



# HEALTH AND CONSUMERS

## Food

EUROPA European Commission DG Health and Consumers Overview Animal Health and Welfare

[Live Animals](#) [Semen, Ova & Embryos](#) [Products of Animal Origin](#) [Animal Diseases](#) [Identification](#) [Animal Welfare](#) [Zootechnics](#) [Strategy \(2007-2013\)](#)

### Animal Welfare on the Farm - Laying hens

[Council Directive 1999/74/EC](#),  
adopted in 1999, distinguishes

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three types of rearing systems for laying hens:

- **enriched cages** where laying hens have at least 750 cm<sup>2</sup> of cage area per hen;
- **non enriched cage systems** where hens have at least 550 cm<sup>2</sup> of cage area per hen. From 1 January 2003 onwards such cages may not be built anymore or utilised for the first time. By January 2012 at the latest this system must be prohibited;
- **non-cage systems** with nests (at least one for 7 hens), adequate perches and where the stocking density does not exceed 9 laying hens per m<sup>2</sup> usable area.

The hens kept in the enriched cage systems and the non-cage systems must also have a nest, perching space of 15cm per hen, litter to allow pecking and scratching and unrestricted access to a feed trough measuring at least 12cm per hen in the cage.

Article 7 of the Directive provides that all egg production units must be registered with the competent authorities in Member States. They must each have a distinguishing number which will be used to trace eggs back to the farm where they were produced. The [arrangements for registrations](#)  laid out in Commission Directive 2002/4/EC have been adopted by the Commission after consultation of the veterinary

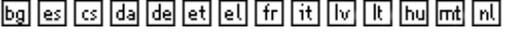
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representatives of the Member States.

Article 10 of the Directive provides that the Commission shall submit to the Council a report on the various systems of rearing laying hens. The Commission adopted this report on 8 January 2008. It details a number of independent scientific and socio-economic studies which lend support to the upcoming ban on unenriched cages. [The report](#)  [pdf](#) ([Working document](#)  [pdf](#)) was drawn up taking into account an [EFSA](#) opinion on this subject, a specific [socio-economic study](#)  and a Community-funded research project ("LAWWEL") which investigated the welfare implications of changes in production systems for laying hens. [Click here](#) for press release.

### **Multistakeholder meeting on the implementation of Council Directive 1999/74/EC**

Conventional cages will have to be phased out in the EU by 1 January 2012 since found unacceptable for animal welfare reasons. Member States are primarily responsible for the implementation of the directive, since its adoption in 1999.

The European Commission is in continuous dialogue with competent authorities from Member States and all sectors concerned in order to focus all existing resources on the implementation of the ban by the legal deadline.

In this context, the Commission organised a multi-stakeholder meeting to discuss the state of play of the implementation of Council Directive 1999/74/EC and available tools to ensure the smooth phasing out of conventional cages by 1 January 2012.

The meeting took place on 19 January 2011 in Brussels and was attended by Member States representatives together with representatives from the industry, farming organisations and animal welfare organisations.

The Commission will follow up on the outcomes of the meeting.

- [Agenda of the meeting](#)  [pdf](#)
- [Press Release](#)

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