



**What reputational pressures  
face UK dairy, and how do we  
address them?**

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**About the UK & its (dairy) issues**

# About the UK



67 million people (VIC: 6.7 million)

244,000 km<sup>2</sup> (VIC: 227,444 km<sup>2</sup>)

1.85 million dairy cows (VIC: 1.5 million)

12,000 dairy farmers (VIC: 2,984; AUS: 4,420)

153 cows in average herd (VIC & AUS 260-270?)

8,200 litres/cow (VIC: 6,345; AUS: 6,203)

~80% herds access pasture (VIC: >98%?)

31% liquid milk, 25% cheese



# UK dairy farming issues

- **Animal welfare & ethics**
- Climate change
- Air and water quality
- Health / nutrition of dairy
- Land use competition / planning
- Affordable, tasty alternatives







**SAY NO TO THE**  
**SUPER DAIRY**  
*factory*



# BBC

## one Panorama



*We've got a number of different types of criminal offence and frankly it's not an acceptable way to deal with cattle.*

Criminal Defence Barrister, Ayesha Smart

On several occasions, lame cows are hoisted by a lift and dragged along the concrete floor after becoming unable to stand. This process is clearly painful for cows. However, the workers are filmed laughing at them making jokes about how they will be 'dinner'.



*What's being done there will be fairly common practice.*

Roger Blowey, Farm Veterinarian



Watch now

### A Cow's Life: The True Cost of Milk?

Is animal welfare being compromised in the drive to keep milk prices low? Reporter Daniel Foggo speaks to farmers and vets about the lives most dairy herds can expect to lead.

Show more

11 months left to watch

🕒 29 minutes

SL

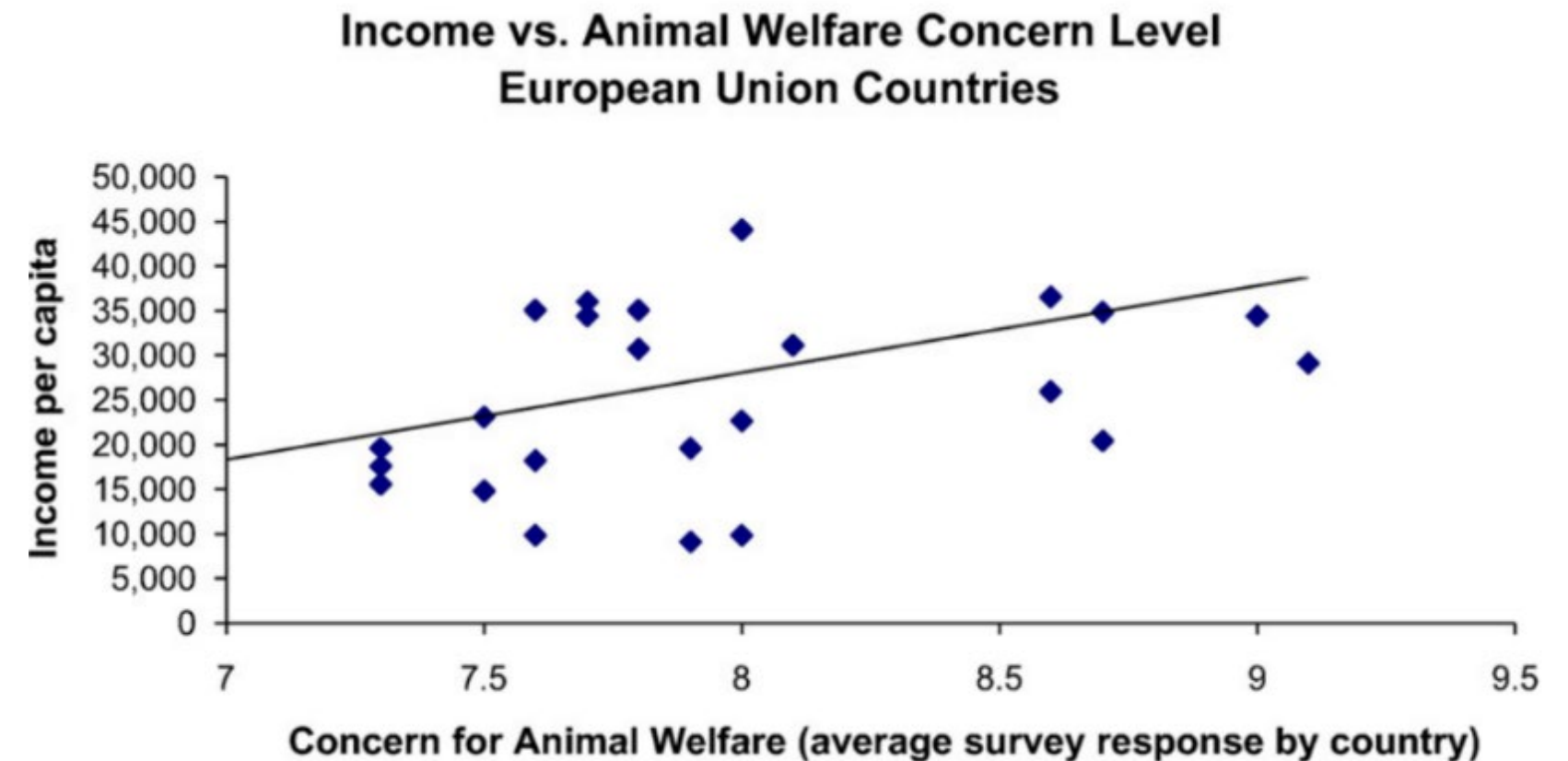


**What is happening and what  
does it mean?**



# Means, motive and opportunity

- **Capability (means)**
  - Technology – microcameras, drones, smartphones
  - Social media – platforms for citizen journalism
  - Sophistication – campaign groups are sophisticated & well-organised
- **Global narrative (motive)**
  - Anti-livestock agenda fuelled by EAT Lancet
  - Climate change – methane reduction
  - Animal sentience – evolving science/positions
- **People and society (opportunity)**
  - Urbanisation
  - Gen Z
  - Rising disposable income / standard of living



Sources: Eurobarometer and International Monetary Fund.

