

Animal Welfare

Introduction

At Hilton Food Group, animal welfare is central to our values and integral to our business to enable us to meet our customers' expectations for high quality, sustainably reared livestock and farmed fish.

We are a customer-led business, working with and delivering to the high standards set by our retailer partners who are themselves recognised as leading in animal welfare.

Together with our retailer partners, suppliers and farmers we are committed to the development and implementation of high welfare standards for animals and farmed fish across our global supply chains, from breeding and rearing to transportation and slaughter.

To view our Animal Welfare Policy, click [here](#)

Our Approach

The welfare of an animal includes its physical and mental state. Our approach is based on the Five Freedoms of the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC):

1. Freedom from hunger and thirst
2. Freedom from discomfort
3. Freedom from pain, injury or disease
4. Freedom to express normal behaviour
5. Freedom from fear and distress

How We Work

Hilton Food Group does not own farms. Our core business is the supply of beef, lamb, pork and fish products under retailer own label brands, working in partnership with the suppliers that lead in animal welfare in each of the markets we operate in.

We currently operate across Europe and Australia, with the core of our business in the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Denmark, Holland, Sweden, Poland and Australia.

Our animal welfare policy applies to all species, in all markets, however we recognise that the different markets Hilton Food Group operates in are at different stages in their development and implementation of animal welfare standards. Our approach is to share learnings across the different markets we operate in, using our influence to drive improvements in standards in a way that is both stretching and achievable for our supplier base. By developing an approach that shares welfare outcome measures across markets, we can allow countries to develop their own solutions to any challenges, whilst still ensuring animal welfare is constantly improving.

At Hilton Food Group, day to day responsibility for our animal welfare policy sits with our Group CSR Director reporting to the Chief Quality and CSR Officer who in turn reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer and main board. The Hilton Food Group board regularly reviews progress against the animal welfare objectives outlined in our Policy through the CSR Committee.

We have developed a multi-layered approach to animal welfare assurance (illustrated in Fig 1 below) that builds upon minimum legal requirements using a range of additional standards and audit regimes. We believe this approach provides robust assurance and fosters continual improvements, as standards are reviewed and strengthened over time.



Fig 1: Hilton's multi-layered approach to animal welfare assurance

Independent Farm Assurance Standards

All livestock/farmed fish slaughter facilities and fish farms supplying Hilton Food Group in our major markets are certified to independent farm assurance schemes. For Hilton Foods UK/ROI and Seachill, this includes Red Tractor, Bord Bia Quality Assurance, Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP), GlobalG.A.P. and Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC). For our other major markets, this includes IKB Varken (benchmarked to GlobalG.A.P.) and QS for pigs reared in Holland, the Danish Product Standard in Denmark, and IP Gris Grundcertifiering (Quality Assured Pig Production) in Sweden. In Holland, all pigs supplied to Hilton meet the 'Good Farming 1 Star' programme and 'De Groene Weg' standards – both of which are higher welfare standards (see below).

Hilton Foods Requirements

Hilton Foods UK/ROI independently audit all livestock slaughter facilities to the Hilton Food Group Supplier Standard using a dedicated second party, during which standards of animal welfare are assessed by a welfare qualified auditor. Seachill directly employs farmed fish welfare officers to audit all farmed fish slaughter facilities and supplying fish farms including those outside the UK, e.g. pangasius in South East Asia. For our European operations, Hilton Food Group directly employ a dedicated team of auditors, who are trained in animal welfare, to audit all livestock slaughter facilities.

Retailer Requirements

In addition to our own standards and audit programme described above, all livestock and farmed fish suppliers supplying to Hilton Foods UK & ROI and Seachill are required to meet and are audited to Tesco Livestock Welfare Standards. These species specific standards are independently audited by Integra Food Secure Ltd. (an ISO 17020 accredited inspection body) who employ trained animal/fish welfare officers. A similar approach is taken in partnership with retailers in our other major markets.

Example: ICA in Sweden

In Sweden, Hilton Foods Sweden supplies the leading Swedish grocery retailer ICA who themselves carry out animal welfare audits at both slaughter facilities and farms through their own quality specialists or a third party.

Example: Tesco in UK

In the UK, all supplying farms and abattoirs must comply with species specific, industry leading Tesco Livestock Requirements encompassing the Farm Animal Welfare Council Five Freedoms and covering all aspects of animal rearing, including health, welfare, feed, production systems, environment, stocking, transport and slaughter, across all livestock species including aquaculture.

