

**EUROGROUP
FOR
ANIMALS**

**PAVING
THE WAY FOR
HIGHER WELFARE
BROILER BREEDS
IN THE EU**

**FROM MARKET INITIATIVES
TO LEGISLATION**

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INTRODUCTION

The revision of the EU's animal welfare legislation, announced by the European Commission in its Farm to Fork Strategy in 2020, provides an immense opportunity to update existing provisions on farm animal welfare, and add duly needed protections for species that have been neglected thus far.

Broiler chickens are one such species. Farmed in exceedingly high stocking densities and with a staggering majority of farmed breeds being fast-growing, low-welfare hybrids, they suffer acutely under the current laws. An immense body of science points to the fact that the most important factor deciding the welfare of a broiler chicken is their breed, and that slower-growing strains exhibit higher welfare outcomes than their fast-growing counterparts.^{1,2}

As such, the requirement to transition to higher welfare, slower growing breeds constitutes one of the key conditions of the [European Chicken Commitment](#) (ECC, also known as the [Better Chicken Commitment](#) in non-European countries). The ECC is a chicken welfare policy adopted by over 570 companies around the globe.³ Turning to slower-growing breeds is also one of the recommendations provided by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in its scientific opinion on the welfare of broiler chickens⁴, where the scientific body states that *"the health and welfare status of broilers mainly depends on the genetics"*. In the same scientific opinion, selection for fast growth is identified as one of the major hazards for reduced welfare in broilers. It is, therefore, high time this crucial welfare aspect was legislated on, in-line with the commitments of the European Commission to elevate animal welfare provisions⁵, and with the will of EU citizens.⁶

In this document, we discuss several countries' current commitments to improve the welfare of broilers, the possible legal routes to legislate on broiler genetics, and the existing market measures (schemes and labels) that include criteria on broiler welfare. We also share a case study of a market that has undergone a substantial transformation: the Dutch market transitioning to Beter Leven 1-star. It is a prime example of a market-driven initiative that has fundamentally changed the landscape of a whole national market, as 100% of fresh chicken meat sold in Dutch supermarkets is now sourced from higher welfare broiler production.



Image:
Compassion in
World Farming

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EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA COUNTRIES COMMITTED TO IMPROVING BROILER WELFARE

Several EU Member States and European Economic Area (EEA) countries have recognised the importance of phasing out fast-growing broiler breeds, and have done so by announcing a shift of public procurement policies towards higher welfare breeds.

[In Sweden](#)⁷, new criteria developed by the Swedish National Agency for Public Procurement include standards for higher welfare chicken breeds, in-line with European Chicken Commitment. As we publish this paper, there are two propositions in the Swedish Parliament to ban fast-growing breeds nationwide ([proposition number 1](#)⁸ and [proposition number 2](#)⁹). The committees will discuss which proposals to bring up in plenary.

[The Danish government](#)¹⁰ and key Danish political parties have agreed to phase out the state procurement of fast-growing chickens, and vowed to back a ban on the farming of fast-growing broilers at the EU level.



THE DANISH POLITICAL AGREEMENT INCLUDES FOUR KEY POINTS TO:

- 1** Establish a working group shedding light on animal welfare challenges in relation to the production of broiler chickens in Denmark.
- 2** Phase out the production of fast-growing broilers at the EU level.
- 3** Campaign under the auspices of the State Animal Welfare Label with effect from 2024. The campaign must contribute to promoting demand for slower-growing broilers. The campaign's budget will be one million DKK annually in 2024-2027.
- 4** Phase out the Danish government's procurement of fast-growing broilers.

The working group will prepare a report on animal welfare standards in Danish broiler production, including the conditions for parent animals. The report will gather input from relevant stakeholders and incorporate experiences from the Animal Welfare Label and other countries.

Notably, the Danish government openly declared its support for a ban at EU level, and is actively engaged in achieving it. The agreement is clear about the ambitions of Denmark to be at the forefront of the work to improve animal welfare at EU level, and ensure a level playing field for European producers. Local governments are following suit, with [Frederiksberg](#)¹¹ introducing a resolution in their municipal government to ban the public procurement of fast-growing broilers.

[In Norway](#)¹², The Animal Ethics Council recommended the banning of fast-growing breeds such as Ross 308. The Norwegian government has been working on recommendations to give to the parliament, which will most likely revise the Norwegian animal protection law in the near future. The Norwegian government has appointed the Council, and this progressive move clearly shows that animal welfare is truly a fundamental issue for Norwegian society.

There are also Member States with significant market-driven initiatives addressing the need to transition to higher welfare breeds, such as [the Netherlands](#)¹³, where the only available fresh chicken meat sold in supermarkets is that of slower-growing broilers. The leading Dutch retailers took this initiative years ago to ensure that Dutch consumers bought products aligned with their values (see case study in [Annex I](#)). Many Dutch supermarkets developed labelling schemes to improve consumer transparency (see [Annex II](#)).



Image:
Hubbard

SUGGESTED LEGAL ROUTES

Existing legislation regulating broiler breeds

Currently, legislation regulating organic production includes the only legal reference to slower-growing or slow-growing broiler breeds in EU legislation. Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 (recital 10) states that *"Organic husbandry practices should prevent poultry from being reared too quickly. Therefore, specific provisions to avoid intensive rearing methods should be laid down. In particular, poultry shall either be reared until they reach a minimum age or else shall come from slow-growing poultry strains so that in either case there is no incentive to use intensive rearing methods."*¹⁴

Article 12(5) states that *"To prevent the use of intensive rearing methods, poultry shall either be reared until they reach a minimum age or else shall come from slow-growing poultry strains. Where slow-growing poultry strains are not used by the operator the following minimum age at slaughter shall be 81 days for chickens." And that "The competent authority shall define the criteria of slow-growing strains or draw up a list thereof and provide this information to operators, other Member States and the Commission."*¹⁴

Both the European Commission and the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) define slow-growing broilers as those slaughtered at between 70-81 days.^{15,16} They also refer to birds reared to at least 56 days old as 'slower-growing' birds.¹⁵

Many Member States further regulate the breeds used in organic production (for details, see [Annex III](#)).