Various, including Von Keyserlingk & Hotzel, 2015. The Ticking Clock: Addressing Farm Animal Welfare in Emerging Countries, *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*; and Frank, 2008. Is there an “animal welfare Kuznets curve”?, *Ecological Economics*



# Is Your Food a Product of Rape?

We may call the cows who produce milk “mothers,” but they never actually get to be mothers because their babies are taken away from them after birth. And we certainly don’t treat them with the respect that mothers deserve. Cows and other factory-farmed female animals endure being **raped** repeatedly, and their babies are **torn** away from them before they’re all killed.



# Thousands of cows never see the sun





# Consumers versus society

- If a consumer doesn't like what we're doing?
  - Stops buying dairy...but price, freshness, taste can override this
  - In fact, FAO/OECD forecasts show consumption still forecast to rise...
- If a citizen doesn't like what we're doing?
  - Withdraws social licence to operate
    - ➔ Activism & incursions
    - ➔ Escalating retailer demands
    - ➔ New legislation
    - ➔ Growing planning constraints
  - ...Leading to potentially significant business disruption
- We need to start thinking about people feeling good about dairy farming

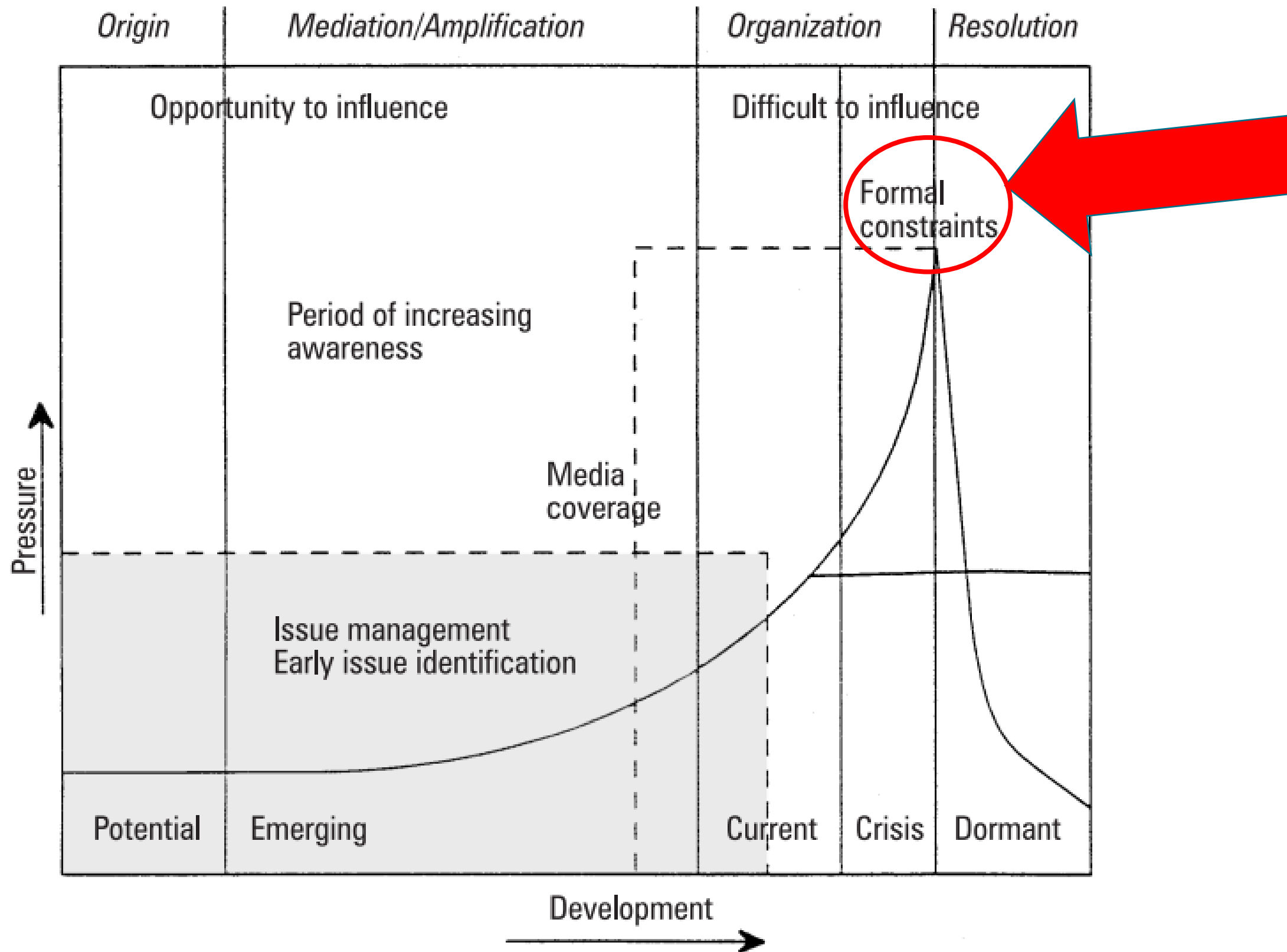


**What can we do?**





# Be proactive!

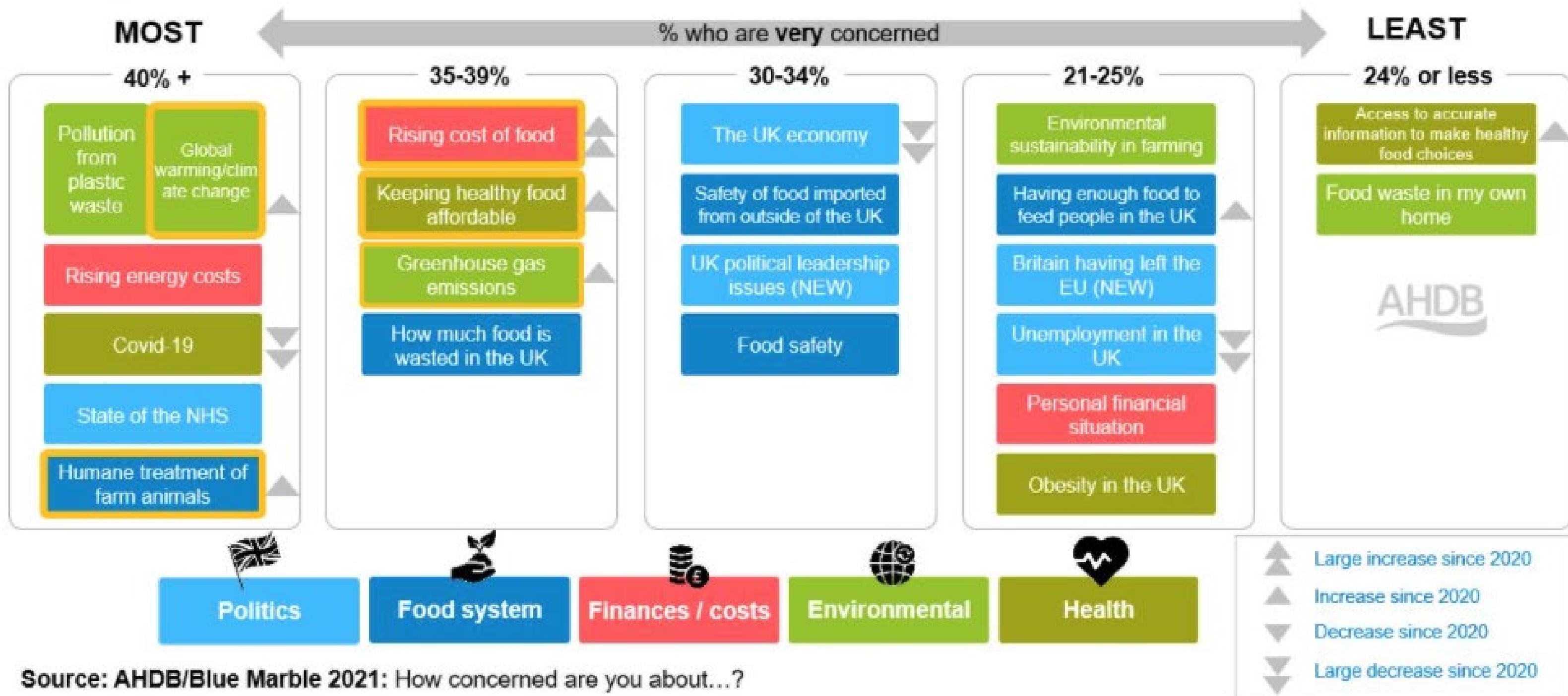






# Accept and 'own' concerns over welfare

## Macro consumer concerns: environment and animal welfare both rising up the agenda



Source: AHDB/Blue Marble 2021: How concerned are you about...?



