

IMPORTS TO MEET SWISS ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS

COUNTRY: SWITZERLAND

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ASK PRIORITISATION

RECOMMENDED

An extensive report researching the promisingness of a national initiative to ban the import of animal products that do not adhere to existing Swiss animal welfare standards

OVERVIEW

This is a summary research report by Animal Ask investigating whether a national initiative to ban the import of animal products that do not adhere to existing Swiss animal welfare standards could be a recommended intervention for improving farmed animal welfare in Switzerland.

We would like to thank the experts we looked to for guidance in this report.

Animal Ask has been founded with the express aim to optimise and prioritise future asks to assist animal advocacy organisations in their efforts to reduce farmed animal suffering. We provide organisations with in-depth research narrowly targeted at key decisions between different animal asks, supporting organisations, individual activists, policymakers and donors so that they may do more good in the long-term.



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THE ASK

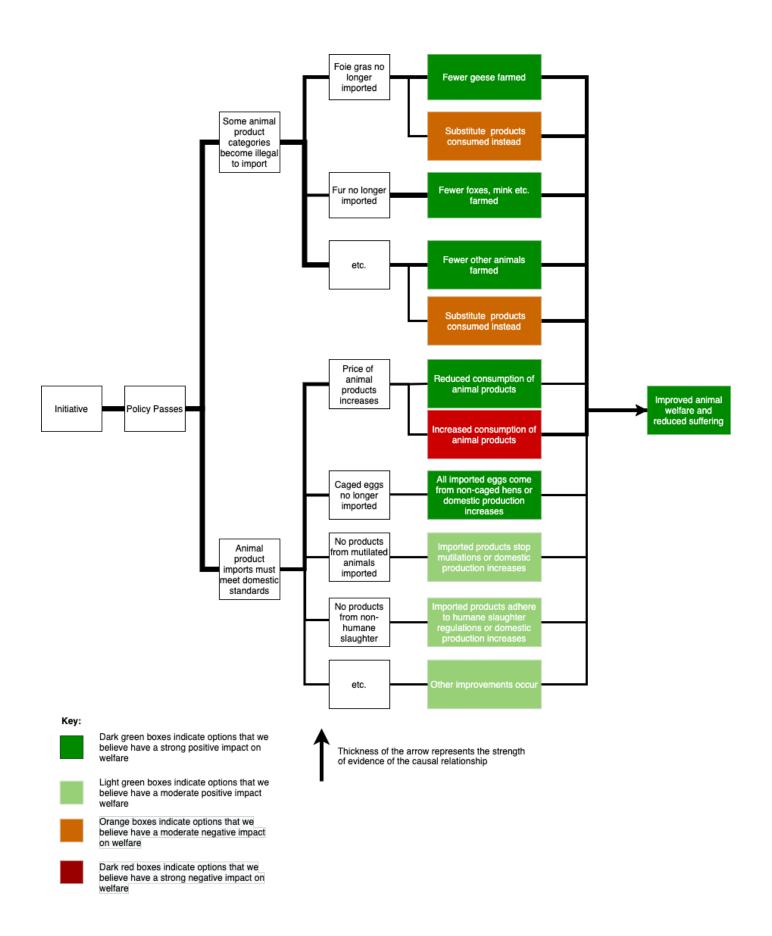
This initiative would seek to introduce a law requiring imports of animal products into Switzerland to meet the same animal welfare standards as those required for animal products produced in Switzerland. In some cases, this would essentially prohibit the import of whole categories of products, such as foie gras, fur, and other products considered in the cruel products ban. In most cases, it would simply ensure a level of animal welfare for imports equivalent to that required in Switzerland. For example, broiler hens would have to be reared and slaughtered in compliance with Swiss legislation. Plausible improvements to welfare in these cases include lower stocking densities, fewer mutilations, and more humane slaughter methods.

The exact wording and structure of the change should be determined in collaboration with legal experts. However, to provide a rough frame for this report, possible amendments to the constitution could look like:

• An amendment to article 80 of the constitution (Confederation, 2021) that expands on the clause requiring the confederate to legislate on the import of animal products to 'the import of animals and animal products such that imports adhere to Swiss legislation on animal welfare;'

If the Factory Farming Initiative is successful, then this ask will likely be achieved. However, if legislators implement conditional tariffs rather than an import ban then another initiative would be beneficial to strengthen this clause.

