

# **PERCEPTIONS OF PORK AND MODERN PIG BREEDING AMONG DANISH CONSUMERS**

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## **PREFACE**

This project report summarises the results of a focus group survey of Danish consumers. This survey was conducted by the MAPP Centre in connection with the project 'Sustainability in the production of pork with improved nutritional and eating quality using strategic feeding in out-door production' also known as SUSPORKQUAL. The overall coordination of the project was undertaken by Anders Karlsson from the Danish Institute of Agricultural Sciences and was supported by the European Commission under contract no QLRT 30162. The other participants in the marked-related part of the project were the University of Uppsala, the University of Bristol and INRA – INRA as the coordinator of this part of the project.

The focus groups were held in Danish following a Danish interview guide, but the results are presented in English in this report for the benefit of the project participants and other interested foreign researchers and practitioners. Quotations are not verbatim, neither are they in Danish but have been translated into English to the best of our ability.

Similar focus groups were held in Sweden, Great Britain and France by our Swedish, British and French colleagues.

Lone Bredahl  
Aarhus, December 2001



## BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The past ten years have shown a relative decline in Danish consumers' demand for pork, compared to other conventional meat types (Fagt & Trolle, 2001). Similar stagnations in pork demand can be observed in other European countries (e.g. Glitsch, 2000; Verbeke & Viaene, 1999). In the same period, consumer demands for improved animal welfare and for more environmentally friendly methods in primary animal production in general have triggered the introduction of animal-based products that claim to take animal welfare into due account, such as free-range eggs and free-range chicken, as well as organic product lines. It remains unclear, however, whether the relative decline in pork consumption is really a result of increased animal welfare demands or reinforced environmental concerns in relation to pig breeding. Other factors involved may for instance be increased safety concerns, quality dissatisfaction or plain changes in consumer taste preferences.

At present consumer interest in breeding methods is not reflected in their choice of pork products, and within the product category, products that seek to meet public animal welfare and environmental concerns are still rarely marketed. There may be at least two reasons for this. First, the insignificant marketing of organic or free-range pork may be tied up with problems related to the production side, such as controlling the growth of pigs in extensive systems. Second, market invisibility of pork from extensive production systems may be due to lack of consumer demand, for instance because intensive pig breeding is not associated with animal welfare problems similar to those that have received attention in chicken and veal production.

Following this, focus group discussions were conducted with Danish, Swedish, English and French consumers to explore perceptions of the quality of pork and perceptions about modern pig breeding.

Focus group discussions are an established way of getting deeper insights into beliefs and subjective meaning structures among consumers. The major strength of the methodology is its ability to elicit individual information based on group interaction and to do so in a relatively time efficient way (Morgan, 1998). Focus groups are usually conducted with 8-12 participants, and the discussion is led by a moderator, usually a qualified psychologist, based on a discussion guide that lists issues to be covered, typically in the form of main questions (Krueger, 1998). Additionally, projective techniques developed to trigger a deeper discussion of more difficult issues may be applied.

Below, details of the design and execution of the Danish focus groups are outlined and main results are presented.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Across countries, the focus groups were conducted in accordance with a jointly developed design. A comparison of results of the focus groups from all four countries is currently underway in Ngapo, Dransfield, Martin, Nute, Magnusson & Bredahl (submitted).

## **DESIGN**

Two focus groups were conducted: one in the largest Danish metropolitan area (Copenhagen, 1 million inhabitants), and one near a medium-sized town (Kolding, 60,000 inhabitants) in the rural part of the country.

### **Recruitment of participants**

Participants were recruited from the surrounding area by telephone random digit calling. At the initial contact, consumers were invited to participate in a focus group discussion about their meat consumption habits. Consumers were only admitted for participation if they were between 30 and 60 years old, were at least co-responsible for shopping for food in their own household and consumed pork for dinner at least once a week. Both men and women were recruited, provided that they fulfilled the screening criteria.

For each participant, responsibility for shopping for food in the household (co-responsible, responsible) was recorded at the time of recruitment along with self-reported frequency of consumption of pork, beef, chicken, lamb and fish (standardized response scale) and key demographic information (gender, age, household size, profession, place of living).

