



Improving cow health and welfare under organic principles

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This presentation



**Organic principles
call for a unique view on
animal health and welfare**

**How can we meet this in practice?
... examples from SOLID ...**



'Organic': living up to IFOAM principles

PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Principle of **HEALTH**

Organic Agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible.

Principle of **ECOLOGY**

Organic Agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them.

Principle of **FAIRNESS**

Organic Agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities.

Principle of **CARE**

Organic Agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well-being of current and future generations and the environment.





Health goes beyond disease prevention and handling ...



Think of health as 'resilience'

- Robustness
- 'Margin' / buffer capacity: react and withstand shocks

Review 

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Resilience as a universal criterion of health

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Abstract

To promote and maintain health in agricultural and food systems, appropriate criteria are needed for the description and assessment of the health of soils, plants, animals, humans and ecosystems. Here we identify the concept of resilience as a universally applicable and fundamentally important criterion of health in all relevant areas of agriculture. We discuss definitions of resilience for soils, plants, animals, humans and ecosystems, and explore ways in which resilience can be applied as a criterion of health in different agricultural contexts. We show how and why resilience can be seen as a key criterion of health. Based on this, we discuss how resilience can be used as a link between soil, plant, animal, human and ecosystem health. Finally, we highlight four key areas for future research on resilience in agriculture, namely spatial and temporal scaling of resilience; effects of diversity; the role of networks for resilience; and stakeholder involvement.

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**Allow
animals to
meet
natural
needs**



**Intervene
when
necessary**

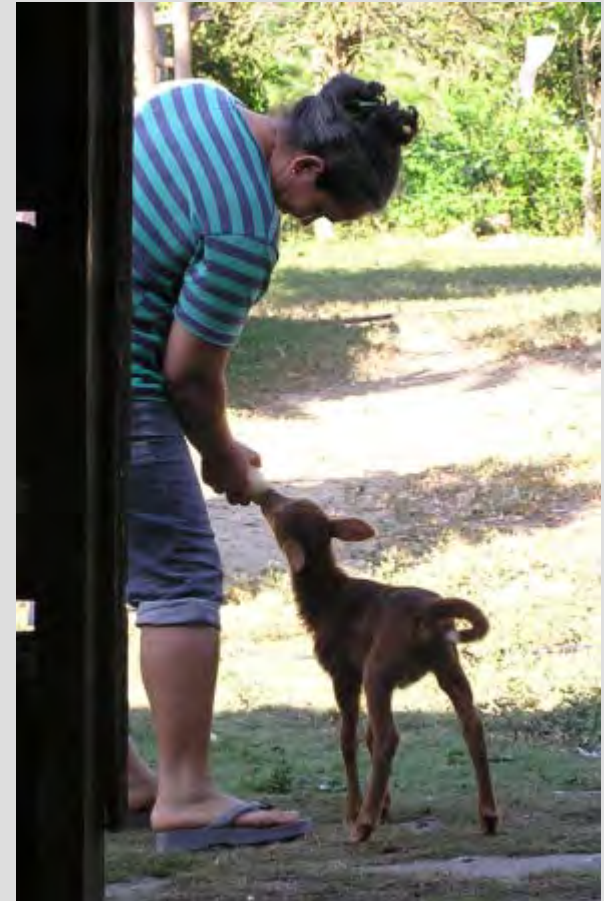


The alliance between humans and animals



The ethical contract

Remember: 'livestock' are animals ...



Living sentient beings ...

Examples of SOLID studies with focus on supporting animal health and welfare

- Herbs
- Cow-calf suckling systems
- Farmer Field Labs
– depending on focus ...

