



They Feel, We Care

***70% of Young India Says  
Farmed Animals Are  
Sentient Beings***

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**Findings from a YouGov  
Survey Commissioned by the  
India Karuna Collaborative  
(2026)**



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# Foreword by Anita Dongre



Fashion has always been a mirror held up to society. It reflects what we value, what we celebrate, and what we are willing to overlook. For much of my career, I have tried to hold that mirror steady, to build a House rooted in the artisanship of India, in the dignity of the craftspeople who make our clothes, and in a deep love for the natural world that has always inspired our design.

India gave the world the concept of *ahimsa*. The understanding that all living beings carry within them a spirit worthy of care. *Karuna* is woven into the rituals of daily life into the way we feed a stray dog outside a temple or set out a ladle of freshly cooked rice for the crows.

And yet. The very systems that feed and clothe us have, in many ways, moved further and further from that inheritance. I have seen it in my own industry. The leather supply chains that so many would prefer not to examine too closely. The wool and silk and down that arrive at factories with no story attached. I have asked questions that made people

uncomfortable. I have tried, with every collection, to find ways to do less harm. It is not a perfect journey. But it is a necessary one.

What this report tells us is that young India already understands something profound. *Seventy per cent of young Indians recognise that farmed animals are sentient beings.* They feel. They fear. They can experience suffering and, we must believe, something like joy. Four in five young Indians have already taken a pro-animal action in the past year. More than half say animal welfare is very or extremely important when they make purchasing decisions. Nearly half say they would avoid a brand if they discovered it was involved in poor animal treatment.

Our young people already know this! Isn't that deeply moving? The work now is to close the gap between what we feel and what we do; between our values and our systems.

India has always had the moral imagination for this. The findings in these pages show that our young people have it too. Now we need the systems and the will to match.

*They feel. We care. Now we must act.*

**Anita Dongre**

Founder, House of Dongre

# Summary Remarks

“Overwhelmingly, this survey shows that people in India are not in the dark about what happens to farmed animals – and they care. A majority recognise that cows, chickens and even fishes can feel pain and fear, and almost four in five say animal welfare matters at least moderately when they shop. At the same time, many still picture cows grazing freely and chickens roaming outdoors, when in reality most animals are raised in intensive systems. That gap between perception and reality is exactly where we need honest conversation.

What gives me real hope is how ready people are to act. Four in five have already changed something in the last year, and one in three have chosen plant-based alternatives over animal products. India is already a plant-leaning country, with more than 60% identifying as flexitarian, vegetarian or vegan. Our task now is to make plant-forward eating the easy, everyday choice– so that our compassion for animals shows up on every plate.”

**Prashanth Vishwanath**, India Director, Veganuary

“The data shows that concern for animal welfare is far from a niche issue in India. A clear majority of respondents say animal welfare is important when they make purchasing decisions, and many are aware that modern farming often involves practices such as intensive confinement, long-distance transport and routine use of drugs to boost productivity. We also see notable scepticism towards vague 'humane treatment' claims that are not backed by independent certification, which has important implications for how brands communicate about welfare.

This survey is significant because it quantifies attitudes that are often assumed but rarely measured at scale. For policymakers, it suggests there is public support for stronger and more transparent welfare standards. For businesses, it highlights both a responsibility and an opportunity to align supply chains and labelling with public expectations. For civil society, it provides a robust evidence base to inform campaigns and public engagement on farmed animal issues.”

**Edward Hutasoit**, General Manager (India & Indonesia),  
Yougov



# Preface

In India, concern for animals is woven into culture, religion, and everyday life. The idea that animals are sentient beings deserving of compassion is not a modern ethical position but part of our tradition. Cows wander through city streets, people feed community dogs, and the concepts of ahimsa (non-violence) and karuna (compassion) are embedded in our cultural values and social norms.

Yet, there remains a gap between these values and the realities of how animals are treated within modern food systems. More than 1.5 billion farmed animals are part of India's daily economic and food systems, yet their suffering remains invisible. They are born, confined, and processed in facilities that treat them as mere units of production.

To understand how young people in India really think and feel about farmed animals, the India Karuna Collaborative (IKC) commissioned YouGov to conduct a nationally representative survey of young Indians, aged 18–30. Titled 'Public Attitudes to Farmed Animals, Their Welfare and Plant-Forward Consumption in India (2026)', the study explores:

- Empathy towards farmed animals and beliefs about their sentience
- Awareness of how farmed animals are kept and treated in modern farming systems
- Willingness to take action to improve animal welfare
- Openness to plant-forward diets as a way to help animals, with cobenefits for health and the environment

The findings are significant. Young India is paying attention. Young India cares. The gap to be bridged is not one of values but of systems. This report translates the survey data into a narrative to guide action across sectors – policymakers, businesses, civil society, and consumers. It highlights both the opportunities and the challenges for improving animal welfare, and outlines concrete next steps, including the integration of animal welfare standards and plant-forward nutrition into corporate governance and policy frameworks.

The stakes extend beyond animal welfare. The food system India builds in the coming decade will shape its public health outcomes, its climate commitments, and its moral trajectory in equal measure.



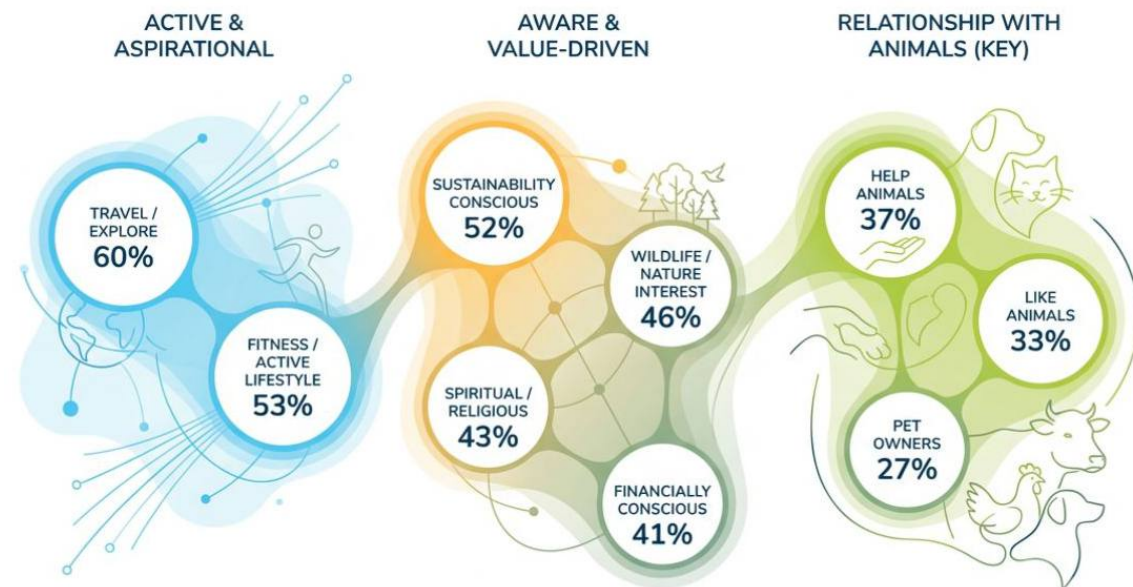
## Section 1

# Empathy: How Young India Perceives Farmed Animals

Empathy is the foundation of how individuals relate to animals – and a critical starting point for understanding attitudes towards the welfare of farmed animals. This section explores how young Indians perceive animals, where farmed animals sit within that moral landscape, and how empathy varies across species and contexts.

### Who are these consumers?

Active, aware, and already connected to animals





## 1. Respondent Profiles – Their Relationship with Animals

- 27% - Pet parents/pet owners
- 33% - Like animals but do not own pets
- 37% - Help animals in need (feeding community animals or supporting shelters)

An active culture of care exists for pets and community animals, yet this empathy has not yet extended to animals within the supply chain

74% of those who already factor animal welfare into their purchases rate it as very or extremely important — showing that once the habit of consideration is formed, it is strongly held.