### **Discussion guide**

Focus groups were held according to a standardized discussion guide jointly developed in English by the overall project team. The discussion guide was translated into Danish and cross-checked by bilingual researchers before being applied to the Danish focus groups. A back-translated version of the Danish discussion guide can be seen in Appendix 1. To sum up, the discussion guide covered the following main issues

- meat consumption habits
- dimensions of the quality of pork
- indicators of the quality of pork
- the money value of pork
- the wholesomeness of pork
- the state of pig breeding in Denmark today
- developments in pig breeding in recent years
- Danish pig breeding compared to pig breeding in other countries
- animal welfare in modern pig breeding
- environmental effects of modern pig breeding
- meat quality effects of modern pig breeding

It was expected that parts of the discussion might easily take on a very abstract character that would make it difficult for the participants to articulate their thoughts. Two projective techniques were therefore added: a visualisation exercise and the production of collages. The purpose of these techniques was to assist the participants in putting words to emotions and



attitudes that could not easily be verbalized in an ordinary discussion, but which were nonetheless important.

The visualization exercise was used as an introduction to the discussion about the quality of pork. The participants were asked to visualize going to the supermarket to purchase pork for their evening meal. They were asked to visualize what they would look for (how the meat looked, price, labels etc.), pick up the meat they had decided to buy, purchase a few other food items, go to the counter, pay and leave the supermarket. All participants were then asked to write down their considerations concerning this imagined purchase. Afterwards, results were briefly outlined in plenum.

The production of collages was used as a run-up to the discussion about perceptions of today's pig breeding methods. The participants were asked to produce collages two by two to represent their perceptions of how pigs are bred on Danish farms today. The collages were composed of pictures and words that the participants clipped from a selection of agricultural, environmental, health and women's magazines. Again, results were briefly presented in plenum.

## **Execution**

Recruitment of participants and moderation of the group discussions were carried out by an experienced market research agency. The moderator had a PhD in psychology and five years' experience in conducting focus groups.

The focus group in Kolding was held in May 2001, and the focus group in Copenhagen was held in June 2001. Both focus groups lasted about two hours. The groups were composed as follows:

Kolding – 9 participants  
7 female, 2 male

Copenhagen – 10 participants  
5 female, 5 male

More information about the participants can be seen in Appendix 2 and 3.

Both focus groups worked out very well, with highly motivated and active participants.

In both focus groups, a few participants had particular knowledge of pork production: In the Kolding focus group one was an assisting spouse on a pig farm; in the Copenhagen focus group one was a trained sausage maker, one was raised on a pig farm, and one had a special interest in agriculture in general. After the recruitment, this gave rise to some concerns about whether these 'expert' participants would dominate the discussions. However, rather than handicap the focus groups, the 'expert' participants added important value to the discussions

by provoking clearer statements from participants who did not have the this 'inside' information.

## **RESULTS**

In the following, main results of the discussions are presented. The results are presented in chronological order, i.e. as they came up in the discussions deviating slightly from the order of issues in the discussion guide. This procedure, however, allows insight into the general flow of the discussions.

Generally, the two focus groups revealed very similar patterns, despite their different geographical and social foundations. Likewise, the fact that the focus groups were executed as mixed groups, with both men and women, appeared not to affect neither the results nor the course of the discussions. Therefore, unless otherwise noted, the results presented below represent both focus groups and both male and female contributions.

### **Meat consumption habits**

Both traditional and more special kinds of meat were consumed for hot meals. Beef, pork and poultry (chicken and turkey) were most frequently prepared, especially on workdays. These meat types were sometimes replaced by lamb, veal or venison. Kangaroo and ostrich were mentioned as rare meat types that were purchased on occasion.

Quite a large variety of different cuttings were used, with minced meat as a clear favourite in families with small children.

Beef was generally regarded as the most all-round type of meat, and it was regarded suitable both for simple everyday dishes, for weekend dishes, and for guests and other festive occasions. Pork was generally not regarded suitable for superior cooking, but was considered an everyday type of meat:

*“I would never order pork in a restaurant. It is a little too ordinary. I would choose something I never get.”*

However, certain cuttings such as tenderloin and silverside were accepted for superior cooking.

Wild boar was considered a superior type of pork; it was perceived both to have a stronger and better taste than ordinary pork. Wild boar was mostly associated with eating out.

The distinction between everyday meats and meats for other occasions was to a large degree a function of perceived price (i.e. Guest are not served 'cheap' meats ...), tradition, taste and knowledge of how to prepare the meat (i.e. meats perceived to be difficult to prepare were not served on workdays).