Tesco Livestock Requirements stipulate that 100% of farms are assured to a recognised farm assurance standard, including Red Tractor and Bord Bia, throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland.

For farmed seafood, Tesco requirements are in compliance with the OIE Aquatic Animal Health Code and farm assurance standards including GlobalG.A.P. and the Aquaculture Stewardship Council. Tesco *finest** salmon is reared in Scottish waters and certified to GlobalG.A.P. and RSPCA Welfare Standards. Tesco organic salmon is certified to independently assured organic standards, requiring lower stocking densities.

Example: Albert Heijn in Holland

In the Netherlands, our retailer partner Albert Heijn has committed to pigs reared to the 'Good Farming Star' programme which has been awarded '1 star' under the Beter Leven Quality Mark scheme. This programme guarantees (in comparison with conventional husbandry) both greater space and an environment enriched with objects to create a more stimulating environment for pigs to live in.

Currently around 97% of Hilton's supply of pigs in Holland are reared to the 'Good Farming Star' with a small percentage meeting the higher welfare '3 star' criteria through the 'De Groene Weg' organic standard.

We provide animal specific welfare training for the auditors employed by Hilton Food Group to audit slaughter/farm facilities (e.g. in the case of our farmed fish auditors, all have received external training provided by the Fish Vet Group). We expect all 2nd and 3rd party auditors to also have received animal welfare training.

Animal welfare requirements are included within the contractual requirements for all suppliers to Hilton Food Group.

We have established outcome measures as a means of measuring welfare at farm, during transport and at slaughterhouse facilities. We are agreeing objectives with our partners and will monitor progress using a range of data points including audit results and outcome measures.

Where we identify non-compliances, we work with our suppliers to develop action plans to resolve them, working in collaboration to identify root causes and solutions. This may require multiple visits and longer-term actions to help build better understanding and capability. For example, in 2017 Seachill supported and helped facilitate fish welfare training by European experts for fish farmers in Turkey and Vietnam.

Where critical animal welfare non-compliances are identified, we will temporarily suspend or, if necessary, cease supply.

Hilton Food Group is committed to reporting publicly on progress against our animal welfare objectives.

Welfare Outcome Measures

Welfare outcome measures help us, and our suppliers, understand how well we are doing, where we can make further improvements and to benchmark best practice and identify trends. Outcome measures for livestock are recorded at farm, during transport and at slaughter and include:

- Livestock behaviour and vocalisation in transport and at the abattoir
- Effectiveness of stun process
- During transport (e.g. fall or slip at unloading)
- Antibiotic use
- Physical body condition (e.g. lameness, skins lesions or abrasions, cleanliness, fleece damage)

Outcome measures are recorded and reviewed by our suppliers and reviewed during supplier visits. Our key supplier in the Netherlands, record and publicly report on outcome measures relating to:

- the efficacy of the pre-slaughter stunning process, i.e. the percentage of successful stuns
- antibiotic usage - the percentage of samples found with antibiotic residues above maximum residue levels

Delivering Against Our Objectives

Our objectives are outlined in our [Animal Welfare Policy](#). These objectives drive our programmes of work on animal welfare with our retailer partners and suppliers and are focused on the key farm animal welfare issues relating to beef, lamb, pork and fish.

Humane Slaughter

It is a condition of supply to Hilton Food Group that all animals and farmed fish must be effectively stunned prior to slaughter, and for records to be kept and reviewed to monitor the efficacy of the stunning process and take further actions where necessary. All livestock and farmed fish suppliers to Hilton Food Group have systems in place to ensure they meet this requirement.

How are we doing?

For farmed fish, we have worked hard with our suppliers to drive improved standards of humane slaughter and in 2014 set ourselves the target of 100% fish stunned prior to slaughter (see Table 1 below).

