

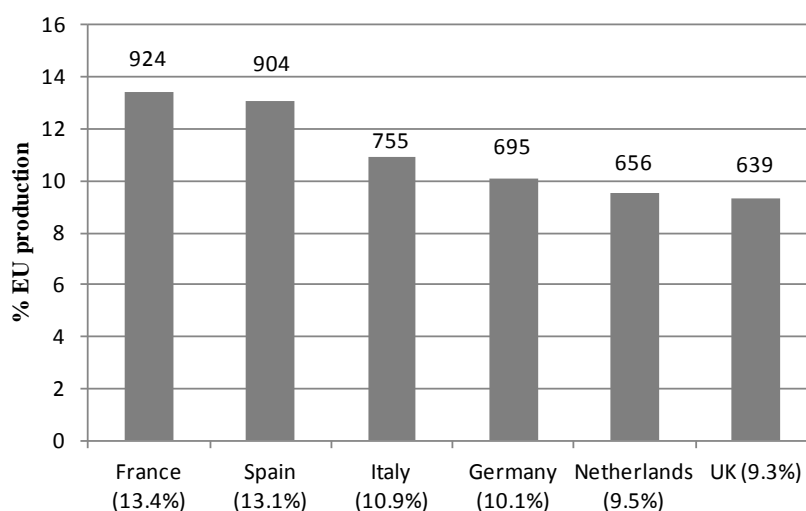
Egg production in the EU

Production

There are almost 363 million laying hens in the EU-27 producing 6.9 million tonnes of useable eggs / egg product per annum. Average egg consumption in the EU-27 is 12kg/capita/annum (Eurostat, 2011).

France and Spain are the largest egg producers, followed by Italy and Germany then the Netherlands and the UK (Figure 1) (European Commission, 2010). France is the 10th largest producer in the world (accounting for 1.5% of total production), whilst China is by far the largest producer accounting for 37.5% of production (FAOstat, 2012a). In 2009, the EU exported 188,000 tonnes and imported 35,000 tonnes of egg / egg product. Globally, the Netherlands is the largest exporter of eggs / egg product (26.4% export share) whilst Germany is the largest importer (27.3% of import share) (FAOSTAT, 2012b).

Figure 1. Top 6 egg producing countries in the EU by percent share of production.
Data labels indicate '000 tonnes of useable egg production by country (% of EU production).



Around 60% of the world's eggs come from laying hens kept in cages. The proportion of hens in different production systems is given in Table 1 for the top 6 EU producing countries (European Commission, 2011).

Table 1. The proportion (%) of laying hens in different housing systems by country.

Country	Cage	Barn	Free range	Organic
France	77.7	3.9	13.4	5.1
Spain	97.4	0.6	1.9	0.1
Italy	71.2	25.8	0.8	2.1
Germany	16.8	61.8	14.2	7.2
Netherlands	10.0	67.0	18.0	5.0
UK	42.9	4.1	50.0	2.9

Eggs are labelled according to production system (Council Regulation, 2007; Commission Regulation, 2008) (See <http://www.lioneggfarms.co.uk/information/egg-codes/> for more information). Production codes and system are found on the egg along with producer identity code and 'Best Before' date. Production codes are:

0 – Organic

1 – Free range

2 – Barn

3 - Caged

Legislation

Use of the barren-battery-cage in the EU is prohibited with effect from 1 January 2012 (Council Directive, 1999). The legal requirements for the different production systems are given in Table 2. Many producers in various countries have not have converted their battery-cages, so will produce eggs from banned systems. It is estimated that almost 3% of laying hens in the EU are still in barren-battery-cages; almost 84% and 56% of laying hens in Spain and Italy are in battery cages (European Commission, 2011).

Table 2. Legal requirements for the various production systems defined by the EU.

Criteria	Enriched-cage ¹	Barn ¹	Free Range ¹	Organic ²
Stocking density	750cm ² /hen	9 birds/m ²		6 birds/m ²
Nest	√	1 per 7 hens; 1m ² /120 hens (group nests)		
Perches	15cm/hen	15cm/hen elevated perches		18cm/hen elevated perches
Litter	√	≥ 250cm ² littered area/hen; litter occupy ≥ 1/3 ground area		litter occupy ≥ 1/3 ground area
Outdoor access	X	X	√ 2500 hens/hectare ² 1 hen/4m ²	√ 4m ² /hen provided limit of 170kgN/ha/yr not exceeded (then limit to 230 hens/hectare)
Beak trimming	Permitted	Permitted	Permitted	Systematic beak trimming not permitted
Other	Claw shortening devices must be provided			

1 - Council Directive 1999/74/EC,

2 - Council Regulation (EC) No 1804/1999

References

- Council Directive (1999) No1999/74/EC: laying down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens. L203/53. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:1999:203:0053:0057:EN:PDF>
- Council Regulation (1999) (EC) No 1804/1999: supplementing Regulation (EEC) No 2092/91 on organic production of agricultural products and indications referring thereto on agricultural products and foodstuffs to include livestock production. L222/14. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:1999:222:0001:0028:EN:PDF>
- Council Regulation (2007) (EC) No 1234/2007: establishing a common organisation of agricultural markets and on specific provisions for certain agricultural products (Single CMO Regulation) L299/1. <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:299:0001:0001:EN:PDF#>
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