Among pet owners and those who help animals in need, 65% say animal welfare is important when buying products, yet only 45% actually consider it at the point of purchase — a gap that signals opportunity for targeted nudges and clearer product signposting.





## 2. 70% of Young Indians Recognise Farmed Animals as Sentient Beings

Recognition of farmed animal sentience is high. Around 70% of respondents recognise that animals such as cows, hens, pigs, and goats can experience pain, fear, and emotional connection.

Farmed animals are not seen as mere commodities. Most young Indians recognise them as sentient beings that can feel and experience wellbeing.

**This recognition varies by city tier. Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities are broadly equal — 73.1% and 72.5% respectively recognise farmed animals as sentient — while Tier 3 lags at 65.3%. Targeted outreach may be needed to close this gap in smaller cities.**

### Recognition of animal sentience is high - until it drops

Tier 1 and Tier 2 show consistency. Tier 3 reveals the gap.



### 3. Empathy Drops Sharply for Fish and Insects

While empathy for farmed animals is high, recognition of fish and insects as sentient beings is substantially lower:

- Only 47% recognise fish as capable of pain and fear
- Only 33% extend similar recognition to insects

There is a clear correlation between **vocal expression and moral consideration**; the less familiar or less expressive the organism, the more likely we are to discount its capacity for pain.

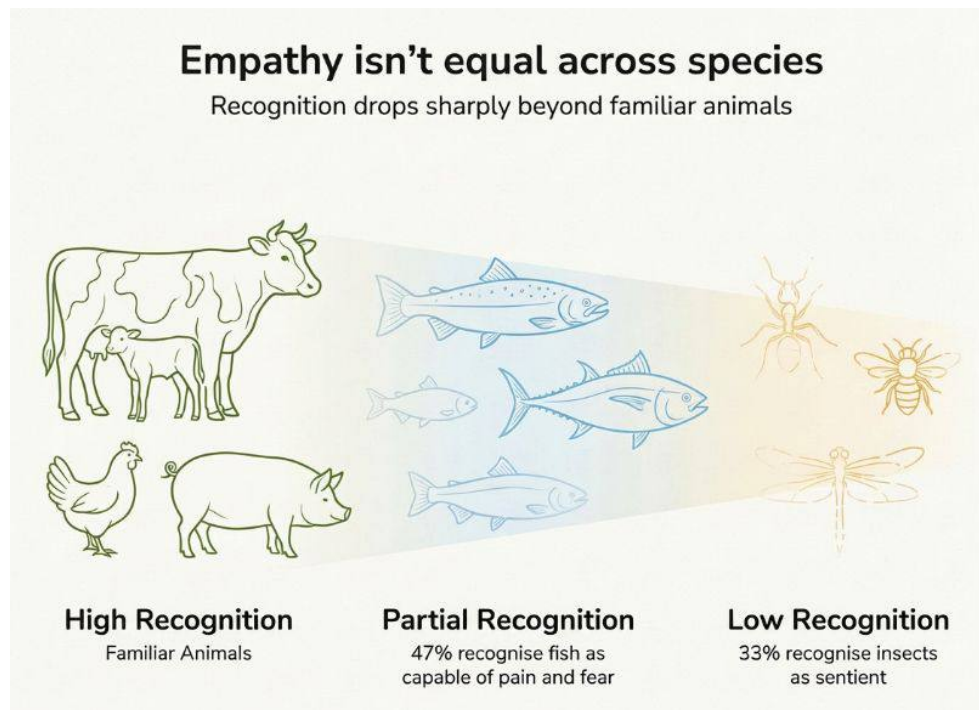


Image Credit: We Animals

## 4. 54% of Young Indians Say Animal Welfare Matters When They Shop

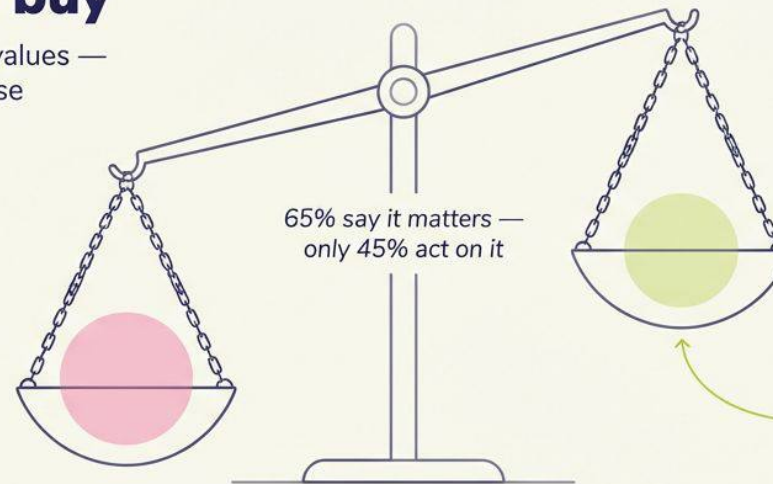
Animal welfare is a meaningful and growing consideration for young Indian consumers. For a majority, it is not a peripheral concern but a genuine value — one that shapes how they see brands, products, and the food system more broadly.

- 54% - Very or extremely important
- 81% - Very, extremely, or moderately important
- 63% believe the animal welfare movement will grow significantly in the coming years

### What we believe doesn't drive what we buy

Animal welfare ranks high in values — but last at the point of purchase

  
**54%**  
say animal welfare matters



  
**29%**  
consider it when buying

WHERE WELFARE ACTUALLY RANKS AT PURCHASE

**Quality 76%**  
SemiBold 12px

**Price 66%**  
SemiBold 13px

**Ingredients 57%**  
#3EC7F4

**Brand 55%**  
SemiBold 75%

**Reviews 48%**  
#272262

**Animal welfare 29%**  
ranked last  
↓

The gap between caring and choosing is where animal welfare advocacy has the most work to do.

Importance of animal welfare and purchase priority factors.  
Base: 3,010. YouGov Survey, India.

## 5. A Minority Places Low Priority on Animal Welfare

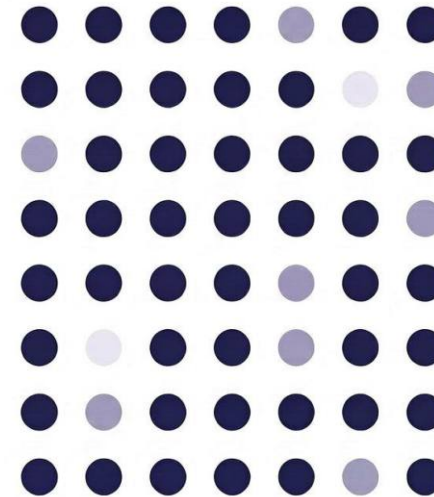
While animal welfare matters to most young Indians, a meaningful minority remain harder to reach:

- 4% - Not at all important
- 15% - Slightly important

Combined, almost one in five young Indians places low priority on animal welfare at the point of purchase. This group may be harder to engage with purely animal-centred messaging and may respond better to cobenefits such as health, taste, cost or environmental impact.

### A small segment places low priority

Most care – but a few remain harder to influence



**1 in 5 Indians**  
prioritise animal welfare  
less while buying

**19%**  
overall  
4% not at all  
15% slightly



Image Credit: Anipixels.com



Image Credit: Anipixels.com

## Implications

Overall, empathy provides a strong foundation. Most Indians believe farmed animals can suffer, and most say animal welfare matters when they shop. This creates broad moral support for:

- Policies that recognise animals as sentient beings and protect them from suffering.
- Corporate commitments to better welfare and plant-forward product development.
- Civil society campaigns, including early learning in schools, that explicitly connect everyday choices to the lives of farmed animals.

