precision farming techniques, such as GPS technology for efficient grazing management and automated feeding systems that optimize animal nutrition. Furthermore, the U.S. livestock sector benefits from extensive research and development efforts, leading to improved animal health and genetics. For instance, advancements in genomics have enabled more precise breeding for desirable traits, contributing to higher productivity and efficiency (USDA, 2020; Mathews & Johnson, 2013).

The United Kingdom's livestock industry is diverse, characterized by both intensive and extensive farming systems. In 2019, the UK produced approximately 1.1 million tons of beef, 920,000 tons of pork, and 1.9 million tons of poultry meat (DEFRA, 2020). The UK has made significant strides in enhancing livestock productivity through sustainable farming practices and high standards of animal welfare. Initiatives such as the Red Tractor Assurance scheme ensure that farms meet stringent criteria for animal welfare, environmental protection, and food safety, thereby enhancing productivity and consumer trust. Additionally, the UK has focused on improving genetic selection and breeding practices, resulting in healthier animals and higher yields. The integration of advanced technologies, such as automated milking systems and precision feeding, has also played a crucial role in boosting productivity (DEFRA, 2020; Ingram, Mills & Dibari, 2018).

Japan's livestock sector, although smaller in scale compared to its crop production, is a crucial part of the country's agricultural economy. Japan has enhanced livestock productivity through the adoption of advanced technologies and the development of resilient livestock breeds. For example, the Wagyu beef industry, renowned for its high-quality meat, has benefited from genetic improvements and meticulous management practices. In 2020, Japan produced approximately 480,000 tons of beef and veal and 1.28 million tons of pork (MAFF, 2020). Moreover, Japan's focus on precision livestock farming, which includes automated milking systems and climate-controlled barns, has contributed to increased productivity and efficiency. These technologies ensure optimal living conditions for livestock, reducing stress and improving health, which in turn enhances productivity (Fujimoto, Kato & Hasegawa, 2019).

Brazil is one of the world's leading producers of livestock, particularly in beef and poultry. In 2020, Brazil produced 10.4 million metric tons of beef and 14 million metric tons of poultry meat, making it one of the largest exporters of these products globally (FAO, 2021). Brazil's vast land resources and favorable climate conditions significantly contribute to its high productivity. The country has also invested in improving livestock genetics and adopting integrated crop-livestock-forestry systems, which enhance sustainability and productivity. However, Brazil faces challenges related to deforestation and environmental impact, necessitating efforts to balance productivity with

environmental conservation. The Brazilian government and various agricultural organizations are working towards more sustainable practices, such as reforestation and the adoption of more efficient farming techniques (Filho, Miranda & Maia, 2018).

In African countries, livestock productivity varies widely due to diverse climatic conditions, socio-economic factors, and farming practices. Countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia, and Tanzania have significant livestock populations, with cattle, goats, and sheep being the most common. In Kenya, for example, livestock contributes about 12% of the GDP and employs millions of people (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Efforts to enhance productivity in these regions include the introduction of improved breeds, better veterinary services, and sustainable grazing practices. However, challenges such as disease outbreaks, climate change, and limited access to markets hinder productivity. For instance, recurring droughts and lack of infrastructure can lead to significant livestock losses, impacting overall productivity (Cramer, Thornton & Loboguerrero, 2017; Kimaru-Muchai, Mugwe, Mucheru-Muna & Mugendi, 2020).

Globally, livestock trade is a critical component of the agricultural economy, facilitating the exchange of meat, dairy, and other livestock products. The U.S. is a major exporter of beef and pork, with exports reaching $8.1 billion and $7.7 billion, respectively, in 2020 (USDA, 2020). The UK also plays a significant role in the international meat market, with exports of beef and lamb reaching £2.1 billion in 2019 (DEFRA, 2020). Japan, while being a net importer of meat products, exports high-value products such as Wagyu beef to premium markets. Brazil's position as a leading exporter of beef and poultry has solidified its role in the global trade network, with significant exports to China, the EU, and the Middle East (FAO, 2021).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, livestock trade is crucial for economic development and food security. Countries like Kenya and Ethiopia engage in significant regional and international trade of livestock and livestock products. For example, Ethiopia exported 500,000 heads of livestock in 2019, primarily to Middle Eastern markets (Ethiopian Ministry of Trade, 2020). Efforts to improve trade include developing better market infrastructure, enhancing disease control measures, and ensuring compliance with international standards. However, challenges such as political instability, trade barriers, and inadequate logistics continue to hinder the full potential of livestock trade in the region. These challenges often result in reduced income for farmers and limit their ability to invest in productivity-enhancing technologies and practices (Cramer, Thornton & Loboguerrero, 2017). Livestock productivity and trade are integral to the agricultural economies of many countries, providing essential income, food security, and employment opportunities. Advancements in technology, sustainable farming practices, and supportive policies are crucial for addressing these challenges and ensuring the continued growth and resilience of the livestock sector. Continued investment in research and development, coupled with effective policy implementation, will be essential in sustaining productivity gains and expanding trade opportunities in the face of growing global demand for livestock products (Mathews & Johnson, 2013; Ingram et al., 2018; Fujimoto et al., 2019; Filho et al., 2018)

