



EGG PRODUCERS FEDERATION

Of New Zealand (Inc)

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Egg Producers Support Welfare Code

The Egg Producers Federation, the industry body representing all egg farmers in New Zealand including free-range, barn and cage production systems, welcomes and supports the Animal Welfare (layer Hens) Code of Welfare 2004 issued today by the Minister of Agriculture, Jim Sutton.

This new Code gives greater status to animal welfare considerations and this is important, says Michael Brooks, Executive Director of the Federation. The Code is the result of a thorough and robust process involving wide public and industry consultation over three years. It has been developed by the Government appointed National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) which is an independent committee of professionals, including some with agricultural and scientific backgrounds and including representatives from animal welfare groups.

“It has been important for us that the creation of the Code has taken place quite independent of the industry - so there can be no accusation of undue influence. There was no representative of the egg industry on NAWAC. Industry people were involved in the writing group seconded by NAWAC to provide practical technical input, but so too were representatives from welfare activist groups. Final decisions were made by NAWAC.

“The egg holds a unique position in the New Zealand diet. It is a low cost source of protein and nutrition enjoyed by all New Zealanders. Egg consumption in New Zealand is high by world standards and the challenge for NAWAC has been to ensure that any welfare regulations are carefully examined because of the potential disruption that they could have on both the consumer and the industry,” says Brooks.

“I believe this Code will stand the test of time. It is firmly based on science and common sense. NAWAC sought detailed scientific analysis on key points to ensure that decisions were soundly based on evidence and not supposition or emotive rhetoric. The industry has been pleased to be able to assist by commissioning independent research on welfare practices and will continue to do so. There is simply no scientific justification for a ban on cage production and with the modifications to cages that are taking place all the time the arguments against cages will diminish.

“It needs to be remembered that this is a Code for all egg production systems – cages, barn and free-range. This Code sets standards that the Egg Producers Federation will actively support with its members. Our focus is on continually improving farming practice and in our experience good welfare practice naturally follows”, says Brooks.

“The situation in Europe is often inaccurately portrayed. Less than a handful of countries have banned, or are intending to ban, cages in the face of clamour from activists. These countries meet demand for eggs by importing large quantities of cage-produced eggs from neighbouring countries. Not only is this exporting their conscience, but there is a rapidly growing realisation that these countries have hobbled their egg industry and have handed a competitive advantage to neighbouring countries. Debate on these issues in Europe is about to intensify as egg industries and the public realise exactly what they have let themselves be pushed into.

“New Zealand has a small but powerful economy built on primary production. Farming practices have always drawn heavily on science, research and innovation combined with a strong streak of Kiwi common sense. This approach is evident in all the codes that have been developed under the Animal Welfare Act.

“The industry has been pro-active in encouraging the development of this Code and of good farming practice. There is no room in today’s society for anyone, no matter what production type, that maltreats an animal. To this end the EPF will actively assist authorities in the implementation of this code.

“The egg industry in New Zealand has been through a rapid modernisation programme in the last five years with standards across all production types steadily improving. We have some distance to go, but examples of poor practice, and regrettably there have been some, are very much the minority and this Code, together with other measures, will accelerate us towards the goal of comprehensive modernisation across the industry,” says Brooks.

“Finally, once the requirements of welfare are met - in line with the Code - the choice of purchasing eggs is for the consumer at the point of sale. Consumers have preferences relating to the nutritional qualities of eggs, their price and welfare considerations, and they are entitled to them,” says Brooks.

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For further information:
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