Duck and lamb were served rarely. However, some saw these types of meat as delicacies suitable for guest meals.

The most superior meats were considered to be the best cuts of beef, veal and venison. These meats were also regarded the most expensive meat types.

## **Quality perception with regard to pork**

The purchase of pork: visualization exercise

The visualization exercise showed the purchase of pork in a supermarket to be mostly associated with an everyday situation where time was scarce: the purchase of the pork should be easily over and done with and quality expectations were moderate. Price was the primary purchase criterion, but date of production, product appearance, fat content, fat brim, country of origin, organic/non-organic produce, and the way the meat was trimmed were also checked out.

Products sold on offer were popular, but perceived to be bought, at least to some degree, at the expense of quality. They were purchased anyway due to budget constraints.

In the supermarket some participants also looked for pork that had recipes stuck on the package because this could save time in meal preparation at home.

Dimensions of the quality of pork

High quality pork was associated with good taste, tenderness, juiciness, freshness, leanness and healthiness. Above all, pork of good quality had to taste good. In addition, it should be tender and juicy, fresh, lean and healthy.

The participants generally found it difficult to evaluate the quality of meat at the point of purchase, particularly pre-packaged meat. The quality of pork offered for sale in supermarkets was perceived to vary, and the participants were uncertain about how to make their choice:

*“Without being able to touch the meat, it is difficult to evaluate it. And poking a finger into the meat to feel its firmness and structure is not something one would do, because it is not given that I am going to buy that particular piece of meat.”*

Product-specific quality indicators

A number of product-specific aspects were mentioned as applicable indicators of the quality of pork at the point of purchase. They were

- the share of fat
- the colour of the fat
- the colour of the meat

- the cutting of the meat
- the texture of the meat
- whether the meat was marinated or pre-spiced

The colour of the meat and the share of fat were important quality cues. Generally the participants looked for meat with little fat, but one of the ‘expert’ participants noted that she looked for meat with a moderate degree of fat marbling. To some, the colour of the fat and the colour of the meat were used as indicators of the freshness of the meat. Pieces of meat that were cut in unequal sizes or meat that was poorly trimmed were considered to be of low quality. Moreover, the meat should not be too soft and definitely not marinated or spiced:

*“I never buy anything that is pre-spiced. It looks fishy and means that the meat is old.”*

*“It [pre-spiced meat] always has to be prepared on the same day. That only goes to show.”*

Even though the participants tried to evaluate the quality of pork by inspecting the appearance of the meat, they did not regard this a fully reliable way of tracing pork of good quality in the shop:

*“It may look good, but meat from the supermarket is often insipid and not very juicy, so my expectations are not very high.”*

Further indication of the quality was obtained when the meat was prepared/fried. Here, the following elements were observed

- shrinkage
- texture and structure
- smell

It was perceived to be an indicator of poor quality if the meat shrank too much during frying, if the meat seemed hard and had a foul smell.

### Other quality cues

A variety of aspects which are not a direct, visual part of the meat were also mentioned as indicators of the quality of pork. These were

- country of origin
- price per kilo
- if the product was on offer
- labelling of fat percentage
- production date
- sell-by-date

- the quantity of meat in the cooling counter
- the temperature of the cooling counter
- if the product was organic
- brands and quality marks
- the name of the slaughterhouse
- place of purchase

There was a strong belief that Danish pork was better than foreign pork, but substantive reasons for this could usually not be given:

*“Some how, I just have more confidence in Danish meat.”*

*“No, there is no special reason – it is just something I believe.”*

*“I wouldn’t like to buy pork from Germany.... but I don’t really know why.”*

The group of participants with more factual knowledge about pork production referred to better veterinary control systems and more decent production methods in Denmark:

*“I buy Danish pork to support the Danish producers. In this country, we have a fairly good control system and I believe in that. I believe that there is less control in other countries. In this country, control is more in focus and they have to live up to the requirements.”*

*“It has to do with disease. The standards are significantly higher in Denmark than in the countries we are surrounded by. Veterinary control gives security.”*

A higher price was also perceived as an indicator of better quality:

*“I think that if I buy something that is a little more expensive, I get a better product.”*

Some participants suspected that products sold on offer might be of a poor quality. Reference was made to a television programme that had shown how a supermarket transformed a roast into steaks, cubed meat and finally minced meat over a period of six days. Others, however, made a point of looking for special offers and would buy the product if the colour was acceptable. This price consciousness could have two reasons: a tight budget and/or just having given up digesting the constant flow of information from the media. The general feeling was that one could not do anything about food scares and the like anyway.

