

Brussels, 8 January 2008

European Commission Confirms that Cruel Battery Cages Must go in 2012

Eurogroup for Animals has welcomed today's statement by the European Commission that the European Directive banning the keeping of laying hens in battery cages for the production of eggs from 2012 will go ahead as planned.

This follows the adoption of a new report on battery cages by the Commission and is the only logical conclusion due to clear scientific evidence showing that hens suffer in battery cages and consumer rejection of this cruel production system.

Sonja Van Tichelen, director of Eurogroup for Animals, says: *"This is the right decision for the welfare of millions of hens kept for egg production in Europe. The ban was adopted in 1999 after a long campaign with the full support of the European Parliament and the majority of Member States."*

"Changing this decision would not only have been undemocratic but it would have been unacceptable for all those producers who have already abandoned battery cages and invested in alternative systems."

Birds kept in battery cages are restricted from performing natural behaviour such as wing-flapping, dust-bathing and perching as the mesh-wire cages they are kept in are no bigger than the size of an A4 piece of paper. Scientists agree that these problems are inherent to the battery cage and cause severe disadvantages for the welfare of hens.

Consumers and retailers in Europe are increasingly purchasing more welfare-friendly alternatives such as free range or barn eggs and in some countries battery eggs have completely disappeared from supermarket shelves. But the EU is not alone – some food producers such as Burger King and Ben & Jerry's in the US have adopted a cage-free policy.

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The Commission report should be available today at: http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/index_en.htm

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Note to Editors

Eurogroup for Animals, established in 1980, is the European federation of animal welfare organisations. It represents its national member organisations at the European Union level, provides advice and expertise on animal welfare to European institutions and campaigns for animal welfare to be taken into account in all areas of European policy and legislation.