

FACT SHEET

Egg Labelling and Sale Bill 2013

Many Tasmanian consumers are concerned about the welfare of animals and choose to buy free range eggs in preference to eggs produced by hens living in cages or barns. As a result, the demand for free-range eggs in Australia has increased steadily over the last decade.

Free-range eggs now comprise about 27% of the national market; a significant increase from around 15% in 2005. This increase in demand has occurred even though the cost of 'free-range' eggs is generally higher than the cost of cage or barn laid eggs

Much of the increased demand is attributed to consumer concerns about animal welfare, however there remains a degree of uncertainty for consumers about the definition of free-range. This is compounded by the labelling and marketing of eggs, which has the potential to mislead consumers.

While general consumer laws prohibit misleading representations in commerce, there is no agreed, mandated or universal definition of the terms 'cage', 'barn' or 'free-range', which makes successful prosecution for misleading claims very difficult.

To ensure that accurate information is available to support consumer choice, the Tasmanian Government has drafted legislation that sets out certain requirements in relation to packaging and retail signage for eggs sold in Tasmania.

The proposed legislation affects the advertising of whole eggs in the State. There are two key elements to the Bill:

- All cartons or containers of eggs produced and sold in Tasmania will be required to be labelled either "free range", "barn laid" or "cage" eggs in letters not less than 6mm high.

- Any retailer who has a display of eggs for sale that exceeds two metres in length (one or more shelves combined) is required to separate the eggs into the three categories and clearly indicate which eggs are from each production system.

The legislation has been drafted so as to align with definitions and standards already accepted within the industry.

Not-for-profit associations as well as producers with a maximum of 20 hens are exempt from the carton labelling requirements. While the retail signage obligations only apply to retailers if the total length of their display surface for the eggs is two metres or more.

In essence, the Bill aims to ensure consumers can easily identify the egg production system from which any carton of eggs originates, thereby enabling them to make informed purchasing decisions.