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CHICKENS AND PIGS SET TO LOSE AT LONDON 2012

Olympic organiser's 'Best of British' includes factory farmed chicken and pork

The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) has published its *Food Vision Paper* for the 2012 Olympics claiming it will serve "the best of British". But the *Food Vision* sets *Red Tractor* as the baseline standard, which permits pigs and chickens to be farmed intensively in some of the worst farming conditions in Britain.

Government funded research has shown that over a quarter of chickens raised to *Red Tractor* equivalent standards suffer painful lameness. Over 3 % are almost unable to walk at all. Supporters of Chicken Out! do not believe this is acceptable at the greatest sporting event in recent British history.

Chicken Out! believes that *RSPCA Freedom Food* should be the mandatory baseline standard, because it is scientifically proven to benefit chicken welfare. However, *RSPCA Freedom Food* is only listed as an 'aspirational standard' along with organic and free-range.

British personalities are speaking out about the Olympic Food Vision Paper. Chicken Out! supporter Joanna Lumley said: "Why would the Olympic organisers not go for the best of the best? What a massive disappointment it will be for our country not to show itself in its best colours with the world's eyes upon us."

Chicken Out! has already amassed over 167,000 supporters and major retailers are recognising the significant demand for *RSPCA Freedom Food* and free-range chicken. If LOCOG's *Food Vision* becomes a reality, London 2012 could serve food which lags way behind established good practice.

For athletes concerned about their diet, intensively reared, fast-growing chicken actually contains more fat than protein. Research has shown that breast meat from slower growing breeds, such as those used in Freedom Foods farms, have more protein than fast-growing breeds and half the amount of fat making higher welfare a healthier option.

River cottage chef and Chicken Out! campaigner Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall said: "It is totally inconsistent and I think inconceivable that we will be watching sports people at their peak of fitness, yet being served chicken by the Olympic Games catering service that not only has an arguably lower nutritional value, but has been produced in a system that causes lameness in over a quarter of the birds. I believe that the 2012 Olympics has a role to play in showing leadership and responsibility in this issue."

Rowen West-Henzell, Compassion in World Farming's Head of Food Business said: "Since 2007 Compassion in World Farming has been urging LOCOG to serve RSPCA Freedom Food chicken and pork at the Games. I'm incredibly disappointed that after presenting LOCOG with scientific and consumer evidence supporting this position, it has chosen to bury its head in the sand on chicken and pork, instead of showing real leadership. The resulting food vision is conspicuous - not for being visionary, but for being completely out of touch with the growing food culture in Britain and what, as a nation, we might wish to eat at our Games."

The Food Vision Paper currently states unmet targets for the percentage of RSPCA Freedom Food meat to be served at the Games. Chicken Out! is calling for an Olympic *Food Vision* to set clear and leading targets to ensure we serve food that Britain can be proud of in 2012.

Chicken Out! is calling for Olympic athletes and celebrities to come forward and join the campaign and help demand 'Good Food for our Games'.

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Notes to editors:

For further information on Chicken Out! or Compassion in World Farming please contact Rebecca Deeny on 01483 521973 / 07771 926005 or email rebecca@ciwf.org

More about Chicken Out! [GOOD FOOD AT OUR GAMES:](#)

Chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall launched The Chicken Out! Campaign in 2007 and it is run in association with Compassion in World Farming. The campaign aims to highlight the unacceptable practice of the intensive factory farming of chickens and encourage consumers to choose higher welfare standards when buying chicken. www.chickenout.tv

Standard intensive chicken comes from farms where chickens are reared in barren and crowded sheds with no outdoor access, no natural daylight and little room to move freely. These birds grow unnaturally fast and at least 25% of standard welfare chickens suffer from painful leg disorders. Many also suffer from ammonia burns on their legs or breast and heart failure. Around 700 million chickens suffer in intensive farming systems every year in the UK, reared quickly and cheaply, to have enough meat to fulfill the average Briton's demand of more than 2 kg of chicken per month.

*Sales of higher welfare indoor-produced chicken meat, such as Freedom Food, increased by 44% in volume between 12/07 and 12/08 due to campaigns such as Chicken Out! according to a TNS survey commissioned by Compassion in World Farming.

Current Chicken Out! support includes, Anthony Head, Bill Oddie, Boyzone, Count Arthur Strong, Jamie Oliver, Joanna Lumley, Jonathan Ross, Kate Humble, Kate Nash, Keane, Ken Livingstone, Nick Baker, Rosie Boycott and Sarah Beeny.

RSPCA statement:

"The RSPCA welcomes the inclusion of animal welfare in the Olympics Food Vision, by making the Games the first ever to only use cage-free eggs. However we are disappointed that the commitment to higher animal welfare standards is not extended to other species such as chicken and pork.

We have met with LOCOG to discuss animal welfare and look forward to working with them to further encourage sourcing of higher welfare food, and promote high standards of welfare for any animals involved in 2012."

For more information or to arrange an interview with the RSPCA please contact Calie Wozzley on 0300 123 0490 or email cwoozley@rspca.org.uk

More about Freedom Food Chicken:

The RSPCA's higher welfare assurance scheme, Freedom Food, reported a 125% rise last year in the number of chickens reared under its scheme to the RSPCA's higher welfare standards (compared to 2007). Freedom Food has also reported a further 3% increase in the first half of 2009.

Standard chicken production in the UK (under Assured Chicken Production guidelines) gives space of 526 sq cm (19 birds/sq m), the equivalent of 15% less than an A4 sheet of paper per chicken.

The RSPCA recommends that chickens bred for meat should be stocked at no more than 15 birds/sq m – equivalent of 7.8% more space than an A4 sheet of paper per chicken.