

MEDIA RELEASE

04 June 2020

SUPERMARKETS NEED CAGED EGG FARMERS TO PREVENT MASS SHORTAGES

- **Aussies consume 247 eggs per head, each year.**
- **Without caged eggs, supermarkets would face a 40% drop in supply**
- **Retailers could then consider importing eggs from China**

Australia's leading egg farmers warn that consumers would face mass egg shortages, if supermarkets continued a push against caged egg farms in the country.

The warning comes as some Coles supermarkets move to remove caged eggs from the shelf in the mistaken belief that modern caged production was harming hens.

Egg Farmers of Australia CEO Melinda Hashimoto said caged eggs made up 40% of egg sales in Australian supermarkets and without them, families struggling to keep a lid on rising household budgets, would be worse off.

"In Australia we have three main egg farming systems: caged, free-range and barn-laid eggs," Mrs Hashimoto said.

"According to the CSIRO, around 40% of all eggs sold in Australian supermarkets are caged. Therefore, it is not hard to work out that if caged eggs were suddenly removed, retailers would never have enough eggs to satisfy consumer demand and the cost of a carton of eggs would skyrocket beyond affordable means."

Mrs Hashimoto warned to make up the shortfall, supermarkets would need to consider importing eggs from places like China - posing significant health risks to Australian consumers and agriculture.

The egg boss cited how Kiwi consumers were gripped by mass egg shortages and supermarket chaos, when New Zealand moved to banned caged eggs.

Egg Farmers of Australia is the national lobby voice of Australian egg producers and represents farmers who operate caged, free-range and barn-laid farms.

Australian farmers produce 19 million eggs every day to satisfy the growing domestic appetite for Aussie eggs - equating to a \$1.8 billion injection into the economy.

Egg Farmers of Australia Chairman (and egg farmer) Bede Burke said supermarkets were more interested in marketing themselves as 'good social citizens', than understanding the facts about caged hens.

“Caged egg production has moved a long way forward from the old battery hens seen in the 1970’s. That method no longer exists in Australia,” Mr Burke said.

“In terms of animal welfare, scientific research shows modern caged hens are healthier and have the lowest incidence of disease compared to free-range or barn birds.

“Antibiotics are not needed in this environment and the mortality rate is the lowest of any egg production system. Importantly for the environment, caged farming also has the lowest carbon footprint among the three farming methods,” he said.

It’s not only Coles, multinational fast food outlets like McDonalds has also moved to ban caged eggs from its kitchens.

Mr Burke said the executives of multi-national companies failed to understand the symbiotic relationship between caged, barn-laid and free range egg farmers in Australia.

“When it comes to caged, barn-laid and free-range eggs: all three farming methods are required in Australia to maintain a sustainable supply of eggs across the country.

“Currently, to maintain a reliable supply chain of fresh eggs for Aussie consumers, our egg industry needs to introduce 600,000 additional hens into the Australian egg production line every year. Without caged eggs, this figure could not be achieved, resulting in a mass shortage of eggs Australia-wide,” Mr Burke said.

He said Egg Farmers of Australia, however, does support a cap on the current number of conventional cages used in Australia.

“Egg Farmers of Australia has made a commitment that in the longer-term future there will be no additional conventional cages added to the current egg production cycle within Australia,” Mr Burke said.

The rule will coincide with the adoption of new animal welfare standards and guidelines currently under government review.

“Unlike New Zealand, maintaining a cap on the current number of conventional cages is necessary, to ensure the continuation of a reliable and sustainable supply of eggs to Australian consumers, without generating chaos in the market place of the likes that we saw the Kiwi’s face in their supermarkets,” Mr Burke said.

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Photo Caption: CEO Melinda Hashimoto and Chair Bede Burke on his farm

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2fPsaS5ZI8&feature=youtu.be>
Free-range and caged egg farmers talk about the benefits of their farming methods.

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