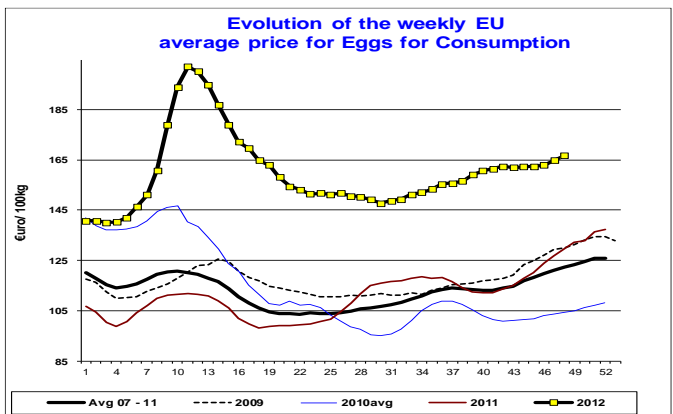


## EUWEP's Position on 'Revision of the EU legislation on animal welfare'

First of all EUWEP wants to emphasize that with the laying hen directive which was adopted in 1999 a tremendous step forward in the improvement of animal welfare has been made by EU egg producers. In Northern Europe there is already a shift from cage systems e.g. in Germany, Austria, Sweden, France and the Netherlands. At the moment the market is changing quite rapidly, lots of supermarkets and also food-industries have indicated dates to be "cage-free" as from 2025 or 2026. This shows that the market is already changing in response to consumer demand! The latest figures from the European Commission revealed that since 2020 less than 50% of the hens in the EU are housed in cages, with important differences between countries due to the different consumers demands and market characteristics.

When the laying hens directive became effective in 2012 this had a huge impact on the European egg-market. Although there was a transition period for over 10 years, lots of farmers waited with the transition until 2012. This had impact on the availability of eggs and thus the egg prices in 2012 (see graph), which rose to unprecedented prices (historic highest). This phenomenon disturbed completely the European egg market.



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The European egg sector has always followed consumer demands. Unlike other sectors, the EU has not put in place a framework of financial aid aimed at defraying the cost of compliance with new EU rules including the elimination of battery cages in 2012.

The European egg sector has been facing already for more than a decade imports of both eggs and egg products from housing systems which are forbidden in the EU. These imports come from Ukraine, Argentina, India etc.

But on the other hand, although the Commission recognized the sensitive status of the sector, the imports of non-EU-compliant eggs and egg products never stopped! EU market is more or less self-sufficient in eggs, the quantity of these imports may be not so high, buyers might know they are not compliant with EU legislation. These imported eggs and egg products have an unfair advantage due to the fact that they are produced in countries with significantly lower labour costs and other costs than in the EU. In addition their animal welfare standards are lower and they still make use of battery systems.

For animal welfare and transport EUWEP wants to state that in the EU legislation 1/2005 on transport in paragraph point 1.8(d) of Chapter III of Annex I to the Regulation where the catching of animals is mentioned, poultry should be excluded from the item catching at the legs. Carrying poultry by their legs is the world 's most common way of catching and carrying poultry, the best way to catch the birds and thus they suffer the less. This is also stated in the EFSA report 2011<sup>1</sup>: *“However, it is more usual, if not universal, to catch and lift birds by their legs. Both legs should be used to lift the birds since this reduces the frequency and severity of haemorrhaging in the thigh (Wilson and Brunson 1968). It also reduces the number of broken bones sustained.”*

*If more detailed information is needed or additional reasons are needed, please feel free to contact the Secretary General of EUWEP, Clara Hagen at +31 6 31 959 880 or via email [clara.hagen@euwep.org](mailto:clara.hagen@euwep.org)*

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<sup>1</sup> EFSA Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW); Scientific Opinion concerning the welfare of animals during transport. EFSA Journal 2011;9(1):1966.[125 pp.].doi:10.2903/j.efsa.2011.1966. Available online: [www.efsa.europa.eu/efsajournal.htm](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/efsajournal.htm)