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Shame on Sainsbury's: Retail Giant Reneges on Chicken Commitment

Leading farm animal welfare charity Compassion in World Farming, is urging the public to shame Sainsbury's following its failure to make meaningful progress to improve chicken welfare standards within its supply chain.

Sainsbury's was one of the first companies to be receive a Good Chicken Award in the UK in 2010, when it announced plans to stock only higher welfare own-label fresh chicken – at a time when public interest in chicken welfare had been raised through a prominent campaign headed by celebrity chefs Jamie Oliver and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall.

Under the Good Chicken Award, Sainsbury's committed to improving the space allowance in its chicken sheds, providing the birds with natural light and enrichment such as straw bales for them to peck at and perch on and moving to a more robust slower growing breed of bird.

According to the Award criteria, these commitments must be met within five years. Unfortunately, Sainsbury's has achieved low conversion on its Good Chicken Award commitments since 2010 and has therefore failed to deliver on its promise. Today less than 20% of Sainsbury's fresh chicken is higher welfare.

Compassion has withdrawn the Good Chicken Award and is calling on its supporters to sign the open letter at shamesburys.co.uk, to tell them what they think of their broken promise. The petition carries a striking spoof apology from 'Shamesbury's' publicising that the retailer has failed to meet its commitment to supply 100% higher welfare fresh chicken.

"After eight years, we've had to call time on this situation," explained Sean Gifford, Head of Public Campaigns at Compassion in World Farming. "By going back on its word, Sainsbury's is consigning millions of animals to a life of misery in overcrowded sheds, where the chickens are selectively bred to grow so big, so fast, that many struggle to walk, and some develop serious heart conditions.

“The UK has long been regarded as leader in higher welfare but as companies like Sainsbury’s backtrack, we are in danger of falling behind other countries in this field.”

At a time when there is increasing public interest in animal welfare and better food, and when so many other companies are bearing the costs to advance their welfare standards, it’s deeply disappointing to see the company that wants to be ‘the UK’s most trusted retailer’¹ backtrack on their higher welfare promise.

Sean Gifford concludes: “Approximately 900 million chickens are reared for meat in the UK each year and a staggering 86 million are wasted – that’s almost 10%.

“By paying a little more, by eating less and wasting less, meat can be produced to higher welfare standards, which is affordable for all. We do need companies like Sainsbury’s to take the lead and make higher welfare meat readily available. By reneging on their promise, they are not just letting their customers and the chickens down but themselves too. We urge everyone who agrees to visit [shamesburys.co.uk](https://www.shamesburys.co.uk) to make Sainsbury’s rethink their actions.”

~ends~

For more information please email mediateam@ciwf.org.uk or call 01483 541 886

To support Compassion’s campaign please visit [shamesburys.co.uk](https://www.shamesburys.co.uk)

Additional information can be found [here](#)

Notes to editors:

1. Compassion in World Farming was founded in 1967 by a British dairy farmer who became horrified at the development of intensive factory farming. Today Compassion is the leading farm animal welfare organisation dedicated to ending factory farming and achieving humane and sustainable food. With headquarters in the UK, we have offices across Europe, in the US, China and South Africa.
2. Introducing higher welfare standards into a business does require financial support, which is often cited as the reason that companies like Sainsbury’s are forced to abandon higher welfare ambitions. However, many Good Chicken Award winners,

¹ <https://www.about.sainsburys.co.uk/making-a-difference/our-values>

such as Waitrose and M&S, remain true to their word today and are bearing the cost to advance chicken welfare.

3. Over 80 companies in the US (including Subway, Burger King and Kraft Heinz) have now made 2024 commitments² to improve the lives of meat chickens by tackling the fundamental problems of fast growing breeds and overcrowding in relatively barren environments, alongside the need for humane slaughter and third party auditing.

In Europe, M&S, Unilever and contract caterer, Elior Group have signed up to new European criteria for meat chickens³, developed jointly by NGOs including Compassion, promising to achieve their aims by 2026. For M&S that means higher welfare chicken across its entire fresh and ingredient chicken supply, for Unilever that means higher welfare chicken in all its bouillons and soups – a truly phenomenal commitment given that the chicken is for ingredients in products where their power in the supply chain is limited, and finally, Elior Group has committed to using higher welfare chicken globally.

4. Like any other business decision, commitments on animal welfare should be made for the long term, embedded into a public facing policy and supported at all levels in the business to ensure they can be achieved. Companies need to invest in production systems that are fit for purpose to ensure that the animals experience a good quality of life and ensure that they will be fit for the future too by meeting the growing demand for more ethical and sustainable food.
5. Other companies that have reneged on their Good Chicken commitments include: IKEA (2017), Coop Italia (2015), Amadori's 10+ Brand, Italy (2015), The Cooperative Food (2014).

² <http://poultryprogress.com/docs/Statement.pdf>

³ <http://welfarecommitments.com/europeletter/>