# Recognise that we see welfare differently

What is 'good welfare'?

- Farmers focus on **regular care** based on habit and good intentions
- Scientists focus on **biological parameters**
- Animal protection organisations combine **animal nature** and **maximal care**
- The public focuses on **icons** like space, straw and outdoor access





# Understand public preferences

People in the six 'citizen' groups, each identified by their top priority for dairy farming, were more likely to have the following characteristics...



## WELFARE

(18.3% of participants)

- University-educated
- Board-minded and tolerant
- Unrestricted diet



## GRAZING

(15.6% of participants)

- Urban or suburban
- Older
- More traditional



## TASTE OF MILK

(15.2% of participants)

- High-achieving
- Inexperienced with animals
- Knowledgeable about dairy farming



## FAIR PRICE

(18.9% of participants)

- Older and traditional
- Rural
- Knowledgeable about dairy farming



## COMFORT

(14.8% of participants)

- Female, vegan or vegetarian
- Non-university educated
- Strong belief in a 'cow's mind'



## NO PREFERENCE

(17.2% of participants)

- Male, with focus on self
- Inexperienced with animals
- Highly rates dairy knowledge despite lacking it!



## But what lies beneath...?

- What perception of dairy farming was this based on?
- What was their understanding of the terms used?
- What outcomes did they want to achieve?
- What about the 'wants' we left out?