Image:
Hubbard



What should legislation on broiler breeds look like?

The starting point for legal provisions should be the EFSA scientific opinion on the welfare of broiler chickens, followed by the ECC criteria for slower-growing breeds. The ECC¹⁷ is a science-based chicken welfare policy that is both approved and supported by animal welfare organisations and animal welfare scientists. It is **already adopted by a large number of leading companies**, demonstrating that **better chicken welfare and market competitiveness are compatible**.

The criteria of the European Chicken Commitment were tested in numerous scientific studies¹⁸ and the authorisation of permitted breeds is based on a widely tested protocol (see [Annex IV](#)). The ECC structure provides an adaptable positive list. This serves as a strong basis for legislation that meets the most recent scientific findings and EU consumers' increasing expectations for higher animal welfare standards in Europe, as well as takes into account evolving technology. The feasibility of going further than the current ECC is demonstrated by the wide adoption of other labels going beyond the ECC's requirements, described in detail in Part 2 of this document.

To date and regarding the types of breeds authorised, the ECC requires signatories to adopt breeds that demonstrate higher welfare outcomes: either the following breeds, Hubbard Redbro (indoor only), Norfolk Black, JACY57, JA757, 787, 957, or 987, Rambler Ranger, Ranger Classic, and Ranger Gold, or others that meet the criteria of the RSPCA Broiler Breed Welfare Assessment Protocol. The ECC thereby provides an **adaptable positive list**.

Why is a positive list of approved breeds the best solution for animals?

AN ADAPTABLE POSITIVE LIST WOULD:



Determine very precisely which breeds are allowed to be farmed or not, providing farmers and breeders with clarity.



Add additional breeds to the list with a level of flexibility, since there would be no need to go through the whole legislative process again to adjust the list, facilitating innovation leading to better animal welfare outcomes and encouraging sustainable investments.

A positive list eases comprehension and clarity of the legislation for stakeholders, and facilitates implementation by authorities and inspectors. Its adaptability allows the rule to quickly adjust to the market without compromising the broilers' welfare. As breeds approved under the European Chicken Commitment are widely adopted and have scientifically proven high welfare outcomes, they are natural candidates for the positive list of approved breeds. To ensure the list is adaptable, the EURCAW-Poultry should produce a protocol to assess the eligibility of other breeds to be added. The protocol used for assessing breeds included in the ECC ([Annex IV](#)) can serve as a basis for developing such a framework.

The aforementioned protocol, used for assessing breeds acceptable under the standards of the ECC, includes a daily growth rate limit and animal welfare indicators, proving that animal welfare can go hand-in-hand with market success, as many companies follow these standards. Thus, the protocol used to determine the positive list of breeds acceptable under the new legislation should incorporate a daily growth rate limit as a vast body of science¹², including EFSA recommendations, points to this parameter as the key factor influencing broiler welfare. EFSA recommends that the growth rate should be limited to a maximum of 50 g/day to mitigate negative welfare effects.⁴

Many protocols used by labelling entities listed in [Annex V](#) and [VI](#) include animal welfare indicators, such as measuring levels of hock burn or foot pad dermatitis. The welfare outcomes of the animals in the farming unit must be monitored regularly with the use of adequate animal welfare indicators.



Image:
Compassion in
World Farming

Suggested legal options

Below, three options for legal texts are presented, from the most to the least protective measures.

OPTION 1: Most protective measures

The preferred option, as described above, is the one which provides a positive list of breeds authorised for farming, with an incorporated protocol including animal welfare indicators and a daily growth rate limit.

Article 1. Definitions

For the purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

1 "Slower-growing breed" means one of the following hybrids: Hubbard Redbro (indoor only), Norfolk Black, JACY57, JA757, 787, 957, or 987, Rambler Ranger, Ranger Classic, and Ranger Gold, or any other that meets the criteria of the EURCAW-Poultry-SFA Broiler Breed Welfare Assessment Protocol. Another slower-growing breed can be added to the list mentioned in paragraph 1 when it has been recognised as a slower-growing breed by the EURCAW-Poultry-SFA, pursuant Article 5;

2 "EURCAW-Poultry-FSA" means European Union Reference Centre for the Welfare of Poultry and Other Small Farmed Animals;

3 "Operator" means any natural or legal person having animals or animal products under their responsibility, including for a limited duration of time, but excluding pet keepers and veterinarians.

Article 2.

The following articles set out the principles ruling the breeding standards to be followed by operators in broiler production systems.

Member States and operators are encouraged to go beyond those minimum standards.

Article 3.

Operators must adopt breeds that demonstrate higher welfare outcomes. Therefore, they are allowed to only use "slower-growing breeds" as defined in Article 1, paragraph 1, or breeds that have passed the EURCAW-Poultry-FSA's protocol as indicated in Article 1, paragraph 2, and defined in Article 5.

Article 4.

The welfare of broilers has to be monitored by adequate welfare indicators. These will be measured on-farm and at the time of slaughter. In the case of surpassing agreed upon thresholds for a welfare indicator controlled at the time of slaughter, further farm visits must be carried out by the relevant authority. Records of the levels of welfare indicators must be kept on farm.

Article 5.

1 In addition to the breeds mentioned in Article 1, paragraph 1, operators are allowed to breed breeds that have been recognised as "slower-growing" by the EURCAW-Poultry-FSA.

