



INVESTOR'S GUIDE TO



CIWF + FAIRR INITIATIVE



FARM ANIMAL WELFARE **AND** INVESTMENT MATERIALITY

The treatment of farm animals in the supply chains of food companies is increasingly understood as a material investment issue. Failure to adequately manage farm animal welfare can lead to a number of issues that can impact the bottom line of food companies:

- **Food safety issues and product recalls**, such as the California-based meatpacking company Hallmark/Westland which was forced into bankruptcy after animal welfare violations in 2008 led to the largest meat recall in history
- **Reputational damage and media scrutiny** as consumer interest in animal welfare and transparency rises – with 58% of US consumers* more concerned about farm animal welfare today than they were two years ago
- **Regulatory risk** from tightening legislation such as the potential EU-wide ban on prophylactic antibiotic use which has been approved by the European Parliament, and US state laws such as the Massachusetts ballot initiative which passed in 2016, outlawing close-confinement
- **Exacerbation of wider risks to food sector and society**, such as the human health risks from antibiotic resistance linked to intensive livestock production. High standards of farm animal welfare also enable future-proofing of a business in the face of inevitable escalation of wider risk issues such as emissions and resource use.

Increasingly, company management of farm animal welfare is also seen as a proxy for good governance and can give insight into supply chain control more broadly, which is especially important for large, global food companies with complex, multi-species supply chains.

But farm animal welfare isn't just a risk issue for companies; it also presents upside opportunities. Higher standards of farm animal welfare can mean access to new markets and opportunities to demonstrate business leadership and innovation.

* Packaged Facts, *Animal Welfare: Issues and Opportunities in the Meat, Poultry and Egg Markets in the US* (2017)

CAGE-FREE EGG PRODUCTION IS A FAST-MOVING TREND

The shift towards cage-free egg production has been a fast-moving trend in the US egg industry over the past two years. Over 200 companies have made corporate commitments on this issue since 2015 when McDonald's announced their policy to move their entire North American egg supply to cage-free, with a ten year timeline. As such, cage-free commitments are one of the most developed animal welfare indicators in terms of corporate policies and, where relevant (i.e. for companies with egg supply chains), investors should be factoring this in to their assessment of food companies.

CORPORATE COMMITMENTS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSPARENCY ON PROGRESS

An increasing number of food companies now publicly disclose a high level policy on farm animal welfare. The latest Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare (BBFAW) report published in January 2017 found that 73% of the 99 companies surveyed had published farm animal welfare policies, compared to just 46% in 2012.

However, many companies currently fail to publicly specify details of their objectives and targets, or of the performance outcomes that they will track. This makes it difficult for investors to adequately assess companies on both risks and opportunities linked to farm animal welfare, and presents a barrier to effective engagement with individual companies.

Where companies do specify concrete commitments, transparency on progress towards these commitments is crucial. Particularly when the timeframe for targets is long term, as is often the case with cage-free egg commitments, it is a risk for companies to focus on the initial opportunity of publicizing targets and then fail to report on progress against them. Although historically reporting on performance has largely been considered as primarily for internal purposes rather than for

public disclosure, more forward-thinking businesses are starting to realize the competitive advantage in being as transparent as possible on issues like farm animal welfare, as consumers and clients increasingly demand this transparency.

Being ahead of commitments is a market opportunity for companies in terms of being able to respond to client and consumer expectations and demands, and also potentially to gain positive PR opportunities through leadership on this issue.

USING EGGTRACK IN THE INVESTMENT PROCESS

EggTrack is a practical indicator for use in investment monitoring and engagement. In its first iteration, the report is a starting point for structured, quantitative year-on-year data on animal welfare. Given that the majority of companies (73%) did not report on their progress towards cage-free commitments this year, non-reporting companies must be encouraged to do so before the next iteration of the report in 2018, in order to provide comparable data across a broad universe of companies.

Actions for investors:

- Encourage portfolio companies to publicly disclose their cage-free progress for inclusion in the EggTrack tool
- For companies who are already reporting, use EggTrack's data to understand a company's progress towards goals, and to flag companies who are falling behind on their commitments

Questions to ask portfolio companies to engage on this issue:

- How is the company progressing towards its cage-free goals? Is the company behind or ahead of intended milestones?
- What practical challenges does the company see in meeting its targets on cage-free? How does the company plan to overcome these?
- Has the company engaged directly with suppliers over farm animal welfare issues including cage-free eggs? Does the company believe its suppliers are prepared to fulfill its requirements on cage-free eggs?
- Does the company have a timeline for expanding a cage-free egg commitment to other geographies that it operates in?

USING **EGGTRACK** IN THE INVESTMENT PROCESS, CONT'D

- Does the company have timelines for expanding its animal welfare policies to other species, such as phasing out sow-stalls/gestation crates for pigs?
- Is the company's cage-free commitment included as part of a holistic policy on farm animal welfare and clearly flagged as part of the company's broader sustainability agenda?
- Has senior management been assigned responsibility and accountability for farm animal welfare? Is there awareness of farm animal welfare issues at Board level?
- Does animal welfare performance or animal welfare KPIs (for example execution on cage-free egg policy) feature in executive and/or management remuneration?

MORE **WORK** TO BE DONE

Despite the rising importance of farm animal welfare for food companies and investors alike, there is a great deal of work to be done before food corporations globally are adequately and transparently managing this issue. The **EggTrack** tool is important progress in this regard and the more investors can do to encourage transparent, uniform reporting on this issue across global food companies, the better investors and other stakeholders will be able to understand and assess company performance on this issue.



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FAIR
A COLLIER INITIATIVE

CONTACT US:

Compassion in World Farming
125 East Trinity Place, Suite 206
Decatur, Georgia 30030

E: info@ciwf.org
T: 678-902-CIWF (2493)