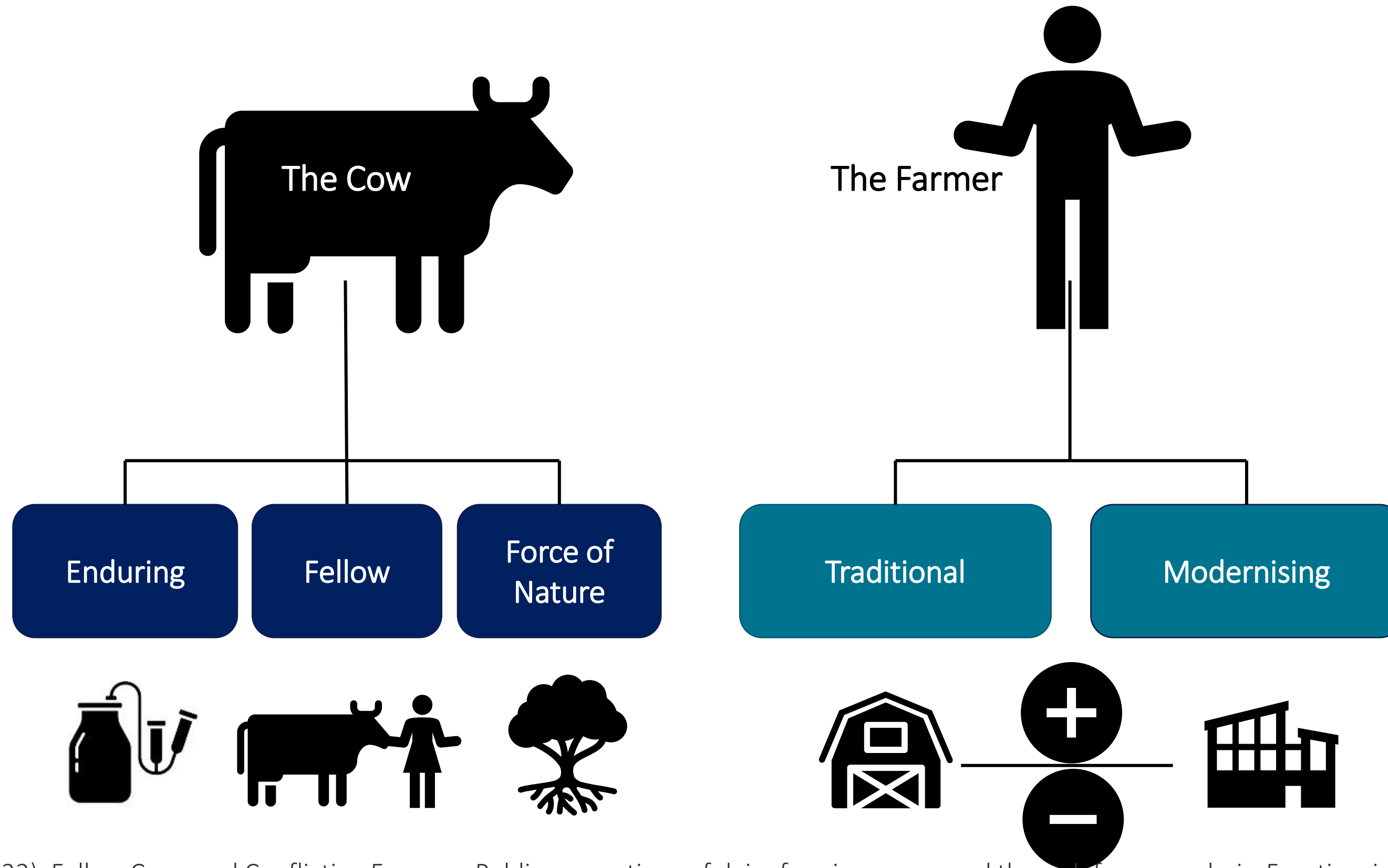


- Face to face interviews with 60 from the survey group





# How do they 'frame' dairy farming?





**BBC**

**TRAVEL**

Embracing cows, or "koe knuffelen" in Dutch, is more than a cute wellness trend. With immense mental health benefits, the practice has growing global appeal.



**THE**  **TIMES**

## Rise of robots down on the farm

From driverless tractors to health monitors for cows, technology is fast changing agriculture



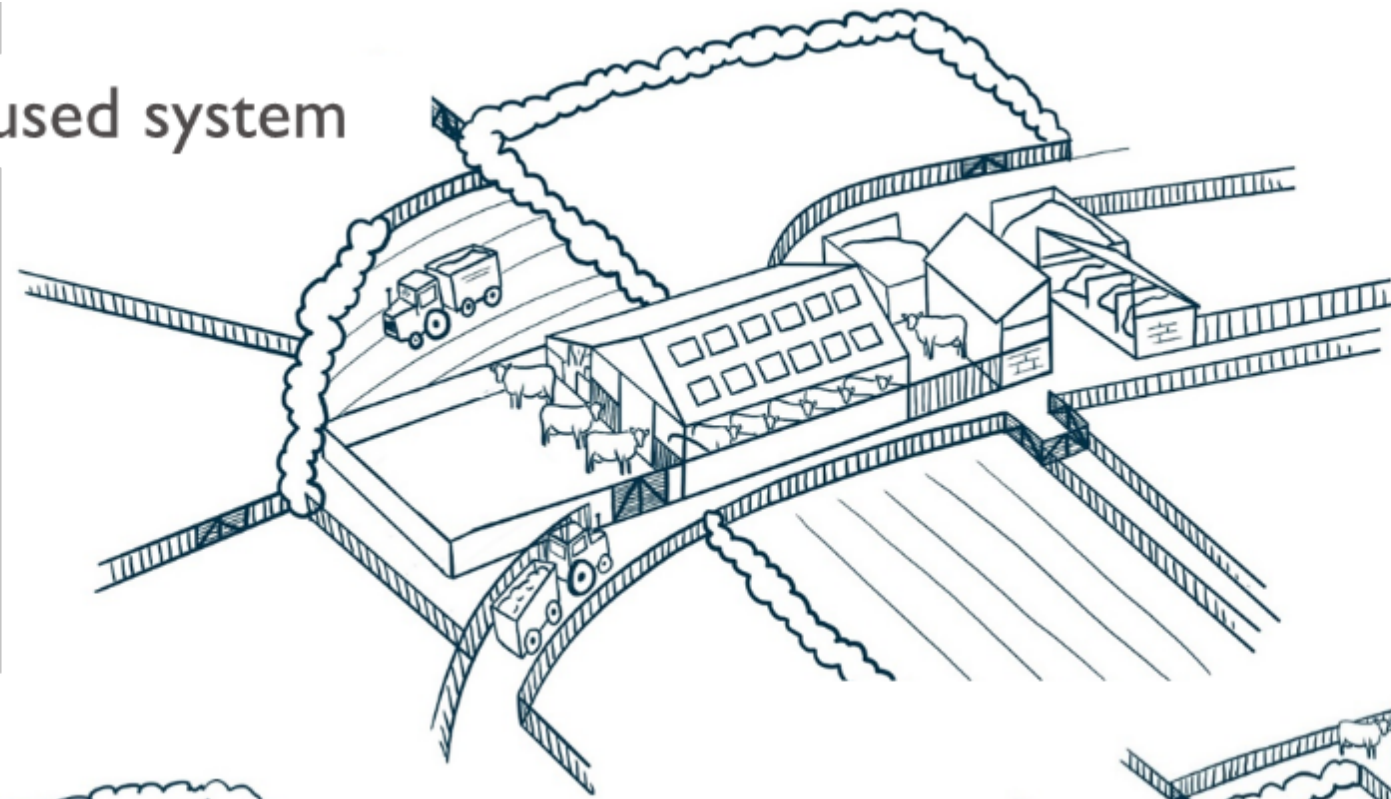
- Big connections to the cow → **“We have a stake in this – don’t dismiss us”**
- Farmers judged by concern for cow → **“Show us you care in ways I understand”**



