

Protection of animals: laying hens in systems of rearing (repl. direct. 88/166/EEC).

Communication included

1998/0092(CNS) - 07/12/1998

The Committee adopted a draft report on the protection of laying hens in various rearing systems. The rapporteur was Heinz KINDERMANN (PES, D). The main aim of the new rules is to ensure the welfare of all laying hens by laying down minimum protection requirements for nests, litter, perches and the area per bird in hen-houses as well as rules on beak-trimming and other conditions. Nowadays 93% of eggs in the EU come from battery hens. The rapporteur wants the new rules to apply to all new rearing systems as of 1st January 2001 with a transitional period up to 31st December 2010 for existing systems. To prevent distortions of competition, says the report, producers must be granted additional aid which is not tied to production. In addition, the EU's animal protection requirements should be a key issue in its negotiations in the WTO. Lastly, given that the consumer's main concern is food safety, the report says that the Commission should introduce a compulsory labelling system for eggs and egg-based products.