

Taina Syrjämaa  
**Epilogue**

Animal industries are highly problematic in many ways. The various branches of this huge global business sector directly influence billions of farmed animals, whose births, lives and deaths it aims to control in order to produce profit for humans. Simultaneously, the indirect effects are tremendous on wild animals, whose territory is continuously diminishing. Whilst – from a short-term perspective – humankind may consist of (seeming) winners and losers, the non-human animals are all victims of a system based on violence and exploitation. Yet, together we all suffer from dramatically deteriorating living conditions as the climate crisis and the current wave of extinction, forcefully underpinned by extending animal industries, transform and destroy our shared planet. This alone calls for a critique of both the seemingly progressive nature of animal industries and the beliefs that these industries are an unavoidable part of creating welfare for nations.

This book has explored the intriguing and interrelated questions of why and how such devastating industries have developed and expanded into their current state and how destructive consumption practices of industrial animal-based products have become so deeply rooted in daily living. The book has delved into the history of animal industries by choosing a long-time scale from the 1860s onwards and by examining the Nordic countries, especially Finland, Norway and Sweden. Denmark has been an important actor in international markets of animal-based products for a long time, and thus has a rather different – and also internationally better known – history than other Nordic countries.

The book has shown how animal industries have not grown as a self-evident, automatic process, but have been in many ways intertwined with such huge and complex phenomena as nationalism and the overall modernisation of societies. These developments also continue to have an impact on the present-day discussions, as, for example, domestically grown animal-based products are marketed as the most responsible consumer choice, or technological innovations are used to further intensify the use of non-human animals in production and to optimise the non-human animals themselves for the processes of production. The most remarkable example of this optimisation is breeding, which has changed the bodies of many farmed animal species, such as chickens, pigs and cows, to an extent that the bodies in themselves may cause welfare problems to the animals.

The case studies together uncover the historical and cultural features of animal industries and their historical roots. They extend much further in its history than factory farming, which currently is the most apparent feature of animal industries. The connection between animal industries and presumed human prog-

ress and national wealth is glaring. Nordic countries, which were rather peripheral in the mid-nineteenth century in a global context and were not amongst the most rapidly industrialising or urbanising countries, eagerly attempted to intensify animal husbandry production and even to participate in international animal markets. Animal production was considered a pathway to higher national income and a stronger society with healthier citizens. The chapters of this book have showcased numerous actors and practices in promoting the production and consumption of animal-based goods. It has made visible, for example, activities at the state level as well as actions of commercial operators, the mass media and most recently social media. The increased consumption of animal-based products has not been a natural, self-evident development, but it has required a significant amount of promotion.

Animal industries consist of many kinds of branches that focus on different animal species, as the above chapters have shown by examining how cattle, pigs, chicken, wild and cultivated fish have been incorporated into the logic of industrial production. This has meant a radical transformation in the lives of animals whose task is to produce ever more and at an ever-increasing rate. In recent decades criticism of factory farming and animal exploitation has been intensifying, as has the popularity of vegetarian and vegan alternatives for animal-based products in the Nordic countries. Yet statistics show that meat consumption has not suffered a significant decline. Views are divided between reformers, who believe that remoulding animal industries could solve topical problems, whilst abolitionists see them as manifestations of an essentially unjust speciesism.

Even from an anthropocentric perspective, animal industries are becoming ever more notorious. At the time of writing these concluding words, animal industries feature in many ways in daily news. The European Commission is suggesting a total one-year ban on fishing Baltic herring as the fish population has recently suffered from starvation and could collapse. Coincidentally, at the same time, an important group of consumers of Baltic herring, namely tens of thousands of farmed minks, are being killed in order to prevent zoonosis. The risk of a new global zoonosis is often connected to wild animal markets far from Europe, in conditions considered to be poor both in terms of hygiene and animal welfare. Yet now the hot spot is in Finnish fur farms, where a highly pathogenic avian influenza virus – a virus that itself has evolved together with intensifying poultry farming – has proven to be able to contaminate at least some mammalian species, such as the mink and could potentially contaminate humans. Human fears are well-founded in these cases, but ultimately animals are those who are the primary sufferers.

The complexities of animal industries have prevailed and continue to define many of the challenges and sufferings that our societies and non-human animals encounter today. To disentangle these complexities is to continue the tireless multidisciplinary work that has begun to be undertaken so that the presumed necessity and justification of animal industries can be questioned and scrutinised, and the exploitative practices that now threaten to destroy all life on Earth can be altered so that multispecies life may survive in the future.

