

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Free Range Egg Labelling Consultation Paper.

A legislated definition of free-range eggs is critical to ending the exploitation of consumers and the unfair market that confronts genuine free-range farmers.

In order to meet consumer expectations of animal welfare, it is essential that the definition of 'free-range' includes specific conditions like stocking density and husbandry practices.

Taking this into account, I believe that the following definition of 'free-range' should be legislated:

"Free-range production systems must have a maximum stocking of 1,500, as outlined in the Model Code of Practice. It must be ensured that hens can, and do, move about freely on an open range on most days. De-beaking is not permitted as a routine procedure."

I support 'free-range' remaining a single, premium label. New labels like "premium free-range" and "access to range" will cause further confusion and potentially allow for the exploitation of consumers to continue.

Production systems that stock hens intensively at 10,000 birds per hectare should not be permitted to use the 'free-range' label.

Independent, third party accreditation of farms to ensure they adhere to agreed standards is critical to restoring consumer confidence.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Mervyn McKibben