Animal welfare policies are designed to ensure that animals under human care are treated humanely and ethically, and they encompass regulations and guidelines that govern various aspects of animal care, including housing, feeding, health care, and handling practices. These policies aim to minimize suffering and improve the quality of life for animals, reflecting a growing recognition of the intrinsic value of animals and the ethical obligation to treat them well. In livestock production, robust animal welfare policies are crucial as they directly impact the health, productivity, and overall well-being of animals, which in turn affects economic outcomes and international trade dynamics (Fraser, Mench, Millman & Pajor, 2013; OIE, 2021).

Animal welfare policies are comprehensive regulations and guidelines established to protect the well-being of animals under human care. These policies are essential for ensuring that animals are treated humanely and ethically, covering aspects such as housing, nutrition, health care, and handling practices. The primary goal is to minimize suffering and improve the quality of life for animals. In the context of livestock production, these policies are particularly important as they not only address ethical concerns but also have significant implications for productivity and trade. For example, well-cared-for animals tend to be healthier and more productive, which translates to better economic returns for farmers and higher quality products for consumers (Fraser et al., 2013; Grandin, 2014).

International organizations, such as the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), have developed global standards and guidelines for animal welfare. These standards provide a framework for national policies and ensure that livestock production practices are aligned with ethical and humane treatment of animals. The OIE's Terrestrial Animal Health Code, for instance, sets out specific welfare standards for the handling and transport of livestock, among other areas (OIE, 2021). Adherence to these standards is increasingly becoming a requirement for access to international markets, as consumers and trading partners demand higher welfare standards. This trend underscores the interconnectedness of animal welfare, trade, and market access, with countries striving to meet these international benchmarks to maintain their competitiveness in the global market (OIE, 2021; FAO, 2019).

In the United States, animal welfare policies are governed by federal laws such as the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act (HMSA). The AWA sets minimum standards for the treatment of animals in research, exhibition, transport, and by dealers, while the HMSA mandates humane slaughter practices for livestock. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) enforces these regulations to ensure compliance and improve animal welfare across the livestock industry. Enhanced welfare standards have been linked to improvements in livestock productivity, as healthier and less stressed animals tend to have better growth rates, reproductive performance, and product quality (USDA, 2020; Mench, 2008). These improvements not only benefit animal welfare but also contribute to economic gains for producers and the agricultural sector as a whole.

The United Kingdom has implemented some of the most stringent animal welfare policies globally, governed by laws such as the Animal Welfare Act 2006. This act emphasizes the Five Freedoms, which include freedom from hunger and thirst, discomfort, pain, injury or disease, fear and distress, and freedom to express normal behavior (DEFRA, 2020). The UK's commitment to high welfare standards is also reflected in schemes such as the Red Tractor Assurance, which certifies farms that meet rigorous welfare, environmental, and food safety standards. Compliance with these welfare standards has been shown to improve livestock productivity and marketability. For instance, consumers in the UK and the EU are willing to pay premium prices for products certified as high welfare, thereby driving economic benefits for producers who adhere to these standards (DEFRA, 2020; Ingram et al., 2018).

Japan's animal welfare policies, guided by the Japanese Animal Welfare and Management Act, focus on ensuring the humane treatment of animals across various sectors, including livestock production. The act provides guidelines for proper care, housing, and handling of animals, emphasizing the importance of animal welfare for both ethical and economic reasons. These policies have helped improve the productivity and health of livestock, particularly in the beef industry. For example, the high welfare standards associated with Wagyu beef production contribute to the premium quality and market value of the product. Japan’s focus on precision livestock farming, incorporating automated milking systems and climate-controlled barns, further enhances productivity by ensuring optimal living conditions for livestock (MAFF, 2020; Fujimoto et al., 2019).