THEORY OF CHANGE



EVIDENCE FOR THE THEORY OF CHANGE

The theory of change for this initiative suggests that there are two main factors that contribute to the impact of this initiative. One factor is the effective prohibition of some animal products since it is impossible (or extremely difficult) to produce them according to Swiss law. This would include products such as foie gras and fur. The other factor is the improvement in the welfare of animals raised to produce products that are still imported into Switzerland. This factor is more complex, as the benefits to animal welfare depend on the relative strength of Swiss animal welfare law compared to the animal welfare laws of the exporting country, as well as how these laws are implemented in practice.

MAIN SOURCES OF ANIMAL PRODUCT IMPORTS

The table below displays the 13 largest exporters of animal products into Switzerland, comprising 80.5% of Switzerland's total animal product imports (OEC, 2019c). Each country's rating in the subcategory 'Protecting animals used in farming' from World Animal Protection's Animal Protection Index is also displayed. This subcategory is based on World Animal Protection's analysis of countries' farmed animal welfare laws.

COUNTRY	% OF SWITZERLAND'S ANIMAL PRODUCT IMPORTS (2019)	ANIMAL PROTECTION INDEX 'Protecting animals used in farming' Rating (A - G)
Switzerland	\$2.03 billion of animal products imported	С
Germany	17%	D
France	16.4%	D
Italy	12.7%	D
Netherlands	8.1%	Not assessed
Ireland	3.8%	Not assessed
Austria	3.7%	В
New Zealand	3.3%	С
Norway	3.3%	Not assessed
Denmark	3.1%	С
Australia	2.5%	Е
USA	2.2%	Е
Vietnam	2.2%	G
Brazil	2.2%	D
Total	80.5%	

Sources;

OEC (2019c) Where does Switzerland import Animal Products from?

World Animal Protection (2020b) World Animal Protection, Animal Protection Index. Available at: https://api.worldanimalprotection.org/ (Accessed: 23 September 2021).

The table shows that, out of the 13 largest importers of animal products to Switzerland, seven countries (representing 55.2% of Switzerland's total imports) had farm animal protection ratings lower than Switzerland's. Three countries (representing 15.2% of total imports) were not assessed and so could not be compared, while three countries (representing 10.1% of imports) had the same rating or better. The majority of the remaining 19.5% of animal product imports not captured by the table come from other European countries.

EU VS. SWISS ANIMAL WELFARE LAW

The six largest exporters of animal products to Switzerland, representing over half of all import value, are all countries within the EU. Therefore, it is important to consider some of the main differences between Swiss animal welfare law and EU animal welfare law

Laying hens

Switzerland banned cages (both barren cages and enriched cages) for hens in 1992. The use of barren cages is illegal in the EU. However, 49% of hens in the EU are still in enriched cages and Switzerland still imports some caged eggs (although these must be labelled).

(BBC News, 2021). The EU recently announced that it plans to ban all cages by 2027 (McDougal, 2021) so this ask is unlikely to be implemented before the ban comes into force.

Broiler chickens

EU law allows countries some flexibility on setting maximum stocking densities for broilers. While a maximum of 42 kg/m2 is mandated, the majority of countries stock somewhere between 33 kg/m2 and 39 kg/m3. However, notable exceptions include France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, where most broilers are stocked at above 39 kg/m2 (EU Broiler Chicken Welfare, no date). In Switzerland, the maximum stocking density for broiler chickens is 30 kg/m2 (Federal Council, 2020).

