

**Question for written answer E-003409/2017
to the Commission**
Rule 130
Jan Huitema (ALDE)

Subject: Innovations in housing used in organic animal husbandry

Regulation 889/2008 stipulates that housing used in organic animal husbandry must be equipped with a comfortable, clean and dry laying¹/rest area provided with ample dry litter material comprising straw or other suitable natural material.

Innovative designs of livestock housing are now available (the 'Koeientuin'/cow garden) with plastic floors which bear the strongest possible resemblance to grassland, without making use of natural litter. These alternative floors have advantages in the fields of animal welfare and the environment, because ammonia emissions are reduced, the manure being separated more effectively. This design of housing complies with all the aims of the Regulation on organic animal husbandry but cannot be assigned organic status because of the requirement for housing to be provided with natural litter.

Does the Commission consider that the development of innovations such as this one is being unnecessarily blocked by the current rules on organic dairy farming?

Can Member States exempt farms with innovative housing designs as described above if it becomes clear that they comply with the purposes envisaged by the Regulation on organic animal husbandry but it is not possible for them to comply fully with the rules on organic production (litter in organic housing) and if so, precisely what conditions must then be met in order to obtain an exemption?

¹ Translator's note: there is a discrepancy between the Dutch and English texts of the Regulation (Article 11): the English version indeed reads 'laying', but ought to read 'lying' (the Dutch version correctly has 'lig-'), as this article concerns mammals, not poultry.

