

# SA egg farmers must deal with EU battery hen ban

With an EU-wide ban on the sale of battery hen eggs coming into force on 1 January, UK supermarkets agreed not to use illegal eggs and some supermarkets have even promised to manufacture their own-label products with free-range eggs.

According to BusinessWings, imports of illegally produced eggs into the UK hasn't been banned, and South African farmers can still export battery egg products to EU nations, as the European Commission has refused to ban both incoming and outgoing battery exports.

Arguably, applying EU regulations to South African chicken farms is difficult as the rules on free-range hens are much looser. The South African Poultry Association provides guidelines on how to keep chickens, but there are no standardised terms like those soon to be enforced in Europe. The cost of conversion is not cheap, either. UK producers have spent an estimated £400m replacing cages with chicken-friendly systems. Conversion can also be time-consuming. The EU ban on battery hens was announced back in 1999, giving the 27 member states 12 years to comply.

As it stands, BusinessWings reports, South African farmers can still export battery egg products to EU nations, but this situation may soon change. Consumers worldwide are becoming more aware of ethical standards, and British egg farmers are demanding that their government introduces a complete ban on all illegal egg products in the UK. Recently, the UK government declared that it seeks to protect British producers from being "undercut by cheap eggs from illegal systems." South African farmers' time could be running out.

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