

REPORT | JANUARY 2026

# Still Cruel Investments



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This report is written by Amanda Dahlberg at World Animal Protection Sweden and Jakob König at Fair Finance Guide Sweden.

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**World Animal Protection Sweden** is one of the leading international animal welfare organizations in the world. We are present on all continents and help animals at all levels, from direct efforts to long-term political influence and in cooperation with regional, national and international authorities, governments, organizations and companies. For 75 years, we've been moving the world to protect animals. [www.worldanimalprotection.se](http://www.worldanimalprotection.se)

**Fair Finance Guide Sweden** is a civil society initiative that conducts research and benchmarks Swedish banks on sustainability issues. The initiative is led by the Swedish Consumers' Association in collaboration with the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, World Animal Protection and Diakonia. It is part of the Fair Finance International network with members in 20+ countries. [www.fairfinanceguide.se](http://www.fairfinanceguide.se)



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## Foreword

For decades, World Animal Protection has worked to move the world toward a future where animals are treated with dignity, compassion, and respect. Yet, as this report makes clear, millions of farmed animals remain trapped in industrial systems that deny them even the most basic opportunities to live decent lives. Factory farming has become one of the defining ethical, environmental, and public health challenges of our time. It is not only an animal welfare crisis—it is a systemic failure that affects all of us.

This report shows that while some Swedish financial institutions are beginning to take meaningful steps, much more remains to be done. Several of the world's largest meat companies continue to score at the very bottom of international animal welfare benchmarks. Despite known risks, a substantial amount of Swedish capital still flows into companies that rely on practices associated with overcrowding, painful mutilations, and selective breeding that pushes animals beyond their biological limits.

True leadership requires moving from words to action. It means setting clear expectations, conducting rigorous analysis, engaging proactively with companies, and being transparent about progress—and about failures. Most importantly, it means being prepared to end financial relationships when companies refuse to change.

Improving farm animal welfare is not only an ethical imperative; it is essential for public health, environmental sustainability, and the resilience of our food systems. Investors have a critical role to play in accelerating this shift. By demanding higher standards, they can drive real, measurable improvements for billions of animals worldwide.

I hope this report will inspire financial institutions to step up, take responsibility, and help build a more humane and sustainable future—one where animal suffering is no longer the hidden cost of our food.



Roger Pettersson

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Pettersson".

CEO

World Animal Protection Sweden

## Welfare issues in factory farming

Approximately 80 billion animals are farmed globally each year to produce animal-based products for human consumption. The majority of these animals are raised in industrial farming systems, commonly referred to as factory farming in this report. Factory farming prioritizes economic gain over animal welfare and the environment.

In these systems, animals typically lack the opportunity to express natural behaviours. Their movement is severely restricted. Thousands of chickens may be confined indoors in overcrowded, barren environments with no enrichment. Sows are often kept in small, barren crates that severely limit their movement during farrowing and lactation. Lack of rooting material may cause pigs to chew on each other in frustration.

Painful mutilations are routine practices. Procedures such as tail docking in pigs (where the tail is cut off), castration, and tooth clipping are frequently performed without pain relief or local anaesthesia.

Selective breeding has pushed animals beyond biologically sustainable limits. For instance, broiler chickens are bred to grow so rapidly that their bones can fracture under their own weight. Similarly, sows may give birth to more piglets than they have teats to nurse.



## Animal welfare is both a goal and mean to sustainable development

Animal welfare is important for many reasons. Not only as a question of ethics and a value for the animal itself but also as an important tool to promote a sustainable development.

An article evaluated the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in relation to animal welfare. The authors suggest connections between improved animal welfare for farmed animals and several of the SDG. For examples SDG 1 "No poverty", SDG 2 "Zero hunger" SDG 3 "Good health and well-being" and more.<sup>1</sup>

Animal welfare prevents the overuse of antibiotics – which is often the consequence of poor animal husbandry. It poses a serious threat to human health by contributing to the rise of antimicrobial resistance. According to a study published in *The Lancet*, deaths caused by antibiotic-resistant infections are projected to increase by approximately 70% by 2050.<sup>2</sup>

Animal welfare is also an important consumer issue. According to surveys conducted by the European Union, 98 per cent of the Swedish citizens believe that farmed animals should have decent living conditions.<sup>3</sup> This means that animal welfare is also important to Swedish bank clients.



