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**NOTE**

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations  
Subject: Ban on laying hens in cages  
– *Information from the Czech delegation*

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Delegations will find in Annex an information note submitted by the Czech delegation on the above mentioned subject to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council ("Agriculture and Fisheries") on 21 September 2020.

## **Ban on laying hens in cages**

European citizens ask for egg-laying hens to be kept in the better welfare conditions. In past this kind of initiatives led to a ban on battery cages in Europe in 2012. The Czech Republic would like to suggest a smooth harmonised transition in European egg production in order to keep equal conditions within the Union Single Market.

The Czech Republic proposes to the European Commission as part of the improvement of the laying hen welfare to consider harmonized ban on caged laying hens from 2030 at the latest.

- Currently, the issue of laying hens kept in battery cages at the European Union level is addressed by Directive 1999/74/EC, which prohibits the use of conventional cages in egg production since 2012 and laying hens must be kept only in so-called enriched cages or alternative farms.
- The Czech Republic is in favour of a responsible approach to animal welfare rules, including fully switched to laying hens systems that comply with the relevant Directive.
- EU consumers are demanding a further increase of the laying hen welfare and many retail chains are moving from sales of eggs from caged laying hens to aviary-produced eggs.
- However, Member States have different approaches to the production of eggs from enriched cages.
- Some Member States prohibit enriched cage farms and require producers to supply eggs only from laying hens from alternative farms.
- Unilateral bans on cage farming at national level, as decided by individual Member States, are not desirable as they lead to unequal conditions within the single market.

- In order to ensure the competitiveness of egg producers in the individual Member States, the issue of cage farming needs to be addressed in a harmonized way at the European Union level.
- In order to comply with the legislative requirements, farmers have spent considerable funds, it will be necessary to compensate for possible losses of farmers who will be forced to close down the farm or write off unpaid investments as a result of the ban on cage farming.
- The Czech Republic calls on the European Commission to analyse the current situation regarding the economic impacts on the market in the context of the ban on battery cages and submit a legislative proposal banning the production of eggs from enriched cage farms in the European Union.
- Furthermore, the European Commission should address the issue of eggs imports from the cage farming from the third countries where egg producers do not have to comply with the strict animal welfare requirements demanded in the European Union.

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