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Rasmus Prehn,
Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries,
Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries of Denmark,
Slotsholmsgade 12
1216 København K

6th July 2020

European Citizens' Initiative 'End the Cage Age': Please support EU-wide end to caged farming

Dear Minister Rasmus Prehn,

Ahead of the AGRIFISH Council Meeting on 19 July, we are reaching out to you to inform you about the latest developments regarding the 'End the Cage Age' European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) and ask for Denmark to express support for a 2027 EU-wide prohibition on the use of cages in animal farming at the Meeting.

In this upcoming meeting, the European Commission intends to share its response to the concerned ECI and its plans moving forward as detailed in its Communication from 30 June 2021.¹ In the Communication, the Commission commits to put forward a legislative proposal by 2023 to phase out the use of cages for farmed hens, rabbits, pullets, quail, ducks and geese, broiler breeders and laying hen breeders, as well as sow stalls and farrowing crates and individual calf pens. It is examining the possibility of enacting legislation to this end by 2027.

Even more, the Communication includes potential funding opportunities to facilitate the transition for farmers. For example, the Commission encourages the Member States to use the eco-schemes under the upcoming CAP to support the transition away from cages. It will also look into options to ensure that imported products adhere to EU standards, which will be explored in an impact assessment.

The Commission's historic response to the ECI is following broad political support from other EU Institutions. On 10 June 2021, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution in which it commends the aims of the Initiative and calls on the European Commission "...to propose a revision of Council Directive 98/58/EC on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes with the objective of phasing out the use of cages in EU animal farming, assessing a possible date by 2027..."² Furthermore, the Committee of the Regions also backed the call, as voted in their adopted Opinions on the Common Agricultural Policy (December 2019) and Agroecology (February 2021).³

According to conservative estimates, in the EU, 300 million farmed animals spend all or most of their lives in cages every year.⁴ Caging animals deprives them of every sense of autonomy and inhibits

¹ Communication from the Commission on the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) "End the Cage Age", C(2021) 4747 final. Online: <https://bit.ly/2Uf5cpI>

² European Parliament resolution of 10 June 2021 on the European Citizens' Initiative 'End the cage age' (2021/2633(RSP)). Online: <https://bit.ly/2TpL0kO>

³ European Committee of the Regions, 2021: 'The CoR supports the European Citizens' Initiative against the practice of rearing animals in cages', Press Release. Online: <https://bit.ly/3wilxpM>

⁴ Compassion in World Farming, 2020: End the Cage Age. Why the EU must stop caging farmed animals. Online: <https://bit.ly/3x9JyI6>



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them from exercising most of their basic behaviours. The health and welfare impediments, as well as the suffering in cages, is well documented by a wealth of scientific research, including opinions from the European Food and Safety Authority (EFSA). This large-scale suffering is completely unnecessary as alternatives to cage systems are economically viable and already in use.⁵

Having recognised that consumers increasingly place importance on animal welfare, hundreds of food businesses are ending the use of cages already. In a recent letter, leading businesses, including Unilever, Nestlé, Barilla, Ferrero and Mondelēz, commend the aims of the ECI.⁶ Likewise, scientists have not been silent in the face of these political developments but shared their expertise calling on the EU to end the cruel and outdated practice of caged animal farming.⁷

Some EU Member States have already taken unilateral steps towards the end of the cage age or called for an EU-wide solution.⁸ Enriched cages for laying hens are banned or will be banned in Austria and Luxembourg, France, Germany, Czechia, Wallonia (Belgium) and Slovakia.⁹ Sow stalls or farrowing crates are or will be banned or limited in Sweden, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and Austria.¹⁰ There are further rules on cages for rabbits in Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, Flanders (Belgium) and Sweden.¹¹

That the European Commission has agreed to phase out cages for farmed animals across Europe is a monumental event that marks an overwhelming victory. Most of all for the millions of animals, but also for the 1.4 million EU citizens who made their voices heard and took their struggle to the lawmakers of the European Union¹². In Denmark it will improve the lives for millions of farmed animals, including sows, calves, and hens, whose unworthy existence behind bars needs to end.

Therefore, dear Minister Rasmus Prehn,

During the AGRIFISH Council Meeting on 19 July, we call on you to support the Commission's Communication on the 'End the Cage Age' ECI and the foreseen end of the use of cages in animal farming by 2027.

Please be assured that we are at your disposal for any questions or discussions that you may wish to raise.

Kind regards,

Anima

Dyrenes Beskyttelse

Dyrenes Venner

World Animal Protection Danmark

⁵ Compassion in World Farming, 2021: Scientific briefing on caged farming. Overview of scientific research on caged farming of laying hens, sows, rabbits, ducks, geese, calves and quail. Online: <https://bit.ly/3h9dJDt>

⁶ Open letter "The time is right to act now" from Food Businesses. Online: <https://bit.ly/2TqXyZ1>

⁷ Open letter "Scientists support an end to caged farming throughout the EU". Online: <https://bit.ly/3dR9Tgr>

⁸ Compassion in World Farming (2021): 'End the Cage Age': European Citizens' Initiative for Farmed Animals. Impact to date. Online: <https://bit.ly/3dy4918>

⁹ Communication from the Commission on the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) "End the Cage Age", C(2021) 4747 final. Online: <https://bit.ly/2Uf5cpl>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Compassion in World Farming, 2021: Our campaign. Online: <https://www.endthecageage.eu/#ourCampaign>