1 Keeling L, Tunón H, Olmos Antillón G, Berg C, Jones M, Stuardo L, Swanson J, Wallenbeck A, Winckler C and Blokhuis H (2019) Animal Welfare and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. *Front. Vet. Sci.* 6:336. doi: 10.3389/fvets.2019.00336

2 [The Lancet: More than 39 million deaths from antibiotic-resistant infections estimated between now and 2050, suggests first global analysis | Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation](#)

3 [Attitudes of Europeans towards animal welfare - oktober 2023 - Eurobarometer survey](#)

## Five of the largest meat giants fail on animal welfare

This report focuses on five of the largest factory farming companies in chicken and pork: **BRF<sup>4</sup>, JBS, New Hope Liuhe Group, Tyson Foods, and WH Group**. These companies operate mainly in countries where the animal welfare practices are poor and the legislation is limited or absent, which means that there is limited guaranteed protection for the farmed animals. This in turn means that the companies need to implement comprehensive policies and systems to ensure that farmed animals are not suffering. However, the assessment by the **Business Benchmark on Animal Welfare (BBFAW)<sup>5</sup>** show that the five companies fail to do so. All of them rank poorly on animal welfare policies and practices in the benchmark.



4 The company has recently merged with Minerva Foods but this study focuses only on BRF's operations.

[Marfrig-BRF merger completed; executive team named | WATTpoultry.com](https://www.wattpoultry.com/marfrig-brf-merger-completed-executive-team-named/)

5 World Animal Protection's rating of the animal welfare standards and legislation in different countries, ranging from A to G.  
<https://api.worldanimalprotection.org/>

**Table 1:**  
**the five selected companies and indicators**  
**on their animal welfare risks and performance**

	<b>Country (API country score)</b>	<b>Location of factory farms</b>	<b>BBFAW company score</b>
<b>BRF S.A.</b>	Brazil (D)	Brazil	Tier 4, impact rating E
<b>JBS S.A.</b>	Brazil (D)	Brazil, US, Europe and Mexico.	Tier 5, impact rating F
<b>New Hope Liuhe Group</b>	China (G)	China	Tier 6, impact rating F
<b>WH Group</b>	China (G)	US, China, Europe	Tier 6, impact rating F
<b>Tyson Foods</b>	US (E)	US	Tier 5, impact rating F

### **Animal Protection Index (API)**

The Animal Protection Index is World Animal Protection's rating of animal welfare standards and legislation in different countries. The rating ranges from A to G. Brazil scored D in the section "Protecting animals used in farming" and no legislation specifically for pigs or chickens<sup>6</sup>. China scored G in the section "Protecting animals used in farming" and no legislation specifically for pigs or chickens<sup>7</sup>. The US scored E in the section "Protecting animals used in farming" and no ban at federal level of sow stalls or farrowing crates, and no ban on federal level limiting stocking density for chickens<sup>8</sup>. <https://api.worldanimalprotection.org/>

### **The Business benchmark on Farmed Animal Welfare (BBFAW)**

The Business benchmark on farmed animal welfare is an investor framework for evaluating the farm animal welfare policies, management, performance, and transparency of 150 leading food companies. Companies are evaluated against 51 defined criteria and classified into tiers ranking from 1 to 6<sup>9</sup>. Tier 1–2 means "Integral to business strategy", tier 3–4 "Some evidence of implementation" and tier 5–6 "Limited or no evidence".

The Impact Rating system graded from A to F, with F indicating the weakest performance. This rating focuses on measurable progress in farm animal welfare practices, rather than simply evaluating corporate policies or stated commitments<sup>10</sup>.

6 5 bbfaw-2024-report.pdf

7 Brazil | World Animal Protection

8 China | World Animal Protection

9 bbfaw-2025-assessment-criteria-document.pdf

10 Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare

## Swedish investments and responsibility measures

### Swedish investments in the five companies

Swedish banks and AP-funds invest in total SEK 975 million in three of the five companies. Among banks, SEB has the largest holding of SEK 100 million. Sjunde AP-fonden sticks out among the AP-funds with SEK 464 million.

The clearly biggest holding is in Tyson Foods which accounts for three quarters of the Swedish investments. No holdings were found in JBS and New Hope Liuhe Group. JBS is the only company that has been publicly excluded by any of the investors. Reasons for the exclusion ranges between environmental issues, corruption and labour conditions.