In order to implement paragraph 1, the EURCAW-Poultry-FSA must set up a protocol that is at least as strong as the Broiler Breed Welfare Assessment Protocol that has been set up by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and adopted by the European Chicken Commitment. Such protocol aims at determining whether a new breed, called the 'trial breed', can be considered as slower-growing or not. The point of comparison for this trial breed will be the breed Hubbard JA757, called the "control breed".

2 For the full implementation of paragraph 1, the Commission shall, by means of delegated acts, determine the mission of the EURCAW-Poultry-FSA in terms of establishing the protocol to be followed to categorise a breed as slower-growing.

In this regard, the Commission shall take into account the following:

a The welfare of the trial breed will be compared to that of the control breed to inform a decision regarding its acceptability for use. Several characteristics will be used to help guide this decision, such as average daily weight gain, mortality rate and cause of mortalities, gait score, foot disorders, welfare of the broiler breeders and/or others if deemed appropriate;

b Generally, for a trial breed to be accepted as "slower-growing", its welfare must be at least comparable to that of the control breed and its maximum daily growth rate must not exceed the relevant threshold value of 50 g per day. If the daily growth rate of a breed that is intended to be used in free range systems exceeds the threshold value of 50 g per day, but is otherwise considered acceptable, then consideration may be given to assessing the acceptability of the breed, with chicken welfare being the only relevant criteria for acceptance and the potential need to determine the conditions in which the broilers must be kept for the breed to be accepted as slower-growing;

c The protocol aims at determining the potential level of welfare of a breed and to enable the breed to grow to its genetic potential by providing it with optimal conditions and a freely available, non-limiting diet;

d In order to carry out the test, the EURCAW-Poultry-FSA appoints an independent research centre in each Member State (hereafter, "independent research centre"), which will carry out the tests; the EURCAW-Poultry-FSA must provide this independent research centre with the criteria to be met, the protocol to be followed and the results to be achieved for a breed to be classified as "slower-growing" and eligible to be included in the list of approved breeds;

e The decision-making process involves the company working with one of the independent research centres appointed by EURCAW-Poultry-FSA;

f The trials are to be conducted at the selected independent research centre; there must be a minimum of two trials with four pens per breed in each trial. If the results are not clear after two trials then further trials may be required;

g If the independent research centre concludes that the breed passed the protocol, the breed is accepted as a slower-growing breed; if not, the breed has to go through additional stages of review and consultation with the EURCAW-Poultry-FSA, before the committee reviews, discusses, and then votes to make a decision.

Article 6.

The use of breeds with a daily growth rate exceeding 50 g per day, called "fast-growing breeds", is forbidden unless exceptions falling under the scope of Art. 5 (2b) apply.

Article 7.

Operators must keep their delivery receipts for at least 10 years, to enable inspectors to check whether only slower-growing breeds have been used.

Relevant Member State authorities shall carry out annual checks of units farming broilers including farm records in order to ensure that only birds of slower-growing breeds are raised.



Image:
Compassion in
World Farming



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OPTION 2: Intermediary protection



A less desirable option due to a lower level of animal welfare protection, but still acceptable and efficient, would be to establish a negative list of breeds forbidden to be farmed. This would be established by EURCAW-Poultry-FSA in an equivalent process to the one described above (in Option 1).

Article 1.
Definitions

For the purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

- 1 "Fast-growing breed" means a breed that gains over 50 g of weight per day and is further defined as "fast-growing" by the EURCAW-Poultry-FSA pursuant Article 4;
- 2 "EURCAW-Poultry-FSA" means European Union Reference Centre for the Welfare of Poultry and Other Small Farmed Animals;
- 3 "Operator" means any natural or legal person having animals or animal products under their responsibility, including for a limited duration of time, but excluding pet keepers and veterinarians.

Article 2.

Operators are prohibited to farm breeds that qualify as "fast-growing breeds" as defined in Article 1, paragraph 1.

Article 3.

The broilers' maximum weight gain is 50 g per day.

Article 4.

- 1 In order to implement Article 2, the EURCAW-Poultry-FSA must set up a protocol whose aim is to determine whether a breed is to be considered fast-growing. The protocol will be based on several characteristics and animal welfare indicators such as: average daily weight gain; mortality rate and cause of mortalities; gait score; foot disorders; welfare of the broiler breeders and/or others if deemed appropriate.
- 2 Every year, the EURCAW-Poultry-FSA will evaluate the list of fast-growing breeds to ensure that the list is up to date.
- 3 For the full implementation of paragraph 1, the Commission shall, by means of delegated acts, determine the mission of EURCAW-Poultry-FSA in terms of establishing the protocol to be followed to categorise a breed as fast-growing.

Article 5.

Operators must keep their delivery receipts at least during 10 years, to enable inspectors to ensure fast-growing breeds have not been used.

Relevant Member State authorities shall carry out annual checks of units farming broilers including farm records in order to ensure compliance.



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OPTION 3: Lowest protection

The option with the lowest level of animal welfare protection would be to include an average daily weight gain threshold in the legislation, above which breeds could not be approved to be farmed. The threshold would be 50g/day as recommended by EFSA.

Article 1.
Definitions

For the purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

- 1 "Fast-growing breed" means a breed that gains over 50 g of weight per day;
- 2 "EURCAW-Poultry-FSA" means European Union Reference Centre for the Welfare of Poultry and Other Small Farmed Animals;
- 3 "Operator" means any natural or legal person having animals or animal products under their responsibility, including for a limited duration of time, but excluding pet keepers and veterinarians.

Article 2.

Operators are prohibited to farm breeds that qualify as "fast-growing breeds" as defined by Article 1, paragraph 1.

Article 3.

The broilers' maximum weight gain is 50 g per day.

Article 4.

Operators must keep their delivery receipts at least during 10 years, to enable inspectors to ensure fast-growing breeds have not been housed.