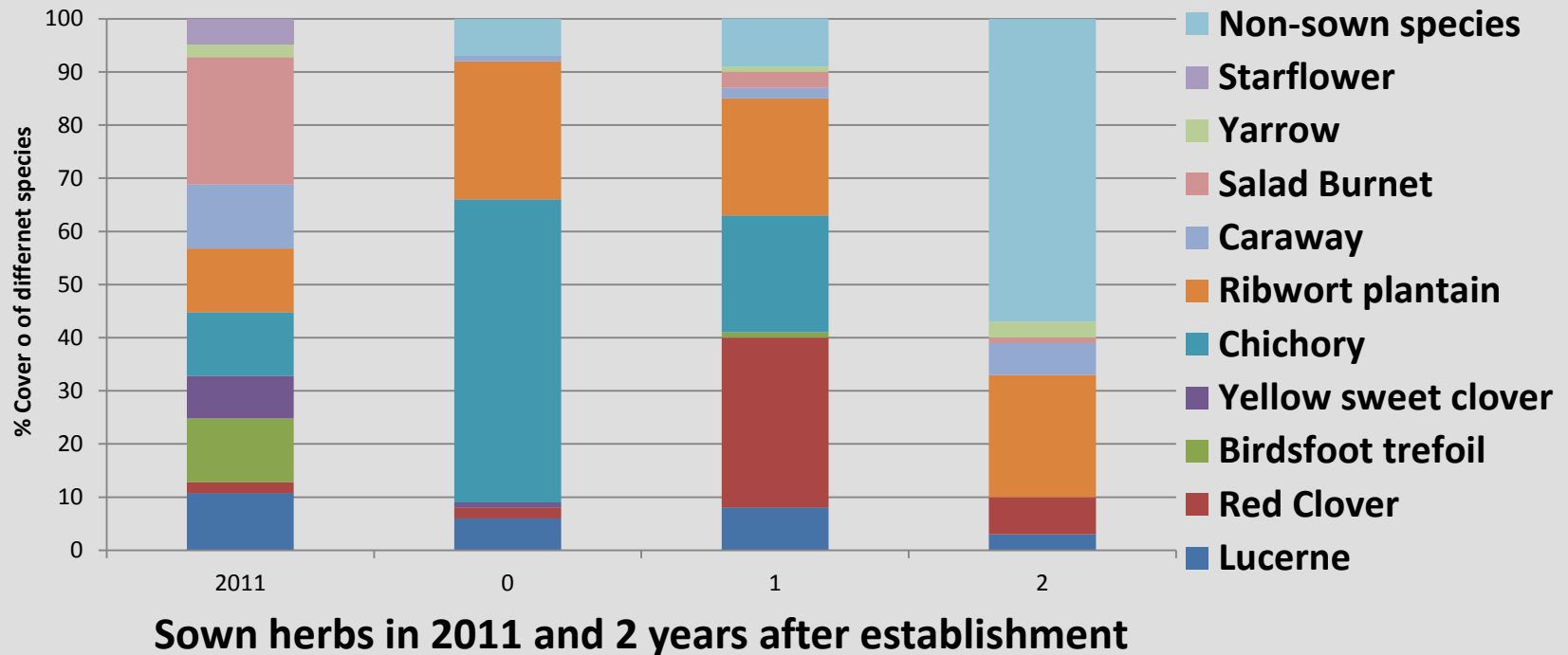


Herbs in the grass field

- 1.** No documented effect on health and welfare ... too many other factors influence!
- 2.** Farmers experience: cows favour herbs in pastures
- 3.** Multiple reasons and motivations; very much 'we like the idea and can see that animals like it'.
- 4.** Relevant practical research issues raised:
 - How to manage and maintain herbs on long-term grass fields?
 - What is the right cutting / harvesting time, especially for hay?

Example: Pure herb field: Plant cover analysis on the year of sowing and the two consecutive years

Plant cover analysis pure herb field no 1



Cow-calf-suckling – UK & Dk



Cow-calf-suckling – UK & Dk



- 1. Observational study:**
 - UK: First year with suckling cow-calves on the farm
 - Dk: Twenty first year – well experienced and adjusted to farm conditions several times; own mother and some with 'aunt'
- 2. Bonding and de-bonding the great challenges; a number of practical strategies identified**
- 3. Requires commitment and active, conscious experience building**
- 4. Can work incredibly well – in the right set-up and with good care giving.**



Why ?

- **‘Natural’**
- **Healthy calves and cows ... when it works!**

Healthy lively calves & not 'rodeo heifers'







**Learning – active lives –
group interactions**

The big challenges: bonding and de-bonding





Farmer Field Lab for knowledge generation aiming at reducing antibiotic use

- **UK experience: 15 farmers in a group:**
 - **General: exchange and generation of knowledge and experience for reducing antibiotic use**
 - **Four farmers in trial of mint oil liniment – results discussed in the group.**

(DK: 12 years ago: ‘Stable schools’ – worked incredibly well when farmers commit themselves)

Farmers taking responsibility for herd health development—stable schools in research and advisory activities as a tool for dairy health and welfare planning in Europe

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Impact of animal health and welfare planning on medicine use, herd health and production in European organic dairy farms

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Complex integrated animal farming systems requires complex knowledge



The power and potential of farmer groups for exchange & development

Experience phasing out antibiotics:



- **Basic!**
- **Air, day light, space to natural movements,**
- **hygiene,**
- **stressfree surroundings, care, consequent intervention when needed**

...



'Peace to be cows'

**Knowledge
generation and
exchange**

'I want this'



**Understanding
of animal needs
and signals**

**Take a
decision**



Support animal health and welfare ...



... and: when it comes to disease:

ACT!

**'Responsible action'
... is not always
equivalent to 'veterinary
treatment'**





**'First remove all
obstacles to
cure ...'**

Support the animal to regain health and balance



Low-input: overcoming the high-input elements of European dairy production



Reliance on imported feed

... and fossil fuels



.... few 'designed breeds'

AND: Reliance on antibiotics



NRDC

CASE STUDY

Going Mainstream: Meat and Poultry Raised Without Routine Antibiotics U



Subway Joins

Antibiotic-Free Meats

by REUTERS

Consumer growing f the United

Food Producers Increasingly Offer Chicken, Beef and Pork Raised Without Antibiotics, Respond About Resistant Bacteria



Meat Companies Going Antibiotics-Free Under Pressure From Consumers

#WSJLIVE
WSJ Live

Consumer demand for meat grown without antibiotics is having a market effect beyond government regulations. WSJ's David Kesmodel reports. Photo: Rachel Mummy for The Wall Street Journal

A clear and relevant focus & goal for low-input and organic dairying

Visions for the future...

- 'The need for a new agricultural paradigm'
- 'Sustainability requires a new definition of the terms productivity and growth'





Thanks for your attention!