

**U.S. EGG LEGISLATION WILL HELP FARMERS, RETAILERS AND CONSUMERS AVOID THE CHAOS OCCURRING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION, SAYS UNITED EGG PRODUCERS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. (February 2, 2012) – Congress only has to look at what’s happening in the European egg industry right now to understand the benefits to American farmers, grocers, and consumers of the proposed amendments to the Egg Products Inspection Act (H.R. 3798) introduced last month in Congress.

Contrary to the proposed legislation in the United States, egg farmers in Europe were given a single deadline (January 1, 2012) with no phase-in period to abandon the use of conventional cage housing for egg-laying hens with no specific alternative housing proposed. The result was a legal morass, confusion and chaos for European farmers, retailers and consumers that contributed to reported egg shortages and higher prices.

The proposed legislation in the U.S. is intended to avoid those chaotic consequences that occurred in Europe, according to Chad Gregory, senior vice president of United Egg Producers, which represents U.S. farmers who produce 88 percent of America’s 76 billion eggs.

“European farmers had a prohibitive rule imposed on them rather than being part of the process like we are with the proposed legislation that we and one dozen other egg and farm groups support,” Gregory explained. “European farmers had a single deadline, whereby U.S. farmers will have a gradual transition period of 18 years with several interim milestones for U.S. farmers to meet. Unlike European farmers, American farmers will phase in space allocations for hens from 67 square inches or less now, to 124 inches over a 15-year period.”

European farmers did not have specific approved alternative housing systems when the ruling was made in 1999, so many farmers were forced to develop cage-free facilities where costs are dramatically higher. This, combined with higher feed costs in recent years, has led to higher consumer costs for eggs in the European Union. We believe the proposed legislation in the U.S., with a gradual transition from conventional to enriched cages, will avoid many of the problems being experienced in Europe right now.

Gregory, who also serves as a U.S. representative to the International Egg Commission’s Executive Committee, says that U.S. farmers have to replace cage housing systems as they deteriorate over many years anyway, so that the transition to enriched cages as a replacement should not provide any marketplace disruption in the U.S.

“Earlier estimates of higher egg prices in the U.S. were based on the fear of a patchwork of state mandates for cage-free production which involves dramatically higher costs. This federal legislation is what is best for consumers, retailers and egg farmers to avoid the catastrophe that is occurring all across Europe right now,” Gregory added.

###

United Egg Producers (UEP) is a Capper-Volstead cooperative for U.S. egg farmers, representing the ownership of approximately 88 percent of the nation's egg-laying hens. UEP members produce eggs using various systems including modern cage production, enriched cages, cage-free, free range, organic and other specialty eggs. For more information about UEP, please go to [unitedegg.org](http://unitedegg.org).

**Media Inquiries, please contact on behalf of UEP: Mitch Head [520-398-7379](tel:520-398-7379)**