Relevant Member State authorities shall carry out annual checks of units farming broilers including farm records in order to ensure compliance.



ANNEX I

CASE STUDY:

The Dutch transition to higher welfare broiler production

1. HIGHER WELFARE BROILER BREEDS AS THE NEW STANDARD IN THE NETHERLANDS

1.2 Conditions for change

Broiler production in the Netherlands has recently seen a major shift with a new broiler concept: the "Chicken of Tomorrow", introduced during 2014 - 2015. The transition to higher welfare broiler production in the country started with the introduction of the Beter Leven 1-star label in 2007.

This alternative broiler breed has now replaced the previous conventional concept for the Dutch fresh broiler meat market, and represents 40% of total domestic production⁶¹ with plans for expansion. The market of fresh chicken meat in the Netherlands is 100% higher welfare, slower-growing broilers.

In one investigation, researchers identified the key conditions that made this transition possible.⁶² Firstly, in the Netherlands, retailers are the main actors in the value chain and hold the market share for broiler sales. They are therefore well-positioned to bring about change in the chicken sector.

To facilitate this shift to slower-growing broiler production nationwide, Dutch retailers secondly had to be willing to make changes and see the benefits these changes would have in terms of their image and social responsibility. Various studies have shown that Dutch consumers are willing to pay for improved animal welfare standards in the Netherlands, which constituted an incentive for retailers.⁶³⁻⁶⁵

Furthermore, the transition needed to not be too costly in terms of production. Retailers were not ready to make the shift to 1-star Beter Leven, but wanted to improve broiler welfare. Cost-efficiency analyses identified breed-related aspects as being prime areas in this regard³⁰, and revealed in addition that the changes had to lie in the middle segment between conventional and organic, extensive outdoor systems.⁶⁶ All of these conditions meant that positive change in terms of animal welfare was possible, albeit with a step-by-step approach. The next step was to elicit the change

1.2 Triggers for change

In the Netherlands, a series of events led to this positive change for broiler chickens, along with key campaigns from NGOs coining the term "exploding chicken" to describe the unnatural growth seen in conventional broilers.⁵⁵ The success of these campaigns catalysed public outcry and, consequently, action from retailers. The two biggest retailers in the Netherlands (Jumbo and Albert Heijn) responded by launching their own higher welfare standards for broilers^{60,67} and were soon followed by all the other supermarket chains in the Netherlands.⁶⁸ This led to the conventional fast-growing broiler chicken being replaced in all of the Dutch fresh meat markets with chickens that benefit from a higher level of animal welfare. Since February 2024, all Dutch supermarkets are selling at least Beter Leven 1-star fresh chicken meat.

1.3 Other positive impacts

This positive change for animal welfare has not negatively impacted the industry in any way, as after an initial slight drop in sales after all supermarkets switched to Beter Leven 1-star, sales have returned to their previous level, indicating that retailers did not lose their market share and that consumers were willing to pay the additional costs for higher welfare. What is more, the "Chicken of Tomorrow" and the Beter Leven concept also addressed public health and environmental concerns by requiring fewer antimicrobials, as the higher welfare birds are more robust and therefore less at risk of catching and spreading diseases.⁶⁹ "Responsible soy" in the feed, is also an additional benefit seen from the new broiler concept.



ANNEX II

1. DUTCH SUPERMARKET LABELS

Because of the progress that has been made in the Netherlands, with supermarkets all coming together to improve the standards for broiler chickens, several supermarkets developed their own labels. These were in use in the transition phase to the current market situation - as of February 2024, all supermarkets in the Netherlands supply at least Beter Leven 1-star fresh chicken meat. The list below elaborates on specific supermarket labels that were in use during the transition period to Beter Leven 1-star.

1.1 Albert Heijn⁵³

Albert Heijn is a Dutch supermarket chain that introduced specific standards for the broiler chickens it produces and sells. In particular, it focused on the following breeds: Hubbard JA 957, JA 757, Rowan Ranger, Cobb Sasso 150, and the Sasso SA 451 N, as well as other slower-growth breeds that are recognised by the Beter Leven organisation and have an average maximum growth rate of 45 g per day. Currently, all fresh chicken meat sold by Albert Heijn meets at least 1-star Beter Leven standards.

1.2 Boons Markt⁵⁴

Boons Markt is a Dutch supermarket chain that established the label "Betere kip" (or Better Chicken) for its chicken products. The Better Chicken is a slower-growing breed, which according to Wakker Dier, has a maximum average weight gain of 45 g per day.⁵⁵ Currently, all fresh chicken meat sold by Boons Markt meets at least 1-star Beter Leven standards.

1.3 Poiesz⁵⁶

The Dutch supermarket chain Poiesz took the decision to only use slower-growing broiler breeds, and developed the label "Chicken of a Slower Growing Breed" for its products. According to Wakker Dier, its birds have a maximum average weight gain of 50 g per day.⁵⁵ Currently, all fresh chicken meat sold by Poiesz meets at least 1-star Beter Leven standards.

1.4 Aldi (The Netherlands)⁵⁷

Aldi stores in the Netherlands all transitioned to slower-growth chickens, and all of their chicken products have at least 1 star level of the Beter Leven scheme. Wakker Dier reports that Aldi defines slow-growth as an average maximum weight gain of 47 g per day.⁵⁵

1.5 PLUS⁵⁸

PLUS transitioned to slower-growth breeds for its chicken products, with a slaughter age of around 46 days, and a maximum daily average weight gain of 50 g. Currently, all fresh chicken meat sold by PLUS meets at least 1-star Beter Leven standards.

