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AUSTRALIAN EGG FARMERS FACING CRISIS POINT

- COVID-19 hurting egg sector
- Oversupply of eggs dramatically cuts farm returns
- Governments criticised for holding-up new hen welfare standards

Aussie egg farmers are facing a financial crisis akin to a three-edge sword and are pleading with federal and state governments to do more to help their industry.

COVID-19, an oversupply of eggs fuelling low returns, and the failure of federal and state agriculture ministers to sign-off on a new poultry welfare code for hens - are three key issues harming the sector.

Egg Farmers of Australia CEO Melinda Hashimoto said eggs were the most affordable source of protein for Aussie families. But she warned the industry faced the 'perfect storm' for a financial crisis.

"Egg farmers are working at a cracking pace, and yet are facing a three-edge sword of rising production costs, low returns, and government inaction to finalise regulations that impact on their livelihoods," Mrs Hashimoto said.

The CEO said COVID-19 had caused an oversupply of fresh eggs in the Australian market.

"There's an oversupply because less eggs are being used by the cruise ship industry, hospitality and hotel sectors and baking industries. Our population has also receded significantly during COVID due to a halt in migration. This in turn has also led to less egg sales," she said.

But egg farmers reserve their biggest criticism for Australia's federal and state agriculture ministers who once again failed sign-off on new animal welfare rules for egg farms. The long-awaited *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines* for poultry has been under review for the past seven years.

Mrs Hashimoto said agriculture ministers had the opportunity to finally approve updates to the guidelines this year – but bureaucrats had once again put off the task until mid-2022.

"This code governs how hens are housed and how eggs can be produced in Australia in the future. Any delay with it, means farmers don't know how long their current farming system (such as cages) will be lawful – or if new investment is required to acquire other egg farming methods.

"It's time our federal and state agriculture ministers take egg farming more seriously. Waiting seven to eight years for a government process to be completed is unacceptable," Mrs Hashimoto said.

"No other natural product, other than eggs, provide a cheaper or more nutritious protein for Aussie families."

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Photo: Egg Farmers of Australia CEO Melinda Hashimoto and Engagement Officer Kylie Jackson.