

# Organic poultry regulations - the EGTOP report

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Making producer-led innovation a reality

## What is EGTOP?

- 2 years ago the EU Commission established the Expert Group for Technical Advice on Organic Production (EGTOP) to advise it and member states on issues include input approvals and more complex matters
- Reports so far have covered feed additives, fertilisers, crop protection inputs, food additives and poultry
- Reports planned for 2013 include protected cropping, aquaculture and food processing
- Recommendations can be converted into legislation – but log jam due to staff shortage in Commission
- EGTOP activity to be reduced to save money/time

## What's happening in the Commission?

- Significant changes in staff and leadership of the organic unit in 2012
- Commissioner want review of organic regulation
  - ◆ Internal consultation
  - ◆ External evaluation
  - ◆ Public consultation
- Some changes being pushed ahead of evaluations
- Agenda to simplify regulations but increase end-product testing to satisfy perception of what consumers want
- Are organic principles about to lose out again to poor understanding of what organic really means?

## EGTOP poultry report

- Mandate agreed December 2011
- Poultry specialist group met February 2012
- Report signed off June 2012
- Report published by Commission September 2012
- Implementation delayed until overall review of regulation takes place

All published documents can be found at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/eu-policy/expert-recommendations/expert-group\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/eu-policy/expert-recommendations/expert-group_en)

## Housing definitions

- Definition of veranda and 'usable' to replace 'net' area
- Include verandas in usable area only if accessible 24/7- not part of open-air access space.
- Multi-tiered systems permitted with some restrictions
- Total stocking rate per m<sup>2</sup> floor area in multi-tiered not more than 50% higher than single layer systems
- Max bird number limits per house should be replaced by flock size limits
- Multi-flock housing could be permitted providing flocks separated from each other internally and externally

## Range access and management

- Increased emphasis on range access (current 1/3<sup>rd</sup> live provision not adequate)
- Range should be designed to encourage use and to provide a contribution to poultry diets
- Where access limited (e.g. due to long term snow cover) supplementary roughage should be fed
- Range should consist of diverse range of plant species – perennial shrubs, trees, pasture, annual cover crops
- Degraded vegetation must be restored – by reseeded, reduced stocking, prolonged resting or feeding supplementary roughage
- Removal of surplus vegetation to control leaching risks

## Outdoor stocking rate

- Lack of maximum radius from house for stocking rate calculations inconsistent with general free-range regs
- Recommend adopting same 150 m radius extendable to 350m if at least 4 shelters (either natural or artificial) per ha and drinking troughs provided, evenly distributed throughout the whole open-air run
- Current organic regulation has three conflicting limits:
  - ◆ Max nitrogen limits linked to Nitrates Directive
    - interpretation depends on assumption of how much N deposited outside (10%-50%?)
  - ◆ Max bird numbers per m<sup>2</sup>
  - ◆ Max bird numbers per flock

## Outdoor stocking rate (cont.)

- Stocking rate definitions not consistent for different species
- Suggestion that single stocking rate in terms of kg LW/m<sup>2</sup> (0.3-0.5kg?) should be defined irrespective of species, but further analysis/debate needed



## Breeding/rearing regulations

- Breeding parents in general should be subject to similar constraints as other adult poultry
- Case for special treatment with respect to mutilations not accepted (unless prescribed by other regulations)
- Restricted feeding regimes to control aggression should not be used – slow growing strains, roughage options
- Consistent system for identifying slow-growing strains
- Different in-house stocking rates and flock size limits should be applied to very young birds (e.g. pullets 0-8 weeks, starter finishers 0-21 days)
- Outdoor access should be available even if not utilised by very young stock

## Derogations

- Not part of mandate and therefore not addressed specifically
- Some breeders are seriously concerned about misuse of derogation options – resulting in lost business or potentially businesses failing
- Similar impact of transplant derogations in past
- Issues need addressing urgently – not wait for 2-3 years before regulations change

## Conclusions

- Poultry regulations need developing to better reflect organic principles – credibility at stake
- Access to, utilisation and management of range to meet birds' welfare, nutritional and other needs are key issues
- Potential for rationalisation/simplification with respect to stocking rates
- Regulations for hatcheries not addressed
- Feed issues also not addressed
- Derogations not addressed – urgent
- Potential for outcome based regulations (e.g. Assurewel) worth exploring further