1.6 Lidl (The Netherlands)⁵⁹

Lidl stores in the Netherlands all committed to use slower-growth chickens. Wakker Dier reports that Lidl defines slow-growth as an average maximum weight gain of 50 g per day.⁵⁵ Currently, all fresh chicken meat sold by Lidl meets at least 1-star Beter Leven standards.

1.7 Jumbo⁶⁰

Jumbo transitioned to slower-growth broiler breeds before fully adopting the 1-star Beter Leven quality level. According to Wakker Dier, its birds have a maximum average weight gain of 45 g per day.⁵⁵

1.8 Others

According to Wakker Dier, the following Dutch stores also transitioned to slower-growing broilers with a maximum average daily weight gain of 50 g:⁵⁵ the Coop, Dekamarkt, Dirk, Hoogvliet, Jan Linders, SPAR, Vomar, Boni, and Picnic. The following use slow-growing broilers with a maximum average daily weight gain of 45 g:⁵⁵ MCD and Nettorama. Currently, all markets mentioned above sell fresh chicken meat that meets at least 1-star Beter Leven standards.

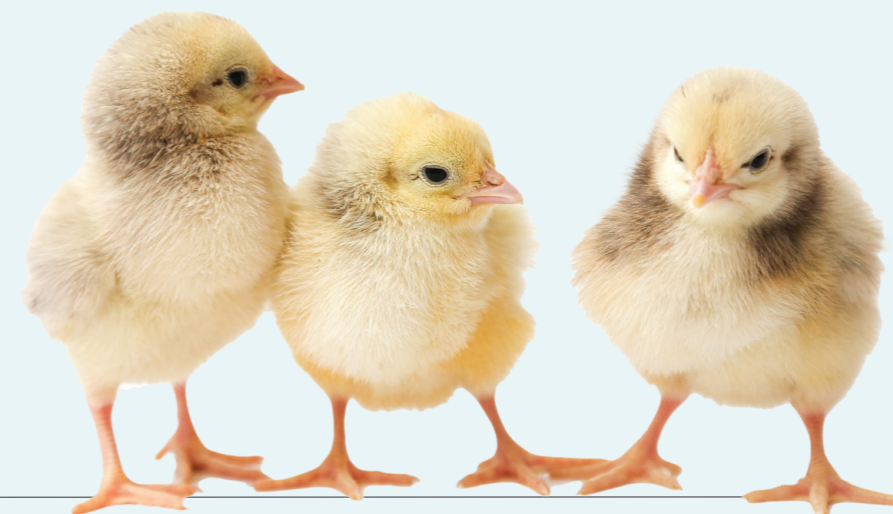


ANNEX III

List of Member States with specific provisions on the type of broiler breed permitted for organic farming

MEMBER STATE	LEGAL SOLUTION
Malta	The European Rural Poultry Association (ERPA)'s ¹⁹ 2015 presentation stated there was no organic production in Malta. Organic production has since been on the increase, and the competent authority on organic farming practice is the Ministry for Environmental, Sustainable Development and Climate Change, Rural Development Department. However, they list no specific definition for slower-growing broilers in the Subsidiary Legislation 427.93 Organic Production and Labelling of Organic Products Regulations, ²⁰ and only require producers to comply with the EU Regulation (EC) No 889/2008. ¹⁴
Germany	The Working Group of the Federal States on Organic Farming of Germany ²¹ defines slow-growing broilers as those strains whose growth rate is, at most, 80% of the daily growth rate of the strains bred for top efficiency. To aid with the calculation, the yearbook for poultry is used, which has the respective published evaluation results for conventional broilers on-farm. ²² To provide context for this, if the average daily weight gain for a conventional broiler is 65 g/day which is the case for the Ross 308 ²³ , a slower-growth broiler can then be defined as one that grows up to 52 g/day. However, according to information gathered from European interlocutors and presented to the European Parliament, Germany defines slow-growing broilers in organic production as an average 41 g weight gain per day. ²⁴
Sweden	Swedish regulations for organic farming define slower-growing broilers as those with an average daily weight gain of 45 g. ^{25,26}
Romania	According to the ERPA, Romania was in the process of developing its definition for its organic legislation. However, there is still no reference to slow growth in either Order no. 895 ²⁷ or Order no.1253. ²⁸
Finland	In 2014, Finland notified the European Commission that it defines slow-growth organic broilers as breeds with a maximum average daily weight gain of 35 g per day. ²⁹
Poland	In 2014, Poland notified the European Commission that it defines slow-growth organic broilers as breeds with a maximum average daily weight gain of 45 g per day, and has confirmed a list of slow-growing strains. ²⁹
The Netherlands	Organic systems in the Netherlands have a minimum growing period of 70 days for slow-growing breeds, and 81 days for non-slow-growing breeds in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 889/2008. ^{14,30} According to information gathered from European interlocutors, and confirmed by the Dutch Society for the Protection of Animals, the Netherlands define slow-growing broilers in organic production as an average 40 g weight gain per day. ²⁴

MEMBER STATE	LEGAL SOLUTION
Spain	According to information gathered from European interlocutors, Spain defines slow-growing broilers in organic production as an average 35 g weight gain per day. ²⁴ ERPA states that Spain also has a list of local traditional strains as part of its definition. ²⁹
Austria	The Bio Austria Regulations for Organic Farming in Austria list the minimum slaughter age for non-slow-growing breeds of chickens as 81 days. ³¹ According to information gathered from European interlocutors, Austria defines slow-growing broilers in organic production as an average 40 g weight gain per day. ²⁴
Denmark	According to information gathered from European interlocutors, Denmark defines slow-growing broilers in organic production as an average 38 g weight gain per day. ²⁴
France	In 2014, France notified the European Commission that it defines slow-growth organic broilers as breeds with a maximum average weight gain of 27 g per day, and confirmed a list of slow-growing strains. ²⁹ According to information gathered from European interlocutors in 2020, France continues to define slow-growing broilers in organic production as an average 27 g weight gain per day. ²⁴
Belgium-Wallonie	In 2014, Belgium-Wallonia notified the European Commission that it defines slow-growth for organic broilers in terms of a list of approved slow-growing strains of broilers, and a minimum age of slaughter. ²⁹
Belgium-Flanders	In 2014, Belgium-Flanders notified the European Commission that it defines slow-growth for organic broilers in terms of a list of approved slow-growing strains of broilers. ²⁹



ANNEX IV



SCAN THE QR CODE TO READ THE
"RSPCA BROILER BREED WELFARE
ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL".