At the same time, efforts must expand empathy to less familiar species (especially fishes and other less visible animals) and find ways to reach those who currently see welfare as a low-priority issue.



## Section 2

# Living Conditions – What Young India Believes and What Is True

Understanding living conditions is critical to assessing animal welfare. This section explores how young Indians perceive these conditions, highlighting both growing awareness of intensive practices and persistent gaps between perception and reality.

### 6. 61% of Young Indians Want to Know More About Farm Conditions

Young Indians show partial awareness of key farming practices, with recognition ranging from 38% to 50% across the following:

**46%** Artificial breeding to increase productivity (e.g., artificial insemination, selective breeding): 46% think it's very or extremely common

**49%** Small cages or enclosures for most of animals' lives: 49% think it's very or extremely common

**41%** Animals kept alone with limited interaction: 41% think it's very or extremely common

**47%** Calves taken away from cows in dairy farms: 47% think it's very or extremely common



**38%**

Male chicks killed shortly after birth on egg farms: 38% think it's very or extremely common

**43%**

Long-distance transport before slaughter: 43% think it's very or extremely common

**50%**

Use of hormones, antibiotics, and special feed to boost growth/production: 50% think it's very or extremely common

**49%**

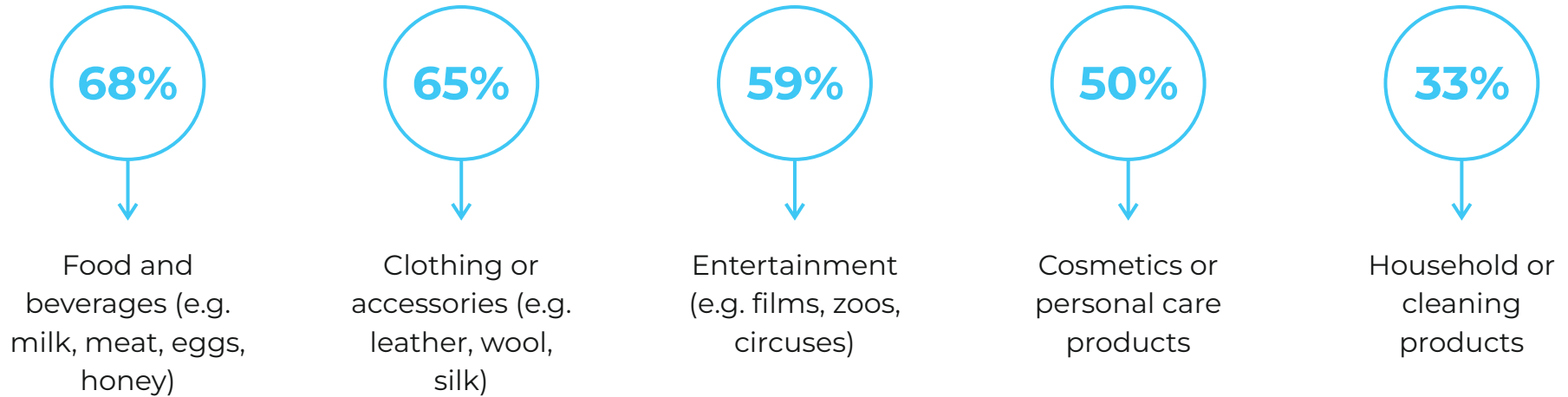
Cows used for milk kept pregnant most of their lives: 49% think it's very or extremely common

Yet alongside this, 44% believe most dairy cows graze freely in fields, and 41% think chickens raised for meat are usually kept outdoors. Awareness of what the system does exists, but belief in humane exceptions persists just as strongly.



## 92% Know Animals Are Used in Industry — But Awareness Drops in Less Visible Sectors

92% of respondents are aware of animal use in at least one industry, but recognition drops steeply as visibility decreases:



Only 3% are unaware across all sectors. The pattern mirrors what was found at the farm level: people recognise what they can see.

### 68% Trust YouTube for Information on Farm Animals

Digital platforms dominate as sources of learning, vastly outpacing traditional media:



YouTube  
**68%**



Instagram  
**48%**



In-person conversations  
**44%**



WhatsApp communities  
**32%**

Demand for deeper knowledge is strong — 61% say they would watch a 2-minute video of actual farming conditions in India, with a further 22% open to it. Among the minority who decline, the most common reasons are already knowing conditions are bad (33%), fearing it would be too disturbing (30%), or not wanting to feel guilty (29%). Respondents also identify the topics most underrepresented in school curricula:

- Civic responsibility: 57%
- Emotional intelligence and empathy: 54%
- Empathy towards animals: 53%

Seven in 10 recognise that supply chains and cultural traditions shape how animals are treated, suggesting a systemic understanding that formal education has not yet caught up with.



Image Credit: indianexpress.com



Image Credit: freepik.com

## Vegetarians and Vegans Most Likely to Check Dairy Labels

Label-reading behaviour differs sharply by dietary identity. Vegetarians (68%) and vegans (70%) are significantly more likely to check dairy packaging, while omnivorous (~51%) and flexitarian (~50%) consumers engage more with eggs and meat labels. Engagement tracks closely with what people already eat and care about.



## 7. Basic Needs vs. Quality of Life: Perceptions of the Five Freedoms

Perceptions of animal welfare are often anchored in basic survival needs rather than overall quality of life.

- 27% – Farmed animals very commonly experience freedom from hunger and thirst
- 38% – Commonly
- 9% – Not at all

While this suggests that many people believe animals are at least fed and watered, it may also reduce the perceived urgency for change. If the baseline is assumed to be “adequate,” deeper welfare concerns, such as space, social interaction, and the ability to express natural behaviours, may receive less attention.



Image Credit: Anipixels.com



Image Credit: Anipixels.com

## Implications

The data show that many Indians know there are serious issues in animal farming, but they often underestimate the scale and overestimate how “natural” or free-range conditions are. For animal welfare advocates and policymakers, this points to a dual task:

- **Exposure:** Make the true conditions of intensive farming more visible, using credible, non-sensational evidence.
- **Clarification:** Distinguish between minimal survival (food, water) and genuine welfare (space, comfort, social life, freedom from chronic stress and pain).

Correcting common misconceptions, particularly around dairy cows grazing freely and chickens being kept outdoors, is especially important, given how central these products are in Indian diets.



## Section 3

# Willingness To Act – From Attitude to Behaviour

Behavioural shifts are already visible. This section examines the actions young Indians have taken in response to concerns about animal welfare, and how these are shaping consumption and lifestyle choices.

### 8. 4 in 5 young Indians report having made at least one change in response to how animals are treated

These responses were more pronounced among slightly older respondents (25-30) and those in Tier 1 cities, suggesting that affordability may influence the ability to act on these concerns. Four in five young Indians reported having made at least one change in response to how animals are treated.

Among specific actions:

37%

Started checking labels more carefully

33%

Chose plant-based alternatives

32%

Avoided leather or fur items

31%

Avoided products tested on animals

28%

Preferred products with independent animal welfare certifications

25%

Reduced meat consumption

21%

Reduced egg consumption

21%

Reduced dairy consumption

## 9. Inertia and Barriers to Sustained Behaviour Change

A notable share of young Indians report no behavioural change in the past year.

20% reported no changes at all in the last year related to how animals are treated

Without supportive environments, such as clear labelling, availability of better options, and price parity, positive intentions may not translate into sustained change.



Image Credit: freepik.com



## 10. Strong Intent to Act Collectively

Yet alongside this inertia, young Indians show strong intent to act collectively. Four in 10 plan to support regulations that improve animal welfare, choose brands with better welfare standards, or talk to friends and family about the issue.

Nearly half say they would boycott or avoid products if they found they involved poor animal treatment — a powerful signal of latent consumer pressure on brands and policymakers alike.