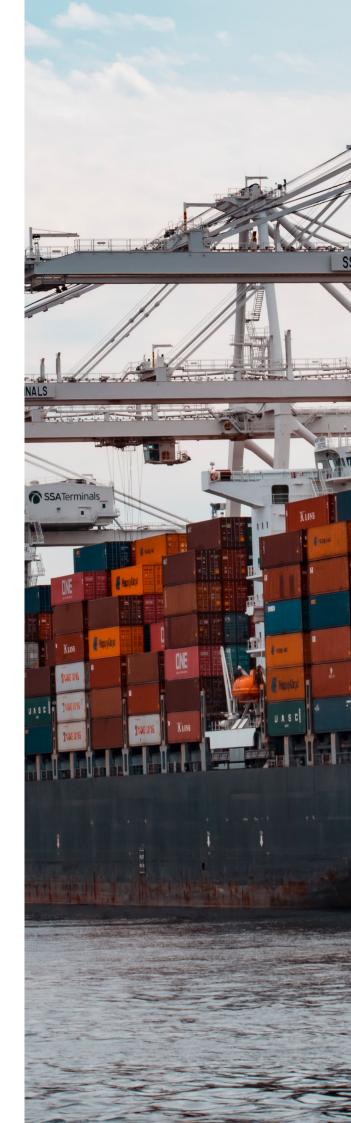
Pigs

The EU allows for tail docking to be carried out as long as it is not performed routinely and there is evidence that it is required. However, this law is currently not enforced effectively and, on average, 77% of pigs are routinely tail docked in EU countries (De Briyne et al., 2018). In Switzerland, tail docking is banned and fewer than 5% of pigs are tail docked (De Briyne et al., 2018).

Farmed fish

The EU only requires that farmed fish "shall be spared any avoidable pain, distress or suffering during their killing and related operations" but does not include a requirement that fish must be stunned before slaughter (Giménez-Candela, Saraiva and Bauer, 2020). In contrast, Swiss law states that "Vertebrates and crayfish may only be killed under anesthesia. If anesthesia is not possible, everything necessary must be done to reduce pain, suffering and anxiety to a minimum." Permitted stunning methods for fish and crayfish are also provided in the Ordinance (Federal Council, 2020).

The examples listed above are by no means exhaustive and it should be kept in mind that animal welfare laws also vary between individual EU members. However, the comparison shows that, in general, Swiss law provides greater protection to animals than EU law does. This suggests that many animal products imported from the EU are produced at standards lower than the minimum legal requirements in Switzerland.



ANIMAL WELFARE LAWS IN OTHER MAJOR EXPORTERS TO SWITZERLAND

Although non-EU countries only contribute a relatively small portion of animal product imports to Switzerland (roughly a quarter) (OEC, 2019c), this still affects the lives of many millions of animals each year. The gap between Swiss animal welfare laws and those of non-EU countries is also generally larger, since EU animal welfare laws are typically stronger than those elsewhere in the world. Therefore, a large part of the impact of an import ban on animal products that don't meet Swiss standards may come from its effects on non-EU exporters, even though these account for a smaller proportion of overall imports.

For example, the USA accounts for 2.2% of Swiss animal product imports (\$44.7 million)(OEC, 2019a) and received an 'E' rating from World Animal Protection for its legal protection of farmed animals (World Animal Protection, 2020b). Major deficits in the USA's animal welfare law include the absence of federal legislation limiting the stocking density of broiler chickens, the absence of requirements to stun farmed fish before slaughter, and the absence of federal

bans on battery cages or sow stalls (World Animal Protection, 2020a). Meanwhile, Vietnam also accounts for 2.2% of Swiss animal product imports (almost entirely fish and crustaceans) (OEC, 2019b) and received a 'G' rating for its legal protection of farmed animals (World Animal Protection, 2020b). World Animal Protection's analysis of Vietnam's animal welfare laws revealed that there were no specific protections for farmed animals beyond general legislation against 'mistreatment' (World Animal Protection, 2020c).

TRACTABILITY

PUBLIC OPINION

The impact of an initiative depends entirely on whether it is voted for by the public. To this end, it is essential that we have a clear picture of public opinion on an issue to gather some sense of what voting intentions would be.

