

Stories that numbers tell about Otwarte Klatki

Nuño Sempere

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Background

After some feedback on the [last round](#) models, a [second round](#) makes the same calculations for each project:

- Number of expected animal-years involved
- Value of improvement, in years of hurtful hen pain
- Cost in PLN
- Cost effectiveness, in years of hurtful hen pain avoided per PLN

It then aggregates past estimates to estimate what percentage of impact corresponds to each past intervention.

I highly recommend that the reader explore [the summary table](#), [the global variables](#) used throughout the models, as well as the individual project models. Parts of the models can be expanded and collapsed by clicking on the row numbers.

Stories about the individual programs

To me, the stories which these estimates tell about the individual programs are:

- Caged hens: This is an effective and well-proven campaign. The estimates are saying that it comprises about ~50% of past impact from Anima. But stopping implementation would sacrifice past attained impact.
- Stop the Farms: The impact from this program seemed hard to estimate, but plugging some numbers into it, we see that it's pretty impactful! Future work would probably have a similar impact as past work.
- ECC chickens: Past work doesn't seem to have been supremely cost-effective, but if we elicit Pawol, we come up with an estimate that future work will be 87 times as cost-effective as past work. This seems suspicious/unrealistic, but mellowing some assumptions still leads to estimates saying that future work will be 10x as cost effective as it is now.
- Mink farms: Legislative efforts have not succeeded this year, and because they haven't succeeded in the past, the probability that they'll succeed in the future is, I think, not super high (10%-5% chance of success each

year). But because there are just so many mink, the work does end up looking pretty cost-effective in expectation.

- Plant-based food: In the short-term, this looks extremely not cost-effective. But over the long-term, who knows.

Differences between estimates of past impact and future impact

The estimates also show future impact as being much greater than past impact. Part of this is that Anima is now larger, better funded, and generally in a better place than a few years ago. But a big part of it, is, I think that the initial estimates of future impact I elicited in Poznan are just a bit unhinged, too optimistic, extrapolate too much into an uncertain future, and are in general much less reliable than past impact. In past impact, there is a stronger anchor to reality, whereas when thinking about future impact, there isn't really a check.

This is particularly the case if you think that at some point you think you are going to win definitively, as opposed to merely shifting the supply and demand for meat downwards. In Poznan, we explored a bit how thinking about a glorious vegan/vegetarian future was psychologically and historically important for advocates, but I think making predictions about the future, and strategizing so as to make the best decisions is enough of a different game that the "shifting the curve downwards" framing seems worth keeping more in mind.

Stop the Farms vs ECC chickens

One of the key decisions which this research was meant to inform was whether it was worth shutting down the *Stop the Farm* campaign, particularly if this increased the impact of ECC campaigns by some small amount (1%, 5%, 10%). Talking about this, it was agreed that Ilona was responsible for making this decision.

I would lean towards recommending keeping the *Stop the Farm* campaign alive. This is because I think that its impact, although distributed and uncertain, is probably very large. And although you can have extremely large estimates for ECC chickens if you want, more realistic and uncertain estimates are low enough that it's not worth it. And past impact for *Stop the Farms* has probably been higher than past impact for ECC chicken campaigns.

