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## **French presidency opposes postponement of 2012 battery cages ban**

Compassion in World Farming has welcomed the announcement by The French Presidency of the Council of the European Union (Wednesday 24 September 2008) that it rejects any postponement of the EU ban on battery cages. Michel Barnier, French Minister of Agriculture and current president of the Council, made the statement during a meeting of the European Parliament's Intergroup on the Welfare & Conservation of Animals in Brussels.

Peter Stevenson, Chief Policy Advisor at Compassion in World Farming said: "This is good news. Following the European Commission's January report which concluded that there should be no postponement of the EU ban on barren battery cages, the French Presidency has now also said that there should be no delay to the ban.

"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 been dashed by the European Commission report in January, whose conclusions are now reinforced by Barnier's recent statement."

Mr. Stevenson continued: "The spotlight now switches to powerful Member States like Spain and Poland, which still want the ban to be postponed. The question is will they accept the Commission's ruling and the French Presidency's statement or will they try to overturn them 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 French presidency’s position 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. “

Compassion in World Farming also welcomes M. Barnier’s willingness to further develop the debate about cloning for rearing within the EU and about European legislation on the transport of live animals.

**Ends**

**Notes to the editor**

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- 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.