There is no direct polling of public opinion on lower welfare imports in Switzerland but we can look to public support in other similar countries. In the UK, there have been recent efforts to implement a ban on lower welfare imports (George, 2021). Opinion polls commissioned by the British Guild of Agricultural Journalists (BGAJ) and RSPCA for this end found support for a ban on lower welfare imports at 84% and 75% of the public respectively (Case, 2019; Media, 2021). Broadly speaking, we would expect initial support for this initiative to be similar to the UK figures as both animal advocates and farmers would be in favour of the policy. The main areas of resistance would come from from the Federal Council, who are likely to recommend the rejection of the initiative because of concerns about WTO rules and

implementation, as well as free trade advocates (The Federal Council, 2020).

We can see this with a somewhat similar past initiative called the 'Fair Food initiative'. This was launched in 2015 and voted on in 2018 (Federal Council. 2021). The text of the initiative aimed to add an additional clause to 'Article 104: Agriculture of the Constitution, Art. 104b: Food'. This required the federal government to strengthen the range of foods offered which are of good quality, safe, environmentally and resourcefriendly, animal-friendly, and produced under fair labour working conditions (Federal Council, 2018) as well as setting standards for transport and the storage of food. More importantly for our purposes, the initiative also included a clause that also required imported products to adhere to these conditions. Unfortunately, this initiative was rejected 61.3% to 38.7% with a 37.52% turnout (Federal Council, 2021). Part of the reasoning for the government and parliament's recommendation to reject the initiative was because it would conflict with current trade agreements (Swissinfo, 2018). However, given that several other clauses were included in the initiative, it is difficult to determine whether its failure was caused by the import restrictions.

LEGAL HURDLES

One barrier has been raised by the Federal Council numerous times in response to previous motions for import bans: the potential clash with World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules. The Council has previously stated that a ban on the import of certain products for animal welfare reasons could prove incompatible with international law (Matthias, 2015). They typically suggest that product declaration and proper labelling should be used instead (Lukas, 2019). Indeed, a paper published in 2006 states that import tariffs or bans for animal welfare reasons conflict with WTO rules. Principally, this is because trade law considers two animal products which are identical in their finished form to be 'like products' even if they were made using different production methods (Grethe, 2007). However, this paper is now 15 years old and since its publication there has been case law that suggests that animal welfare-motivated import restrictions can work.

WTO case law indicates that countries can require imports to meet welfare standards equivalent to their own, as long as there is no discrimination in favour of domestic producers and no discrimination between different exporting countries. WTO Article XX sets out exceptions to the WTO's prohibition on trade restrictions. One of these exceptions relates to public morals and another to the conservation of natural resources (Charity Entrepreneurship, 2020). Both of these exemptions have implications for the legality of animal welfare-motivated import bans.

In 2009, the EU banned the import of seal products (with two exceptions for the sustainable management of marine resources and hunts conducted by Inuit or other indigenous communities) (Council of the EU, 2015). Canada (WTO, 2014a) and Norway (WTO, 2014b) challenged the EU ban but the Appellate Body ruled that in the EU, animal welfare comes within the field of public morals (WTO, 2014a). Other import bans have been upheld by the WTO for animal products that have been produced at lower standards than is legal in the importing country. This includes a case where the US banned the import of shrimp and shrimp products from countries that used a certain

trawling net that put sea turtles at risk (WTO, 2001).

In addition to cases that have been dealt with by the WTO, there are also examples of import restrictions that have not been legally challenged. For example, the EU requires imported meat to come from animals slaughtered to welfare standards at least equivalent to its own (Broom, 2017). Recently, an anonymous EU official was reported as saying that expanding these requirements from just slaughter to all EU animal welfare standards for meat imports would be WTO-compliant as long as it was on ethical grounds (Foote, 2021).

The precedent for import bans seems especially strong in the case of fur. Switzerland itself has banned the import of cat fur since 2006 'largely because of concern over cruel methods of slaughter in exporting countries' (Info, 2014). Meanwhile, the UK government is currently considering a ban on fur imports (DEFRA, 2021). A survey showed that 72% of the public are in favour of a ban (with only 12% opposed) (Humane Society International UK, 2021), while the idea has also received widespread support from MPs

(Forrest, 2021). In addition, India introduced an import ban in 2017 on mink, fox, and chinchilla fur skins, while this year (2021) Israel became the first country in the world to ban fur sales (except for some minor exceptions) (Respect for Animals, 2020).

