

Labelling of foodstuffs containing eggs regarding the farming method of laying hens

1. Many consumers would like to see mandatory labelling of processed foodstuffs containing eggs that provides information on what kind of housing system was used for the laying hens. In the case of unprocessed chicken eggs, consumers are able to base their purchasing decision on the type of housing, which must be indicated by the numbers 0 to 3 as part of the producer's distinguishing number in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013, Commission Regulation (EC) No 589/2008 and Commission Directive 2002/4/EC. There is no such labelling requirement for processed foodstuffs containing egg as an ingredient. A similar requirement to indicate the type of housing used would give consumers the necessary freedom of choice with regard to processed eggs.
2. For foodstuffs containing eggs, consumers can currently only identify the type of housing of the laying hens if it is voluntarily indicated. The predominant majority of such products sold in Germany does not provide this information, however. A requirement to indicate the type of housing system could improve consumers' trust in the product and process quality of processed foodstuffs containing egg as an ingredient and ensure greater transparency.
3. The type of housing is associated by consumers with the welfare of laying hens. New marketing opportunities generated through a requirement to indicate the type of housing could offer chicken keepers an incentive to select a type of housing that permits greater animal welfare.
4. Animal welfare is one of the topics covered by the Commission's Farm-to-Fork Strategy. The relevant Council conclusions from 19 October 2020 addressed improving animal health and welfare as well as reducing the environmental footprint of the EU's food system, improving (human) health and increasing the appreciation of foodstuffs. Within the scope of these objectives, consumers would also be supported in making informed choices taking into account environmental and animal welfare aspects.
5. Against this background, Germany invites the European Commission to investigate the options for an EU-wide requirement to indicate the type of housing for laying hens on processed foodstuffs containing egg as an ingredient – including administrative burdens for food business operators – and to present a corresponding legislative proposal in order to create harmonized conditions for all animals, animal keepers and consumers within the EU.