

**Question for written answer E-011820/2011  
to the Commission**  
Rule 117  
**Stéphane Le Foll (S&D)**

Subject: Rules on organic farming and poultry and egg production

I was recently contacted by poultry and egg producer organisations in my region concerning the difficulties they are having in implementing Regulation (EC) No 889/2008<sup>1</sup> relating to implementing arrangements for organic farming and its harmonisation.

These rules are currently posing problems, as they are giving rise to varying interpretations among Member States, with regard to two particular aspects of organic poultry and egg production.

- The minimum age of poultry for meat production: a long life is the most important criterion for extensive farming and good-tasting poultry meat. However, the regulation provides for the possibility of not complying with the minimum age set out in the text if the animals 'come from slow-growing poultry strains', with no further details being given on the matter. This is somewhat paradoxical, in that it is leading, in practice, to considerable abuse of the system, contradicting the purpose of the regulation.

Should compliance with these minimum ages therefore not be mandatory, or, at the very least, should the rare exceptions not be defined?

- Stocking density and size of poultry farms: although there are rules concerning maximum number of birds and maximum density of birds per square metre, the rules are very vague on this issue and do not take into sufficient account different livestock farming practices. This means that multi-storey factory farms are being developed, holding multiple batches of poultry in vast hangars, to the detriment of traditional, free-range production in small buildings. And yet the principle of organic farming is to be able to rely on an integral consistency of management in proportion to the size of the farm.

Does such consistency not mean that the size of poultry farms and the animal density in relation to the floor area of the buildings should be limited?

Since these two issues have an impact on the quality, image and cost price of organic poultry and eggs, what measures will the Commission take to solve the problems of distortion caused by the current implementation of existing rules?

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 250, 18.9.2008, p. 1.