Given the evidence presented above, existing precedent suggests that import bans, as long as they can be defended on the basis of public morals, are legally compliant. There are several examples of import bans which have been motivated by animal welfare considerations and have either not been challenged, or have been challenged and successfully defended in the WTO. Therefore, it appears that Switzerland would have legal grounds to impose ethically-motivated import bans.

Another potential barrier for Swiss trade agreements is the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). The EFTA is an intergovernmental organisation made up of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland which aims to promote free trade and economic integration between its member states (Books, 2010). The EFTA has some powers and responsibilities for negotiating trade agreements and preventing preferential

European Union, and other countries. A subset of EFTA members have also joined the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA) which covers the free movement of goods, services, persons, and capital (EFTA, 2021b). The free movement of goods within the EEA Agreement does not apply to all products and most trade in agricultural products is not included in the EEA Agreement (EFTA, 2021a). However, as Switzerland is not part of the Agreement on the EEA, it has its own bilateral trade agreements with the EU.

This includes their own agreement on agriculture that aims to 'strengthen free trade relations between the parties by improving market access for the other party's agricultural products' (Federal Assembly, 2020a). Article 5 of this agreement outlines requirements for the removal of technical barriers to trade. However, this does not specify issues with animal welfare, only 'Veterinary hygiene and zootechnical measures in the trade in live animals and animal products' as well as various other plant or organic products. Title 2 of this agreement covers trade in animal products (Federal Assembly, 2020b), but existing language only refers to veterinary hygiene and animal health with no mention of animal protection or welfare. If this initiative is successful, this agreement will have to be renegotiated and amended with animal welfare in mind.

EXPERT INTERVIEWS

During our research we spoke with multiple experts who offered their advice on the implementation of the ask, ask complexity, ask formation based on their past experience, and public perception of the issue.

Due to the sensitive nature of these interviews and the information the individuals shared, we have chosen to collate their collective thoughts into a summary to avoid compromising their important work.

Experts had the general impression that the Swiss population cared about animal welfare issues, demonstrated by their seemingly higher welfare standards across the board. Trade policy is a particularly prevalent current topic due to the recent United Kingdom exit from the European Union and the consequent redefining of the UK's trade arrangements. Similarities to the situation in Switzerland, which is also not a member of the European Union, have proved useful as a point of comparison.

Experts pointed us to synergies between Swiss and European trade laws that could prove to be useful examples in this case. The two most notable examples seem to concern welfare at the time of slaughter and the seal meat ban. Both of which are good examples of trade legislation being put in place to protect animals and maintain higher welfare practices.

With this initiative in particular, experts felt that support for this measure could be wide reaching due to the clearer distinction between Swiss products and imported products. They also felt that imports in general were not adequately addressed within the Factory Farming Initiative and that a separate initiative on this matter could be impactful for animals.

Some language technicalities were spoken to, namely changing the ask from an import ban to a 'placing on the market ban'. Whilst the outcome is the same, the import ban could be dismissed by the WTO as discriminatory as it applies to countries outside of your own, however if you place the ban on the market of the lower welfare products, you are affecting your own country which is more likely to be passed through the WTO.

ORGANISATION COST EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS (CEA)

This section summarises our outreach CEA, which weighs organisational costs against the welfare benefits of the policy in expectation. This provides us with an estimate of the comparative costeffectiveness of outreach for different asks. However, some parameters are calculated through our own internal projections and are therefore uncertain. The results of this CEA should be taken in light of the limitations of the model and of the welfare points index system used for the welfare estimates. However, we feel that the discussion provided below and in the additional information document more clearly communicate the updates we made based on our findings. These make the uncertainty in our estimations clearer to readers unfamiliar with CEAs compared to presenting the raw numbers. For further discussion of some of the challenges with CEAs, see the attached sources (Reese, 2016; GiveWell, 2017; Sarek, 2020).

