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2012 EU battery cage ban will be upheld

10 Jan 08

Battery cages will be banned in 2012 as European Commission rejects farmers' call for postponement.

The European Commission has today published its report in which it recommends that the ban on battery cages should not be postponed but should come into force in 2012 as planned.

This is a huge success for Compassion in World Farming and members of the European Coalition for Farm Animals (ECFA) who have been campaigning and lobbying tirelessly to ensure the 2012 ban was upheld.

Peter Stevenson, Chief Policy Advisor at Compassion in World Farming said: "The Directive gave farmers a very generous 12 years to move away from battery cages. It's a scandal that the industry has been pressing for even more time.

"Now that the Commission has ruled that there should be no delay, we hope the egg industry will stop fighting the ban and belatedly knuckle down to getting their hens out of cages and into barn and free-range systems."

The 1999 EU Laying Hens Directive bans battery cages from 2012; however, farmers in many EU countries – including in Britain – have been pressing for the ban to be postponed for many years. Their hopes have now been dashed by the Commission report which concludes that the ban should come into force as scheduled in 2012.

Mr Stevenson continued: "The spotlight now switches to powerful member states like France, Spain and Poland, all of which want the ban to be postponed. The question is will they accept the Commission's ruling or will they try to overturn it and get the ban put back or even scrapped? The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has made it clear that the UK does not want the ban to be delayed."

Barren battery cages confine laying hens in small wire cages with less space than an A4 sheet of paper each. These conditions cause immense suffering and leave hens unable to exercise or to carry out many important natural behaviours. Scientific research shows that battery cages severely compromise hen welfare.

The Commission's report will make a huge difference to the 18 million hens that are still kept in battery cages each year in the UK – and for over 200 million a year that are confined in battery cages in the EU.