Moral Foundations and Consumer Preferences for Livestock Production Practices

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INTRODUCTION

Consumer preferences for livestock production practices are important for the adoption of the technologies by farmers, regulation of the production practices by the government and risk communication to the technology by different stakeholders. Consumers can influence the adoption of technologies through their purchase decisions, for example. In previous studies, consumers’ preferences for livestock production process attributes have been analysed (e.g., Windmir and Ortega, 2014; McKenzie et al., 2013; Muringai and Goddard, 2017). However, there are still limited studies that link consumers’ moral concerns/footprints to their preferences for food products (e.g., Goddard et al., in press). Differences in moral foundations might influence consumers’ preferences for food products from certain production systems due to concerns about the effects of the products on human health, animal welfare and environmental sustainability.

OBJECTIVES

- To analyze whether there are differences in preferences for livestock production practices for consumers classified according to their level of agreement to individualizing moral foundations (with specific focus on disease resistance/relaxation for comparisons across the years).
- For each data set, respondents are classified into two groups based on their level of agreement with the individualizing moral foundation items from Graham et al. (2011) using hierarchical cluster analysis with Ward’s linkage.

METHODS

Data
- Online surveys were conducted in Canada in 2012 (N=1,566), 2015 (N = 839) and 2017 (N=1,159).
- In 2012, respondents chose between conventional pork chops and pork chops from pigs that are identified as having a low probability of contracting diseases (disease resistant) (no technology was identified).
- In 2015, respondents chose between conventional pork chops (no use of genome selection) and pork chops with information about the use of genomic selection in pigs for disease resistance, increased levels of carcass (a compound that has been shown to have anti-aging properties and increased feed efficiency) and tenderness. Respondents were also provided with information about antibiotic use (no antibiotics used or antibiotic are used by a veterinarian to treat a disease or infection). In 2017, respondents were asked about their buying decision for pork from pigs raised with reduced antibiotic use due to higher disease resistance.
- Respondents in 2012 were required to be major food shoppers for the household but this was not required in 2015 and 2017.

RESULTS

Figure 1: 2012: Pork chop choices

Table 1: Moral foundations statements (1 not relevant, 6 extremely relevant)

Table 2: Summary statistics for explanatory variables

RESULTS CONT’D

Table 3: Regression model results

Table 4: Willingness to pay values for the disease resistance attribute

CONCLUSIONS

Respondents who have lower scores for the individualizing moral foundations items show a higher (harmony) or lower preferences for lower premiums (2012 and 2017) or be discounted higher amounts (2015) for disease resistance/resilience in pigs as compared to respondents who have higher scores for the items (Group II).

Although it might be difficult to change people’s moral values, monitoring people’s moral foundations, perceptions and attitudes might give information about their preferences for food products and production practices in the future. Given an individual’s views, it is also important to note that moral foundations are associated with preferences for certain practices due to animal welfare or individual’s health concerns.

REFERENCES


Application of Genomics to Improve Swine Health and Welfare