OVERVIEW

The main finding highlighted by the CEA is that the majority of the effect of this ask comes from the reduction in lower welfare chicken and fish imports. One their own, these two effects make up 90% of the value of the ask, with

most of the rest of the value (\sim 9%) coming from a reduction in caged eggs. This is largely driven by the vastly greater number of chickens and fish imported into Switzerland each year, with about 100 times more chickens imported per year than sheep, the next most imported animal. These two effects alone make this ask look incredibly impactful, with the potential to possibly improve the lives of tens of millions of individuals. The main concerns raised in the CEA, other than the probability of success and counterfactual speed up which are concerns for all asks, is the uncertainty with the number and source (whether farmed or wild caught) of the imports of fish. The lack of accurate information on these parameters means that the importance of this effect could range within an order of magnitude. However, when compared to our next most promising ask 'particularly cruel products', this ask still looks more impactful. This is even more the case when we consider that we did not include the effect that a broader import ban would have on cruel products. If these products are also included, as is most likely, then this ask pare-todominates the cruel products ask, given they have equal probability of success.

INFORMED CONSIDERATION

ENFORCEMENT

A concern raised by the Federal Council in response to a cruel products motion is that implementation of such a policy would require inspections of foreign producers, something that would 'be extremely time-consuming and require the consent of the state concerned' (Lukas, 2019). Therefore, they claim that implementing such an import ban would be practically impossible. For some items, such as frogs legs or shark fins, enforcement would be significantly easier than the Federal Council has previously suggested, as all examples of these products can be considered cruel. Previous instances of such bans, such as on seal products or the ban on cat fur, are examples of enforcement on individual products being largely successful. For other products, analysis of previous instances of lower welfare bans or tariffs would be beneficial, such as an assessment of the EU-Mercosur trade agreement which has successfully placed conditional tariffs on egg imports that are not raised to EU standards (Busby, 2019).

According to a report that partially examined this issue, (Grethe, 2007) one

problem might be that the process of verification could be biased by domestic producers, who have an interest in increasing the cost of compliance for foreign producers. To cope with this problem, the process of determining cost of compliance and equivalence requirements must be allocated to an institution independent from producer interests. Another issue comes in the determination of equivalence, since it is difficult to unambiguously assess different husbandry systems with respect to their degree of animal friendliness. For example, a production system may be superior to Swiss standards on one metric (e.g. space) but inferior on another (e.g. provision of enrichment). Therefore, any system of enforcement needs to be limited to significant differences in animal welfare standards on which some consensus can be reached. The report points to international organic certification standards as an example of how a 'process standard' can work across borders. Apparently, compliance with these standards in Europe is ascertained at a relatively low cost, usually less than 1% of product value (Grethe, 2007).

Even if import restrictions are successful, another concern with enforcement will be Swiss citizens purchasing these products across the border. For foie gras, 38% of consumers are willing to travel abroad to France or elsewhere to circumnavigate the ban ('La réalité du foie gras en Suisse', 2019). Given the lack of information available for other cruel products, we should take this as a rough prior for the percentage of consumers who would travel abroad for less frequently purchased luxury products. However, for items such as fur, exotic leather, and live-plucked down, faux or replacement products are more difficult to distinguish from the genuine product. One would expect this to reduce the desire to travel abroad for the real product. Again, there are also reasons to expect caged eggs to differ significantly, as consumers are typically willing to pay more for cagefree vs caged eggs (Lusk, 2019) and the two products are virtually identical. This means cross-border shopping will be largely determined by the potential cost savings of doing so (Leal, López-Laborda and Rodrigo, 2010). Therefore, we expect a greatly reduced motivation for cross-border shopping for these goods.

SHOULD INCREASED TARIFFS FOR LOWER-WELFARE PRODUCTS BE CONSIDERED INSTEAD OF A BAN?

If a ban on lower-welfare imports is deemed too controversial to succeed as an initiative, an alternative could be increased tariffs for lower-welfare products. This approach would involve keeping tariffs the same for exporters that meet Swiss animal welfare standards and increasing tariffs by a substantial amount for those that do not. Whilst this would not prohibit any products from being imported - even unpopular ones such as fur - it would increase the costs of purchasing lowerwelfare products, thereby shifting demand to products from domestic or foreign producers who can meet Swiss standards.