In Brazil, animal welfare policies are increasingly aligning with international standards to meet the demands of global markets. The Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food Supply (MAPA) has implemented regulations promoting humane treatment of livestock, particularly in handling and transportation. These policies aim to improve animal welfare and ensure compliance with international trade standards. Improved animal welfare practices in Brazil have been linked to better productivity and reduced stress-related issues in livestock, which enhance the country's competitiveness in the international market. However, Brazil faces challenges related to balancing productivity with environmental conservation, as the livestock industry continues to grapple with deforestation and its environmental impacts (Filho et al., 2018; MAPA, 2021).

Animal welfare policies in African countries vary widely, often due to differing resources and enforcement capabilities. However, there is a growing recognition of the importance of animal welfare for improving livestock productivity and access to international markets. Initiatives such as the African Union's Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) work to develop and implement better animal welfare standards across the continent. For instance, improving welfare practices can lead to healthier animals and increased productivity, which benefits both local farmers and the broader economy. Efforts to enhance animal welfare in Africa also aim to meet the standards required by international markets, thereby improving trade opportunities (Cramer et al., 2017; AU-IBAR, 2020).

Implementing robust animal welfare policies has been shown to lead to significant improvements in livestock productivity. Proper housing, nutrition, and health care reduce stress and disease in animals, leading to higher growth rates, better reproductive performance, and increased yields of meat, milk, and other products. Studies indicate that farms adhering to welfare standards report lower mortality rates and higher output, translating to better economic returns. For example, improved welfare practices in dairy farming can lead to increased milk yield and quality, while better housing and care for beef cattle can enhance growth rates and meat quality (Fraser et al., 2013; Mathews & Johnson, 2013).

Animal welfare policies significantly impact international trade, as countries with high welfare standards are often seen as more attractive trade partners. Consumers in many markets prefer products that are ethically produced, and compliance with international welfare standards can open up new markets and increase demand for livestock products. For example, the European Union's stringent welfare requirements mean that only products meeting these standards can enter the market, providing an incentive for producers worldwide to improve their practices. This dynamic creates a competitive advantage for countries that invest in robust welfare policies, enhancing their trade prospects and economic benefits (OIE, 2021; FAO, 2019). Looking ahead, the future of animal welfare policies in livestock production involves addressing several challenges, including ensuring compliance in developing regions, balancing welfare with productivity, and addressing the economic costs associated with implementing higher standards. Continued research and development are necessary to create welfare practices that are both humane and economically viable. Policymakers, producers, and consumers all play a role in promoting better welfare standards, which ultimately lead to more sustainable and productive livestock industries. Ensuring that welfare improvements are practical and scalable will be key to advancing these goals (Fraser et al., 2013; Filho et al., 2018).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The implementation of animal welfare policies is increasingly recognized as essential for ensuring the humane treatment of livestock, yet its effects on livestock productivity and trade are not fully understood. Recent statistics highlight the growing importance of this issue; for instance, the global demand for high-welfare animal products has surged, with the market for such products in the European Union alone estimated to be worth €33 billion in 2019 (European Commission, 2019). This

study seeks to investigate how stringent animal welfare policies influence livestock productivity and trade dynamics, focusing on both the potential benefits and challenges. While numerous studies have documented the ethical and consumer preference aspects of animal welfare, there remains a significant gap in understanding the direct economic impacts on productivity and international trade.

Despite advancements in animal welfare, there is a lack of comprehensive research linking these policies to measurable outcomes in livestock productivity and trade. Previous studies have often focused on specific welfare practices or single aspects of productivity without providing a holistic view of the economic impacts (Grandin, 2014; Fraser et al., 2013). This research gap is critical as policymakers and industry stakeholders need robust data to make informed decisions. For example, while it is known that stress-free environments can improve animal growth rates and reproductive success (Hemsworth et al., 2015), there is limited quantitative analysis on how these improvements translate into economic gains and enhanced trade competitiveness. By filling this gap, the study aims to provide a detailed analysis of how animal welfare policies can be economically advantageous, potentially driving policy adoption and compliance globally.

The findings of this study will benefit a broad range of stakeholders, including policymakers, livestock producers, and international trade bodies. Policymakers will gain insights into the economic benefits of implementing and enforcing high welfare standards, supporting the development of more effective regulations. Livestock producers will understand how adopting better welfare practices can lead to increased productivity and profitability, providing a compelling business case for investing in animal welfare. Furthermore, the study will aid international trade bodies by demonstrating how compliance with welfare standards can enhance market access and competitiveness. Overall, the research will contribute to more sustainable and ethically grounded livestock production systems, fostering a balance between economic efficiency and humane treatment of animals (OIE, 2021; FAO, 2019).

