

Tesco back Barn Eggs in the move to 'Cage-Free'

The main UK retailers have committed to only selling only 'cage-free' eggs by 2025, but they have not given much away about their plans to achieve this. Producers need commitments from retailers about how they intend to manage the change to only stocking cage-free eggs and what they ultimately mean by 'cage-free'.

The difficulty the retailers are wrestling with is how to balance customer desire for 'cage-free' whilst retaining a 'value option'?

Egg producers are clear that attempts to offer a 'value' free-range line will damage the sector. Free-range is a more costly system of production that cannot be undervalued, how can retailers differentiate between low value and a high value eggs produced under the same system?

Tesco are one retailer that has put their cards on the table, recognising the need to provide a value egg range for their customers without devaluing the free-range sector. Tesco see 'Barn-egg' production as a solution to delivering customer welfare expectations at a lower cost than free-range.

Above all else producers are looking for commitment, especially those producers who heavily invested in enriched colony cages in the lead up to 2012 and the battery cage ban. They were led to believe there was a future for enriched colony cages and invested accordingly, with most of those new sheds yet to pay back that investment.

Tesco say they are committed to a long-term future for Barn Eggs in their stores and they are developing standards for Barn production that can utilise existing assets. By utilising existing buildings to convert to barn production they believe producers can save money but still deliver high welfare standards for the birds.

NFUS asks other retailers to recognise they can't offer 'value free-range' alongside 'free-range' without tearing the industry apart and calls for clear plans from retailers on their plans and timelines for the change to cage-free.