



MERCY FOR
ANIMALS

Farmed Animal Opportunity Index (FAOI)

Considerations and Influence on Our Global Strategy



While we believe the index is a powerful tool that can provide important insights, the following considerations should be kept in mind.

The FAOI should be used as a starting point for comparative analysis, not as a stand-alone or final tool for decision-making. The FAOI was devised as only the first of four steps our organization takes in determining where we would be most effective for animals in our international expansion. Specifically, we designed the index for use as a preliminary step to help focus in-depth research in a more manageable set of countries. Additional research is needed and should include conducting surveys and analyses.

Finally, conclusions should reflect that the index arrives at its rankings by rewarding countries for favorable performance and penalizing them for unfavorable performance in each of the given indicators.

The rankings the FAOI provides do NOT completely reflect the level of opportunity for farmed animal advocacy in each country. Several important variables were not included in the FAOI because of the lack of available, quantifiable data. As the index seeks to reflect conditions in countries that have been understudied, data was not available for several key considerations, such as the following:

1. Attitudes toward our specific issue areas: animal welfare, animal-product reduction, and plant-based alternatives
2. The scope of a country's neglect of our issues, specifically, the number of animal organizations with some focus on farmed animals, the effectiveness of existing groups, and their allocation of resources
3. Donations to farmed animal advocacy organizations in each country
4. Market trends for relevant products

The FAOI could not capture several important variables that are more qualitative in nature. Many key considerations cannot be adequately quantified and are therefore better

analyzed through other methods. Such considerations include the following:

- Cultural norms
- History of animal farming
- The role of religion
- Presence of influencers (celebrities, politicians, others)
- Ease and efficiency of making social change
- Government attitudes toward activism, farmed animal welfare, meat reduction, etc.
- Prevalence of plant-based alternatives
- Environmental and health conditions related to our issues
- The impact of COVID-19
- Important legislative and judicial processes and precedents
- Ease of finding and retaining quality staff

To assess these factors, Mercy For Animals conducts more in-depth research as part of our scoping studies.

Not all organizations will weigh FAOI factors the same. While the EA sector of the animal rights movement has tended to pay more attention to the scale of the problem, we believe that evaluating our likelihood of success is critical if we are to intervene in a particular country, especially in regions with completely different cultures and political contexts. Bearing this in mind, we assign tractability a considerably greater weight. Other organizations may wish to adjust the weights differently to suit their unique perspectives. But we strongly recommend that different ad hoc weights reflect the ones established by the factor analysis. To better understand this recommendation, please read our [methodology document](#).

The Critical Role of Tractability

Mercy For Animals adheres to and is often guided by the three pillars of effective altruism: scale, neglectedness, and tractability. That said, as we consider and compare countries as part of our strategic expansion, our experience suggests that each of these elements should not be given equal weight. In the FAOI and other assessment methods, we are particularly interested in determining how likely we are to effectively address the problem (tractability). We do this through an analysis of factors we label “generic tractability” and “movement-specific tractability.” We seek to better understand the social, political, or cultural context in each country of interest, never assuming that strategies that worked in one country will work in another and instead tailoring our approach to each audience and context.

- **Generic tractability** encompasses broad variables such as political stability, economic conditions, levels of education, and internet penetration. These variables would be relevant to any organization seeking to be active in the country in some form.
- **Movement-specific tractability** includes consideration of variables that are particularly relevant for animal advocacy organizations, such as the general population’s knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding farmed animals; availability of plant-based alternatives; existing animal welfare laws; and number of influencers currently advocating for farmed animals. Knowing these variables gives us a better sense of not only our likelihood of success in general but which campaigns are most likely to work well in a particular country or region.

Mercy For Animals takes a step-by-step approach to strategic decision-making around international expansion.

We designed the FAOI so that both countries and regions could be compared. This is in line with our global expansion strategy, in which we consider two kinds of interventions: country and regional (where work in a group of countries is managed through a regional office).

Once a promising country or region is identified through the FAOI, we take the following additional steps to help determine where to work and what type of work to do:

1. Evaluate special opportunities. We explore whether selected countries have talented, reliable people on the ground who are willing to help; important stakeholders that can facilitate our work; and ripe contexts. Although this is a very subjective analysis, experience proves that these factors can make a big difference.
2. Evaluate potential cost-effectiveness. We assess general cost of living for potential staff, likelihood of success according to our tractability evaluations, the

movement’s track record of success in the country, etc.

Note: This is something Mercy For Animals is still working on and has not yet implemented.

3. Conduct deeper scoping studies. We more closely consider quantitative aspects not included in the FAOI, as well as key qualitative elements. In this process, we also communicate with individuals and organizations on the ground to better understand the context and uncover any unique opportunities.
4. Conduct audience analyses. We deploy surveys in each country to better understand movement-specific tractability.

Types of Work

In general, the variety of interventions employed across the movement can be categorized under two main areas: social change through raising awareness and movement building and institutional change through corporate engagement and legislative and public policy initiatives.

Mercy For Animals believes that in general institutional change can promote the greatest short- and mid-term impact for animals. We also recognize that targeting institutions provides more tangible ways to track progress and estimate the potential impact of our work. But the likelihood of success of institutional change will strongly depend on the state of democracy in the country, generic and movement-specific tractability, and other factors. In the case of more authoritarian regimes, the possibility of success for institutional change is unlikely to depend on people power as it does in regions with higher levels of democracy and tractability. Institutional change is also much less likely to occur in regions with low public awareness about our cause and little people power, because such change almost always requires public sympathy and movement pressure.

While securing institutional change without awareness and people power is not impossible, we believe the more awareness and people power we have in a country, the more likely institutional campaigns will succeed, in terms of both policy commitments and enforcement. This perspective emanates from and is reflected in our theory of change.

How the FAOI Supports Our Strategy for International Expansion

As noted above, we believe in a tailored approach to our international strategies, as each region presents differences in terms of culture and stages of movement development. Given the importance of tractability in our strategic plans, we have created a basic framework that reflects how different levels of tractability (along with other key dimensions) can impact

our priorities and outcomes. In general, in countries and regions where we perceive high levels of tractability, we will prioritize institutional change. In those with moderate levels of tractability, we will prioritize public awareness and movement building. In those with a good state of democracy but low levels of tractability, we will provide resources to help local organizations. Finally, in areas with more authoritarian regimes, depending on circumstances evaluated in scoping studies and on special opportunities, we may prioritize relationships with key figures with power to advance institutional change.

If a country or region has...	We tend to see greater opportunities for...	We can expect...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High global influence • High tractability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating institutional change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerated institutional change with greater likelihood of enforcement and a domino effect in other countries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate-high tractability • High scale • High neglectedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising public awareness, building people power, and exploring institutional-change opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundwork laid for accelerated institutional change, possibly influenced by other countries • Some institutional change • Institutional-change enforcement tested
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate tractability • High scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising public awareness and building people power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundwork laid for accelerated institutional change, possibly influenced by other countries • Institutional-change enforcement tested
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-moderate tractability • Low-mid scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building people power by supporting local groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groundwork laid for accelerated institutional change, possibly influenced by other countries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low tractability (due to more authoritarian regimes or less regional development) • High scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring institutional change through government affairs and public policy • Exploring awareness-raising opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher risk, though institutional change can occur more rapidly than other types of change where the right opportunities exist