ANNEX V

1. EU AND INTERNATIONAL ASSURANCE SCHEMES AND LABELS

1.2 European Chicken Commitment³²

The European Chicken Commitment (ECC) and the Better Chicken Commitment (BCC) are science-based chicken welfare policies that are approved and supported by animal welfare organisations all over the world. They list the following breeds as being appropriate and demonstrating "higher welfare outcomes": Hubbard Redbro (indoor use only)*; Hubbard Norfolk Black, JA757, JACY57, 787*, 957, or 987* †, Rambler Ranger, Ranger Classic* † and Ranger Gold, or other breeds that meet the criteria of the RSPCA Broiler Breed Welfare Assessment Protocol.

The decision-making process for additional breeds to be accepted by the ECC involves, first, the company working with one of the ECC organisations to test the breed at an independent research centre according to the RSPCA Broiler Breed Welfare Assessment Protocol. Second, the results have to be submitted to the Technical Working Group of the European Chicken Commitment, and if they and the research institute conclude that the breed meets the thresholds set by the protocol, then it can be accepted as an ECC-approved breed. If not, the breed has to go through additional stages of review and consultation with the RSPCA, before the committee reviews, discusses, and then votes to make a decision.

*RSPCA Assured now lists these breeds as being "under derogation" and in the process of being further improved.

† RSPCA Assured does not approve these for free range systems.

1.2 Better Animal Welfare: The Danish Governmental Animal Welfare Label³³

Better Animal Welfare is a governmental animal welfare label from the Danish government. It was developed by the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration in collaboration with key stakeholders. The voluntary scheme includes a staircase model with three different levels (1-3 hearts), representing increasing levels of animal welfare. All three levels are stricter than the Danish and EU legislation for animal welfare, and all require slower-growing breeds for broilers.

Slower-growing breeds are defined as: "Broilers, where both parents are of a slower growing breed, where the average daily gain (Average Daily Gain), cf. the breeding companies' specifications on the breed, is a minimum of 25 per cent less than Average Daily Gain for breed Ross 308. Where Average Daily Gain is given as a range, the average is used in the calculations."³³

For instance, if the Ross 308 has an average daily weight gain of around 65 g²³, this would mean that the Better Animal Welfare scheme classifies an average weight gain of 49 g/day and below as slower-growing.

1.3 Beter Leven³⁴

Slower-growing breeds are required for all levels as the slaughter age must be 56 days for levels 1 and 2, and 81 days for level 3. Beter Leven lists the following breeds as being approved for all levels of their scheme: Ranger Gold, Rambler Ranger, Hubbard JA 257, 957, 757, Rowan Ranger, Cobb Sasso 150, Sasso SA 451 N. They will also accept applications for other breeds to be assessed and approved by the Animal Protection Society, with particular consideration for the following characteristics: slower-growing (average growth rate is a maximum of 45 g per day), mortality rates and causes, gait scores, foot disorders, and welfare of the broiler breeders.

1.4 CIWF Food Business Good Chicken Awards³⁵

The Good Chicken Awards are run by the animal welfare organisation Compassion in World Farming every year, to recognise companies that use or are committing to use (within five years) higher welfare chicken breeds. The awards are now granted in-line with the European Chicken Commitment, and therefore require the same breeds as listed in the ECC, along with any other breeds that meet the criteria in the RSPCA Broiler Breed Welfare Assessment Protocol.

1.5 Demeter (BioDynamic Research Institute)³⁶

The Biodynamic Federation Demeter International is an agricultural association with a network of individual certification bodies for biodynamic farmers across the globe. In their standards, slow-growing breeds are only listed as a recommendation. However, all chickens must be at least 81 days for slaughter.

1.6 Für Mehr Tierschutz³⁷

Für Mehr Tierschutz is an animal welfare label created by Deutscher Tierschutzbund (German Animal Welfare Association). According to its standards, both the basic and premium levels of certification have a mandatory requirement for extensive to medium-extensive breeding lines with slower growth. In particular, a maximum daily growth rate of up to 45 g (according to the genetic growth potential shared by the breeding company) is permitted. They do allow up to 51 g daily weight gain when the breeding company can be approved for various criteria. These include:

- Scientific evidence from gait score studies that the breeding line has no more than 5% of the flock with a Grade 1 gait score;
- Gait score assessments are performed every nine months, and abnormalities are reported immediately;
- The livestock owner has to check for and rule-out breeding-related causes (lameness, cardiovascular diseases) when the average mortality rate is exceeded for the first time.

Für Mehr Tierschutz recommends breeding broiler lines with a maximum weight gain of 35 g/day. They also recommend breeding lines that avoid the need for restrictive feeding of the parent animals. They advise monitoring the birds' movement behaviour and their use of perches, when the maximum value of 51 g is used, to observe whether the performance of the birds is worse than those of a maximum 45 g daily weight gain.

1.7 GlobalG.A.P. Animal Welfare Add-on³⁸

GlobalG.A.P. is a brand of farm assurance solutions developed in Germany with various food industry stakeholders, producers and retailers. In its standards, it states that slow-growing breeds are only required to be used if the producer's customers require them. There are no criteria for what a slow-growing breed looks like, as it is stipulated by the customer.