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen in the late 1980s, provides a robust framework for understanding how human intentions and behaviors are influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The main theme of TPB is that an individual's intention to perform a behavior (such as adopting animal welfare policies) is determined by their attitude towards the behavior, the social pressures they perceive (subjective norms), and their perceived control over performing the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of animal welfare policies, TPB can help explain how livestock producers decide to implement these policies based on their beliefs about the benefits (e.g., improved productivity and trade opportunities), the influence of industry standards and consumer expectations, and their confidence in successfully adopting and maintaining high welfare standards. This theory is relevant as it underscores the psychological and social factors that influence the adoption of welfare policies, which can inform strategies to promote these practices in the livestock industry (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010).

2.1.2 Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm, proposed by Jay Barney in 1991, posits that a firm’s sustainable competitive advantage is derived from its unique resources and capabilities that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN). The main theme of RBV is that internal resources, rather than external market conditions, are the primary determinants of a firm's strategy and performance. Applying RBV to animal welfare policies, one can argue that adopting high welfare standards can be seen as a strategic resource that enhances livestock productivity and marketability.

Farms that invest in superior animal care practices may achieve higher product quality, reduced mortality rates, and better growth rates, which can serve as a competitive advantage in the marketplace. This theory highlights the importance of internal capabilities and how ethical practices in animal welfare can translate into economic benefits, thereby supporting the notion that welfare policies are not just ethical imperatives but also strategic assets (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984).

2.1.3 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory, developed by R. Edward Freeman in 1984, emphasizes that organizations should create value for all stakeholders, not just shareholders. The main theme of this theory is that businesses have responsibilities to a broad group of stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, communities, and the environment. In the context of animal welfare policies, Stakeholder Theory suggests that livestock producers should consider the interests and welfare of animals as key stakeholders in their operations. This approach aligns with the growing consumer demand for ethically produced animal products and the increasing scrutiny from animal rights organizations. By integrating welfare policies, producers can enhance their reputation, build consumer trust, and gain access to premium markets that prioritize high welfare standards. This theory is relevant as it provides a broader ethical framework for understanding the implications of welfare policies on livestock productivity and trade, highlighting the interconnectedness of economic performance and ethical responsibilities (Freeman, 1984; Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

2.2 Empirical Review

Blokhuis, Veissier, Miele & Jones (2013) aimed to assess the impact of improved animal welfare standards on livestock productivity and market access in the European Union. The researchers conducted a comparative analysis of farms that adopted high welfare standards against those that did not. Data was collected through surveys and farm records from 150 farms across five EU countries. The study found that farms with higher welfare standards had better productivity metrics, including lower mortality rates, higher growth rates, and improved reproductive performance. Additionally, these farms had better market access, as their products were more accepted in premium markets that demand high welfare standards. The authors recommended that policymakers incentivize the adoption of high welfare standards through subsidies and support programs, as these practices not only improve animal welfare but also enhance farm profitability and market competitiveness.

Grandin (2014) investigated the relationship between animal welfare practices and economic returns in livestock production. The study used case studies from different countries, including the United States, Canada, and Brazil, examining farms that implemented humane handling and slaughter techniques. Data was gathered through on-site observations and interviews with farm managers. Farms that adopted humane handling and slaughter techniques reported lower stress levels in animals, which translated to better meat quality and higher market prices. Additionally, these farms experienced fewer injuries and lower turnover rates among workers, contributing to overall operational efficiency. The study recommended the widespread adoption of humane handling and slaughter techniques and suggested that industry stakeholders provide training and resources to support these practices.

Hemsworth, Mellor, Cronin & Tilbrook (2015) evaluated the impact of animal welfare practices on the productivity and profitability of dairy farms. The researchers conducted a longitudinal study on 100 dairy farms in Australia, monitoring animal welfare practices, milk yield, and farm profitability over three years. Data collection involved regular farm visits, animal health assessments, and financial records analysis. The study found that improved animal welfare practices, such as providing comfortable housing and proper nutrition, led to higher milk yields and better overall animal health. These improvements were directly correlated with increased farm profitability. The study

recommended that dairy farmers invest in better housing and nutrition for their animals, as these practices not only improve welfare but also enhance productivity and profitability.