Both the date of production and the sell-by-date were used to evaluate the freshness of the meat. Some also checked that the temperature in the cooling counter was not too high and tried to avoid meat that was stacked too high:

*“I hate it when they fill it [ the cooling counter] all up, the packages on top are not cold enough then.”*

*“I always pick products from the bottom.”*

Many also looked for organic meat even though the underlying motivation was sometimes blurred:

*“To me, quality depends on the fat content and the content of growth enhancers. I often buy organic products. I don’t know why, but I tell myself that it tastes better... but I don’t believe it. I guess there is a bit of psychology in it.”*

Most pork is sold unbranded, but there are a few branded products available. Branded meat and meat with quality labels were generally perceived to be of higher quality.

The place of purchase was generally seen as a reliable way of finding good meat, based on previous experience with the shop:

*“I only shop for food at one store, because I want a decent quality, and in that supermarket I can get that.”*

Finally, the name of the slaughterhouse was used by one of the ‘expert’ participants. This ‘expert’ participant claimed to know slaughterhouses to use varying procedures and had more confidence in some slaughterhouses than others.

### Evaluating the quality of pork in the shop

Each participant used a selection of the above quality cues when buying pork. In general, the evaluation of the quality of pork at the point of purchase was regarded a difficult task. Which and how many quality cues were used seemed to be a function of knowledge about pork production, time constraints, and whether feeling overwhelmed by contradictory and complex information about the production of pork.

Turning to the butcher was, at least to some, the perceived best way of dealing with the general quality uncertainty:

*“I cannot check the quality myself. When it comes to that I go to a professional, my butcher.”*

Production method was mentioned unprompted as an aspect that influenced the quality of pork. The examples given were whether growth enhancers and/or medicine had been used. It was noted that despite its importance, this information was mostly unavailable to consumers in the shop.

## The influence of the media and food scares

As has also appeared in the above sections, the media are generally an important player in the formation of attitudes towards pork. However, the behavioural consequences of the attention created by television features on food scares and pig production were often insignificant:

*“When there is something up about, let’s say, growth enhancers, I loose my appetite. It is psychological and influences me for the next couple of days. When I go to the supermarket I pick another kind of meat. But it doesn’t last long, after a few days I am back to the old habits again.”*

Participants sharing this opinion had a latent bad conscience that they took it so lightly and tried to defend their actions:

*“I don’t have the time nor the knowledge to get qualitative advice, for instance whether there is medicine residues in the meat.”*

The outlets were not perceived by the ‘expert’ participants to know enough to give trustworthy advice about these issues anyway:

*“No matter whether it is a supermarket butcher or an independent butcher’s, he doesn’t know how much penicillin was in the meat he bought. He has to trust the people that he buys from, and it is like that the whole way through.”*

Other participants tended to simply ignore the public debate on medicine residues, growth enhancers and other substances in modern pork production:

*“If you have a healthy lifestyle, nothing is unhealthy in itself, really.”*

*“It is ludicrous to be afraid of these things. The reason why children get allergies is that they have been over-protected and have not had the chance to build up their immune system.”*

Still others were annoyed that they were exposed to information about food safety and recommendations about what to eat all the time:

*“I find it incredibly tiresome that one has to be afraid of everything: salmonella, growth enhancers etc. My life is too short to get into that, and also I would not be able to eat anything if I had to think about all these things. I think less about it now than five years ago.”*

## The perceived money value of pork

The participants agreed that pork offered for sale could be of both poor and good quality, but disagreed on whether the price always matched the quality.

The 'expert' participants perceived that competition was so tough that consumer demands on price forced the producers to sell low quality pork:

*“Generally, I think that we pay too little. Quite often supermarkets use inexpensive pork to attract customers, and therefore we also pay too little for pork and get a quality which is too poor.”*

In general, the value for money was perceived to be difficult to evaluate, particularly because the participants felt that they lacked knowledge about production costs. Some felt, however, that the price was quite acceptable, others that they got too little value for money, and still others felt too uncertain about this to have an opinion.

