

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001189/25
to the Commission
Christine Singer (Renew)
(20 March 2025)**

Subject: Access to open air areas for young organic poultry

Regulation (EU) 2018/848 (Regulation on Organic Products) requires poultry to have access to open air areas ‘from as early an age as practically possible’, which can be interpreted as from the first day of life (Annex II, Section 1.9.4.4(e)). This rule is neither conducive to animal welfare nor practical and creates health risks for young poultry, especially in the first weeks of life.

Chicks are particularly susceptible to diseases, sensitive to the cold and at risk from predators at this early stage of development. Premature access to open air areas increases the risk of infection, as the immune system is only fully developed from the third or fourth week of life. In addition, it leads to greater energy consumption, and damp bedding can cause health problems.

Many farms also face insurmountable infrastructural challenges, as their existing housing facilities are not designed to provide access to open-air areas at such an early stage. Strict implementation of the provision could significantly reduce organic poultry farming and jeopardise the survival of many farms.

1. How does the Commission intend to ensure that the requirement for access to open air areas only applies when this is actually possible without causing problems, in line with the physiological development of the animals, and does it intend to consider clarifying or adapting the requirement?
2. What measures does the Commission intend to take to enable Member States and certification bodies to implement the regulation flexibly so that businesses are not forced to take measures that are contrary to animal welfare?

Submitted: 20.3.2025

**Answer given by Mr Hansen on behalf of the European Commission
(8 May 2025)**

Access to open air areas for poultry for at least one third of their life is one of the key features for the organic production of poultry and iconographic images of this requirement are often used as a marketing tool.

Rules on access to open air areas for poultry were reviewed by Regulation (EU) 2018/848 on organic production and labelling of organic products ⁽¹⁾ following the recommendations of the Expert Group for Technical Advice on Organic Production ⁽²⁾.

Regulation (EU) 2018/848 provides a certain flexibility in the implementation of continuous daytime open-air access for poultry in relation to the physiological and physical conditions of the birds (feather coverage) or temporary animal health restrictions imposed on the basis of EU legislation but does not cover permanent structural settings without any access to open air areas or only access to verandas ⁽³⁾.

Article 14 of Regulation (EU) 2018/848 empowers the Commission to set minimum surfaces for outdoor areas for poultry production. Annex I part IV to Regulation (EU) 2020/464 ⁽⁴⁾ sets minimum outdoors area surfaces for different categories of poultry that may be adapted by Member States. Article 26(7) of that regulation ⁽⁵⁾ sets transitional periods for poultry producers to adapt in case where structural changes are needed.

The current regulatory framework provides high animal welfare standards for organic production in the EU.

⁽¹⁾ <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/848/2024-12-01>

⁽²⁾ https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/document/download/580c76bb-6cef-4183-9713-28afaa983161_en?filename=final_report_on_poultry.pdf

⁽³⁾ Points 1.6.5 and 1.9.4.4 of Part II of Annex II to Regulation (EU) 2018/848 ‘1.6.5. Open air areas may be partially covered. Verandas shall not be considered as open air areas. 1.9.4.4 (h) open air areas for poultry shall be covered mainly with vegetation’.

⁽⁴⁾ http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2020/464/2021-11-25

⁽⁵⁾ http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2020/464/oj Article 26(7) of Regulation (EU) 2020/464: ‘7. By way of derogation from Section 2 of Part IV of Annex I to this regulation, for holdings or production units producing pullets in poultry facilities built, refurbished or brought into use before the date of entry into application of this regulation in compliance with Regulations (EC) No 834/2007 and (EC) No 889/2008 and for which major adaptations of the structure of the poultry houses or additional land acquisition are necessary to comply with the rules of Section 2 of Part IV of Annex I to this regulation, shall comply with the stocking density and the minimum surface of indoor and outdoor areas for pullets and broiler roosters laid down in Section 2 of Part IV of Annex I to this regulation as from 1 January 2030 at the latest’.