

# Survey of supply of noncaged eggs throughout supermarket chains in the Czech Republic



# 1. Introduction

## *Farming systems*

The Laying hen could be farmed in a few different ways. The most common way of farming eggs in the Czech Republic, and also in Europe, are in battery cages. The other types are barn, free-range and organic. There are two possible methods of breeding battery hens, unenriched and enriched. In both types of battery caging, hens have a space allowance smaller than an A4 sheet.

(For English version of report - more information and a detail description on types of breeding of hens can be found at [www.ciwf.org](http://www.ciwf.org) Chickens Out or Publication).



## *EU Directive*

Conditions of stated breeding are regulated by Council Directive 1999/74/EC.

The new Laying Hens Directive (Council Directive 1999/74/EC) bans the use of conventional unenriched battery cages from 2012. After this, enriched cages should only be used, although the welfare of laying hens is questionable.

## *Breeding laying hen in the Czech Republic*

It is estimated that approximately 50-55 % of the total Czech Republic egg-laying population of 9-10 million are currently farmed in agricultural sector where 97% hen are kept in completely unsatisfactory conditions of caged farming. Around 2,7 % are bred in barns (source of the Department of Agriculture).

Currently, there are only 2 farms producing organic eggs in the whole Czech Republic. (on the photo is one of farms, hens can not use a run due a bird flu limitations)



## *Hens suffer in cages*

There is no need to emphasise that every animal trapped in cage or any small space suffers.

Hens in cage breeding systems spend their entire life, around 13 - 14 months, squashed, without freedom or the possibility to leave the cage.

The lack of space prevents the hen stretching and to flap its wings. Sloping wire cage floor causes painful footpads, overgrown nails and often stops them from standing up straight. With no opportunity to exercise many develop osteoporosis, very brittle bones and they often break. Throughout the whole their life, they are imprisoned in dusty dark environment and are unable to see daylight. Intensive farm breeding degraded this animal to machines (robots), who are only allowed to intake food and lay eggs – nothing else.

**Change for the better is possible** - It is in the hand of every consumer (for those who aren't lucky enough to get them directly from small breeder or relatives) depending what eggs he/she will choose when shopping. The consumer creates demand for what eggs will be produced and in what conditions.

### ***Compulsory labelling of eggs***

The compulsory labelling of the farming method used to produce eggs is possible to find on the egg box and the code number directly stamped on eggs:

Caged eggs / vejce nosnic v klecích – code 3

Barn eggs / vejce nosnic v halách – code 2

Free-range eggs / vejce nosnic ve volném výběhu – code 1

Organic / vejce nosnic v ekologickém chovu – code 0



Unfortunately, in the Czech Republic, the consumer will be hard pressed to find organic, barn or other high quality eggs on the market. Free-range eggs are not possible to buy at the moment.

According to the figures published by the Department of Agriculture, the average consumer ate 249 eggs in 2007.

### ***Supply of non-caged eggs abroad***

In comparison with other EU countries, a supply of noncaged eggs in supermarkets and awareness of unnecessary suffering of laying hens is, unfortunately, still slim.

- A good example is Austria, where since 2007 every supermarket offers caged eggs and from 2009, will be forbidden to breed hens in both types of cages.
- In Dutch supermarkets caged eggs are being banned.
- In the United Kingdom – big supermarkets (including Waitrose and Marks & Spencer) have stopped selling caged eggs and some they eliminated the use of caged eggs in their products (dried etc.).
- In Belgium – together with five supermarkets, fast food chain McDonalds have joined.<sup>2</sup>
- In Germany – Since 2007, a ban of unenriched breeding, with exception until 2009.
- In Sweden – 50% of egg production is from noncaged systems, in Denmark 40%.

### **Aim of the survey**

Survey was designed to find out which large supermarket chains in the Czech Republic offers in their range noncaged eggs and from what method of breeding.

We believe that food retailers in the Czech Republic (currently mainly large chains) react to huge demand for eggs. The cheap price of the sold eggs isn't redemption for animal suffering.