### The perceived healthiness of pork

Healthiness was an important dimension of quality in relation with pork. In general, however, healthiness was perceived as an invisible factor, which was difficult to evaluate. Therefore it often only played a minor role in purchase situations. Nevertheless, as indicated above, factors perceived to affect the healthiness of pork such as pesticide residues had high awareness.

### Perceived determinants of the quality of pork

A range of factors was perceived to influence the quality of pork. Most of these were related to the treatment of the live pigs. The following factors were all mentioned unprompted:

- the transportation of the pigs
- how the pigs were kept at the farm
- what the pigs were fed
- the use of growth enhancers
- treatment of the live pigs at the slaughterhouse
- the general welfare of the pigs
- the use of medicine
- the breed of pigs
- the level of veterinary control
- the cooling of the meat

Long-distance transportation of pigs was perceived to result in poor meat as was intensive production, such as keeping the pigs in cages rather than allowing them to roam around and only offering the pigs little space overall. The pigs should also be given natural fodder rather than concentrates, and they should not be given growth enhancers to that they would grow too quickly:

*“The pigs were so fat [in a TV programme] that their legs collapsed under them.”*



All these aspects along with the pre-slaughtering treatment of the pigs at the slaughterhouse were linked to the general welfare of the pigs, and among the non-‘expert’ participants the attitude was clear:

*“They [the pigs] should be treated well, and I don’t believe that they always are.”*

The remaining factors, in addition to the use of growth enhancers, were perceived to have very direct consequences for the meat quality: the meat should be free of medicine, the pigs should not be of the modern long and thin kind, there should be sufficient veterinary control, and the meat should be cooled very fast after slaughtering.

In general, it was also agreed that pigs should have a ‘happy’ life, because it was seen as a right in itself but also because it was perceived to influence the quality of the resulting meat.

## **Modern pig breeding**

Pig breeding in Denmark today: collages

The participants did not perceive that pigs were thriving in today’s pig breeding, neither during the growth period nor in relation with slaughtering (transportation to the slaughterhouse and the actual slaughtering). However, the non-‘expert’ participants also emphasized that their *knowledge* about this was limited:

*“I don’t know a whole lot about it. I just feel so sorry for the pigs.”*

In general, this part of the discussion revealed significant variations among the participants in the degree of emotional arousal, with the ‘experts’ as the most level-headed ones. Overall, an ideal picture of ‘the happy pig’ emerged in contrast to a bogey of ‘the sad pig’. The perceptions can be grouped as follows:

### **The happy pig**

Lives outdoors

Is allowed to roam around

Eats natural fodder

Does not get growth enhancers

Grows naturally

Does not get any medicine

Is slaughtered on the farm

Is under satisfactory veterinary control

### **The sad pig**

vs. Is kept in a cage, behind bars

vs. Has very little space

vs. Is fed on concentrates possibly genetically modified

vs. Gets growth enhancers

vs. Grows very fast

vs. Gets a lot of medicine (penicillin)

vs. Is transported over long distances before slaughtering

vs. Is under poor veterinary control

Is treated when sick	vs.	Is not treated or spared of transport when sick
Is not stressed before slaughtering	vs.	Gets very stressed before slaughtering
Is killed decently	vs.	Is killed with an electrical stick

The dichotomy between ‘the happy pig’ and ‘the sad pig’ was very clear-cut and was seen in all of the collages. The dichotomy was mostly used as a way of presenting the gap between the perceived ideal and current situation in today’s pig breeding. However, it was also used to illustrate the perceived gap between two production methods: organic and conventional pig breeding:

*“There are two kinds of production: organic production and ordinary production where the pigs are behind bars and all that.”*

Among the more emotional participants, the collages were used to present modern, industrialized pig breeding as a situation where animal welfare was threatened as a consequence of the wish to produce inexpensive meat. Lack of space, intensive use of medicine and growth enhancers, and greediness emerged as major elements. Everyone was perceived to be happy with the situation except the pigs: the farmer and the veterinary authorities earned good money, and the consumers got access to inexpensive meat:

*“Pollution, medicine, the pigs are victims of inbreeding. Bone meal as fodder, medicine that gives sores. They get injections, hormones. It is all a matter of money. It’s business!”*

*“Here, we have pictures of the Minister of Food and the head of the farmers’ interest organisation as they look when they try to talk pork into the hearts of the consumers. Animal welfare is not on their agenda.”*

The participants explained the fact that consumers demand inexpensive meat by the stressful life that people lead today and the extent of family crises. Consumers were perceived to accept miserable conditions for farm animals simply because they lacked energy in their everyday lives.

