

30 January 2009

Federal Minister Nikolaus Berlakovich  
Federal Ministry of Agriculture,  
Forestry, Environment and Water  
Management  
Stubenring 1  
A-1010 Vienna



River Court, Mill Lane, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 1EZ  
T: +44 (0)1483 521 950 F: +44 (0)1483 861 639

Email: [compassion@ciwf.co.uk](mailto:compassion@ciwf.co.uk)

Dear Sir

**RE: Proposed stocking density for chickens reared for meat**

Compassion in World Farming is disappointed to learn the Austrian Government is set to lower chicken welfare standards by increasing the stocking density legislation.

Stocking density is an important determinant of broiler welfare. To date, Austria has led the way in chicken welfare with a maximum stocking density that has been based on scientific research. Accordingly the lower maximum should be 25kg/m<sup>2</sup> and the upper maximum should be 30kg/m<sup>2</sup>; these are the figures recommended by the EU Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare.

Compassion in World Farming is disappointed with the EU Broiler Directive due to come into force in 2010, however, by lowering current standards to come into line with the Directive, it gives a green light to the continuation of intensive poultry production. Cramming 17 chickens into a square metre is unacceptable.

New data published in the UK shows that there are economic benefits for farmers who stock at 30kg/m<sup>2</sup> rather than 38kg/m<sup>2</sup> or above. As compared with broilers stocked at 38kg/m<sup>2</sup>, broilers stocked at 30kg/m<sup>2</sup> have lower mortality rates and a greater proportion receive grade A (which achieves a higher price) at the slaughterhouse.

There is also very considerable public concern about the welfare of broilers. Respondents to the recent Eurobarometer survey identified broilers and laying hens as the species most needing welfare improvements. Two years ago Compassion in World Farming with the European Coalition for Farm Animals collected a petition signed by 400 000 citizens EU-wide calling for an end to the factory farming of broilers.

We urge the Austrian Government to continue to have a maximum stocking density of 30kg/m<sup>2</sup>. Scientific research shows that the high stocking densities lead to a range of serious welfare problems.

We would be happy to answer any questions you may have,

Yours sincerely,



**PHILIP LYMBERY**  
Chief Executive