*The survey of public voice of EU Eurobarometr shows that nearly 50% asked customers are willing to pay a bit more and therefore provide better living conditions for the animals.<sup>1</sup>*

## 2. Survey and results

A questionnaire was sent to 13 large supermarket chains (and shopping coalitions) in the Czech Republic, in the second half of 2007:

Kaufland ČR v.o.s  
Lidl v.o.s.  
Makro Cash & Carry ČR s.r.o.  
Norma k.s.  
Penny Market s.r.o.  
Plus – Discount s.r.o.  
Tesco stores ČR a.s.  
Ahold ČR a.s. – Albert  
Ahold ČR a. s. – Hypernova  
Billa s.r.o.  
COOP Centrum družstvo  
Globus ČR k.s.  
Interspar Spar ČOS s.r.o.

From the above mentioned number of addressed supermarkets, only 6 sent back their completed questionnaire. Five didn't respond to our repeated phone calls, e-mails and letters. Two expressed, they are not interested to take part in our survey.

Interviewed:

- Took part in our survey:  
Lidl v.o.s., Norma k.s., Albert a Hypernova společnosti Ahold ČR a.s., COOP Centrum družstvo, Interspar Spar ČOS s.r.o.
- Did not fill the questionnaire and did not respond at all to our repeated phone calls, e-mails and letters: Makro Cash & Carry ČR s.r.o., Penny Market s.r.o., Plus – Discount s.r.o., Tesco stores ČR a.s., Billa s.r.o.
- Not interested to take part in our survey:  
Kaufland ČR v.o.s a Globus ČR k.s.

**Table 1: Eggs offered by existing chain (shopping coalition) in their range**

<b>Name of the supermarket chain (coalition)</b>	<b>caged eggs</b>	<b>barn eggs</b>	<b>organic eggs</b>
Lidl v.o.s.	YES	NO	NO
Norma k.s.	YES	NO	NO
Albert (Ahold a.s.)	YES	YES	YES
Hypernova (Ahold a.s.)	YES	YES	YES
Coop Centrum družstvo	Don't hold any information on their range of eggs	Don't hold any information on their range of eggs	Don't hold any information on their range of eggs
Interspar Spar COS s. r.o.	YES	YES	NO

Free-range eggs are still not possible to buy at the moment at all.

The table shows, that the supply of barn and organic eggs are very low.

- Ahold a. s. offers the biggest selection of noncaged eggs. Organic eggs make 1 % in total sale of eggs in hypermarkets Hypernova (51 Hypernova) and 0,2 % in supermarkets Albert (46 Alberts). Barn eggs make 7% in total sale of eggs in hypermarkets Hypernova (in 53 Hypernova) and 10 % in supermarkets Albert (243 Alberts).
- Interspar Spar COS s. r. o. offers to their customers barn eggs only, according representative of Interspar, this is 10 % from their whole range of eggs, eggs are Czech origin.
- Coop Centrum doesn't hold any information on their range of eggs
- Lidl v.o.s. a Norma k.s. offer only caged eggs at the moment.



We visited at random a few stores from each supermarket chain which did not take part in our survey and we have no information from their representatives. We discovered barn eggs in Tesco Stores ČR, Globus ČR k. s. and in Billa s. r. o. We managed to buy German organic eggs in Plus – Discount s. r. o. And some Billa s. r. o. Stores.

**Table 2: Plans to increase supply noncaged eggs in their shops, eventually to begin selling if noncaged eggs are not offered**

<b>Name of the supermarket chain (coalition)</b>	<b>initiation/expansion of sale noncaged eggs</b>
Lidl v.o.s.	YES
Norma k.s.	NO
Albert (Ahold a.s.)	YES
Hypernova (Ahold a.s.)	YES
Coop Centrum družstvo	Don't hold any information on their range of eggs
Interspar Spar COS s.r.o.	NO

**Table 3: Common obstacles stopping to extend the range of noncaged eggs or stopping its sale**

<b>Name of the supermarket chain (coalition)</b>	<b>initiation expansion of sale noncaged eggs</b>
Lidl v.o.s.	expensive, small demand
Norma k.s.	expensive
Albert (Ahold a.s.)	Insufficient supply of noncaged eggs from Czech suppliers
Hypernova (Ahold a.s.)	Insufficient supply of noncaged eggs from Czech suppliers
Coop Centrum družstvo	Don't hold any information on their range of eggs
Interspar Spar COS s.r.o.	Slightly expensive for their customers

Number of interviewed representatives state that the reason is the insufficient demand of their customers because of the higher price. According our survey many customers are willing to pay a bit more for eggs produced in more humane conditions (in some chains, offering noncaged, we spotted that organic ones were sold out).