Generally, a fair portion of anthropomorphism appeared in the discussion of how pigs were treated in today’s pig breeding. Particularly, the more emotional participants tended to assign humans feelings to the pigs:

*“They [the pigs] cannot endure life in sties. They need to get out and get some fresh air. And we, on the other hand, cannot stand those sties either, can we?”*

Some participants saw organic farming with outdoor pig breeding as the solution to the perceived problems of modern, intensive pig breeding. Others doubted that consumers were willing to pay a premium for organic meat. Others again were more focused on the benefits that

intensive pig breeding offered consumers; inexpensive meat and an opportunity to consume more pork. Nevertheless, these participants also believed that more decent production methods were needed in today's pig breeding, but they regarded the perceived ideal unrealistic:

*“If pigs were bred the way we would like to see it, they would cost a fortune.”*

Other collages were more neutral. Among other things, they for instance depicted a range of end products such as air-dried ham and minced pork labelled with fat content. They were somewhat surprised that other collages were so pre-occupied with perceived poor conditions in today's pig breeding:

*“It struck me that people come up with completely negative statements, and it frightens me, because there are also positive sides, and the bad sides can be overcome by doing like this: ‘Poor ethics should reduce the settling account’ [newspaper headline].”*

These participants also associated a few problems with modern pig breeding systems, but the modern farm was generally perceived as a good place for the pigs:

*“A pig that has lots of space to roam around is used to that. A pig that is kept in a pen is used to that.... and doing fine.”*

These participants did not perceive free-range pigs to be better off than pigs in intensive systems. Among other things, it was said that the free-range sows might squash their free-range piglets by lying on them.

The 'expert' participants knew more about the methods used in today's pig breeding and their factual orientation was directly reflected in their collages and their subsequent collage presentations. Settling prices, production figures, particular stable floors were among the words used. These participants were not condemnatory, but were able to view the issues from the farmer's side as well. The farmer was perceived to be subject to requirements from authorities and consumers and perceived to be in tough competition with other producers:

*“The farmer has to follow the development. And he does a good job; he should be proud of what he is doing. It is also thought-provoking that consumers spends so little money on food, compared to other goods.”*

However, the 'expert' participants' collages also covered perceived negative aspects of modern pig breeding. These were substantially the same as presented in the other collages, only they took up less space:

*“Well, the negative sides also have to be there, but we are a bit undecided, because it tastes good and it is nice to be able to get inexpensive meat.”*

In general, both intensive and extensive pig breeding methods were seen to be applied in today's pig breeding in Denmark, and a number of undesirable elements were associated with intensive pig breeding. The participants were uncertain about how common 'the unhappy pig' was, but they suspected the worst case and realised that they tried to suppress this when they went shopping for food:

*"I must say that I have a bad conscience, because I think they are treated really horribly. I ought to buy the pigs that run around in the fields. But I never get down to doing it. And I eat the other meat anyway."*

Today's pig breeding compared with pig breeding in the past

The participants disagreed on whether pigs lead a better life now than before.

Some believed that conditions in Danish pig breeding had deteriorated compared to for example the fifties. Others claimed that pigs have a better life now, but still not good enough and that pigs had actually never had 'a good life'. Still others believed that the situation had not really changed:

*"The pigs' circumstances are neither better nor worse today than 20 years ago. Only the farmer that is worse off."*

These participants believed that the fuss about modern pig production had mostly been created by increasing media attention towards the negative sides of modern farming methods. They believed that there might be signs in the opposite direction, e.g. more free-range pigs.

Danish pig breeding compared with pig breeding in other countries

It was generally agreed that Danish pig breeding was superior to pig breeding in other countries, particularly because of better control procedures:

*"There is more control in Danish farming. I believe that you get a more healthy pig here than in Germany."*

But also for other reasons:

*"We have higher standards in Denmark in terms of animal welfare, the slaughtering methods are better here."*

One participant stated that control is better in Sweden than in Denmark, but the other participants generally dismissed this.