1.8 Krav³⁹

Krav is an organic labelling scheme in Sweden that covers various criteria, including animal welfare and sustainability. Currently, the label standards define slow-growing breeds as those that grow no more than 45 g per day. From 2032, slow-growing breeds will be defined as breeds where the animals grow an average of 40 g a day.

1.9 Label Rouge⁴⁰

Label Rouge is a French label that identifies a production method based on an approved high animal welfare specification. Label Rouge breeds are included as permitted birds under the Europe Chicken Commitment, as they have, in general, growth potential of lower than 30 g/day. Furthermore, Label Rouge has a minimum slaughter age of between 81 - 110 days.

1.10 Svensk Fågel⁴¹

Svensk Fågel is the industry organisation for Swedish poultry production and breeding, and accounts for 98% of the food poultry production in Sweden. Their label "Gula Pippin" does not include the criteria in European Chicken Commitment, but they have a promise on better stunning methods by 2025.

1.11 Recommended by Animal Protection (Anbefalet af Dyrenes Beskyttelse)⁴²

Animal Protection Denmark is an animal protection organisation in Denmark that has its own welfare assurance label "Recommended by Animal Protection", that covers a wide range of animal products. It states on its website that the brand ensures that the chickens included are of a slow-growing breed.

ANNEX VI

1. NON-EU ASSURANCE SCHEMES AND LABELS

1.1 ACO Certification Ltd (Australian Certified Organic)⁴³

ACO is Australia's largest certifier for organic and biodynamic produce. In its standards, it encourages the use of slow-growth breeds that are grown for a minimum of 70 days. ACO believes that fast-growing breeds do not "taste better", so they advocate for the use of only slow-growth breeds. However, they do not define slow growth.

1.2 A Greener World (AGW): Animal Welfare Approval (AWA)⁴⁴

AGW is an international labelling scheme with a range of labels covering animal welfare and environmental issues. Its standards for the Animal Welfare Approval label specify an average maximum weight gain of 40 g per day on an optimum ratio for good welfare. AGW takes the information from the breeding company or hatchery that supplies the birds, and not from individual farms. If negative welfare impacts that are related to growth rates, such as lameness, skeletal health issues and high mortality, are seen or reported, AGW will require breed and/or management changes to be made.

The use of birds from traditional breeds is recommended in the standards but is not essential, although this recommendation is to be reviewed annually, with the intent to make it a requirement once sufficient suitable stock is available.

1.3 Global Animal Partnership (GAP)'s Better Chicken Project⁴⁵

Global Animal Partnership is one of the largest animal welfare food labelling programmes in North America. Its Better Chicken Project was a collaborative project initiated by GAP to establish a research-based framework, to reinvent the modern-day broiler chicken. It involved a collaboration of scientists, broiler breeding companies, producers, buyers and animal welfare advocates to develop a research-based framework for assessing the welfare of different broiler breeds. The result was a protocol that GAP now uses to test breeds at accredited research facilities, to determine whether they are eligible for certification under GAP's 5-Step Standard for Broiler Chickens. Before this research, the scheme based breed selection on published average weight gain as outlined below.

2020: GAP's 5-Step standards (v3.2)⁴⁶

Before developing its new protocol, GAP's 5-Step standards (version 3.2) used the following guidance for broiler breeds.

The criteria for growth rate varied across the different Steps:

- For Steps 1-3, the maximum average growth rate must not exceed 68 grams per day;
- For Step 4, the maximum average growth rate must not exceed 50 grams per day;
- For Step 5, the maximum average growth rate must not exceed 45 grams per day;
- For Step 5+, the maximum average growth rate must not exceed 35 grams per day.

Note: Compliance is determined by GAP from the breeder's published data.

GAP also listed specific breeds which were accepted for each Step of their scheme, shown in the tables below. GAP used the published breeders' data for chickens at 42 days of age to create standardised data for all breeds and strains. It then used this information to set the maximum Step-level that can be achieved for each breed/strain.



This information is shown in the concurrent tables below.

Table 1: Broiler breeds/strains that are acceptable for the various Steps in the GAP scheme (1 – 5+).⁴⁶



SOURCE	BREED/STRAIN	AV. DAILY GAIN (AS HATCHED) (LBS/DAY)	MAXIMUM STEP ACHIEVABLE
Cobb Vantress	Cobb 500	0.150	3
Cobb Vantress	Cobb Sasso 150	0.077	5+
Cobb Vantress	Cobb 700	0.139	3
Ross	Ross 308	0.147	3
Ross	Ross 708	0.140	3
Ross	Rowan Ranger	0.090	5
Hubbard	Classic	0.150	3
Hubbard	F15	0.147	3
Hubbard	Flex	0.150	3
Hubbard	H1	0.149	3
Hubbard	JV	0.140	3
Hubbard	F915	0.136	3
Hubbard	JA287	0.110	4
Hubbard	JA787	0.110	4
Hubbard	JA987	0.110	4
Hubbard	JA257	0.099	5
Hubbard	JA757	0.099	5
Hubbard	JA957	0.099	5
Hubbard	JACY87	0.099	5
Hubbard	JACY57	0.088	5
Hubbard	Redbro	0.077	5+
Hubbard	Redbro Cou Nu (Poulet Rouge Fermier)	0.065	5+
Crystal Lake Farms	Free Ranger	0.091	5
Freedom Ranger Hatchery	Freedom Ranger	0.092	5
Centurion Poultry	Sagitta	0.048	5+
S&G Poultry	Heritage White	0.095	5
S&G Poultry	Red & Rainbow Ranger	0.074	5+

GAP noted that some operations will achieve different growth rates from those in Table 1, and that some operators rear birds to different slaughter ages. Table 1 and the approach was a stop-gap while the study determining specific requirements for each Step level was underway, and while they transitioned all Step levels to higher welfare genetics (by January 1 2024). Using this process meant that a Step 3 operation, for example, could use a Cobb 500 bird, regardless of their on-farm performance and growth rate and their age/weight at slaughter.

