

NEWS RELEASE



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Battery cages will be banned in 2012 as European Commission rejects farmers' call for postponement

A report published today by the European Commission that comes down firmly against any postponement of the EU ban on battery cages has been welcomed by Britain's leading farm animal welfare organisation, Compassion in World Farming,

Peter Stevenson, Chief Policy Advisor at Compassion in World Farming said: "The Directive gave farmers a very generous 12 years to move away from battery cages. It's a scandal that the industry has been pressing for even more time.

"Now that the Commission has ruled that there should be no delay, we hope the egg industry will stop fighting the ban and belatedly knuckle down to getting their hens out of cages and into barn and free range systems."

The 1999 EU Laying Hens Directive bans battery cages from 2012. However, farmers in many EU countries – including in Britain – have been pressing for the ban to be postponed for many years. Their hopes have now been dashed by the Commission report which concludes that the ban should come into force as scheduled in 2012.

Mr Stevenson continued: "The spotlight now switches to powerful Member States like France, Spain and Poland, all of which want the ban to be postponed. The question is will they accept the Commission's ruling or will they try to overturn it and get the ban put back or even scrapped? The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has made it clear that the UK does not want the ban to be delayed.

“The Commission’s report is good news for the 18 million hens that are still kept in battery cages each year in the UK – and for the over 200 million a year that are confined in battery cages in the EU.

“Battery cages have long been seen as one of the most inhumane aspects of factory farming. Scientific research shows that battery cages severely compromise hen welfare. The Commission’s report is especially welcome at a time when the public is increasingly concerned about industrial poultry production.”

Notes to the editor:

For further information, interviews, footage or photographs contact: Emily Durrant, Media Officer, Compassion in World Farming on 01483 521952 and 07771 926005 (out of hours) or emily@ciwf.org

- Battery cages are so tiny that the hens cannot even stretch their wings, nor can they perform their natural behaviours of laying their eggs in a nest, pecking and scratching in the ground, dustbathing and perching. Usually four hens are crammed into each cage. In a battery shed, long rows of cages are stacked several tiers high.
- 62% of the UK’s 29 million laying hens are kept in battery cages. 34% are free range and 4% are kept in barn systems.
- Yesterday The Co-operative became the fourth major UK supermarket to commit to phasing out sales of battery hens’ eggs, with only Tesco and Asda so far making no firm commitments to change their egg sourcing policies.
- The report can be found on the European Commission website