Image Credit: Anipixels.com



## 11. 69% of Dairy Consumers Are Willing to Pay a Premium for Higher-Welfare Products

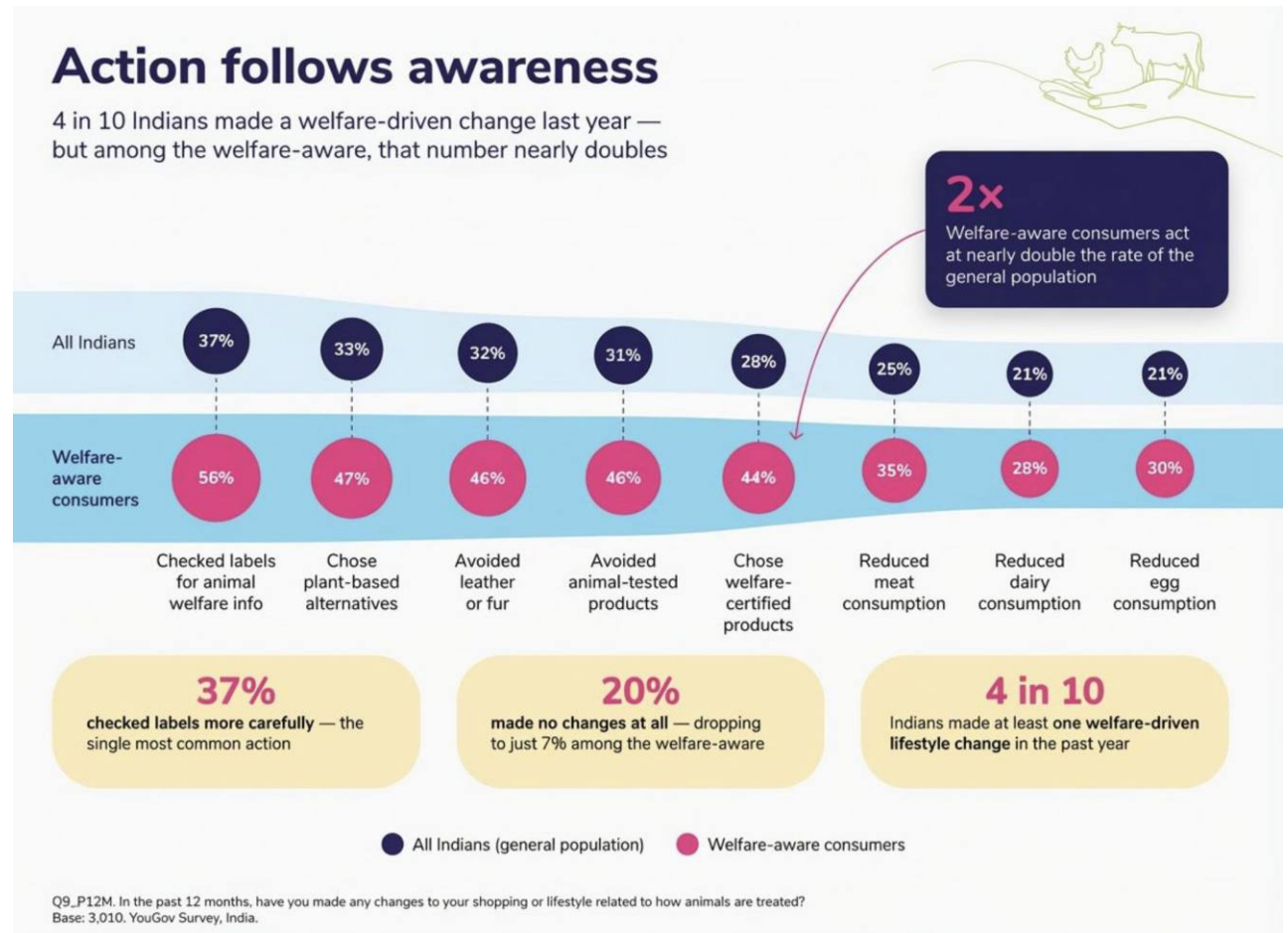
A majority of consumers express willingness to pay more for higher-welfare products, although cost remains a constraint for a significant segment.

69% of dairy consumers are willing to pay 10% or more for products with higher animal welfare standards.

Nearly half of meat consumers are willing to pay 10% or more.

25–29% of meat and apparel consumers would not pay any more for higher welfare.

This does not necessarily indicate opposition to better welfare; rather, it may reflect limited ability to absorb additional costs.



**40% of respondents say food companies and brands bear the greatest responsibility for improving farm animal conditions** — placing corporate actors second only to government and farmers in terms of expected leadership on this issue.

Looking ahead, avoidance intent is high: **if poor animal treatment were confirmed, nearly half of consumers say they would avoid purchasing personal care products** (48%), apparel and leather (47%), meat (46%), dairy (44%), and eggs (41%).

This represents a significant reputational and commercial risk for brands that fail to act on welfare.



Image Credit: Anipixels.com

## Implications

The fact that 4 in 5 respondents report taking at least one pro-animal action in the past year is both encouraging and strategically valuable. It suggests:

- A large “actionable middle” who can be supported to do more
- Strong social proof: 4 in 5 young Indians have already made a welfare-driven change.

However, meaningful change at scale will require:

- Making pro-animal actions easy, affordable and rewarding
- Helping people move from occasional to habitual behaviours
- Supporting those who are currently inactive to take first small steps, rather than expecting immediate transformation

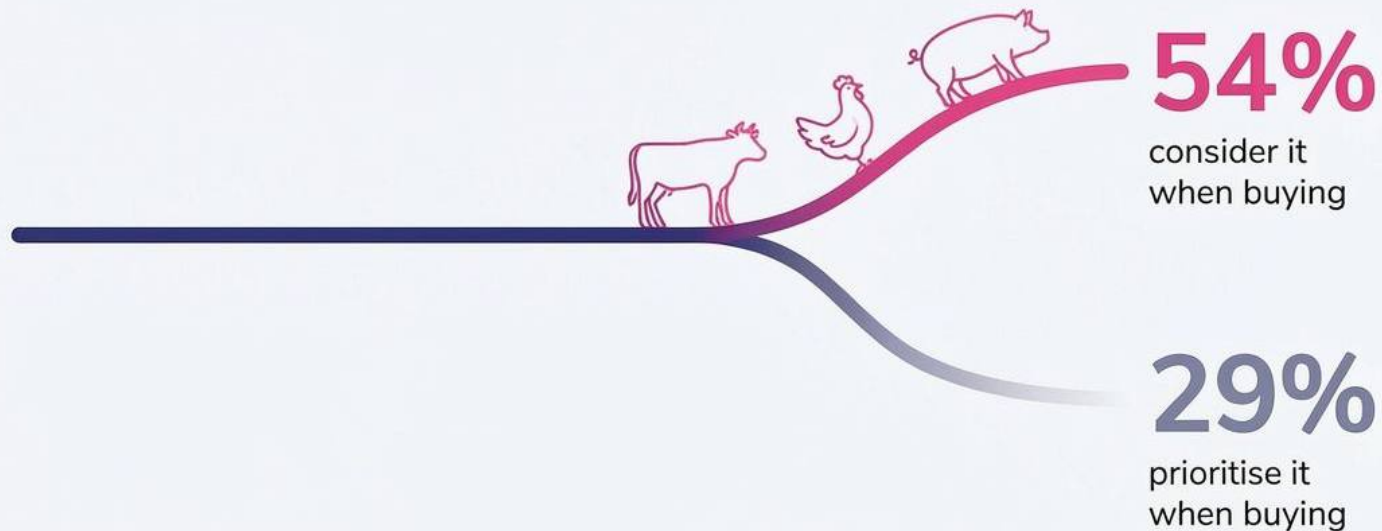


At the same time, a gap remains between attitudes and behaviour. While animal welfare is very important to 54% of shoppers, only 29% consider it when making purchase decisions. This indicates that although concern for animal welfare is widespread, translating intent into consistent action remains a key opportunity.

