

**24<sup>th</sup> August 2018**

### **UK citizens say fish welfare matters**

UK citizens care about fish welfare, according to a recent survey undertaken by ComRes on behalf of Compassion in World Farming and Eurogroup for Animals. Results include:

- 76% of UK adults, believe the welfare of fish should be protected to the same extent as the welfare of other animals we eat.
- Three quarters (75%) of those questioned say they would like to see information about the fish's welfare on the label of all fish products.
- The majority of UK adults (67%) think that 'sustainable' on fish packaging tells you that the species of fish is not currently over-fished.
- While 94% of UK adults eat fish, the majority of these (67%) know just a little or nothing about the welfare of fish.

The results clearly show that while UK citizens want to know about fish welfare, few currently have that knowledge. *"Fish are incredibly misunderstood," said Dr Krzysztof Wojtas, Head of Fish Policy at Compassion in World Farming. "They are sentient, able to feel pain, pleasure and other emotions. Despite this, fish receive very little legal protection and are either farmed in inhumane conditions or caught from the wild in cruel ways."*

Momentum has been building around fish welfare since consensus emerged that they are sentient beings, able to feel pain and pleasure. At the end of 2017 the European Commission published a study into the welfare of fish during transport and at slaughter in European Aquaculture. Despite the study finding that international standards are being failed across most sectors of European aquaculture, the outcome was incredibly disappointing, with the report recommending that the European Union take no action.

Traditionally, many of the methods used for fish slaughter have been inhumane. These include: submersion in a mixture of ice and water; suffocation in air; exposure to carbon dioxide and bleeding, among others. All of these methods cause considerable pain and fear, and are unnecessary when there are humane slaughter procedures. What currently doesn't exist is legislation, ensuring that these humane methods are used on a commercial scale.

This new survey proves that UK consumers are becoming increasingly interested in fish welfare with 76% of UK adults, believing the welfare of fish should be protected to the same extent as the welfare of other animals we eat. Matt Mellen, Fish Campaign Manager at Compassion in World Farming, says: *“Currently, many people do not realize the extent to which fish suffer in order to satisfy market demands. Fish farming does not have to be intensive, industrial, cruel and unsustainable.*

*“We plan to work with partners and key stakeholders to ensure that there is European legislation that protects fish in the same way that some other farm animals are protected.”*

Issues concerning fish are not well understood and are poorly communicated by the industry. The survey found 67% of UK consumers assume that fish certified as “sustainable” have lived improved lives but, the sad reality is that their welfare has not been factored in at all.

Intensive fish farms, much like land-animal factory farms but hidden from view underwater, keep large numbers of fish, sometimes hundreds of thousands, in a small space. In such close confinement, fish are unable to carry out their natural behaviours. Very high stocking densities provide ideal conditions for disease and parasite spread. Sea lice feed on the skin and blood of fish, leading to ulceration, reduced growth and sometimes open wounds on the back of the head. These now infest nearly half of Scotland’s salmon farms.

With the majority of survey respondents stating that they would be willing to pay more for a ‘higher welfare’ version of a fish product (on average, they would be willing to pay 16% more for a ‘higher welfare’ version compared to the equivalent ‘lower welfare’ option) this demonstrates that now is the time to move forwards in improving fish welfare.

For more information on Compassion’s upcoming fish campaign please visit [www.ciwf.org.uk/our-campaigns/fish-farming/](http://www.ciwf.org.uk/our-campaigns/fish-farming/)

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**For more information about the campaign please email [mediateam@ciwf.org.uk](mailto:mediateam@ciwf.org.uk) or call 01483 521 995 or 078 1403 8196**

**Notes to Editors**

1. ComRes surveyed 1,003 adults in the UK aged 18+ online between 30th April and 8th May 2018. The full set of results can be found [here](#).
2. Compassion in World Farming was founded in 1967 by a British dairy farmer who became horrified at the development of intensive factory farming. Today Compassion is the leading farm animal welfare organisation dedicated to ending factory farming and achieving humane and sustainable food. With headquarters in the UK, we have offices across Europe, in the US, China and South Africa
3. To find out more about Compassion in World Farming visit: [www.ciwf.org](http://www.ciwf.org)
4. Eurogroup for Animals represents 62 animal advocacy organisations in 24 EU member states, the USA, Switzerland, Australia, Serbia and Norway. Since its inception in 1980, the organisation has succeeded in encouraging the EU to adopt higher legal standards for animal protection. Eurogroup for Animals reflects public opinion through its membership organisations' affiliations across the Union, and has both the scientific and technical expertise to provide authoritative advice on issues relating to animal welfare.