

To: Dan Jørgensen
Minister of Agriculture
Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries
Slotsholmsgade 12
1260 Copenhagen V
Denmark



23 January 2015

Reply to: Labelling Matters.
C/o Compassion in World Farming,
River Court, Mill Lane,
Godalming,
Surrey,
GU7 1EZ,
United Kingdom

Dear Mr Jørgensen,

In October, you received a letter from 85,000 EU consumers calling for method of production labelling of poultrymeat.

You also received a letter from Labelling Matters (a partnership project of Compassion in World Farming, Eurogroup for Animals, RSPCA, and Soil Association), and Dyrenes Venner with whom we work closely.

Thank you for your Ministry's reply, signed by Frederikke Thye. We agree that consumers should have clear, comprehensible information. Research from 2013¹, accepted by the European Commission², shows that 84% of EU consumers support the extension of mandatory method of production labelling, based on the existing, successful shell egg scheme.

Joint Statement on Animal Welfare

We were heartened to read in your 14th December Joint Statement, signed alongside the ministers for agriculture for The Netherlands and Germany, that improved information for consumers is high on your shared list of priorities.

We believe European consumers have a right to know **how** their food has been produced, not just **where** it comes from. When they have this information consumers are able to make informed choices and deliver sustainable, market-led improvements in farm animal welfare.

Promoting economic growth

Method of production labelling offers an opportunity for growth in the agricultural sector. Where mandatory labelling exists, many consumers have chosen to reward higher welfare farm systems. The success of shell egg labelling has been recognised by the British Egg Industry Council, which has called for an extension of the scheme to egg products.

The critical driver has been guaranteed point of sale differentiation. We believe that many other producers would like to be able to invest in higher welfare farm systems, but because the market is opaque, they don't believe they'll be adequately rewarded by consumers.

Mandatory labelling will help provide the confidence necessary for producers to invest in higher welfare systems, and add value to their businesses.

New research into confusing labels

New research into existing meat and dairy labels, commissioned by Labelling Matters, will be published in January 2015. The research shows that many consumers are genuinely confused about the farm system used to produce their food. Even those who believe they have a good understanding of modern farming methods often find it hard to accurately identify higher welfare products.

The research supports our view that consumer information regarding animal welfare and in particular the farm system of origin is inadequate. Words such as 'Farm Fresh', or 'Country Fresh', and pictures of green fields and 'happy' animals, can imply higher welfare standards than actually exist. This confusion distorts the market place – against higher welfare products. Clear, objective method of production labelling helps to provide clarity for consumers, and promotes informed choice.

EU policy from 2016

We believe that better information for consumers, and in particular mandatory method of production labelling, should be delivered for all meat and dairy products.

The EU Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012-2015 recognises that consumers are not always well informed about today's farming methods and their impact on the welfare of animals. It emphasises the Commission's intention to increase transparency and the provision of adequate information – empowering consumers to make informed choices in order that the market can drive further improvements in farm animal welfare. Clear, honest labelling of meat and dairy produce is critical if the European Commission is to deliver on its strategic vision.

The 2012-2015 strategy will, we hope, be replaced by a new strategy or policy from 2016. In our view, mandatory method of production labelling should be central to the new strategy, and an impact assessment on mandatory labelling should be undertaken.

Poultrymeat labelling


As you will know, the European Commission is reviewing its rules on the labelling and marketing of poultrymeat. Commission Regulation 543/2008 on marketing standards for poultrymeat already defines methods of production for free range and extensive indoor chickens. This Regulation, in force since 1991, sets out the standards that must be reached if retailers wish to label chicken 'free range' or 'extensive indoors'.

In our submission to the poultrymeat marketing review Labelling Matters recommends that the use of one of four labelling terms be made mandatory. The existing terms, 'organic', 'free-range', and 'extensive indoor', should be used, and the term 'intensive indoor', should be added to describe poultrymeat from birds housed in systems that are not currently eligible to use the higher welfare terms.

The poultrymeat labelling review provides an immediate opportunity to improve consumer information and benefit producers by delivering consumer-supported price differentiation in the market place. This change is supported by more than three-quarters of EU consumers.

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss mandatory labelling with you in person, and to present the new research. We wonder if you would agree to a meeting.

Yours sincerely,



ffino Costain, European Project Manager, Labelling Matters
Bibi Mollerup, Dyrenes Venner

References

¹ Labelling Matters, 2013. Method of Production Labelling of Meat and Dairy Products Research – Report. Carried out by Qa Research, London, UK

² European Commission, 2014. Written Answer to Parliamentary Question E-002770/2014, on: 'Possible extension of mandatory method-of-production labelling'. OJ C 355, 08/10/2014.

www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2014-002770&language=EN