## Modern pig breeding and the environment

Modern pig breeding was apparently not associated with significant pollution problems. Pollution problems were not regarded as an important issue in any of the groups and did not appear in the collages either. This is striking because (unfortunate) environmental consequences of modern pig breeding methods have been the subject of considerable media coverage, especially in the first six months of 2001. The debate on stench problems has even been followed up by new legislation that restricts the construction of new pigsties close to built-up areas..

Pollution problems, including stench problems, were not mentioned at all in the focus group held in Copenhagen, and when prompted, responses were sparse as well. In the focus group held in Kolding, environmental side effects were not in focus either, and it was generally agreed that the smell from pig breeding farms was something one just had to accept when living in the countryside:

*“Pigs smell worse than it usually smells in the country... but that’s how it is.”*

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The two focus groups show a clear perception of the concept of quality in relation to pork. As it is impossible to experience the quality before the purchase, various means are applied to evaluate product quality at the point of purchase. However, consumers do not appear very confident in this task.

Moreover, results reveal a clear perceptual link between the quality of pork and the applied production method, in which extensive, free-range production is generally perceived to beat intensive, indoor production.

Despite the predilection for ‘welfare’ pork, meat from extensive production systems is rarely bought. Although regarded as desirable, the meat is rejected because it is perceived to be either too expensive or too difficult to obtain.

The discussions point to a number of marked differences in beliefs and attitudes among Danish consumers. In the presentation of the results, we distinguish between ‘expert’ participants and non-‘expert’ participants. However, based on the discussions in the two groups, it seems that the non-‘expert’ category can be subdivided into a number of distinct consumer types. Importantly, establishing the exact typology of Danish consumers based on beliefs and attitudes towards pork and pig breeding requires more elaborate research. When nevertheless we present a typology of four consumer types based on results of the focus groups, it is merely to emphasize that significant differences exist among Danish consumers with regard to perceptions of pork and pig breeding.

The four consumer types that can be suggested based on the Danish focus groups are

- Knowledgeable pork consumers
- Caring pork consumers
- Easy-going pork consumers
- Price-oriented pork consumers

*Knowledgeable pork consumers* have substantive knowledge about the way pork is produced. These consumers realize that a great number of quality dimensions are difficult to evaluate for ordinary consumers, even after purchase and consumption. Their view of pig breeders and pork production is very matter-of-fact.

*Caring pork consumers* are very interested in quality, but do not know much about pork production. Their arguments are both driven by emotions and by a desire for knowledge. They take an interest in animal welfare and believe it to be incompatible with modern pork production. Organic production is seen as the way to go.

*Easy-going pork consumers* use brands or persons they trust to vouch for the quality of the pork they want to buy. These consumers have given up evaluating both the healthiness and eating quality of the meat and are willing to pay a premium for quality meat. They are not very interested in learning about how pork is produced and not very interested in the animal welfare issue.

*Price-oriented pork consumers* put decisive emphasis on price and look for special offers. The quality of the meat is checked in the shop mostly by evaluating the colour of the meat and the date of production. These consumers tend to ignore the public debate on undesirable effects of modern pig breeding methods.

Regardless of the prevalence of these segments in the overall population and regardless of the possible existence of a somewhat different consumer typology as well, subsequent research on consumer attitudes and purchase behaviour with regard to pork will have to take into account these marked differences in behaviour and perceptions about pork and pig breeding.

## REFERENCES

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## APPENDIX 1. DISCUSSION GUIDE

*Text in parentheses lists comments to the moderator.*

### 0. Introduction (5 min.)

The moderator introduces the focus group and its objectives which are presented as: “..learning more about food habits of Danish consumers, particularly with regard to meat.” (i.e. pork is NOT introduced here.)

+ general practical information needed (duration of the focus group, no right or wrong answers, talking one at a time, etc.)

### 1. Warm-up (5-10 min.)

Which kinds of meat do you eat? (beef, pork, veal etc.) On which occasions do you use the different kinds of meat? (e.g. everyday vs. weekend, family vs. guests) Are some meat types more suitable for guests than others?

### 2. Introduction to pork (5-10 min.)

We are now going to talk a little more about pork. Well, what is it in fact called pork or pig meat?

What do you think about pork compared to other kinds of meat? (if pig meat is preferred, this term is to be used in the rest of the discussion..)

What do you think of the healthiness of pork?

