**Understanding the drivers of community trust in livestock production**

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Public trust in livestock industries is essential for sustaining their role within global society. This study, part of Voconiq’s broader research programme across Australian and the United Kingdom’s agricultural sectors, investigates the drivers of community trust in livestock production, focusing on environmental responsibility, industry responsiveness, and animal welfare—critical components for building social licence. Using data from over 25,000 Australians gathered through a nationally representative, longitudinal survey, the study identifies and tracks trust trends across livestock, horticulture, and other agricultural sectors, with an emphasis on developing a industry agnostic model for best practices.

**Application:** These findings offer actionable insights for rural industry stakeholders, particularly within the livestock sector in Australia and beyond. Emphasising proactive communication, transparency in environmental practices, and a clear commitment to animal welfare is crucial for enhancing social acceptance across livestock industries globally, where public expectations for ethical practices are rising.

**Introduction:** Voconiq’s research programme examines the dynamics of trust between rural industries, including livestock production, and the public. As livestock plays an essential role in global food security and sustainable agricultural systems, this study provides evidence-based recommendations for addressing and managing public expectations, thereby reinforcing the livestock sector’s social licence.

**Materials and Methods:** This research draws from an extensive survey dataset, collected annually from a representative sample of Australian adults. Survey metrics specifically targeted trust in livestock through measures of environmental responsibility, responsiveness to community concerns, and animal welfare practices. Data were analysed to understand the key factors influencing public trust and acceptance across livestock and other sectors.

**Results:** Results indicate that environmental responsibility remains the strongest driver of trust in livestock production, with 63% of participants emphasising the need for sustainable practices. Responsiveness to community feedback also proves critical, with 56% of respondents associating higher trust with attentiveness to public concerns. Additionally, animal welfare impacts community trust, with 72% of Australians expressing that humane treatment of livestock is essential for sector trust. These findings highlight universal principles for building trust, relevant to livestock industries worldwide.

**Conclusions:** For livestock industries globally, sustaining public trust necessitates a commitment to transparency in environmental and welfare practices and responsiveness to community expectations. Integrating these practices into operational strategies helps livestock sectors strengthen their societal role while addressing evolving public demands. Insights from five years of data across various sectors provide a strategic framework for fostering stronger connections between livestock industries and communities worldwide, promoting a sustainable and trusted agricultural future.

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