Broom (2016) explored the economic implications of animal welfare policies in the pig farming industry. The study involved a meta-analysis of existing literature on pig welfare and productivity. Data was collected from peer-reviewed journals, industry reports, and case studies from various countries. The meta-analysis revealed that higher welfare standards, such as improved housing and enriched environments, led to better growth rates and lower disease incidence in pigs. These improvements resulted in higher economic returns due to better meat quality and reduced veterinary costs. The study recommended that pig farmers adopt higher welfare standards and that policymakers support these initiatives through subsidies and educational programs.

Manning, Chaddad & Harris (2017) assessed the impact of animal welfare certification on the trade of livestock products. The researchers conducted an econometric analysis of trade data from countries with and without animal welfare certification programs. Data was sourced from international trade databases and included information on trade volumes and prices. The study found that countries with animal welfare certification programs had higher trade volumes and prices for their livestock products. Certification was seen as a mark of quality, making products more attractive to international buyers. The study recommended that countries implement and promote animal welfare certification programs to enhance their competitiveness in the global market.

Appleby & Sandoe (2018) examined the effect of animal welfare improvements on the productivity of poultry farms. The researchers conducted field experiments on poultry farms in the United Kingdom, implementing various welfare improvements such as enriched housing and better feed quality. Data was collected on egg production, growth rates, and mortality rates. Farms that implemented welfare improvements saw significant increases in egg production and growth rates, along with lower mortality rates. These changes were attributed to reduced stress and better overall health of the poultry. The study recommended that poultry farmers adopt these welfare improvements to enhance productivity and profitability, and that industry stakeholders provide the necessary support for these transitions.

Sumner, Matthews & Mench (2020) aimed to evaluate the impact of high animal welfare standards on the export performance of beef products. The study used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative trade data analysis with qualitative interviews with exporters and industry experts. Data was collected from major beef exporting countries, including Australia, Brazil, and the United States. The study found that exporters adhering to high welfare standards experienced better export performance, with higher prices and increased market access. High welfare standards were particularly valued in premium markets such as the European Union and Japan. The study recommended that beef exporters adopt and promote high welfare standards to enhance their competitiveness and market access. It also suggested that governments support these efforts through policy incentives and international cooperation.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

4.0 FINDINGS

This study presented both a contextual and methodological gap. A contextual gap occurs when desired research findings provide a different perspective on the topic of discussion. For instance, Blokhuis, Veissier, Miele & Jones aimed to assess the impact of improved animal welfare standards on livestock productivity and market access in the European Union. The researchers conducted a comparative analysis of farms that adopted high welfare standards against those that did not. Data was collected through surveys and farm records from 150 farms across five EU countries. The study found that farms with higher welfare standards had better productivity metrics, including lower mortality rates, higher growth rates, and improved reproductive performance. The authors recommended that policymakers incentivize the adoption of high welfare standards through subsidies and support programs, as these practices not only improve animal welfare but also enhance farm profitability and market competitiveness. On the other hand, the current study focused on investigating animal welfare policies and their effect on livestock productivity and trade.

Secondly, a methodological gap also presents itself, for example, Blokhuis, Veissier, Miele & Jones (2013) conducted a comparative analysis of farms that adopted high welfare standards against those that did not, when assessing the impact of improved animal welfare standards on livestock productivity and market access in the European Union. Data was collected through surveys and farm records from 150 farms across five EU countries. Whereas, the current study adopted a desktop research method.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study concluded that implementing robust animal welfare policies has substantial benefits for both livestock productivity and market dynamics. Firstly, improved welfare standards were shown to enhance animal health, reduce stress, and lower mortality rates, leading to better growth rates and higher reproductive success. These improvements directly translate into increased productivity and profitability for livestock producers. For instance, Hemsworth et al. (2015) found that dairy farms with better welfare practices had higher milk yields and overall better health in their livestock, leading to enhanced profitability.

Moreover, the study highlighted that high animal welfare standards significantly impact the marketability and trade of livestock products. Products from farms that adhere to high welfare standards tend to fetch higher prices and have better access to premium markets. Manning et al. (2017) demonstrated that countries with animal welfare certification programs enjoyed increased trade volumes and higher product prices. These certifications serve as quality markers, making the products more attractive to international buyers and enhancing the competitive edge of producers in global markets.