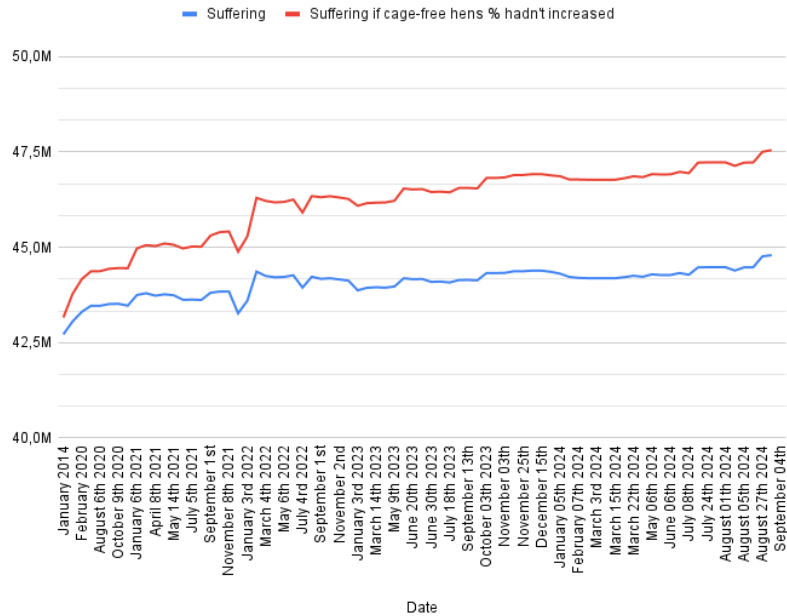
At the same time, I'm kind of hesitant to doubt Pawol's expertise as a subject matter expert¹. So although my sense is that future impact will be much closer than past impact than he thinks, I'm not 100% certain in the above conclusion either.

¹This point used to be more striking, but Pawol has since revised his estimates down a bit.

Final thoughts

- I thought that this project was very cool, but also exhausting, particularly the part that wasn't just coming up with estimates, but navigating people.
- I exceeded the amount of time I planned to dedicate to it.
- When thinking about prioritizing between different parts of Otwarte Klatki, thinking in terms of what fraction of impact they each generate, rather than in terms of headcount, seems like a really powerful idea.
- Estimates were much messier than I expected, and because they were complicated, they had a bunch of errors throughout. I think that by talking with Kevan, and changing the estimates to all have the same structure, we have gotten rid of many of them, but it's hard to say whether none remain
- I think I have a bias for trying to come up with neat and straightforward conclusions ("Initially you were thinking that Stop the Farms isn't that valuable. But it's valuable even if uncertain, and in fact so valuable that you shouldn't shut it down for a 10% increase in effectiveness for ECC chickens").
- I feel excited about producing some lobbying materials for the Mink farms campaign, because this seems related to the work I've been doing on [emergency response](#). I may follow up.
- For shifting the curve vs transformative change, I think an interesting example is the cage free hens campaign. I fed some [quick plausible numbers](#) for the suffering of cage-free hens vs furnished cage hens, and my sense is that the total amount of suffering has continued increasing even as the share of cage free hens have continued increasing. This is because the total number of hens has increased, and even cage free hens have lives not worth living. So the story is that Poland has generally increased production (for exporting etc.), but probably led to less suffering than it otherwise would have in the absence of an animal suffering movement. But suffering still increases.

Suffering vs Suffering if cage-free hens % hadn't increased (~hen lifetimes of hurtful suffering)



- The cost-effectiveness for plant-based food campaigns is really low. But I'm not completely unsympathetic to the aims of a donor which wants to see food system transformation. The thing is, I don't think going through small retailers has even a 0.05% chance of flipping the whole system. Maybe it would be worth brainstorming things that could have such a chance (starting a political party and hoping for a tie in parliament? donating to a major political party in exchange for a single large concession? betting the money in the stock market? starting a new supermarket chain?)
 - In other words, I feel that if you have some restricted funding i) consistent and cost-effective interventions like cage free hens campaigns are ok, ii) wacky ideas that only work in unlikely scenarios but are really valuable if so might also be ok, but iii) plant-based foods interventions that are likely to be mediocre is sort of disappointing.
- I basically think that Open Philanthropy's "standard multiplier" of 40 years for the acceleration of projects in the absence is wrong. This is because it overweighs uncertain accelerations too much more than assured flows.
- One of your bottlenecks was hiring campaigners. I'm curious about whether you've taken steps to solve it since we last talked.
- What happened to Ilona's phone? Did she get a new one? If I recall

correctly at the time it was visible broken. What was the resolution?