Even among consumers who express empathy for animals, behaviour change tends to be gradual. It often begins with lower-effort actions or peripheral purchasing decisions, such as checking labels or avoiding leather and animal-tested products, rather than changes that disrupt daily routines, such as food choices.

## Animal welfare matters while making a choice

More than half consider it — fewer act on it when buying



## Section 4

# Plant-Forward Consumption – The Landscape, the Barriers, the Opportunity

Plant-forward consumption reflects both cultural context and evolving consumer behaviour. This section examines dietary patterns, levels of adoption, and the barriers that shape the shift towards plant-based choices.

## 12. Dietary Patterns and Cultural Context: 61% of Young Indians Identify as Flexitarian, Vegetarian or Vegan

India enters this conversation with a strong foundation in plant-rich dietary traditions. When asked which description best fits their usual eating habits:

- 32% – Omnivorous (meat, fish, poultry, etc.)
- 21% – Flexitarian (mainly vegetarian, occasionally eat meat)
- 34% – Vegetarian (no meat, fish, or egg)
- 6% – Vegan (no animal-derived products, including dairy and eggs)

34% Vegetarian, 6% Vegan, 21% Flexitarian — combined, 61% identify as flexitarian, vegetarian or vegan. Even if practices vary, this indicates a high level of cultural acceptance of plant-forward eating.

## Tier 2 cities: India's most plant-forward segment

The plant-forward profile is most pronounced in Tier 2 cities. In Tier 2, 42.9% identify as vegetarian (vs 28.6% in Tier 1 and 33.1% in Tier 3), and 8.6% identify as vegan, nearly double the Tier 1 and Tier 3 rates. Conversely, only 20.3% of Tier 2 respondents are omnivorous, compared to 36.5% in Tier 1 and 34.5% in Tier 3. Within this study, Tier 2 cities emerge as the most plant-forward segment.

For brands and civil society organisations planning plant-based outreach, this is a significant opportunity: Tier 2 cities offer a large consumer base that is already culturally and behaviourally aligned with plant-forward eating — yet campaign and product investment has typically concentrated in metros.



### 13. 54% Consume Plant-Based Alternatives Several Times a Week

Consumption patterns reveal a range of dietary behaviours, with animal product consumption varying significantly across the sample.

Among meat consumers:

- 47% – Eat meat several times a week
- 28% – Once a week
- 13% – Less than once a week
- 12% – Daily

Among dairy and egg consumers:

- 41% – Daily
- 39% – Several times a week
- 13% – Once a week
- 8% – Less than once a week



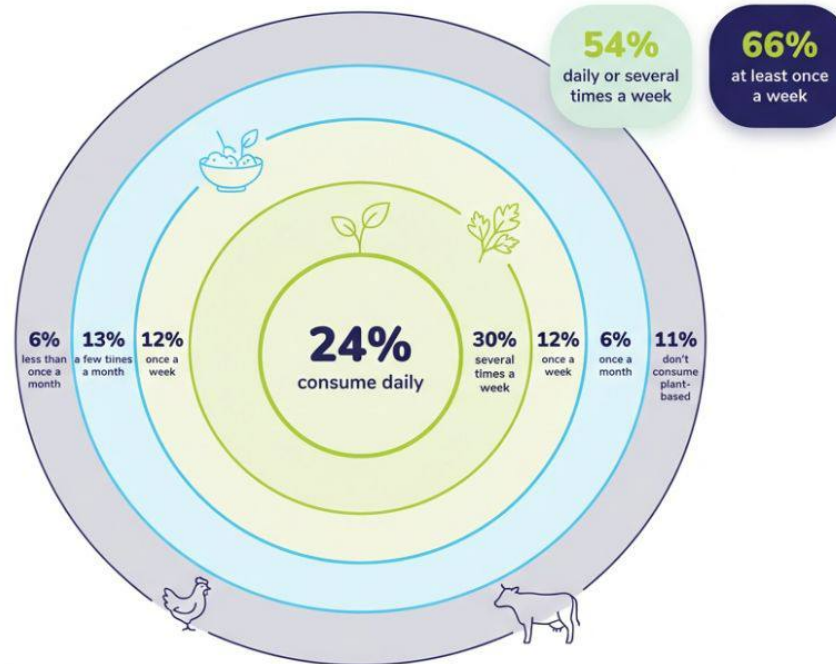
Among all respondents:

- 54% – Consume plant-based alternatives several times a week
- 66% – Consume them at least occasionally

India's dietary landscape is more varied than a simple meat-eating vs. vegetarian divide. Plant-based options are embedded in everyday consumption patterns across the sample — a foundation that policy, retail, and food service can build on.

## Plant-based is no longer niche

More than half of Indians eat plant-based alternatives several times a week or more



Plant-based eating has crossed into the mainstream — over half of Indians consume plant-based alternatives multiple times a week, signalling a quiet but significant dietary shift.

Q16\_Frequency. Base: 3,010. YouGov Survey, India.

## 14. 49% Believe Animal Products Are Essential for Protein

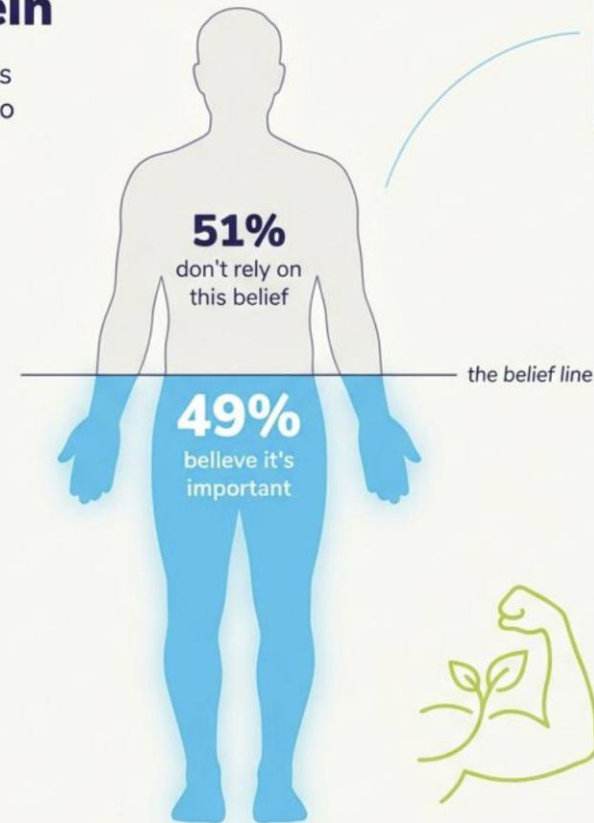
Animal products continue to play a significant role in diets, supported in part by perceptions around nutrition.

- 60% – Consume meat several times a week or daily
- 80% – Consume dairy and eggs daily or several times weekly
- 49% – Believe consuming meat, eggs, or dairy is essential for meeting protein requirements

Nearly half of young Indians believe animal products are essential for protein — a perception that represents one of the most important barriers to plant-based switching. This rises to 55% among pet owners and those who enjoy fitness, sports, or physical activity, suggesting that credible nutrition messaging will be especially important for active and animal-connected consumers.

### Half of India links animal products to protein

49% believe consuming meat, eggs or dairy is very or fairly important to get enough protein



Nearly half of Indians still associate animal products with protein sufficiency — making nutrition education a key lever for shifting dietary behaviour.

Q32\_Protein. How important do you think it is to consume meat, eggs or dairy to get enough protein?  
Base: 3,010. YouGov Survey, India.