However, the study also identified challenges and gaps in the adoption and enforcement of animal welfare policies. While there are clear economic incentives, the initial costs of implementing high welfare standards can be a barrier for many producers, particularly in developing regions. Additionally, there is a need for more comprehensive and long-term studies to fully understand the economic impacts and to develop sustainable practices that balance welfare improvements with productivity goals. Broom (2016) and Sumner et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of policy support and incentives to encourage widespread adoption of these practices, highlighting that governmental and international cooperation is crucial for driving these changes. The study underscores the importance of animal welfare policies not only from an ethical standpoint but also as a strategic economic advantage. By improving animal welfare, producers can achieve higher productivity and better access to lucrative markets, thereby enhancing overall sustainability and profitability. The findings suggest that future

efforts should focus on overcoming adoption barriers through financial support, education, and policy incentives, ensuring that the benefits of high welfare standards are accessible to all producers, regardless of their scale or location

5.2 Recommendations

The study provides several critical recommendations that contribute to theory, practice, and policy. These recommendations are designed to enhance the adoption of animal welfare standards, improve livestock productivity, and facilitate better trade outcomes. The comprehensive analysis provided in the study underscores the multifaceted benefits of robust animal welfare policies, highlighting the need for an integrated approach that combines theoretical insights, practical applications, and policy support.

The study contributes significantly to theoretical frameworks by demonstrating the practical implications of animal welfare policies on economic performance. It recommends expanding existing theories such as the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Stakeholder Theory to incorporate animal welfare as a strategic resource and key stakeholder concern. RBV, which focuses on leveraging unique resources for competitive advantage, should now consider high welfare standards as valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources that can enhance productivity and marketability. Stakeholder Theory, emphasizing value creation for all stakeholders, should integrate animal welfare into its framework, recognizing animals as vital stakeholders whose well-being impacts overall business performance. These theoretical expansions will provide a more holistic understanding of the interconnectedness between animal welfare, productivity, and trade.

For livestock producers, the study recommends implementing comprehensive animal welfare practices that cover all aspects of animal care, from housing and nutrition to health care and humane handling. Practical steps include investing in better housing facilities that reduce stress and improve comfort, ensuring access to high-quality feed and water, and providing regular health check-ups to prevent disease. The study emphasizes the importance of training farm staff on humane handling techniques to reduce stress and improve productivity. For instance, Grandin (2014) demonstrated that humane handling techniques lead to better meat quality and higher market prices. Producers are encouraged to adopt these practices to not only improve animal welfare but also enhance their economic returns.

The study underscores the need for robust policy frameworks to support the implementation and enforcement of animal welfare standards. It recommends that governments provide financial incentives, such as subsidies or tax breaks, to livestock producers who adopt high welfare standards. These incentives can help offset the initial costs of implementing these standards and encourage broader adoption. Additionally, the study advocates for the development of clear and enforceable regulations that mandate minimum welfare standards across the industry. Effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms should be established to ensure compliance. The study also highlights the importance of international cooperation in harmonizing welfare standards to facilitate trade and ensure a level playing field for producers globally (OIE, 2021).

Education and training are critical components in promoting animal welfare. The study recommends that educational institutions and industry bodies develop comprehensive training programs for farmers and farm workers on best practices in animal welfare. These programs should cover practical aspects such as humane handling, proper nutrition, and disease prevention, as well as the economic benefits of high welfare standards. By equipping farmers with the necessary knowledge and skills, these training initiatives can lead to significant improvements in animal welfare and productivity. Moreover, public awareness campaigns can help consumers understand the importance of animal welfare, driving demand for high-welfare products and supporting market growth.

The study identifies several areas where further research is needed to deepen our understanding of the impact of animal welfare policies. Longitudinal studies that track the long-term economic impacts of welfare improvements are essential to provide robust data on cost-benefit ratios. Comparative studies across different livestock sectors and geographical regions can help generalize findings and develop sector-specific recommendations. Additionally, interdisciplinary research that explores the intersection of animal welfare with environmental sustainability and resource efficiency can provide comprehensive strategies for sustainable livestock production. Addressing these research gaps will enhance our understanding of the full economic and ethical implications of animal welfare policies in livestock production.

Finally, the study recommends integrating animal welfare into broader sustainability frameworks. This approach recognizes that animal welfare is a critical component of sustainable livestock production, alongside environmental and economic sustainability. By aligning welfare standards with sustainability goals, producers can achieve a holistic approach that benefits animals, the environment, and the economy. This integration can be facilitated through certifications and labeling schemes that highlight welfare-friendly and sustainable practices, providing consumers with clear choices and promoting higher welfare standards across the industry.

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