2021: Broiler Chicken Assessment Protocol (v1.0)⁴⁷

Upon completion of the two-year research project, GAP, along with a multi-stakeholder Technical Working Group including breeding companies, producers, scientists and animal advocates, used the results from the research to develop a protocol for testing broiler breeds. It uses the protocol to test breeds at GAP accredited research facilities to determine whether they are eligible for certification under the GAP 5-Step Standard for Broiler Chickens scheme. The protocol blind-tests the breeds against a conventional breed as a control, and scores them on numerous health, environmental and welfare criteria (e.g. foot pad dermatitis, litter condition and lameness). The breed has to score 80% or higher overall to be accepted. Please see the website⁴⁵ for more information.

Table 2. The GAP-approved broiler breeds/crosses listed on its website (July 2022). GAP specifically states that it is the specific cross as listed in the table that is approved, and not the individual female and male parent line or the reverse combination.⁴⁵

Approved Broiler Breeds (i.e. approved crosses)	From Parent Stock:	
	Female Line	Male Line
Aviagen Ranger Classic	Aviagen Ranger	Aviagen Classic
Aviagen Ranger Gold	Aviagen Ranger	Aviagen Gold
Aviagen Ranger Premium	Aviagen Ranger	Aviagen Premium
Aviagen Rowan Ranger	Aviagen Ranger	Aviagen Rowan
Cobb-Sasso 200 (CS200)	Cobb 500	Sasso C441
Cooks Venture Pioneer	Cooks Venture Pioneer	Cooks Venture Pioneer
Hubbard JA757	Hubbard JA757	Hubbard M77
Hubbard JA787	Hubbard JA87	Hubbard M77
Hubbard JACY87	Hubbard JA87	Hubbard CorolYield
Hubbard REDBRO	Hubbard REDBRO	Hubbard M77
Hubbard Redbro M	Hubbard Redbro M (mini)	Hubbard Redbro

With this new protocol, GAP has moved away from the previous emphasis on weight gain, and average weight gain is not even included as a criterion. Instead, it tests the birds at two different target weights: target weight one, where the average weight of all the birds in one breed reaches 2.5 kg, and target weight two, where the remaining birds grow to an average of 3.2 kg or to a maximum of 84 days (whichever comes first).

GAP lists the following breeds and crosses on its website as those that currently meet its minimum eligibility score for all its Steps (Table 2). The breeds are also in-line with the Better Chicken Commitment for slow-growing breeds. The list is not meant to be exhaustive, and GAP invites producers and breeding companies to test any breeds they think are eligible as long as they are tested using GAP's Broiler Chicken Assessment Protocol, and at a GAP-accredited research facility.

1.4 Organic Farmers and Growers (OF&G)⁴⁸

The OF&G is the UK's second-largest organic certification body. In its standards, slow-growing breeds raised under full organic management have no set minimum slaughter age. Slow-growing breeds sourced from non-organic sources cannot be slaughtered before 71 - 73 days. Its standards also state that where slow-growing strains are not used, the minimum age for slaughter is 81 days under Article 12 (5) (regulation no 889/2008).¹⁴

The Livestock Production Standards document states that "Bird types must be suitable for organic free-range production, and in the case of table-birds, slow growing".⁴⁸ OF&G classifies slow-growing breeds as those with an average daily weight gain of no more than 35 g and not exceeding 60 g/day at the steepest point of the growth curve. The average weight gain figures are to be taken from published data for the strain, grown under optimum conditions. Also, where birds are suffering from breed-associated issues, such as higher gait scores, OF&G may recommend or require a change of breed.

1.5 Soil Association (SA) Certification Limited⁴⁹

The SA is the UK's largest organic certification body. Its standards state that breeds must either meet Defra's definition of slow-growing⁵⁰ (no more than 45 g per day)* or be on the RSPCA's list of welfare-approved free-range broiler breeds. The slaughter age for chickens is a minimum of 81 days. Poultry strains with intermediate growth rates are also permitted.

* Although the SA refer to Defra's definition of slow-growth as being a maximum of 45 g weight gain a day, there appears to be no online reference to this. It appears to be archived.

1.6 Red Tractor⁵¹

Red Tractor is a food chain assurance scheme in the UK. In the standards for its Enhanced Welfare label, Red Tractor requires lower stocking densities and specific slower-growing breeds compared with its other labels. It stipulates the same breeds as approved by the BCC as a way to enable its licensees and producers to meet the specifications of the BCC. The Red Tractor states that not only does stating specific breeds as a requirement ensure it is in-line with the BCC, but that it is a more holistic approach to improving welfare, as the breeds are known to have improved wellbeing across a range of welfare measures and not just slower-growth rates.

1.7 RSPCA Assured⁵²

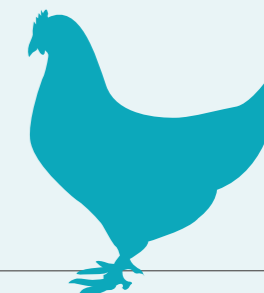
UK-based RSPCA Assured is the RSPCA's not-for-profit farm animal welfare assurance scheme, and requires breeds to be tested according to the RSPCA Broiler Breed Welfare Assessment Protocol. This Protocol uses a range of welfare criteria to test whether breeds are suitable for RSPCA Assured broiler production. It does not define slow growth per se, but does include growth rate as one of the criteria, and has a threshold of 60 g average growth rate per day for birds permitted for use in RSPCA Assured in indoor systems, and 52 g for free-range systems.



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