## 15. Uneven Readiness to Shift

Readiness to adopt plant-based diets varies across segments. While trial of plant-based alternatives ranges from a third to nearly half of respondents depending on the category, and many have reduced meat or dairy consumption, 20% report

making no dietary changes at all in the past year. The opportunity lies in moving those who have tried plant-based options towards more regular consumption.



Image Credit: freepik.com

## 16. Welfare Labels Remain Unfamiliar to Most Young Indians

Understanding of animal welfare labels and claims remains limited, potentially constraining informed consumer choices.

Familiarity with key welfare labels remains low across the board:

44% — familiar with 'cruelty-free' (most recognised label)

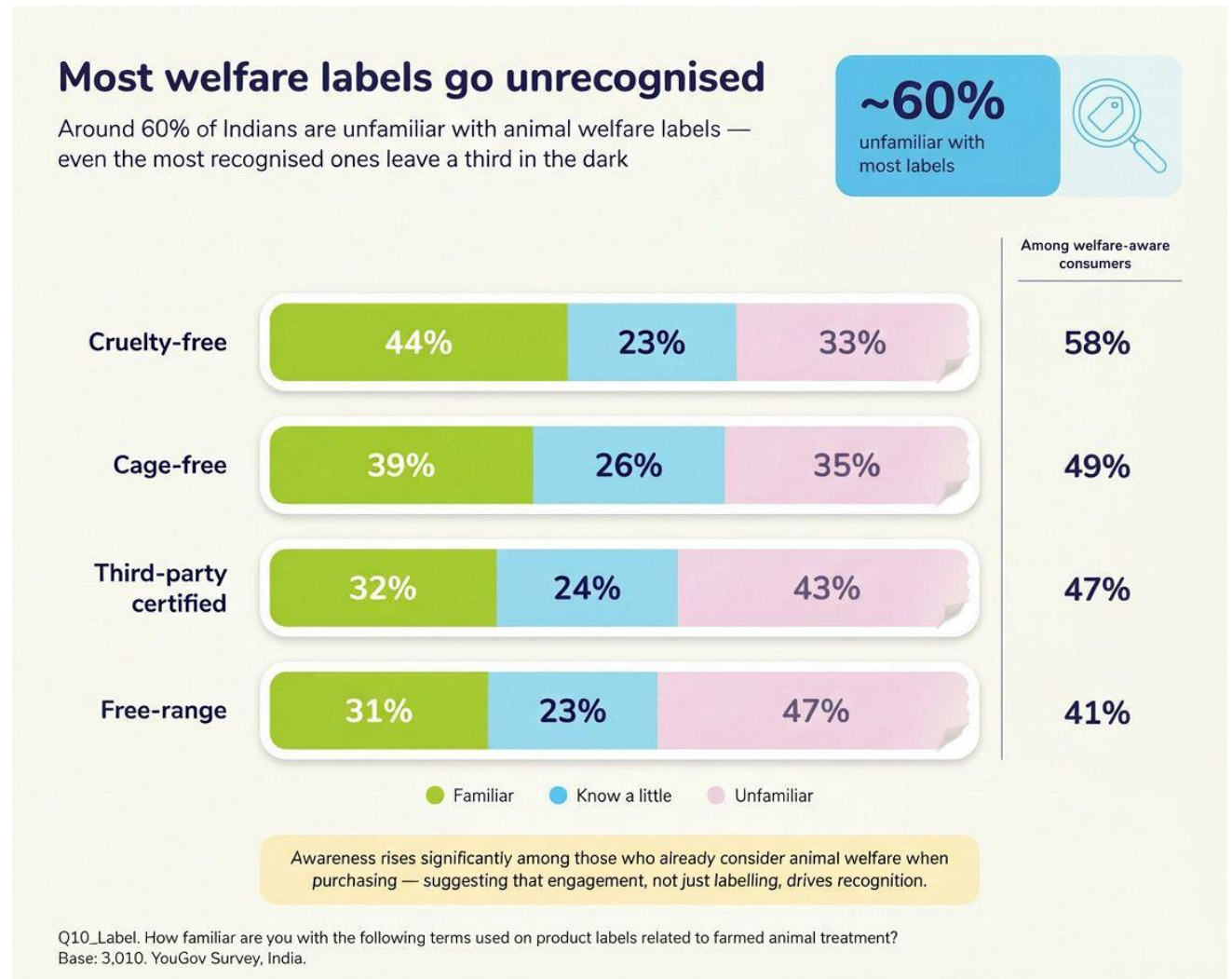
39% — familiar with 'cage-free'

32% — familiar with 'third-party certified'

31% — familiar with 'free-range'

Among pet owners and those who actively consider animal welfare during purchases, familiarity is significantly higher — around 50% for cruelty-free and cage-free — suggesting that engagement with welfare drives label literacy. But the broader market remains largely unable to act on these signals at the shelf.

Scepticism of unverified claims is also widespread: 3 in 5 believe that "humane treatment" claims without certification are exaggerated or unlikely to be true.



## 17. Protein, Taste, and Practical Barriers to Adoption: More Than Half of Young Indians Are Open to Replacing Animal Protein with Plant-Based Options

While openness to plant-based options is high, adoption remains conditional on product parity and everyday constraints.

53% are open to replacing some or all animal-based protein

with plant-based options, but this willingness is highly dependent on plant-based products matching animal products on price, taste, and texture.

Key barriers to adoption include:

34% are concerned about protein sufficiency

32% prefer the taste of meat, eggs, or dairy

31% cite household habits and the fact that the same food is cooked for everyone at home



Image Credit: freepik.com





## Implications

The combination of:

- A plant-forward cultural baseline (40% of respondents identify as vegetarian, with flexitarian consumers a further significant segment)
- Meaningful recent reductions in meat, eggs and dairy
- Rapid uptake of plant-based alternatives (for a third of respondents)

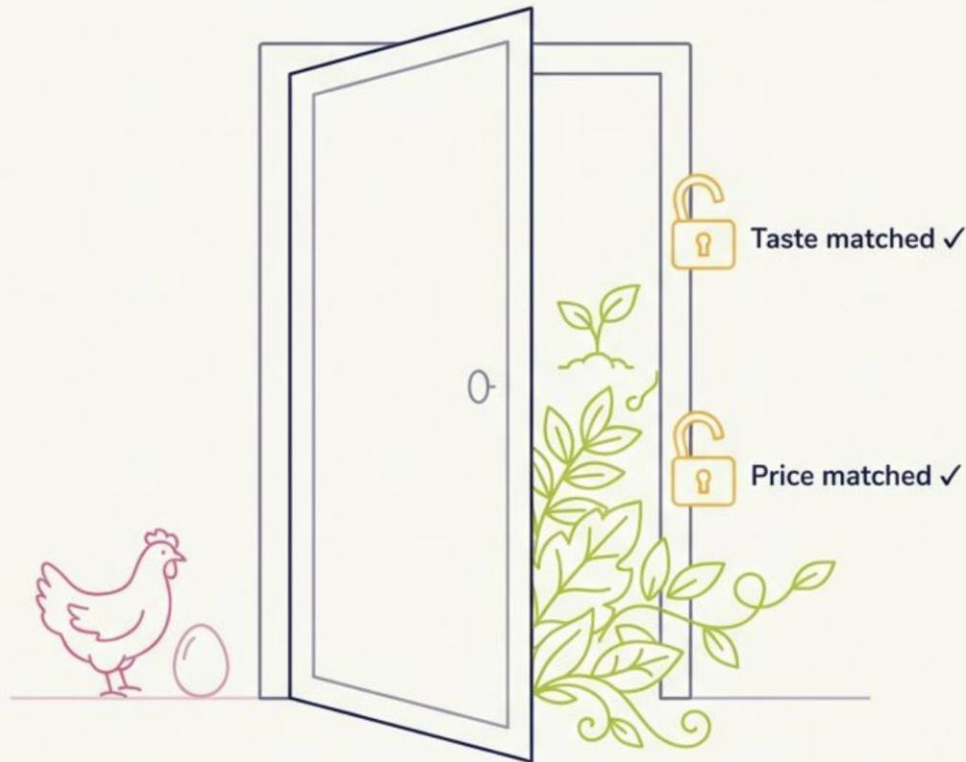
...creates a very favourable environment for accelerating plant-forward eating. However, doing so at scale will require:

- Ensuring plant-based options are affordable, accessible and appealing
- Communicating plant-forward diets clearly as a way to help animals, alongside benefits for health and climate
- Addressing misunderstandings around labels and making plant-based choices simple to identify



## More than half would switch — if the barriers were removed

If plant-based foods matched on taste and price, 53% of Indians would replace some or all of their animal-based protein



# 53%

would replace  
animal-based protein

with plant-based alternatives

Latent demand is strong — held back  
only by taste and cost, not by attitude

The willingness is already there. Taste parity and price accessibility are the two  
unlocks that could accelerate India's plant-based shift significantly.