Table 2: the Swedish investments in the five companies per June 30, 2025. Million SEK

BANKS	JBS	Tyson Foods	BRF	WH Group	New Hope Liuhe Group	TOTAL
SEB	Excluded	29	56	15	0	100
Länsförsäkringar	0	60	4	0	0	64
Danske Bank	Excluded	15	0	24	0	39
Nordea	Excluded	18	0	8	0	26
Swebank	0	0	0	15	0	15
Handelsbanken	Excluded	2	3	2	0	7
Skandia	0	0	0	5	0	5
AP-FUNDS						
Sjunde AP-fonden	Excluded	425	39	0	0	464
Fjärde AP-fonden	0	103	0	13	0	116
Första AP-fonden	0	57	0	0	0	57
Tredje AP-fonden	0	0	0	55	0	55
Andra AP-fonden	0	27	0	0	0	27
TOTAL	0	736	102	137	0	



## The banks' policies on animal welfare

Among the banks' assessed by Fair Finance Guide, Ekobanken and JAK Medlemsbank have by far the best policies and support 100 per cent resp. 96 per cent of 14 internationally recognized animal welfare principles (see table 3). None of the larger banks support more than 25 per cent of the principles, where Danske Bank, Nordea, Länsförsäkringar and Swedbank have the highest scores. Skandia sticks out with the lowest score and only supports the first principle on Five Freedoms<sup>11</sup>.

The banks' policies have changed only slightly since our previous report in 2023. Skandia has made its commitment a bit clearer by expressing an explicit expectation that companies should respect animals' "Five Freedoms"<sup>12</sup>. Previously Skandia only referred to a convention with no further elaboration.

SEB has on the contrary reduced its commitment on animal welfare by exempting asset management from the policy scope<sup>13</sup>. Since the bank's asset management company also has no own policy on animal welfare it means that SEB funds are no longer covered by any such commitments.

Handelsbanken has also updated its policy on "Forestry and Farming" which applies to the whole group. It includes new guidelines that prescribe Five Freedoms, time-limitations on animal transports<sup>14</sup>, avoiding painful procedures, slaughter methods that minimize animal suffering, and healthy environments to minimize the use of antibiotics. The policy is stated to apply to the whole group but according to the bank the specific commitments on animal welfare only apply to corporate clients which the banks have lending to. Since the asset management company has no own policy on animal welfare, Handelsbanken's funds are not covered by any animal welfare commitments.



11 In the updated Fair Finance Guide methodology 2025 the term Five Domains is used instead.

12 Page 19, [www.skandia.se/495c41/globalassets/pdf/om-skandia/hallbarhet/skandia-vara-stallningstaganden.pdf](http://www.skandia.se/495c41/globalassets/pdf/om-skandia/hallbarhet/skandia-vara-stallningstaganden.pdf)

13 [https://webapp.sebgroup.com/mb/mblib.nsf/alldocsbyunid/2A899C2EF35788F4C125881300755F60/\\$FILE/Agriculture\\_Policy\\_2025.pdf](https://webapp.sebgroup.com/mb/mblib.nsf/alldocsbyunid/2A899C2EF35788F4C125881300755F60/$FILE/Agriculture_Policy_2025.pdf)

14 However, it requires only compliance with national legal requirements, which is often insufficient.

**Table 3: the banks' commitments to animal welfare criteria in Fair Finance Guides policy assessment<sup>15</sup>.**

	TOTAL SCORE									
	Ekobanken	JAK Medlemsbank	Danske Bank	Nordea	Länsförsäkringar	Swedbank	Handelsbanken	SEB	Skandia	
	100 %	96 %	25 %	25 %	24 %	24 %	19 %	15 %	7 %	
1	Companies respect the Five Freedoms of animals.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Partly	Partly	Partly	No	Yes
2	Non-medical animal testing (including but not limited to cosmetics testing) is unacceptable.	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Partly	Partly	No
3	Requirements are set for the use of laboratory animals for testing medical products in order to limit animal suffering and the number of animals used as much as possible and demonstrably look for alternatives to animal testing (the so-called 3R-strategy).	n.a	n.a	No	No	No	Partly	No	No	No
4	Producing, manufacturing, trading and selling fur and exotic leather (and derived products) is unacceptable.	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Partly	No
5	Severely restricted housing methods for farm animals, including calves in crates, hens in battery cages and sows in feeding cubicles, are unacceptable.	Yes	n.a	No	Yes	Partly	Partly	No	No	No
6	Farm animal breeding practices and genetics are geared towards good welfare.	Yes	yes	No	No	Partly	No	No	No	No
7	Animal protein companies are certified according to the criteria of certification schemes that include animal welfare requirements (mentioned in section 2.1.2).	Yes	Partly	Partly	Partly	No	No	No	No	No
8	Companies safeguard adequate environmental enrichment and quality for farm animals.	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Partly	Partly	No	No
9	Companies avoid painful procedures for farm animals.	Yes	Yes	No	No	Partly	Partly	Partly	No	No
10	Companies practice humane slaughter methods for farm animals..	Yes	Yes	No	No	Partly	Partly	Partly	No	No
11	Companies limit the duration of animal transports in line with best-practice standards.	Yes	Yes	No	No	Partly	No	No	Partly	No
12	Entertainment activities in which wild animals are involved (including circuses, dolphinariums, fighting games with animals and shows and exhibitions with animals) are unacceptable.	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Partly	No
13	Companies integrate animal welfare criteria into their procurement and operational policies.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
14	Companies include clauses on the compliance with criteria on animal welfare in their contracts with subcontractors and suppliers.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No



