

Consumer perception regarding milk

Consumers believe milk to be a healthy product and want to buy it fresh. They are concerned about the way in which dairy cows are kept, the large scale intensification of dairy farming, the impact of farming on the environment and the welfare of the dairy cow. Recent surveys and polls have shown that 95% of respondents believe it is unacceptable to keep cows permanently indoors, and would never buy milk produced in this way (61%); 93% said they would pay more for good welfare if welfare was guaranteed.

Public opinion on UK milk marketing and dairy cow welfare (Ellis et al., 2009)

363 interview questionnaires to the general public in central Scotland and northern England, summer 2007.

95% of respondents thought it was unacceptable to keep cows permanently indoors

93% of respondents said they would pay more for good welfare if welfare was guaranteed

- 37% said they would pay 30% more

73% of respondents believed it was acceptable to keep cows outdoors in summer and indoors in winter

56% believed organic production better a standard of welfare than non organic systems

Ipsos-mori poll on behalf of WSPA (June 2010)

2019 face to face interviews with age 15+ adults (4-10 June 2010); 90% buy milk

When asked: Which phrase or image comes to mind when you think of milk? (multiple selections permitted)

70% of respondents said 'fresh'

52% of respondents said 'healthy'

47% of respondents said 'cows grazing in fields'

whilst 25% said 'British', 24% said 'pasture', 20% said 'children' and only 4% said expensive

When given the following information: There is a proposal for a new dairy farm in the UK, which would produce milk from around eight thousand cows in large indoor dairy sheds. The cows would spend most of the time indoors, only being able to graze outdoors when they are not able to produce milk, and asked: How often, if at all, would you buy milk if it were produced in this way? (single response permitted)

61% of respondents said 'never'

13% of respondents said 'several times/week'

whilst 8% said once a week, 8% said 'varies', 6% said 'less than once a week' and 5% said 'don't know'

When asked: What is the most important feature when you buy milk? (single response permitted, excluding price)

69% of respondents said 'freshness / sell by date'
22% of respondents said 'welfare of cows'

Further examination of 'cows grazing in fields' by region indicated that this response was geographically affected:

61% of respondents in the South West of England and 62% of respondents in Wales (maximum response) imagined 'cows grazing in fields', compared to 30% of respondents in London (minimum response).

With regards to American style Mega dairies

Over 14,000 people have formally objected to Nocton Dairies' plans to build a 'super dairy' in Lincolnshire. All but a handful of the representations have voiced opposition to the controversial plans, citing a mixture of ethical reasons, particularly regarding animal welfare, and concerns about its impact on the local environment and local residents (Farmers Guardian 2011).

References

Ellis, K.A., Billington, K., McNeil, B. and McKeegan D.E.F. 2009. Public opinion on UK milk marketing and dairy cow welfare. *Animal welfare* 18: 267-282.

Farmers Guardian 2011. <http://www.farmersguardian.com/home/hot-topics/super-dairies/%E2%80%98unprecedented%E2%80%99-response-to-nocton-dairies-plan/36519.article>

WSPA 2010. <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oItemid=2653>