The Food Sovereignty Initiative in 2018 proposed implementing tariffs for imports which did not meet Swiss environmental or ethical standards. The Fair Food Initiative in the same year proposed for the government to promote sustainable and animal-friendly production methods by imposing new standards, including on imports (Geiser, 2018). Both initiatives were rejected by the public, with the Food Sovereignty Initiative gaining 32% of the vote and

the Fair Food Initiative winning 39% (Geiser, 2018).

According to reports, worries about increased prices and a reduced variety of products contributed to the defeat of the initiatives. In addition, concerns were raised about the impact of import tariffs on Switzerland's international trade agreements, as well as the potential for retaliatory tariffs (Gillman et al., 2018). However, more positively, the initiatives did well in the French-speaking parts of Switzerland, where they had stronger support from farmers (Gillman et al., 2018). Apparently, pollsters also found that there was strong public support for imposing Swiss welfare and sustainability standards on imports (Askew, 2018).

The tariff approach, although less radical than banning non-compliant products, is still likely to face some of the same objections that the import ban approach would. For example, the government may make the case that imposing tariffs is in contravention of international trade law. The same issues with the administrative burden of verifying that foreign producers are adhering to Swiss welfare standards also apply. In addition, since import tariffs

on most animal products are already quite high in Switzerland (ITA, 2021), it may be hard to make the case for raising them further.

SHOULD THE CONDITIONAL LIBERALISATION OF TRADE BE CONSIDERED INSTEAD OF A BAN?

An alternative to imposing import bans or extra tariffs is to incentivise trading partners to improve welfare through the 'conditional liberalisation' of trade. Essentially, this would involve reducing or eliminating import tariffs on certain animal products on the condition that they are produced to Swiss animal welfare standards.

The best example of this approach is the recent EU-Mercosur trade deal. The free trade agreement includes a requirement that Mercosur egg producers respect EU-equivalent rules for layer hen welfare in order to benefit from duty-free access to the EU market. This is apparently the first inclusion of an animal welfare related condition in a free trade agreement, setting a significant precedent (Foote, 2021a).

Swiss import tariffs are very high for animal and dairy products (110% and 133.2% respectively (Gov, 2019).

Therefore, the reduction or elimination of these tariffs for products that are produced to Swiss welfare standards might be quite an attractive prospect for exporting companies, leading them to improve standards.

Conditional liberalisation differs from an import ban strategy in that it does not prevent lower-welfare products from entering the country. Instead, it merely increases their cost relative to imports which meet Swiss welfare standards (since Swiss-equivalent imports benefit from reduced tariffs). Hopefully, the tariff reductions offered by Switzerland would be sufficient enough for the higher-welfare imports to outcompete lower-welfare imports on price, leading to an overall shift towards more animalfriendly production systems in exporting countries. However, imports of products such as fur would be unaffected since producers would be unable to farm fur at Switzerland's incredibly high welfare standards anyway, and so would simply continue paying import tariffs on fur as normal.

Conditional liberalisation would be a less controversial, though also less impactful, way of improving the animal welfare of imports. However, it is important to get a better understanding of how it might be implemented in practice and how much improvement to welfare it could bring. It is also an open question of how, or if, an initiative could be used to compel the government to pursue conditional liberalisation in future trade negotiations.

CONCLUSION AND REMAINING UNCERTAINTIES

Each year Switzerland imports a large proportion of the agricultural products it consumes, particularly for fish where domestic production only accounts for 2% of consumption (Bondolfi, 2018). This means maintaining high standards for imports is as important or more important for some products than domestic production. The number of individual carcasses imported each year numbers in the tens of millions for fish and chickens, and tens or hundreds of thousands for other commonly farmed species like sheep, cattle, and pigs. In addition, wider import regulations will likely also affect many of the cruel products examined in our second report.

This means that if successful, this ask is almost guaranteed to be more impactful than a more targeted cruel products ban. Fortunately, there also appears to be sufficient public support to give this initiative fair chance of succeeding. Given the large potential impact, reasonable level of public support, and the plausible compliance with WTO rules. think the we expected value of this initiative is very high and view it as the most promising ask for a Swiss initiative.

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