

A conversation with Paul Shapiro, July 20, 2016

Participants

- Paul Shapiro – Vice President, Farm Animal Protection, The Humane Society of the United States
- Lewis Bollard – Program Officer, Farm Animal Welfare, Open Philanthropy Project

Note: These notes were compiled by the Open Philanthropy Project and give an overview of the major points made by Paul Shapiro.

Summary

The Open Philanthropy Project spoke with Mr. Shapiro of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) as part of a grant update. Conversation topics included recent progress on cage-free reforms, implementation challenges, criticism of cage-free policies, the international impact of US cage-free campaigns, how the grant funding has been spent, and progress on broiler chicken welfare reform.

Recent progress on cage-free reforms

Restaurant chains

After numerous discussions with HSUS, McDonald's announced in September 2015 that it planned to adopt a cage-free policy. Other large restaurant chains have since made comparable or better cage-free pledges. HSUS has also convinced some smaller restaurant chains to make a cage-free pledge.

Grocery chains

Whole Foods Market made a cage-free pledge in 2005, after discussions with HSUS. As of the beginning of 2016, no other major grocers had made any cage-free commitments. In the last 6-7 months, all of the largest 25 grocers in the US have made cage-free pledges and have set a timeline for the change.

WalMart's pledge arguably had the largest impact, because WalMart sells about 25% of all groceries in the US.

Publix campaign

Publix is a large grocery chain in the southeastern US which has historically been resistant to corporate social responsibility pressures. After discussions in which Publix refused to adopt a cage-free policy, HSUS ran a major, resource-intensive campaign including online, television, and print advertising. Publix subsequently announced its plans to adopt a 100% cage-free policy, similar to the policies of McDonald's and WalMart.

Egg producers

There is currently a large disparity between major retailers' pledges and the plans of major US egg producers, many of which are resisting pressure to go cage-free. HSUS has been working to get several of these egg producers to make cage-free pledges. Its work in this area has included an undercover investigation at the main factory of Hillandale Farms, a major egg producer in the northeastern US. This led Hillandale Farms to announce its plans to go 100% cage-free, and for all of its new operations, expansions, and replacements to be cage-free.

Convincing major egg producers to go cage-free is an important step in ensuring that retailers follow through with their cage-free pledges. Mr. Shapiro thinks it's reasonable that there may be more whistleblowing exposés at the factories of egg producers that are resisting the cage-free trend.

Massachusetts ballot initiative

HSUS has been working on a ballot initiative in Massachusetts to require that all shell eggs sold in the state be produced by cage-free hens. It succeeded at getting this measure on the ballot, and voters will decide the issue in November.

This and other ballot measures will codify the pledges that companies have made. Mr. Shapiro believes that corporate policy and public policy are both necessary elements in the fight for hen welfare and are mutually reinforcing.

Confronting implementation challenges

Most of the cage-free pledges that retailers have made are on 9-year timelines, though many are shorter than that. There will likely be implementation challenges that could prevent companies from following through with their pledges on their stated timelines. Additional work will be needed to maintain interest in this issue and to codify the companies' pledges into law, e.g. via ballot measures such as the one in Massachusetts.

HSUS is considering lobbying for mandatory disclosure labeling, because there is some evidence that disclosure labeling of eggs from caged hens may drive consumer preferences away from battery cage eggs. This has not yet been done in the US, and it is not clear what impact this would have.

Criticism of cage-free policies

Cage-free egg production represents an improvement in hen welfare over caged egg production, but is not a cruelty-free system. Mr. Shapiro believes that it is important to honestly acknowledge the downsides of cage-free systems and does not object to news articles critiquing them, so long as they make it clear that they're still much better than cage systems. However, he is troubled by what he calls the false

arguments that cage-free egg production is equally harmful or more harmful than caged systems.

International impact of US cage-free campaigns

One strategy HSUS used in its corporate campaigns was to reference the corporate policies of companies' European branches that had already gone cage-free. Similarly, the recent shift toward cage-free policies among US retailers may give campaigners in other countries more leverage to push companies to adopt the same policies they have in the US. Mr. Shapiro believes that HSUS's recent successes have built momentum around this issue that will increase the likelihood of animal welfare successes in other countries.

Grant funding

HSUS has spent approximately \$350,000 of the Open Philanthropy Project's \$500,000 grant. Expenditures to date include:

- The Publix campaign, which accounts for the majority of the grant funding that has been spent so far.
 - \$42,000 on online advertisements
 - \$127,000 on advertisements in about 10 southeastern newspapers
 - \$150,000 on television advertisements in three regions of Florida
- Preparations for a campaign against Meijer. It was not necessary to run this campaign, because Meijer chose to adopt a cage-free policy after seeing the advertisements HSUS planned to run.
- A newspaper advertisement praising HEB Texas Grocery after it chose to adopt a cage-free policy.

HSUS has not yet decided how it will use the remaining \$150,000. Because the top 25 major retailers in the US have now made cage-free pledges, it will likely spend the remaining funding on either a) campaigns encouraging egg producers to go cage-free or b) campaigns for broiler chicken welfare. The grant cannot be used to fund travel or salaries.

Broiler chicken welfare reform

HSUS has been meeting with retailers and producers to encourage broiler chicken welfare reforms. It is too early to predict the outcome of these discussions. HSUS has met with Perdue Farms (Perdue) many times to help it create and announce a new broiler welfare policy. As far as Mr. Shapiro is aware, Perdue is the first major poultry producer to announce a substantial animal welfare improvement program. Perdue also recently came out in favor of the US Department of Agriculture's proposed organic animal welfare standards improvements, which the majority of the big agribusiness community opposes.

HSUS is working with other poultry producers in hopes of getting them to make commitments that are similar to or better than Perdue's. It will also continue to work with Perdue, which did not make all of the commitments that HSUS recommended.

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