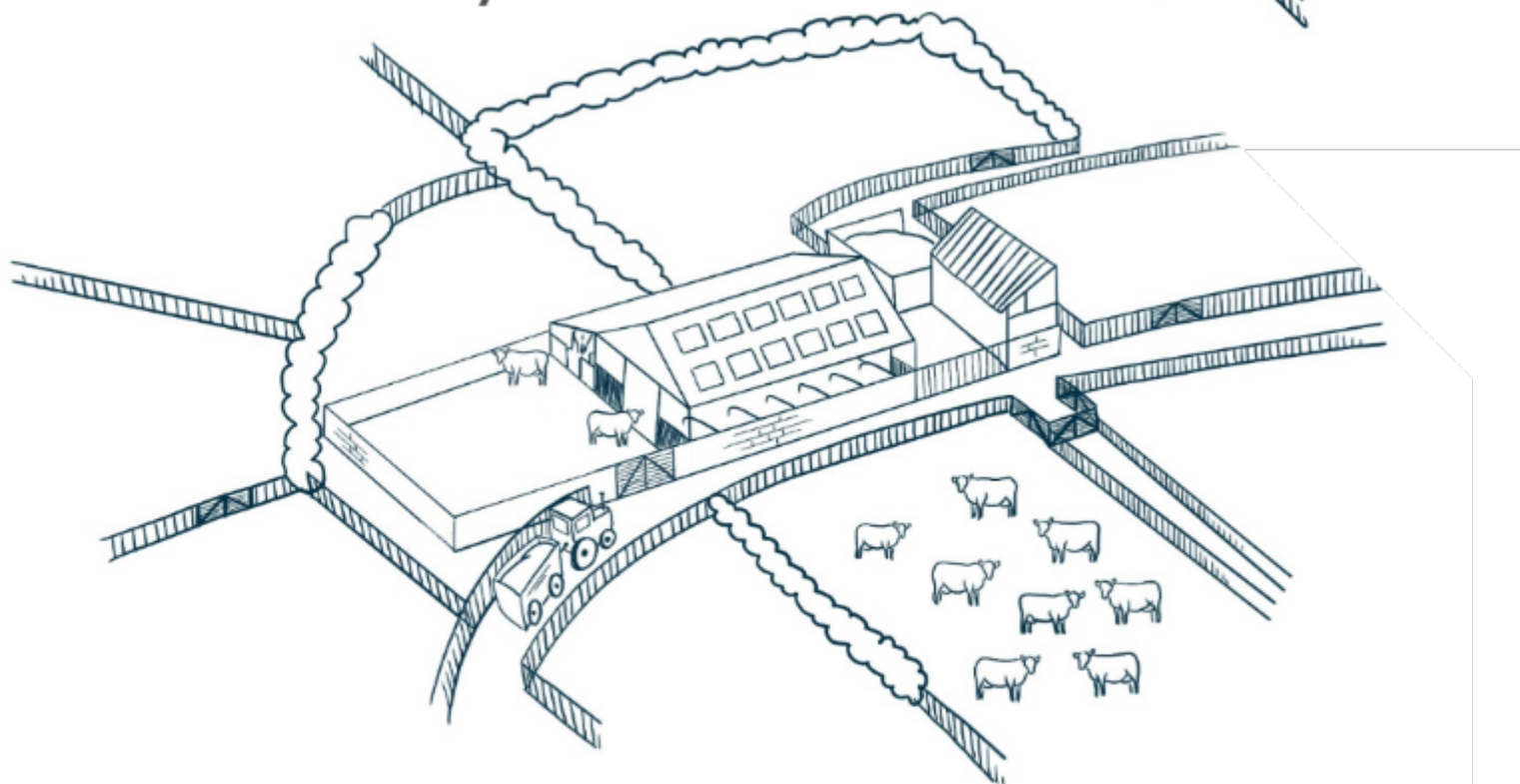


# What system they prefer & why?

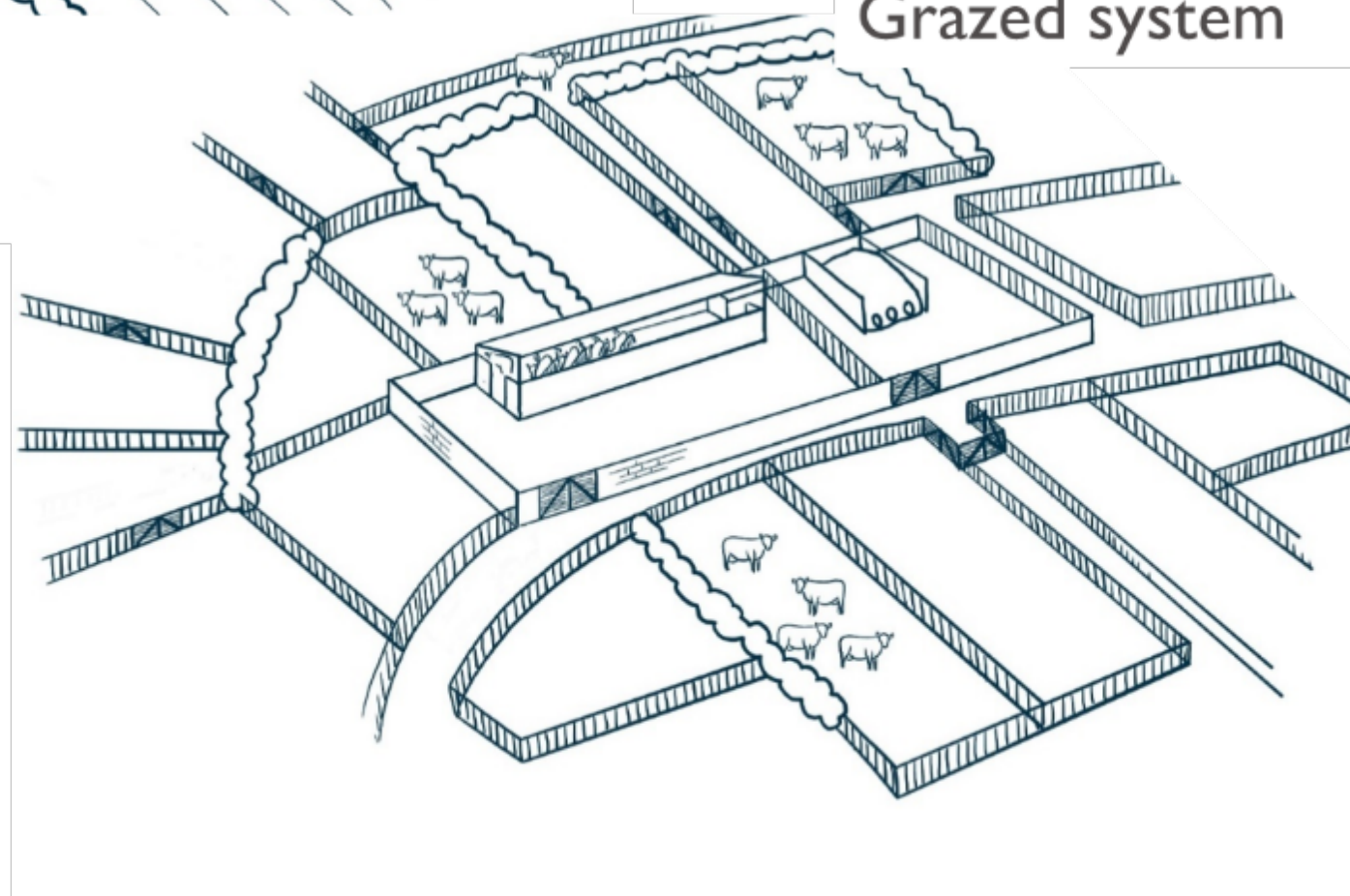
Housed system



Mixed system



Grazed system



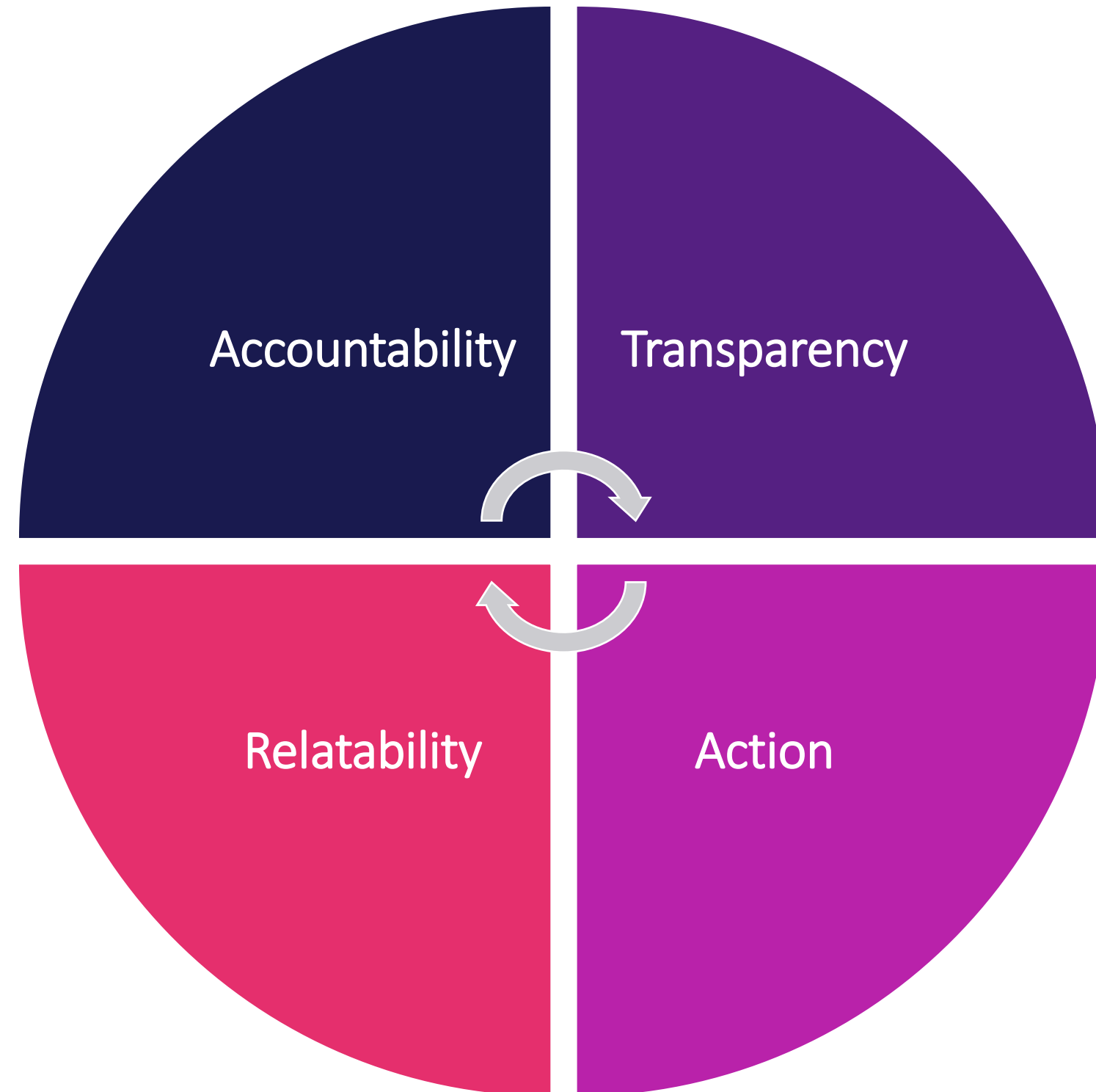


- Cow is both domestic and wild, so needs protection & naturalness
- → **“We have views on a cow’s needs!”**
- People don’t know how a cow should live
- They fill this gap using memories, experiences & media images, by anthropomorphising, or by delegating to others, including the farmer & the cow
- → **“Give us new memories/experiences/images we can trust – or put trusted people (or the cow) in control!”**



**How do we use our insights?**

# Apply to issues management ...





# Managing our issues

- **Accountability**

- Respect public preferences
- Own our issues
- Don't get caught out

- **Transparency**

- Increase familiarity – fill the gaps ourselves
- Be honest about the challenges we face

# Managing the issue

- **Relatability**

- Show shared values and common goals, not differences
- Find good 'brand ambassadors' to communicate authentically

- **Action**

- Listen, and respond – then anticipate to get ahead
- Visibly and demonstrably act on our issues – and keep acting