In 2017 we were able to announce 100% of our pangasius, salmon, sea bass and sea bream are humanely slaughtered and independently audited by Integra Food Secure Ltd. In addition, all farms are certified to independent farm assurance standard GlobalG.A.P. or ASC.

| Species | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 - YTD |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Atlantic Salmon | 100% Electrical or percussive |
| Pangasius | 100% percussive |
| Sea Bass | 100% Thermal Stun | 100% Thermal Stun | 10% Electrical 90% Thermal | 60% Electrical 40% Thermal | 100% Electrical |
| Sea Bream | 100% Thermal Stun | 100% Thermal Stun | 10% Electrical 90% Thermal | 60% Electrical 40% Thermal | 100% Electrical |
| Warm Water Prawns | 100% Thermal Stun |
| Tilapia | Manual percussive Stun 100% | None purchased | | | |

Table 1 – Results of progress towards 100% pre-slaughter stunning

We were pleased to see this work recognised by Compassion in World Farming in 2017 through the Best Retailer Innovation award received by Tesco for the introduction of a humane slaughter system for sea bass and sea bream into commercial practice.

<https://www.compassioninfoodbusiness.com/awards/retailer-awards/best-retailer-innovation-award/>

In the Netherlands, our pork supplier publicly reports on the efficacy of the pre-slaughter stunning process, reporting the percentage of successful stuns. For 2017 this figure was 99.97% (no re-stuns needed).

Livestock Travel Times

Minimising livestock travel times is critical to reduce discomfort, risk of injury and distress for transported animals.

Our objective is to keep travel times to a minimum and never to exceed eight hours.

How are we doing?

Our suppliers, in all our markets, monitor transport times to ensure the maximum permitted transport time of eight hours is not exceeded.

In a number of our major markets, including Holland and Denmark, travel times are typically significantly less than eight hours. For example:

- In Denmark, the maximum transport times for approximately 90% of the pigs handled by our key pork supplier does not exceed two hours
- In Sweden, our principal supplier achieves average transport times of less than four hours
- In ROI, the typical journey time for pigs supplied to Hilton Foods Ireland is three hours and for cattle can be as low as 45 minutes
- In the UK, cattle typically travel less than four hours to our major suppliers

Antibiotics

We recognise the importance of antibiotics in both human and animal medicine and the threat from improper use in livestock supply chains. We believe antibiotics should be used as little as possible without compromising animal health and welfare, through better site hygiene, husbandry, biosecurity and other preventative measures. Antibiotics are only used under veterinary control to ensure they are effective and that no residues remain at slaughter.

Hilton Food Group does not permit the use of growth promoting substances or hormones.

How are we doing?

Antibiotic usage is recorded by our suppliers and monitored as part of the farm audit programmes.

Supported by these antibiotic monitoring programmes, we are actively working to reduce antibiotic usage further. For example:

In Norway, our suppliers of farmed salmon have been successful in reducing antibiotic usage through use of vaccines and good husbandry. As an example, the Cermaq Group only had to treat two cages with antibiotics during the entire year in 2017 with a resulting API* per tonne of 0.5g (and the figures for the previous 2 years were also very low at 1g and 0g respectively). **grams of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API) per tonne live weight (LWE)*

- In ROI, our key pork supplier has further developed their approach on antibiotics based around the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA) Guidelines: “Responsible use of antimicrobials in pig production”. RUMA advocate the importance of good farm management and health planning to reduce disease challenge and, by doing so, reduce the need to use medicines such as antibiotics.
- In UK, our key beef supplier has developed, in conjunction with nutritional and veterinary partners, a programme aimed to give guidance to farmers on practices they can follow to reduce the risk of disease and thus the need for antibiotics, including ways to reduce animal stress, improve hygiene and improve biosecurity.

Routine Procedures

Routine procedures such as tail docking, fin clipping and disbudding can cause distress and pain to animals. Hilton Food Group is committed to the avoidance of routine activities such as tail docking and requires farmers to use suitable pain relief where they are used.

How are we doing?

In Australia, our retailer partner Woolworths have rolled out their Pork Blueprint which has banned surgical castration, teeth clipping and grinding and is conducting research to phase out tail docking.

In Sweden, our principle supplier, HK Scan, promotes a preventative approach, aiming to provide an environment that reduces stress levels for their pigs and in doing so reduce the incidence of behaviours such as tail docking, for example providing sufficient space per animal to fulfil their need to move around and explore and providing enrichment and rooting materials

In the Netherlands, under the 'Good Farming Star' and organic programmes, boars are not permitted to be castrated. Currently around 97% of Hilton's supply of pigs in Holland are reared to the 'Good Farming 1 star' with a small percentage meeting the higher welfare '3 star' criteria through the 'De Groene Weg' organic standard.

