Understanding and responding to public expectations in the changing world of livestock farming
Father Terry Martin, a Catholic priest in West Sussex, became a vegan almost three years ago. The transition was fairly abrupt: he was alone eating a roast dinner with his dog Pepe on his knees ("I know," he says. "Terrible.") when he was struck by the realisation that the animal he was eating had been "just as sentient as the one sitting on my lap".
Niche

• Meets specific consumer demand

• Products marketed on the basis of perceived quality

• E.g. Omega-3 and free-range eggs

Commodity

• Single product meeting a common standard; interchangeable

• Competes on costs

• E.g. milk solids used for frozen pizza topping
Why protein from flora?
Our animal-free milk from flora is the first of its kind, using whey protein made by microflora, not cows, to make dairy that’s identical to traditional milk. Yes, we said identical.

Substitutes are getting closer:
• E.g. Perfect Day whey protein
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How to respond to this changing landscape?

• *Short term*: help livestock industry retain commodity market by avoiding reputational damage

• *Long term*: help gain market by better understanding the values of consumers, and helping industry stakeholders better understand and articulate their own values
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  ✓ Create and enforce industry-led standards
  
  ✓ Avoid attempts of secrecy and to ‘educate’ the public
Canada’s Codes of Practice

• *Industry led*
• *Multi-stakeholder*
• *Science informed*
• *Transparent*
• *Continuous improvement*
UBC Research informing the Code

- Pain mitigation
- Calf feeding
- Social housing
- Lameness
- Etc.

Conditioned place avoidance

Ede et al., 2019: Scientific reports 9: 5344
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  ✓ Create and enforce industry-led standards
  
  ✓ Avoid attempts to limit transparency and ‘educate’ the public
Attempts to limit transparency

‘Ag-gag’ laws -- prohibit taking or possessing photographs, video or audio recordings on farms without consent
Counter-productive effects of reduced transparency

_Do ‘Ag-gag’ laws reduce the credibility of farmers?_

Unintended effects of the ‘ag-gag’ laws

Participants exposed to information about ‘Ag-gag’ laws were less likely to agree that:

*Farmers are trustworthy sources of information*

Participants exposed to information about ‘Ag-gag’ laws were less likely to agree that: 

Farm animals have good lives

% agree

Does learning about current dairy cattle care practices change perceptions?
Overall, participants were:

- Pleased to see a high level of attention and care to cattle
- Displeased about cow-calf separation and the lack of pasture/outdoor access

How confident are you that dairy cattle have a good life?

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Research on public attitudes

“Should dairy cows be provided access to pasture?”

- 90.4% “Yes”
- 9.6% “Neutral”
- 0% “No”
Imagining the ideal dairy farm

Cardosa et al., 2016. J. Dairy Sci. 99:1663–1671
How to respond to this changing landscape?

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Context:

“Let’s fast forward to the year 2050. You’re hoping that your grandchildren will take over the farm. In your ideal world, what does this farm look like?”
Take home points:

• Technological and societal changes will result in market disruption
• Avoid loss of market by adopting rigorous standards and a culture of transparency
• Strive to gain market by better understanding public views
• Provide leadership by better articulating industry values

What’s your dream for how farms should look in 30 years, and how do we achieve this?
The Quebec cheese story: from cheese curds to 300 varieties

Les têtes fromagères – Cheesemakers circuit 2022-2023
Fine, curd, raw milk, sheep, goat... in the Townships, you'll find cheeses that you already love and new ones to try.
The BC wine story: from 1000 to 10,000 acres in 30 years
**Reasons to provide outdoor access**
- Region specific weather
- Health, preferences, behavior, quality of the outdoor environment
- Premium pricing, operation expenses
- Farm set up
- Ease of management, knowledge and expertise

**Reasons not to provide access**
- Region specific weather
- Health, preferences, care, nutritional needs
- Milk production, operations expenses and investments
- Farm set up
- Ease of management, lack of knowledge

Smid et al., 2021. J. Dairy Sci. 104:10158-10170
Cow-calf management system scenarios

Perceptions of welfare