

Press Release

Leading food companies call on the EU to End the Cage Age

Today (17 March, 2021), leading food companies across the EU sent a joint letter to the EU Commission and Members of the EU Parliament, calling for a phase out in the use of cages in animal farming, starting with enriched cages for laying hens.

ALDI Nord (retailer), Barilla Group, Fattoria Roberti (egg producer), Ferrero, Inter IKEA Group (retailer), Jamie Oliver Group, Le Groupement Les Mousquetaires (retailer), Mondelēz International, Nestlé, and Unilever co-signed the letter which emphasises that the business case for phasing out enriched cages for laying hens is strong, particularly at EU level. It notes that *“cage-free systems are widespread, economically viable, and provide better living conditions for hens”*.

The signatories stressed that the revision of the animal welfare legislation, which is currently under preparation, is the ideal opportunity to end the use of cages in animal farming across the EU - starting with caged laying hens. They also stated: *“we are ready and willing to share our expertise and collaborate on achieving that goal”*.

“Many businesses are already ahead of the game, having phased out cages in their supply chains. A cage-free future is possible and is already being enabled by some progressive companies”, said Olga Kikou, Head of Compassion in World Farming EU and Substitute Representative of the ‘End the Cage Age’ European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI).

“The EU now needs to catch up and revise the legislation for farmed animals, Directive 98/58/EC, so that the cruel use of cages is brought to an end, for all farmed species.”

The letter commends the aims of the ‘End the Cage Age’ ECI which calls for the end of cages in animal farming across the EU. Compassion in World Farming joined forces with 170 European NGOs and launched the ‘End the Cage Age’ ECI on 11 September 2018. A year later it closed having gained 1.4 million verified signatures and becoming the first successful ECI on farmed animal welfare. Across the EU, over 300 million farmed animals are confined in cages every year.

Statements from signatories:

Leonardo Mirone, Purchasing Director at Barilla Group, said:

“Our Mission, ‘Good for You, Good for the Planet’, guides us constantly. Food is not only what we eat: it reflects on people’s quality of life, on the well-being of animals, and the planet.

“When it comes to eggs and egg products, Barilla Group believes that confinement is harmful for the well-being of laying hens. We started abandoning this farming practice in 2012 and since 2019 - a year in advance of our initial target - we have been using cage-free eggs exclusively, throughout our global supply chain.”

Vittorio Roberti, Farmer and Owner of Fattoria Roberti, said:

“We want to support the ‘End the Cage Age’ European Citizens’ Initiative aimed at the reconversion of farming systems as an alternative to cages. At Fattoria Roberti, we have made the decision to abandon cage systems by 2025. We will continue to stress the importance of animal welfare within our farms, ensuring transparency for consumers who rely on us to take care of the hens and the land.”

Francesco Tramontin, Vice- President Group Public Policy Centre and EU Institutional Affairs at Ferrero, said:

“Our egg supply chain is fully integrated and, working closely with suppliers, Ferrero has already been using only cage-free eggs in Europe since 2014. We believe this should be the standard for everyone. We, therefore, fully support the End the Cage Age European Citizens’ Initiative.”

Sharla Halvorson, Sustainability and Health Manager, Food at Inter IKEA Group, said:

“At IKEA, we are happy to join other leading food businesses and 1.4 million people in supporting the development of EU legislation to drive forward this sector-wide improvement - when we come together, large scale change is possible! We are committed to moving away from caged egg production by the end of 2025, and work continuously to improve animal agriculture and animal welfare through our Better Programmes.”

Can Buharali, Global Public Affairs Director at Mondelēz International, said:

“We are proud of our progress in improving animal welfare as we work towards our 2025 cage-free egg commitment in the EU. We are happy to support the ‘End the Cage Age’ European Citizens’ Initiative. Phasing out the use of cages for egg-laying hens across the European Union is a priority. This takes us one step further towards farm animal welfare and sustainable food and farming.”

Owen Bethell, Senior Manager Environmental Impact, Global Public Affairs at Nestlé, said:

“As a company that already uses 100% cage free eggs for our food products, we know it’s possible to phase out cages in a business-friendly way. We hope the End the Cage Age Initiative will help improve welfare for all laying hens in the EU.”

Thea Koning, Senior Global External Affairs Manager, Foods and Refreshment Division at Unilever, said: *“At Unilever we want to be a force for good in foods, and are fully supportive of the End the Cage Age campaign. In Europe, all our brands including Hellmann’s, Amora and Calvé have used 100% cage-free eggs since 2009. We believe the End the Cage Initiative shares the ambition of the Farm to Fork Strategy to improve animal welfare, starting with caged hens.”*

~ends~

Notes to editors:

1. The letter is addressed to the European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen; Vice-President Frans Timmermans, responsible for the European Green Deal; Vice-President Věra Jourová, responsible for values and transparency; Commissioner Stella Kyriakides, responsible for health and food safety; and Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski, responsible for agriculture and rural development, as well as the Chairs of the Agriculture and Petitions Committees of the European Parliament, Norbert Lins and Dolors Montserrat. You can find the full letter here.