For our farmed fish, Seachill stipulate that fin clipping including soft tissue damage is not permitted and we are currently working to reduce the number of sea lice treatments required per farm as part of a sea lice mitigation strategy, as sea lice infections and the physical treatments needed to remove them can cause stress to the fish.

We are doing this in partnership with our suppliers who are investing in research into farming technology innovations, for example *closed containment systems* (where the inflow of water can be controlled and taken from depths where there are no sea lice present) and *offshore salmon farming* away from interaction with sea lice. This research is being coordinated in the EXPOSED (SFI) project which is researching technologies for open water aquaculture operations which today are unavailable to industrial fish farming due to remoteness and exposure to harsh wind, wave and current conditions.

Close Confinement

Hilton Food Group is committed to the avoidance of close confinement of livestock and finfish across all species and are actively working towards this goal.

How are we doing?

In Australia, our retailer partner Woolworths has committed to ensuring all own brand fresh pork is sourced from farms that only use gestation stalls for less than 10% of the sow's gestation period.

In ROI, a number of different methods are employed for environmental enrichment, including the use of straw, paper, piping and wooden stakes. The method and materials used are determined by the farmer based on a range of factors, for example the individual building design on the farm and behavioural outcome measures such as tail biting.

For our farmed fish, Seachill set science-based stocking densities according to individual species and farming system; these are reviewed and monitored during audits. For salmon there is a particular focus on salmon densities during harvesting to ensure fish are not overcrowded. This is measured through a combination of parameters including time, water quality (e.g. O₂ levels) and welfare outcome measures (e.g. fish behaviour).

Working Together To Drive Up Standards

Hilton Food Group works closely with our supplying partners on a day to day basis to understand where further improvements can be made on animal welfare. This includes:

- Supporting training; for example, Seachill facilitated the provision of fish welfare training by European experts for fish farmers in Turkey and Vietnam.
- Taking learnings from our welfare audit programme; for example, the findings from an audit of a salmon slaughter plant in South Norway revealed an opportunity to improve the flow of salmon into the entrance of the electrical stunner to ensure a head first alignment and thus a more effective stun. In Norway, actions agreed from a salmon slaughter audit led to improved segregation of lumpfish (that help clean sea lice from salmon) during live grading, to ensure both species are stunned correctly.

Hilton Food Group also actively engages in the development and improvement of global standards, looking to identify and support projects dedicated to advancing farm animal welfare practices within the industry. We work with our supplier and retailer partners, for example:

- In the UK, we work collaboratively with Tesco and other leading protein producers as members of Tesco Producer Groups to assist in developing their welfare and environmental farming standards. This includes the Tesco Sustainable Farming Salmon Group and the Tesco Sustainable Farming Lamb Group
- We are an active participant of the UK Antimicrobial Resistance industry working group. This group is looking at the livestock industry's use of antibiotics for the treatment and prevention of disease and any action that can be taken to further reduce usage and contribute towards a reduction in the growth in human antibiotic resistance
- We have been involved for over 15 years in the development and improvement of global welfare standards, for example providing expert fish welfare input into the development of the fish welfare standards within GlobalG.A.P. and other standards
- In Norway, we work with our farmed salmon suppliers supporting improvements in sea lice prevention, investing in the exploration of farming technology innovations including closed containment systems and offshore salmon farming

As market leaders, our suppliers are also actively involved in their own research and standards development, for example:

- In the Netherlands, our supplier Vion, alongside other stakeholders including Albert Heijn and the Animal Welfare Organisation, worked together to develop the 'Beter Leven Keurmerk', a higher welfare standard

Promoting Higher Welfare To Our Customers

- At Hilton Food Group, we are proud of the work we carry out on a day to day basis to improve animal welfare, in partnership with our suppliers, our retailer customers and the wider industry.
- We look for opportunities to communicate this through our website and directly with customers, for example through our attendance at UK agricultural shows alongside our retailer partner Tesco.
- We have a graduate scheme and, in the UK, support the Tesco Future Farmer Foundation; through which we aim to support a wider understanding of the livestock industry including the importance of animal welfare.
- In the Netherlands, products supplied to Albert Heijn promote the higher welfare 'Good Farming Star' programme through a QR Code on the final product packaging which customers can scan to provide traceability back to the farmer and farm.