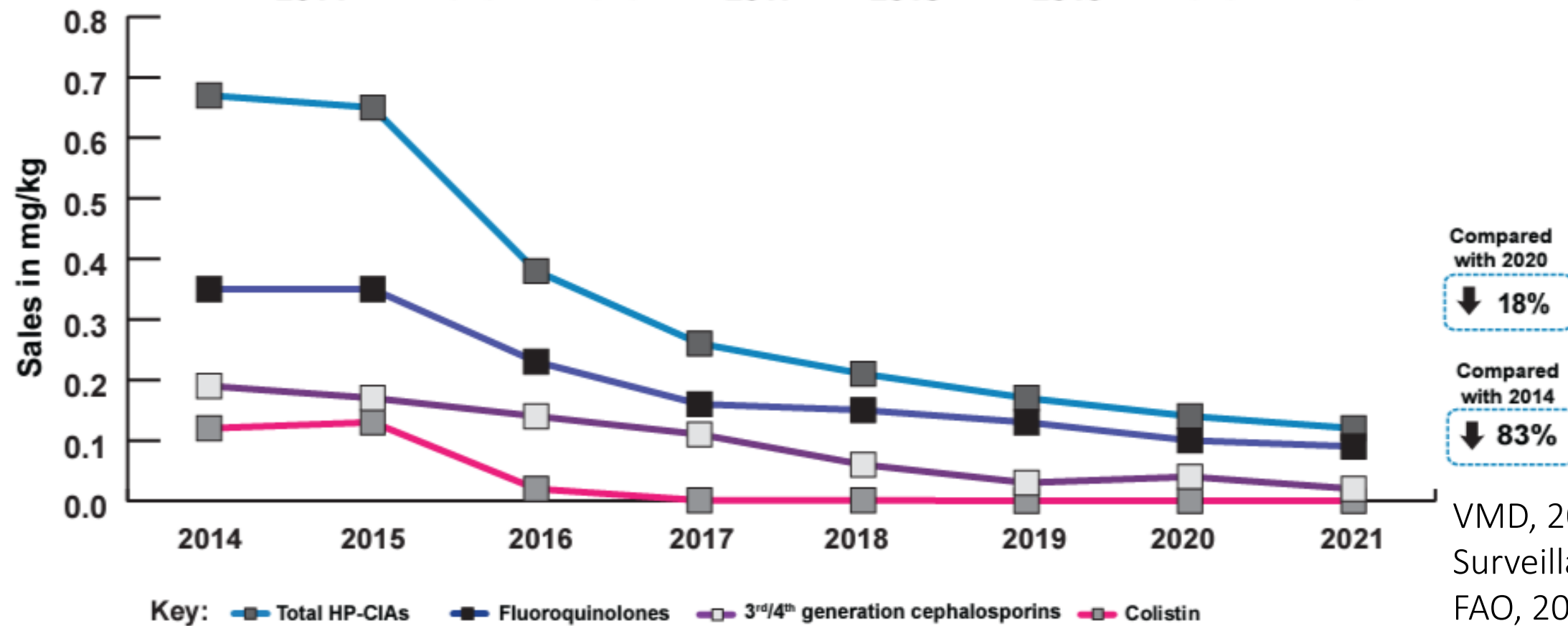
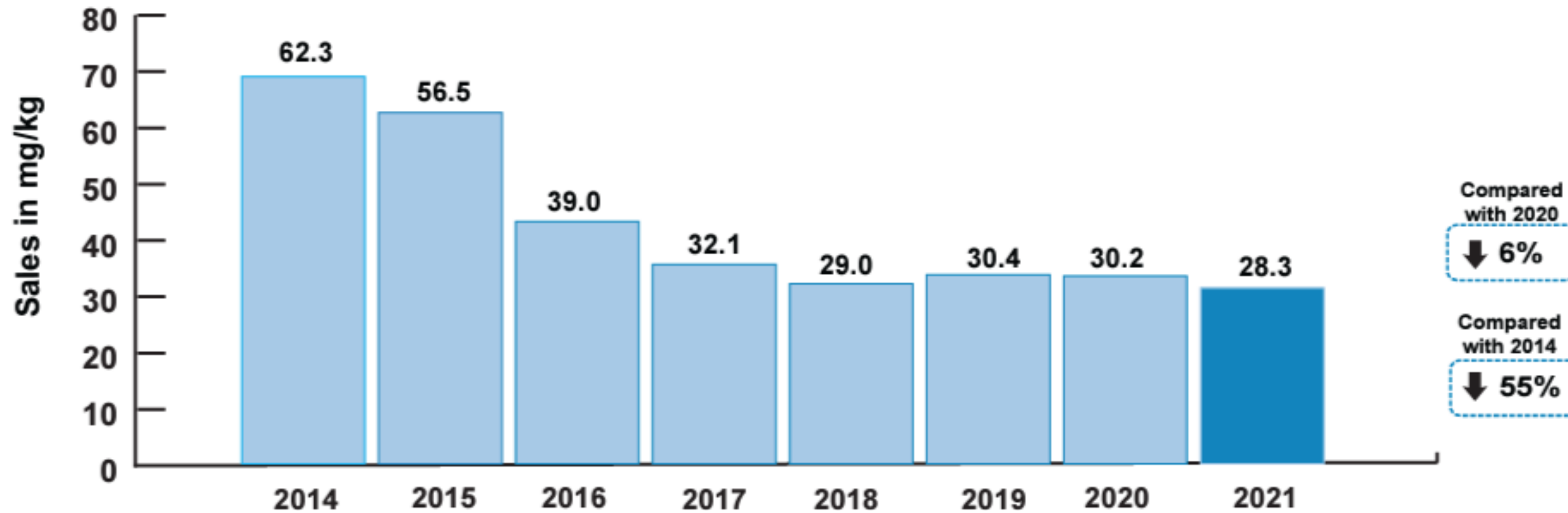


**But...this will require change!**



**If we change, will it work?**

# Accountability & Transparency



VMD, 2021. Veterinary Antimicrobial Resistance and Sales Surveillance 2021

FAO, 2022. Tackling antimicrobial use and resistance in food-producing animals





“I can’t tell you how proud I am of our farmers . . . they set their own targets and just got on with it – fantastic!”

*Dame Sally Davies, former Chief Medical Officer*

“The UK farming industry has ‘owned’ this problem...”

*Professor Peter Borriello  
former Chief Executive, Veterinary Medicines Directorate*



# Relatability



Agrespect  
@weareagrespect



Imagine hearing hundreds of thousands of people cheering and high-fiving farmers for hours. It has been a blast

Farmers have such a positive story to tell. The public adore us when we engage on society's terms rather than our own





# Action



“You know someone is a good farmer when they care this much about making their cows happy.”



*“I love how this guy is happy about his cows’ happiness”*

“I love this man for really really caring how his animals feel!!! HAPPY COWS”



*“I love that he's so happy about making his cows happy”*

*“So refreshing to see people who really love their animals”*

“I'm not a farm person at all, but this is too cute. Those cows just looked like kittens having fun, it's great to see people caring about those animals like this.”



# Action



Amy Jackson  
@Oxtale · Follow



Who's afraid of 'Cow Playtime'....?

It's new & controversial, & we're hitting you with it  
[@TotalDairy!](#)

Join cow behaviour PhD Alison Russell, Karen Halton of  
Halton Farms & me on 23 Nov @ 2.15 to look at what cow  
play could do for cows - and UK farming!  
[totaldairy.com/agenda](http://totaldairy.com/agenda)





# Live and happening in Australia now!



- **Gain insights** in how the red meat industry is viewed by the Australian community.
- **Understand** how to put your values at the centre of communication to build trust and engage authentically on behalf of the industry.
- **Develop skills** to communicate via media and social media to share your story as well as your industry expertise.



# Conclusions

1. The future is about more than dairy sales – it's also about being a valued part of society
2. We must treat consumer AND public views, concerns and 'wants' with respect
3. Let's talk a language people understand and act on the things they care about
4. Being relatable is better than being different
5. Times are changing – and we need to change to get (and stay) ahead of the game







Thank you!

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