

## No trade label for illegal eggs

*« The European Parliament calls for an EU-wide trade ban on eggs that do not comply with the law »  
– EP resolution of 5 May 2010 on the evaluation and assessment of the Animal Welfare Action Plan  
2006-2010<sup>1</sup> –*

Conventional cages for laying hens are incompatible with today's standards of animal welfare. Therefore in 1999 it was agreed to phase them out in the whole of the European Union by 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2012.<sup>2</sup> With ample time for to prepare, all producers in Europe should be ready to comply.<sup>3</sup>

With this date drawing closer, the worry is mounting that not all producers in all Member States will have decommissioned their old cages. Indeed, it is near certain that conventional cages will remain operational for some time still. Such a situation is untenable. Producers who will be using illegal farming methods will try to market their eggs to consumers. This poses the triple problem of disrespect of animal welfare, the distortion of competition with compliant producers (who have born high costs for the modernisation of their farms) and the cheating of consumers about the production methods of the eggs they consume. This is all the more worrying as egg labelling is rightly considered as being at the vanguard of animal welfare labelling.<sup>4</sup>

*“The concept of quality should be more broadly framed in future, and consumers should be able, as they already can in the case of eggs, to make a clearer distinction between different forms of livestock farming.”<sup>5</sup>*

While all political players have made it plain that they will stick to the deadline, it is not clear what measures will be taken to address these problems and ensure the removal of illegal eggs from the market. While different enforcement measures are being contemplated, EPEGA is stepping forward with a concrete proposal which aims to harness the empowered consumer with the means to take illegal eggs off the shelves of stores and markets. A warning sign **« Farming method non-EU standard »** should be applied to illegal eggs. This would serve as a deterrent against purchase and make it obvious for the broad public that European standards are not being applied. This may not show off the enforcement of EU law, but will work immediately and therefore more effectively than lengthy infringement procedures enforcing compliance years from now. However, in order to make such a warning sign mandatory, the Commission would need to amend its Regulation 2002/4/EC<sup>6</sup> before the year is over. Therefore, regulatory intervention is needed to prevent, or at least significantly reduce, expected illegal trading of eggs from old cages starting in 2012.

Even before the cage-ban was endorsed, the European Court of Justice stated that consumers are entitled to food labelling which allows them to make informed choices.<sup>7</sup> In animal welfare labelling, egg labels have so far been exemplary. It is now time this keep the promise to Europe's consumers.

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 14 of the Resolution

<sup>2</sup> 1999/74/EC on the protection of laying hens

<sup>3</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/farm/laying\\_hens\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/farm/laying_hens_en.htm)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.was-steht-auf-dem-ei.de/en/home/about/tasks>

<sup>5</sup> Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the 'Proposal for a Regulation on agricultural product quality schemes' (COM(2010) 733 final), OJ C 218, 23.7.2011, p. 114 (point 1.7)

<sup>6</sup> Directive 2002/4/EC on the registration of establishments keeping laying hens, covered by Directive 1999/74/EC

<sup>7</sup> Case C-2010/96, *Gut Springenheide*

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