Q22\_LIKELY. If plant-based foods were available at a similar price and offered a similar taste and texture, how willing would you be to replace some or all of your animal-based protein? Base: 3,010. YouGov Survey, India.

## Section 5

# Opportunities — What the Evidence Demands of Institutions

Drawing together the four buckets of findings, this section outlines practical opportunities for consumers, government, civil society, and corporates. These are framed to reflect the Indian context and the specific evidence emerging from the survey.

### Opportunities for Government

#### 1. Recognise farmed animal welfare as a mainstream public concern

With 70% recognising farmed animals as sentient and over half rating animal welfare as very or extremely important in purchasing, there is a strong democratic mandate for stronger protections. Half of Indians already place primary responsibility for improving animal welfare on government and regulators (50%) — making inaction a reputational as well as a policy risk.

#### 2. Strengthen and enforce welfare standards for farmed animals

Update existing regulations to ensure meaningful standards across:

- i. Housing and space (limits on crowding, restrictions on cages and severe confinement)
- ii. Access to basic needs and comfort (clean water, appropriate feed, protection from extreme heat and cold)

- iii. Social needs and natural behaviours (allowing grazing, pecking, dust bathing, etc.)
- iv. Transport and slaughter (limits on journey times, humane handling, mandatory effective stunning where feasible)

Increase inspections and enforcement, with penalties that effectively deter serious violations.

### **3. Regulate welfare-related claims and labelling**

- i. Develop and enforce clear definitions for terms such as “cage-free”, “free-range”, “humane”, and “cruelty-free”, including criteria and verification
- ii. Require that such claims be supported by independent certification or verifiable evidence
- iii. Encourage plain-language labelling that explains what these terms mean in practice (e.g., “hens not kept in cages” alongside “cage-free”)

### **4. Integrate animal welfare and plant-forward eating into public policy**

- i. Include content on animal sentience, farming practices, and welfare within school curricula, civic education, and public campaigns
- ii. Incorporate plant-forward dietary guidance into national nutrition, non-communicable disease, and climate strategies, highlighting co-benefits for health, environment, and animals

### **5. Lead by example through public procurement**

- i. Gradually increase the proportion of plant-based and higher-welfare options in government institutions (schools, hospitals, government canteens, and the armed forces)
- ii. Set procurement standards that avoid the worst farming practices (e.g., products from caged hens or severely confined animals), leveraging the willingness of many citizens to support such changes



Image Credit: Anipixels.com



## Opportunities for Civil Society

### 1. Correct misconceptions about farming conditions

- i. Use evidence-based storytelling — photos, videos, testimonies from farmers and veterinarians — to show the real conditions in which many farmed animals live, while avoiding sensationalism that might alienate audiences
- ii. Focus on high-impact myths identified in the survey, particularly around dairy cows “grazing freely” and chickens “kept outdoors”

### 2. Connect existing empathy to systemic issues

- i. Build narratives that link people's existing care for pets and community animals to farmed animals: “If we wouldn't accept this for a dog, should we accept it for a cow or hen?”
- ii. Highlight that modern intensive systems are not the same as small, traditional farms

### 3. Support behaviour change with practical tools

- i. Provide recipes, meal plans, and community challenges (e.g., Veganuary, Meat-Free Mondays, Dairy-Free Weeks) to help people act on their values
- ii. Offer guides to reading labels, understanding certifications, and choosing authentic plant-based options

### 4. Build coalitions across health, environment, and labour

- i. Partner with health organisations, climate groups, and workers' rights groups to demonstrate the multiple

benefits of shifting towards plant-forward, higher-welfare food systems

- ii. Use the survey data to demonstrate shared public support across these issues

### 5. Amplify voices from within the food system

- i. Work with farmers, veterinarians, former industry workers, and supply chain actors who can credibly discuss the need for change and potential solutions
- ii. Highlight examples of farmers and businesses that have successfully transitioned to higher-welfare or plant-based models



Image Credit: freepik.com

## Opportunities for Corporates and Large Employers

Corporates — especially large employers and major food and retail brands — have a unique ability to scale change quickly. The survey findings show a strong business case:

54% of consumers value animal welfare and are increasingly acting on it

91% of dairy consumers and over 70% of meat and egg consumers are willing to pay at least some premium for higher-welfare products

4 in 10 plan to choose brands with better animal welfare standards in the next 12 months

Nearly half say they would avoid purchasing products if poor animal treatment were confirmed — representing a clear reputational risk

### Supply chains, products and marketing

#### i. Audit and improve animal welfare in supply chains

- Map where and how animals are used in products (meat, dairy, eggs, leather, ingredients)
- Identify and phase out the worst practices: extreme confinement, barren cages, routine non-therapeutic antibiotic use, long-distance transport without adequate welfare provisions
- Collaborate with independent experts and certification bodies to adopt reputable welfare standards



## ii. Expand plant-based product lines and increase visibility

- Develop plant-based options across categories — meals, snacks, dairy alternatives, ready-to-eat products — at different price points
- Give plant-based items prominent placement in stores, apps, and menus, rather than limiting them to “niche” sections
- Use marketing that highlights taste, convenience, and cultural relevance (e.g., “classic Indian favourites, made plant-based”), not only ethics

## iii. Honest, clear communication

- Avoid romanticised imagery (e.g., endlessly green fields, free-roaming animals) where supply chains are intensive; either change practices or change imagery
- Use plain-language explanations of welfare commitments and certifications on packaging and websites
- Address scepticism around “humane” claims by backing all welfare marketing with verifiable standards and transparent reporting

