



INTERGROUP ON THE WELFARE & CONSERVATION OF ANIMALS

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Established in 1983

Dacian Ciolos
Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development
European Commission
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium

10 February 2010
PS/102b/2010

Dear Commissioner Ciolos,

Poland's proposal to postpone EU ban on conventional battery cages for laying hens: February meeting of EU Agriculture Council

The EP Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals urges the EU Agriculture Council to reject Poland's proposal to postpone the EU ban on conventional battery cages.

Egg producers have been given a generous phase out period

The Directive has given the industry a very generous period of 12 years in which to phase out the use of conventional cages.

Poland argues that it and the other new Member States have had insufficient time to phase out conventional cages. This is not really the case. Throughout the period that it was negotiating to join the EU, Poland knew that the ban on conventional battery cages was part of Community legislation and that they would have to comply with it by 1 January 2012.

Poland states that some egg producers took out loans in the period 1997-2003 to equip henhouses with conventional cages. However, such producers knew that the EU, which their Government planned to join, had adopted a ban on such cages in July 1999. Moreover, the fact that the EU may ban conventional cages had been common knowledge since at least 1996.¹ Any producer who invested in cages in 1997-2003 was taking an imprudent risk and should not now expect to benefit from a postponement.

Poland also argues that it is difficult for producers to move away from conventional cages by 1 January 2012. However, in Germany, whose ban commenced at the end of 2009, many producers made the change in the final six months before the ban came into force. If producers are committed to complying with the legislation, it is possible for them to move to alternative systems by 1 January 2012.

The ban is fully supported by scientific research

Two major reviews of the scientific evidence have been carried out, the 2005 report by the European Food Safety Authority and the 2006 *Laywel* report. Both concluded that the welfare of laying hens is severely compromised in conventional cages.

Postponement would penalize producers who have already invested in change

Poland suggests that the fact that some producers will fail to comply with the ban by the due date is a good reason for postponing it. We do not accept that a postponement is the appropriate response to anticipated non-compliance.

As the European Commission pointed out in its 2008 report, any postponement of the ban would distort competition and penalise those producers who have already invested in alternative or enriched cage systems.

Farmers who have left it until a late stage to change to non-cage or enriched cage systems should not be rewarded for their delay by being granted a postponement of the ban. Such an approach would undermine the credibility of EU legislation and encourage producers in other sectors to seek postponement of legislation by failing to make required changes in a timely manner.

¹ In 1996 the EU Scientific Veterinary Committee concluded that conventional battery cages have "inherent severe disadvantages for the welfare of hens"

Many EU retailers and food businesses are supporting the ban

Many retailers have stopped selling cage eggs. In addition, a number of major operators in the food service and food manufacturing sectors have already declared their support for the EU ban on conventional cages; some have already stopped using cage eggs, other are committed to doing so before 2012.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caroline Lucas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Caroline Lucas

President of the Intergroup