

FUTURE-PROOFING YOUR BOTTOM LINE:

The food business case for animal welfare and protein diversification in sustainability efforts



WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

In simple terms, sustainability is the **ability to satisfy our needs, without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same**. Sustainability can be a complex concept—it encompasses a broad range of issues, has many competing definitions, and is often difficult to measure effectively. However, it is generally understood that a broad definition of sustainability should address **environmental, social, and animal welfare** concerns.

SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS ARE RESILIENT SYSTEMS

In animal production, increasing feed efficiency and focusing narrowly on resource utilization are no longer sufficient for a sustainable future. In addition to **producing positive, efficient outcomes** for people, animals, and the environment, **sustainable systems should be resilient**. Resilient systems are:

- **Adaptive:** Able to respond to changing circumstances and remain viable over time.
- **Robust:** Resist both internal and external risks.
- **Regenerative:** Able to preserve and self-generate resources.



HOW DOES ANIMAL WELFARE FIT INTO SUSTAINABILITY?

An increasing number of U.S. food businesses have committed to purchasing animal products from **higher welfare production systems**. In response, animal industries have voiced concerns about the impacts of these commitments on sustainability—namely, possible negative impacts on **cost, food security, and the environment**.

However, food businesses should keep in mind that animal welfare is a **growing social concern** that should be **carefully balanced** with other considerations when developing strong sustainability policies. Businesses looking to **future-proof** their systems and portfolios must take all of these perspectives into account when deciding how they will produce or source protein moving forward.

CONSUMERS CARE ABOUT ANIMAL WELFARE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Consumers are **increasingly concerned** with the impact of their food choices; for example, **how their food is produced** and the effect it has on the environment and animal welfare.

- The humane treatment of farm animals is very important to **more than half** of Americans (*FMI 2016*).
- **43%** of consumers report being **“extremely or very concerned”** about the way chickens are bred to optimize meat production (*National Chicken Council 2017*).

CAN HIGHER WELFARE SYSTEMS BE SUSTAINABLE?

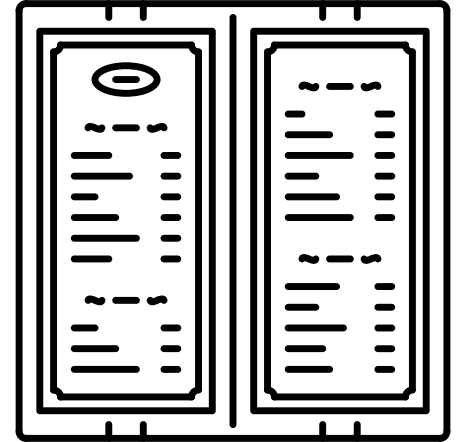
Producing sustainably with higher welfare requires an **investment**, but one that is justified by growing **consumer demand** and the urgent need to make production systems viable for the **long haul**. Higher welfare systems have **greater potential** to be both sustainable and resilient because:

- Animals in higher welfare systems can contribute to **soil fertility** by serving as integral parts of their environments.
- Higher welfare demands attention to **quality**, and not just quantity, producing food that is **nutritionally adequate** and **accessible to all**.
- Higher welfare systems have the potential to address the **social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities** of the factory farming model.

PRODUCING PROTEIN FOR THE FUTURE

We recommend sourcing animal protein from higher welfare systems, *and* expanding offerings to include plant-based and plant-rich options. Animal protein will remain one of our most socially and environmentally expensive sources of nutrition, regardless of how sustainably we produce it. **Diversifying the protein base** makes food production more:

- **Adaptive**: A variety of high-quality proteins, creating more choices for consumers, and a better ability to **respond to market dynamics**.
- **Robust**: More protein sources **mitigates the risks** of relying on animal agriculture to produce ever-increasing amounts of cheap protein.
- **Regenerative**: **Mixed agricultural systems** that include both plant and animal protein production are better-suited to **preserve soil fertility, water, and biodiversity**.



THE BOTTOM LINE:

A business that is attuned to its changing role as a producer or purchaser of **socially responsible, higher welfare, and diversified protein** is one that is not only fit for purpose, but fit for **future**.

QUESTIONS? CONTACT US.

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