

Animal-friendly Egg Production System

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To assist the implementation of animal-friendly hen breeding, the Council of Agriculture drew up the Animal-friendly Egg Production System Definition and Guideline, and delivered it to relevant government authorities, academic institutions, industry associations and business enterprises. It hopes to reach a consensus among those organizations on this issue. Since 2012, professional scholars, business sectors, and animal protection groups have jointly studied three different definitions and contents of animal-friendly production system on enriched cage, floor, and free range rearing. The plan encourages poultry farmers to adopt the animal-friendly production system through industry groups. Together with the participation of private certification institution, the COA also encourages consumers to purchase the eggs produced by farms that develop the animal-friendly breeding method which in turn will elevate the level of animal welfare.

Enriched cage rearing means that the birds are allowed to move freely in the cage which must include amenities to satisfy the behavioral requirements of the birds, such as nesting box, scratching posts and other facilities designed to induce their natural behavior. The average allocated space to each bird should be over 750 cm². On the other hand, floor rearing means that the birds are able to move freely on the ground or a flat surface indoors or outdoors, and the average allocated indoor space to each bird should surpass 800 cm². As for free range rearing, it ensures that the birds can move freely indoors and outdoors, and the indoor area allocated to each bird should be over 800 cm². Other requirements including cage height, perch length and interval, as well as nest box density should also comply with animal welfare and practical needs.

The COA stated that taking production benefit and cost into consideration, most developed animal welfare countries, such as the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and Japan except the European Union, still employ the traditional cage rearing as main egg production method. In Taiwan's case, more than 95% of the country's eggs are produced by traditional cage rearing, making it difficult to diffuse the concept of animal-friendly breeding system. The COA will follow the model of the aforementioned countries to encourage the voluntary participation of poultry businesses and let the industry's associations, animal welfare groups or other institutions take the initiative in promoting the certification system. As a result, consumers would gradually be willing to pay a higher price for the eggs produced by such system, thus joining the efforts of both producers and consumers.

(Data Source: Council of Agriculture)

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