

Information sheet

Laying hens in organic free-range husbandry

1. Stables:

- **Upper limit per stable unit:** maximum of 3.000 hens; compartments shall be separated by solid partitions or semi-closed partitions or nets or meshes
- **Stocking density:** maximum of 6 hens/ m²
- **Laying nests:** maximum of 7 hens/single nest, for group nests: minimum of 120 cm²/hen
- **Perches:** minimum of 18 cm/hen
- **Feeding place:** lengthwise trough: 10 cm/animal; round trough: 4 cm/animal
- **Watering place:** nipple or cup troughs: 1/10 animals; round trough: 1,5 cm/animal; lengthwise trough: 2,5 cm/animal
- **Scratching area:** a minimum of 1/3 of the surface area must be continuous solid floor and strewn in with litter (hay, wood shavings, sand or turf).
- **Manure pit:** this is defined as the area for the feces, that is available for absorption of feces; benchmark: at least 40% of stable area
- **Stable disinfection:** It is required, but only permitted products may be implemented.
- **Light:** The stables must be bright. To ensure sufficient natural daylight, a window area of a minimum of 3 % of the stable surface area is necessary. Artificial light is only allowed a maximum of 16 hours. A continuous night's rest of a minimum of 8 hours is required.
- **Exit/entry pop-holes, total length of outer boundary of stable:** at least 4 linear meters per 100°m² of usable minimum stable area
- **Exit/entry pop-holes¹⁾, total length of internal boundary of stable (eg between stable and veranda):** at least 2 linear meters per 100 m² of usable minimum stable area
- **Exit/entry pop-holes, minimum dimensions of the individual opening:** recommendation 40 cm wide, 35 cm high

2. Outside area:

- The open air areas corresponding to each single compartment shall be separated in order to ensure that contact with other flocks is restricted and that hens from different flocks cannot mix.
- **Outlet frequency:** a minimum of 1/3 of the lifespan, distributed over the whole year
- **Outlet duration per day:** unrestricted during the day
- **Outside area:** a minimum of 4 m² per hen, mainly covered with vegetation composed of a diverse range of plants; sufficient number of protective facilities or shelters or shrubs or trees distributed throughout the entire outside areas
- The **vegetation** on the open air area shall be maintained regularly to reduce the potential for nutrient surpluses.
- **Extension of outside area²⁾:** The open air areas shall not extend beyond the radius of 150 m from the nearest exit/entry pop-hole of the poultry house. However, an extension of up to 350 m from the nearest pop-hole of the building is permissible provided that a sufficient number of shelters from inclement weather and predators are evenly distributed throughout the whole open air area with at least four shelters per hectare.

¹⁾ transitional period of maximum 3 years from 1 January 2022 provided for in respect of these holdings or production units to permit them to carry out the necessary adaptations of animals' premises or the replacement of the equipment to comply with the new requirements

²⁾ transitional period of maximum 8 years from 1 January 2022 provided for in respect of these holdings or production units in order to permit them to carry out the necessary adaptations to comply with the new requirements

3. Veranda

Veranda means an additional, roofed, uninsulated, outdoor part of a building intended for poultry, the longest side usually being equipped with wire fencing or netting, with an outdoor climate, natural and, where necessary, artificial illumination, and a littered floor. The usable area of the veranda shall not be taken into account for the calculation of the stocking density and the minimum surface of the indoor and outdoor areas.

However, an additional, roofed outdoor part of a building intended for poultry, insulated in a way that it does not have an outdoor climate, may be taken into account for the calculation of the stocking density and the minimum surface of the indoor areas, if the following conditions are met:

- it is fully accessible 24 hours a day;
- it complies with the requirements of points 1.6.1 and 1.6.3 of Part II of Annex II to Regulation (EU) 2018/848 (insulation, heating and ventilation of the building shall ensure that air circulation, dust level, temperature, relative air humidity and gas concentration are kept within limits which ensure the well-being of the animals);
- it complies with the same requirements for pop-holes as set for verandas in points (a) and (b) of this paragraph;

4. Multi-tiered systems

Multi-tiered systems shall have no more than three tiers of usable area including the ground floor. The elevated tiers shall be constructed in such a way as to prevent droppings falling on the birds below and shall be equipped with an efficient system of manure removal. All tiers shall allow for easy inspection of the birds. Multi-tiered systems shall ensure that all birds can move freely and easily to the different levels or intermediate areas. Multi-tiered systems shall be constructed in such a way as to provide easy equal access to open air areas to all birds.

5. Feeding:

- If organic fodder is not 100 % available, conventional protein components at a limit of maximum 5 % of the yearly ration may be used for young poultry only.
Conventional herbs, spices and molasses may be used at a limit of 1 % of the yearly ration.
- 25 % of the yearly ration may contain externally bought conversion fodder. If the fodder is in-house conversion product, it may be used completely.
- Roughage must be included in the daily ration.

6. Animal purchases:

- Organic pullets must be bought.
- 3-day-old chicks can be conventionally housed with prior approval by the authority. The conversion period of 6 weeks from housing must be observed.

7. Animal health:

- The **preventative** use of allopathic and chem. –synth. medicine is prohibited. Medicine may only be used if prescribed by a veterinarian. The treated animals must be identifiable through sufficient documentation.
- The lawful **waiting period** must be doubled for organic sale. For medicine without a waiting period, a 48 hour waiting period must be implemented, this means, if medicine without a waiting period is used, any product stemming from two days after the treatment may not be marketed as organic eggs.
- A maximum of **3 treatments/year**. This means, if there are more than 3 treatments a year, the animals lose their organic status and must undergo a 6 week conversion period.
- Sufficient **records** must be kept: details are listed in the documentation journal available of the homepage of the CB.

If you have any questions, please contact your inspection body.