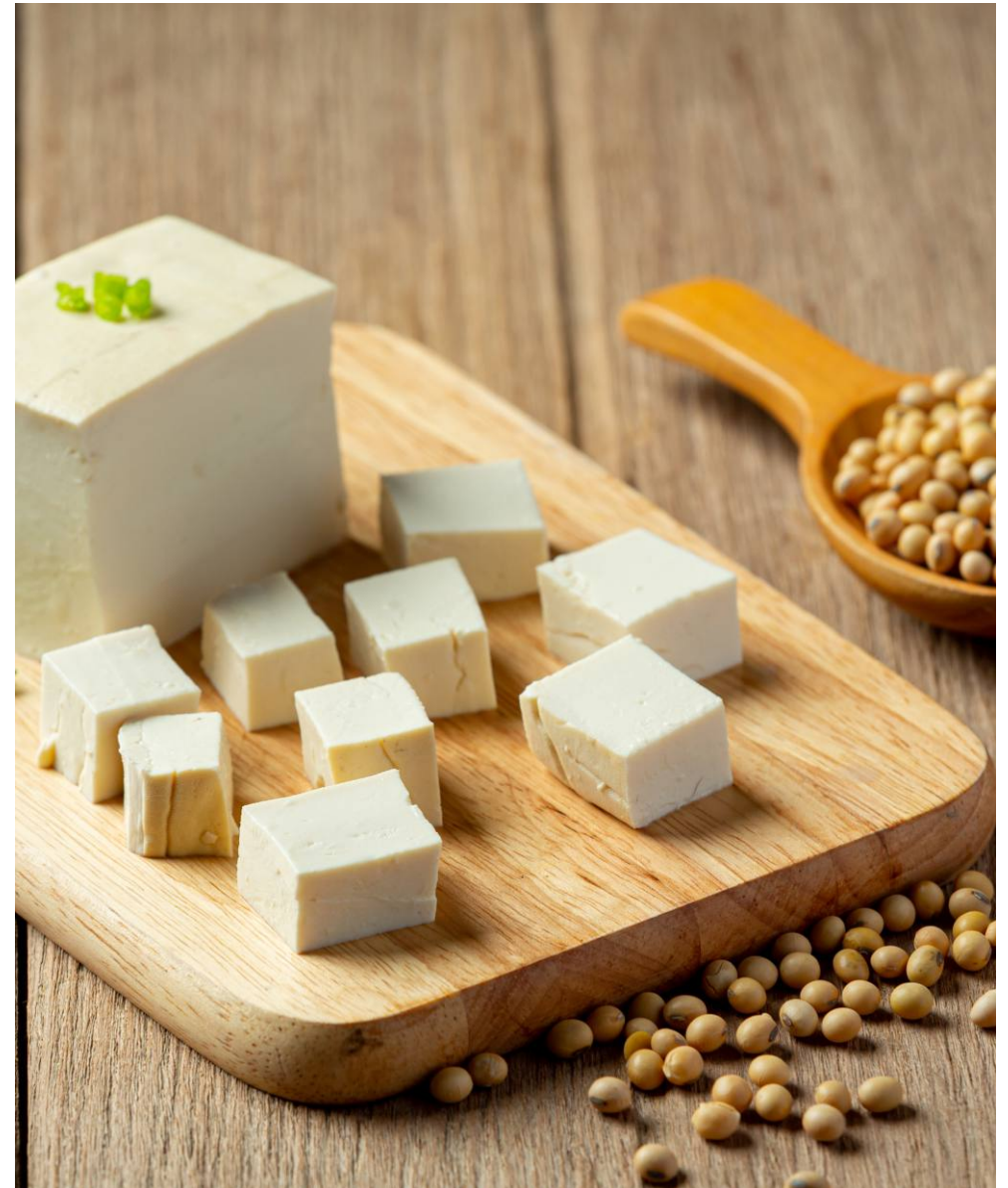


Image Credit: freepik.com

## Large Employers and Plant-Forward Cafeterias

Beyond products and supply chains, large employers have a powerful lever: the food environment at work. Plant-forward cafeterias can simultaneously:

- Reduce demand for animal products and associated animal suffering
- Improve employees' health and wellbeing
- Support companies' climate, net-zero, and ESG commitments

### Specific steps large employers can take:

#### i. Make plant-forward the easy, attractive default

- Ensure that every meal service includes multiple plant-based main options, not just token sides
- Use choice architecture so that plant-based dishes are featured first in buffets and menus, with appealing descriptions and visuals
- Offer plant-based dairy alternatives (e.g., soy, oat, or almond milk) as standard options alongside dairy in tea, coffee, and beverages

#### ii. Run plant-forward campaigns and challenges in the workplace

- Partner with organisations to offer plant-based challenges with recipe cards, cooking demonstrations, nutrition guidance, and social activities

- Introduce theme days or weeks (e.g., “Green Mondays”, “Dairy-Free Fridays”) to reduce meat and dairy use gradually, while still offering satisfying meals

#### iii. Link cafeteria choices to health and wellbeing programmes

- Integrate plant-forward eating into broader employee wellness initiatives (e.g., health screenings, prevention of non-communicable diseases, fitness challenges)
- Provide information and support from dietitians or nutritionists on eating well with plant-based meals, addressing concerns about protein, iron, B12, etc.



Image Credit: freepik.com

#### iv. Connect plant-forward menus to net-zero and ESG strategies

- Measure and report on the carbon and land-use footprint of cafeteria menus, highlighting reductions achieved through more plant-based options
- Include plant-forward food policies in ESG reporting and net-zero roadmaps, making clear that food is a key lever for emissions and biodiversity
- Communicate to employees and stakeholders that reducing reliance on animal agriculture is part of the

company's climate and nature strategy, not just a lifestyle choice

#### v. Engage employees in co-creating menus

- Involve staff through surveys, tasting sessions, and feedback loops to design plant-based offerings that reflect regional tastes and preferences
- Celebrate employee-submitted recipes and stories, reinforcing that plant-forward eating is an inclusive, shared endeavour



# Conclusion

The YouGov survey commissioned by IKC paints a clear picture: Young India is not waiting to be persuaded that farmed animals matter. It already believes they do. The country is already moving towards kinder treatment of farmed animals and more plant-forward diets.

Most young Indians believe that farmed animals feel pain and fear. A majority say animal welfare is important when they buy products. Four out of five have already taken at least one pro-animal action in the past year, whether by reducing meat or dairy, choosing plant-based alternatives, avoiding animal-tested products and leather, or checking labels for welfare information. Many are willing to pay more for higher-welfare products, especially dairy, and 61% want to know more about conditions within the supply chains they rely on.

At the same time, persistent misconceptions about farming conditions, uneven understanding of welfare labels, cost concerns, and behavioural inertia show that the distance to be closed is not one of values but of systems. These are not individual failures — they are design challenges. People need supportive environments — laws, corporate practices, food environments, and social norms — that make it easy and rewarding to align their choices with their empathy.

This is where civil society, government, corporates, and consumers must act together. India's strong plant-based culinary traditions, deep cultural respect for animals, and

emerging climate ambitions provide an ideal foundation. If we seize this moment, the country can lead the way in building food systems that are not only nourishing and sustainable, but also genuinely compassionate, reflecting a simple truth that most young Indians already accept:

**Farmed animals feel. We care. Now we must act.**



Image Credit: Anipixels.com

# Addendum: Survey Methodology and Sample Overview

## Study Title

YouGov x IKC: Public Attitudes to Farmed Animals, Their Welfare and PlantForward Consumption in India (2026)

## Research agency

- Survey agency: YouGov India
- Commissioned by: India Karuna Collaborative (IKC)

## Sample and fieldwork

- Sample size: 3,010 adults aged 18-30.
- Geography: India – nationally representative sample across regions (North / Central, South, East / Northeast, West), city tiers (Tier 1–3) and key demographics (age, gender, diet type).
- Fieldwork dates: 2026 (February 20 to 24).
- Mode: Online survey administered via YouGov's panel.

## Sample Composition

**Gender:** Males 51% | Females 49%

**Age:** 18–24 years: 50% | 25–30 years: 50%

**Regional Distribution:** North & Central India 34% | South India 28% | West India 21% | East & Northeast India 17%

**City Tier:** Tier 1: 36% | Tier 2: 24% | Tier 3: 40%

**Diet Type:** Vegetarians 40% | Non-vegetarians 60%

## Methodology

- Sampling: Respondents were recruited from YouGov's online panel. Quotas and weighting were applied to ensure the sample reflects the young adult online population by age (18-30), gender, region, and city tier.
- Questionnaire: Codesigned by IKC and YouGov. Questions covered dietary identity and frequency, empathy and sentience beliefs, awareness of farming practices, label and certification understanding, recent behaviour changes, and willingness to pay for higherwelfare products.
- Data analysis: Results are reported primarily at the total sample level. Many questions used multiple response options; percentages may not sum to 100%. Percentages are rounded to whole numbers for readability.



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