

INFORMATION ABOUT ANIMAL WELFARE, PRODUCT LIKING AND CONSUMER WILLINGNESS TO PAY

F. Napolitano¹, A. Carlucci², M. Caroprese³, A. Braghieri¹

¹*Dipartimento di Scienze delle Produzioni animali, Università degli Studi della Basilicata, Via dell'Ateneo Lucano 10, 85100 Potenza, Italy, fabio.napolitano@unibas.it*

²*Smell & Taste Association, Bella (PZ), Italy*

³*Dipartimento PRIME, Università degli Studi di Foggia, Via Napoli 25, 71100 Foggia, Italy*

This study aims to evaluate the effect of information about animal welfare on product liking and consumer willingness to pay (WTP).

Three products (lamb, beef and yogurt) were used in three different experiments involving 84, 80 and 104 consumers, respectively. Each experiment was planned in three tests. In the first test the consumers were offered the product, and asked to taste it and rate their liking receiving no information (perceived liking). In the second test the subjects received the information concerning farming conditions and their effects on animal welfare. They were asked to read the information and give their liking expectation for that product (expected liking). In the third test consumers were given the product along with the information sheet. They were instructed to read the information before tasting the sample and express their liking score (actual liking). Consumers rated the products on a nine-point hedonic scale. Only for yogurt, a second-price sealed-bid auction was used to assess consumer WTP according to the level of welfare of the animals used in the production process.

Results from the three experiments showed that expectations induced by the information on animal welfare affected quality perception. Thus, if expectations were either positively (the liking score of the product tasted without external information was higher than expected) or negatively disconfirmed (the product was worse than expected), the assimilation model is generally applicable, which means that hedonic ratings moved towards the expectations when external information on animal welfare was given compared to tasting without information. Conversely, the information concerning high standards of animal welfare was able to affect expected WTP but had an effect on actual WTP only when the most acceptable yogurt was offered to the consumers.

In conclusion, information about animal welfare can be a major determinant of animal-based food liking and consumer WTP.