

Open Letter to the Members of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council

To: Ministers responsible for Agriculture, Members of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council (“AGRIFISH Council”)

Subject: Chick and Duckling Culling in the European Union

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Brussels, 1st June 2022

Dear Ministers,

Despite being the only jurisdiction in the world to have enacted such extensive farm animal welfare regulations, Regulation 1099/2009 on the Protection of Animals at the Time of Killing still allows the systematic culling of male chicks and female ducklings by way of gassing or grinding.¹ On average, EU producers kill 330 million day-old male chicks annually,² and another tens of million day-old female ducks are estimated to be killed in foie gras production, mainly in the EU.³

Day-old chicks and ducklings are killed because they have no economic value to the egg and foie gras industries. Yet, alternatives exist to the mass killing of animals. “In-ovo sexing” technologies can detect the sex of a chicken or duck embryo before they hatch, which allows the selection of eggs before the animals are born.

Considering the cruelty of chick and duckling culling, two EU countries, France and Germany, recently decided to put an end to this practice, thereby requiring the use of alternatives. In 2021, the French Minister for Agriculture, Julien Denormandie, called EU Member States to follow suit in their national laws,⁴ and the parliaments of Italy and Austria are currently discussing legislative proposals to end the practice. The European Commission is also studying the possibility of proposing an EU ban on the killing of day-old chicks and ducklings.⁵

¹ Annexes I and II, Chapter I, Council Regulation 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the Protection of Animals at the Time of Killing, 2009 O.J. L 303/19. - 23.

² Animal Equality, In-Ovo Sexing: An Alternative to Culling Day-Old Male Chicks, 5 (2021)

³ Mark Porter and Ana Pouvreau, “Torture in a Can:” French Foie Gras Farmers Failing to Improve Appalling Conditions, October 17th 2014, Newsweek, <https://www.newsweek.com/2014/10/24/torture-can-french-fois-gras-farmers-accused-again-277606.html?amp=1> (last visited May 19th 2022).

⁴ Julia Daham and Magdalena Pistorius, Germany, France Call on EU Countries to Also Ban Culling of Male Chicks, July 21st, 2021, Euractiv, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/germany-france-call-on-eu-countries-to-also-ban-culling-of-male-chicks/> (last visited April 10, 2022).

⁵ Mark Porter and Ana Pouvreau, “Torture in a Can:” French Foie Gras Farmers Failing to Improve Appalling Conditions, October 17th 2014, Newsweek, <https://www.newsweek.com/2014/10/24/torture-can-french-fois-gras-farmers-accused-again-277606.html?amp=1> (last visited May 19th 2022).

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Because we believe it is time the EU finally lives up to its reputation when it comes to animal protection, we respectfully ask you to enact national legislation banning the killing of day-old male chicks and female ducklings, and to support the adoption of an EU-wide ban in the upcoming revision of EU farm animal welfare legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

