

Dear Treasury,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide the following comments on free range egg labeling.

I feel this matter involves two significant, but separate, issues:

- (1) Cruelty to animals*
- (2) Fraudulent labeling & advertising*

If egg producers are proud of the way they produce their eggs and treat their animals (chickens), then they should have no qualms about clearly and honestly advising their customers of these practices.

The reluctance of egg producers' (and distributors, retailers etc.) to accept/meet basic standards indicates they are ashamed of their own behaviour and do not want consumers to be aware of the specifics of how their eggs are produced.

As a consumer, I want to have confidence that when I pay a premium for a product, it meets my expectations. Because there is no national, enforceable standard for free range eggs, it's difficult to tell which eggs are genuinely free range and which eggs aren't. This is unacceptable considering free range eggs come with a price premium over caged eggs.

I would not accept a standard that allows producers to call their eggs free range when their hens don't actually go outside on most ordinary days, and have an outdoor stocking density of over 10,000 hens per hectare. These producers should call themselves something else that reflects their production process and does not undermine the market for genuine free range eggs.

'Free range' means that hens must freely roam outside and have room to move, indoors and out. The Model Code of Welfare states that hens should have a maximum stocking density of 1,500 hens per hectare. I support this definition.

Labels are meant for consumers. I urge you to put Australian consumers first and enforce a definition that is based on what consumers want and understand free range to be.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

*Yours sincerely,
Garry Hanstead*