15 The assessment was updated in 2025. The criteria used are from the methodology version of 2022. Ekobanken and JAK Medlemsbank are also included as they are part of the assessment. More information about the Fair Finance Guide methodology can be found here [www.fairfinanceinternational.org/ff-international/about-us/#Methodology](http://www.fairfinanceinternational.org/ff-international/about-us/#Methodology)

## The banks' engagement with the companies and the sector

The research included a survey with the seven banks on how they have acted on animal welfare issues among the five high-risk companies they invest in.

The survey shows that none of the banks have a proactive analysis of high-risk companies' performance regarding animal welfare issues, to make sure that companies adhere to the bank's policy commitments. Danske Bank, Swedbank and Skandia claims that animal welfare issues are included in their general reactive screening process where incidents of various sustainability issues are captured. However, this is not a suitable way to capture animal welfare issues as many of the problematic practices are standard procedure in many countries. The banks have also not demonstrated in further detail how this reactive process could possibly capture deficiencies among the companies.

Länsförsäkringar is the only bank that is linked to some kind of proactive analysis by being member of the industry initiative Business Benchmark on Farm Animal Welfare (BBFAW). This initiative assesses annually many high-risk companies (including the five selected companies in this report) on their policies and practices regarding animal welfare.

Regarding engagement with the companies, only two banks have been in contact and raised animal welfare issues. Länsförsäkringar has signed letters to all investee companies by BBFAW where they share the gap analysis of each company and put forward recommendations.

Nordea has been in contact with one of the two investee companies, Tyson Foods, including a meeting, where the bank has asked for more information about the company's performance regarding Five Domains and animal abuse. Nordea has also suggested including performance indicators on animal welfare as basis for executive compensation schemes.

All seven banks claim to have engaged with several of the companies regarding other sustainability issues, primarily through the FAIRR initiative, including antimicrobial resistance, pollution and labour issues.

None of the banks have excluded a company based on violations of its animal welfare policy. SEB, Danske Bank, Nordea and Handelsbanken exclude JBS, but for other sustainability reasons.



## Do the banks live up to their commitments?

Länsförsäkringar is the only bank that is considered to act sufficiently to defend the principles on animal welfare in its investment policy, mainly through its participation in BBAFW which conducts targeted engagement with the companies. Länsförsäkringar could however improve its work by also integrating proactive analysis in the investment process. It is also unclear what escalation methods the bank applies, especially as Länsförsäkringar also concludes that some of the companies make no or little progress.

Nordea's initial efforts to engage with Tyson Foods are welcomed, but the demands put forward are much too general to defend its policy commitments. Considering that common practice in international factory farming includes restricted housing methods and deficient compliance with Five Domains, the bank's asks must be much more to the point to address this. The engagement also seems to have stopped and there is no information on potential progress on the banks asks. Nordea's investments in Tyson Foods have decreased significantly but the company is not on its exclusion list. Nordea also lacks proactive analysis and routines in its investment process to identify high-risk companies and performing gap-analysis against its policy. Nordea has also not engaged with the other investee company, WH Group.

Danske Bank, Swedbank and Skandia have not engaged with the investee companies despite their policy commitments. Some of the banks have relatively small holdings but as none of them have demonstrated a credible process to implement the policy in the investment process, we deem that they fail to comply with the policy commitment.

SEB and Handelsbanken no longer have any policy commitments on animal welfare that apply to their investment funds, so they have nothing to comply with. Handelsbanken has however supported resolutions regarding improved animal welfare at international restaurant chains, which are buyers and stakeholders to the factory farming industry.

**Pig farm in Brazil**



## Recommendations to investors

### Swedish investors are recommended to:

- 1** Adopt a comprehensive animal welfare policy and clear expectations on investee companies. The Fair Finance Guide policy criteria can be used as guidance and the FARMS minimum standards as reference.
- 2** Establish proactive processes to identify high-risk investee companies and perform gap-analysis against your policy.
- 3** Initiate engagement with companies that have gaps or where there is insufficient company information about performance on particular issues.
- 4** Set time-bound targets for the engagement process and establish an escalation strategy for companies that do not improve sufficiently towards the targets.
- 5** Report openly on your engagements, including information on the company names, issues, time-bound targets, status and outlook for achieving the targets.
- 6** End financial relationships with companies that do not meet significant engagement targets within a given timeframe. Publish the name and reason for ending the relationship publicly.
- 7** Join sector initiatives that address and engage with companies on animal welfare issues, for example BBFAW.





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