Organic farmers state that, there is a huge interest in eggs from supermarkets but unfortunately, they can't meet the demand at the moment. Same as representatives of Ahold Czech republic a.s. stated, there is a not sufficient supply of noncaged from Czech egg producers.

The public needs to show their interest in eggs farmed in better conditions and therefore, to motivate egg producers to change conventional breeding for organic or free-range. Further, plead for support from government for farming systems considering welfare of hens.

### 3. Conclusion

In comparison with the EU countries, supermarket chains and alliances in the Czech Republic offer to their customers a very small amount of eggs which are bred in systems respecting their natural behaviours and needs (it is not compulsory to state the method used to produce eggs on the products).

Nevertheless, changes for better could – and according Společnost pro zvířata/Society for Animals should – take both supermarket chains and customers alone. The government should also take the action to change the situation to better.

**Supermarket chains**, offering only battery eggs should also include in their range noncaged eggs. **Consumers** should openly show their interest in noncaged by contacting supermarkets directly and their representatives and the Department of Agriculture by writing.

For those that don't agree with breeding battery hens in horrific conditions, the best way to end up their suffering is to stop eating the caged eggs and start buying noncaged ones. They will help their own health, conscience, our environment and will support the breeder of these hens.

**Government** should effectively support the producers of noncaged eggs and work towards better awareness of how free-range and organic farming has positive impact on bred animals, our health and our environment.

**The Government should** also thoroughly **check labelling on egg boxes**. The writing how eggs have been produced is often far too small, unreadable. Egg box from caged breeding has often on it deceiving colour pictures of free-range hens on a meadow in bloom but these hens never see the meadow in their entire life, only possibly, when transported in boxes to slaughterhouse.

---

<sup>1</sup> Eurobarometer: Attitudes of consumers towards welfare of farmed animals, Feb. – March 2005, s. 50

<sup>2</sup> Eurovoice for Animals, Eurogroup for Animals, Issue 18, s. 5

---

related materials:

[www.spolecnostprozvirata.cz](http://www.spolecnostprozvirata.cz), link Slepice or Nabídka materiálu kampane, link English

- na [www](http://www) je ke stažení či objednání leták – pohled určený supermarketům a ministerstvu zemědělství se všemi kontakty a další materiály,
- leták pro spotřebitele: „Víte jaká vejce kupujete?“
- materiály k problematice ohrožení zákazu užití nezdokonalených klecí, který má platit od roku 2012: např. materiál „Zachovejme zákaz nezdokonalených klecí“, zpráva Evropské komise ke směrnici o minimálních standardech chovu nosnic ES/74/1999

in English - more information about breeding of hens, chickens at: [www.ciwf.org](http://www.ciwf.org)

---

*Společnost pro zvířata/Society for Animals is a nongovernmental non-profit organisation. Its aim is to contribute and assure welfare for every animal that it could live a fulfilling life, have the freedom to express their natural behaviour and ensure that their psyche, physical and social needs are fulfilled.*

*Another aim of the organisation is contributing to acceptance of an ethical way of thinking and living by everyone through the sense of realization the worthiness of animals' lives and not causing them intentional or unintentional pain, suffering and deprivation.*



misleading egg box of caged eggs of firm „Česká vejce-Czech eggs“



egg box with barn eggs



egg box with organic eggs, including logo Bio (green)

**Společnost pro zvířata – z.o. ČSOP**  
 Lublaňská 18, 120 00 Praha 2  
[s.pro.zvirata@ecn.cz](mailto:s.pro.zvirata@ecn.cz)  
[www.spolecnostprozvirata.cz](http://www.spolecnostprozvirata.cz)  
 č. ú. 158182860/0300

leden/January 2008

## VÍTE JAKÁ VEJCE KUPUJETE?



Nákupem vajec pocházejících  
z chovů šetrných ke zvířatům  
můžete ukončit stádní slepek  
vkládaných v kletkách.



The survey was supported by:





YOUR CHOICE CAN FREE THE HENS

**VEJCE Z KLECI**



**VEJCE Z EKO - BIO CHOVU**



**Každé vejce je označeno:**

- podle jakosti třídy: EXTRA, A, B;
- dále čísly: první číslo označuje způsob chovu slepic -  
1 – volný výběh, 2 – chov v hale, 3 – chov v klecích,  
0 – chov ekologický Bio;
- další čísla: registrační kód státu a poslední čtyřmístné je registrační číslo hospodářství.