### 3. Quality of pork (30 min.)

*Visualisation exercise about imagined supermarket shopping situation where pork is bought. Instruction by moderator.*

*Each participant gives a short presentation of imagined shopping experience. Subsequent group discussion based on:*

In terms of pork, what does ‘good quality’ mean to you? (e.g. good taste, tender meat etc.) (The main focus should be on raw, un-minced meat)

What do you look for to get pork of good quality? Is pork of good quality always available?

Do you look at packaging labels when you pick pork from the self-service cooling counter? Which information do you look for? What does this information tell you about the quality of the meat?

How is the quality of pork generally compared to prices?



4. Link to production methods (10 min.)

Moving away now from pork and onto the way that pigs are raised, now, tell me: How does the breeding of the pigs influence the quality of the meat? (e.g. how the pigs are transported, access to outdoor life, general well-being of the animals etc.)

5. Production methods (60 min.)

*Production of collages about how the participants think pigs are bred in Denmark today. Instruction by moderator.*

*Short presentation of collages by the assigned groups. Subsequent group discussion based on:*

What do you think about the way pigs are bred in Denmark today? What is it like to be a pig on a typical Danish pig farm today?

Has the breeding pigs become better or worse in recent years? In what ways?

How is Danish pig breeding compared to pig breeding in our neighbouring countries?

Has the welfare of the pigs become better or worse in recent years? In what ways? What do you think about this?

Do you think about the environment when you think about how pigs are raised today? What do you think are some of the effects on the environment?

How does the way the pigs are raised influence the quality of the meat? (if not already covered under no. 4)

6. Wrap-up (5-10 min.)

We have been talking quite a lot now about pork and about how it is produced. Is there anything you would like to add before we finish?

7. Debriefing (2 min.)

The moderator informs the participants about who is in charge of the research and what the results will be used for..

## APPENDIX 2. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Kolding, 22 May, 2001

Lone (f)  
Childminder  
36 y, married, 3 children

Dorthe (f)  
Pre-school teacher  
42 y, single, 2 children

Inger (f)  
Engineer  
45, single, 2 children

Pia (f)  
PhD student  
37 y, married, 1 child

Hans (m)  
Locksmith  
32, married, 2 children

Birthe (f)  
Assisting spouse  
46 y, married, 2 children

Eva (f)  
Semi-skilled worker  
37 y, married, 2 children

Erik (m)  
Electrician  
33 y, cohabiting, 3 children

Lene (f)  
Social worker  
47 y, single, 2 children

Copenhagen, 12 June, 2001

Anna (f)  
Head doctor  
54 y, single, no children

John (m)  
Garbage collector  
40 y, single, no children

Carsten (m)  
Director  
52 y, married, 4 children

Jette (f)  
Assistant nurse  
50 y, single, 1 child

Gitte (f)  
Pre-school teacher  
40 y, single, no children

Peter (m)  
Chief of section  
47 y, single, no children

Annelise (f)  
Consultant  
41 y, married, 1 child

Marianne (f)  
Teacher  
53 y, married, 1 child

Jesper (m)  
Carpenter  
46 y, single, no children

Thomas (m)  
Skilled sausage maker  
32 y, cohabiting, no children

f=female, m=male

**APPENDIX 3. BREAKDOWN OF MEAT CONSUMPTION AMONG THE PARTICIPANTS**

Beef	Participants Copenhagen (n=10)	Participants Kolding (n=9)
Every day or almost every day		
Several times a week	7	5
Once a week		2
1-3 times a month	2	1
Less	1	
Never		1

Pork	Participants Copenhagen (n=10)	Participants Kolding (n=9)
Every day or almost every day		
Several times a week	5	5
Once a week	5	4
1-3 times a month		
Less		
Never		

Poultry	Participants Copenhagen (n=10)	Participants Kolding (n=9)
Every day or almost every day		
Several times a week	2	4
Once a week	4	3
1-3 times a month	2	2
Less	2	
Never		

Fish	Participants Copenhagen (n=10)	Participants Kolding (n=9)
Every day or almost every day		
Several times a week		1
Once a week	3	1
1-3 times a month	6	6
Less	1	1
Never		

Lamb	Participants Copenhagen (n=10)	Participants Kolding (n=9)
Every day or almost every day		
Several times a week		
Once a week	1	1
1-3 times a month	3	1
Less	4	4
Never	2	3