

# Animals farmed: Misinformation and honest labelling

## Political briefing

Through supermarket websites, advertising practices, such as product labels and adverts, TV shows and print media, the British public are sold the idea that the majority of animals live happy lives outdoors, with idyllic conditions. However, the reality for the approximately 850,000,000 animals being kept in industrial animal farms in the UK could not be further from the heavily sanitised and favourable marketing and media depictions of farming.

Animal welfare standards are important to consumers in the UK. According to the Food Standards Agency's Annual Animal Welfare report, more than 70% of consumers in England and Wales expressed concern for animal welfare in the food production process.<sup>1</sup> YouGov data shows that approximately 40% of people in the UK agree with the statement 'advertising helps me choose what to buy'.<sup>2</sup>



## Tackling misinformation of animal products with our existing laws

Legislation and self-regulation aimed at protecting consumers from misleading impressions and advertising do exist; however, the patchwork regulatory regime has so far proven ineffective to prevent the misrepresentation of farming standards to the British public. Laws and regulatory regimes such as the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024, the Food Safety Act 1990 and the Advertising Codes of Practice have not yet been used effectively to challenge and prevent the prevalent dissemination of misleading claims about farmed animal welfare standards. This is contrasted with the relative success advertising codes have had tackling environmental claims and greenwashing.<sup>3</sup>

The lack of proper enforcement of existing UK laws, as they pertain to the depiction of the lives of farmed animals, has facilitated the establishment of a marketing and media landscape which:

- is dominated by language and imagery that gives the impression that animals have not suffered; and
- omits critical information about cruel farming methods and practices.

Such misleading actions and omissions are clearly influencing the purchasing decisions of a significant proportion of consumers who aspire to avoid causing suffering to animals.

## What needs to change?

The Animal Law Foundation is calling for consumers to be protected from misinformation about animal products by:

### 1. Enforcement

The relevant regulators and law enforcement bodies including the Competitions and Markets Authority, Trading Standards, Advertising Standards Agency and Ofcom being adequately resourced and steered to ensure the enforcement of the existing legal regime to prevent the misinformation that surrounds animal farming and animal products in the UK. 77% of people support enforcement action being taken by Trading Standards, and 75% of people support greater action by the Advertising Standards Authority to prevent misleading adverts and brand imagery that gives a false impression of animal welfare standards.

### 2. Market Investigation

The Competition and Markets Authority launching an investigation into the animal-derived food market, including how the market operates unfavourably against farmers who do uphold higher welfare standards on their farms.

## The case for mandatory method of production labelling

Polling reveals a major difference between the British public's perception of products that make welfare claims and the reality for those farmed animals. An Opinion poll conducted for Humane World for Animals in November 2025 shows that current labels are giving rise to false impressions of good animal welfare practices.<sup>4</sup> For example, 65% of people stated a belief that meat products that carry the claim "welfare assured" would come from animals who have not been caged, while 67% believed that this claim would mean that the animal had not been killed using painful methods (such as CO<sub>2</sub> gassing).

The present reality is that products carrying this label can and do come from animals who have been caged and gassed. Similarly, the majority of the public do not interpret from typical assurance labels and marketing claims that animals involved in the products they are buying have not been reared to the high standards they might expect, including:

**Public feeling about labels creating a false perception:**

**50%** would feel angry

**49%** would feel disappointed

**47%** would feel misled

*if animal products labelled with welfare claims came from animals who had been subject to cruel farming practices, according to 2025 public polling results by Humane World for Animals.<sup>4</sup>*

- pigs and chickens being kept in cages for all or significant parts of their lives;
- animals being subjected to painful mutilations like beak trimming and tail docking;
- the use of slaughter methods that are proven to cause immense suffering, such as the use of CO<sub>2</sub> for slaughtering pigs.

In 2024, the previous UK Government conducted a public consultation on 'Fairer Food Labelling', which included proposals on Mandatory Method of Production (MMOP) labelling. Those proposals included requiring animal products to be labelled and graded against an established set of welfare standards. The Government's response to that consultation showed that 99% of consultation respondents supported MMOP labelling and over two thirds (69%) of businesses and organisations that responded to the consultation also endorsed this approach.<sup>5</sup>

Polling conducted in November 2025 reveals that 77% of people support a new animal product labelling law, with only 5% opposed.

New laws on MMOP labelling would go beyond the existing rules regarding the packaging of farmed animal products, which are currently strictly limited to eggs and fish. These existing laws establish a powerful link between mandatory labelling and consumer purchasing trends, with cage-free egg

production in the UK increasing from 32% in 2004 (when mandatory labelling of eggs was introduced) to 82% in 2025.<sup>6</sup>

Introduction of a MMOP Labelling scheme modelled on the Fairer Food Labelling proposals would help consumers shop in accordance with their ethical values, something recent Defra commissioned research found is very important to UK consumers: 80% of those surveyed wanted welfare scoring systems on food labels.<sup>7</sup>

Labelling would, according to Defra's estimates, improve the welfare of 111 million animals annually.<sup>8</sup> Defra's 2024 Impact Assessment, published alongside the Fairer Food Labelling consultation, also concluded that clearer labelling could increase UK farmers' profits by over £46 million annually and deliver a net benefit of £140 million to society over ten years.<sup>5</sup>

## What needs to change?

Compassion in World Farming and Humane World for Animals UK continue to lobby for UK consumers to have ready access to clear and accurate welfare labels on food products at the point of purchase. This requires:

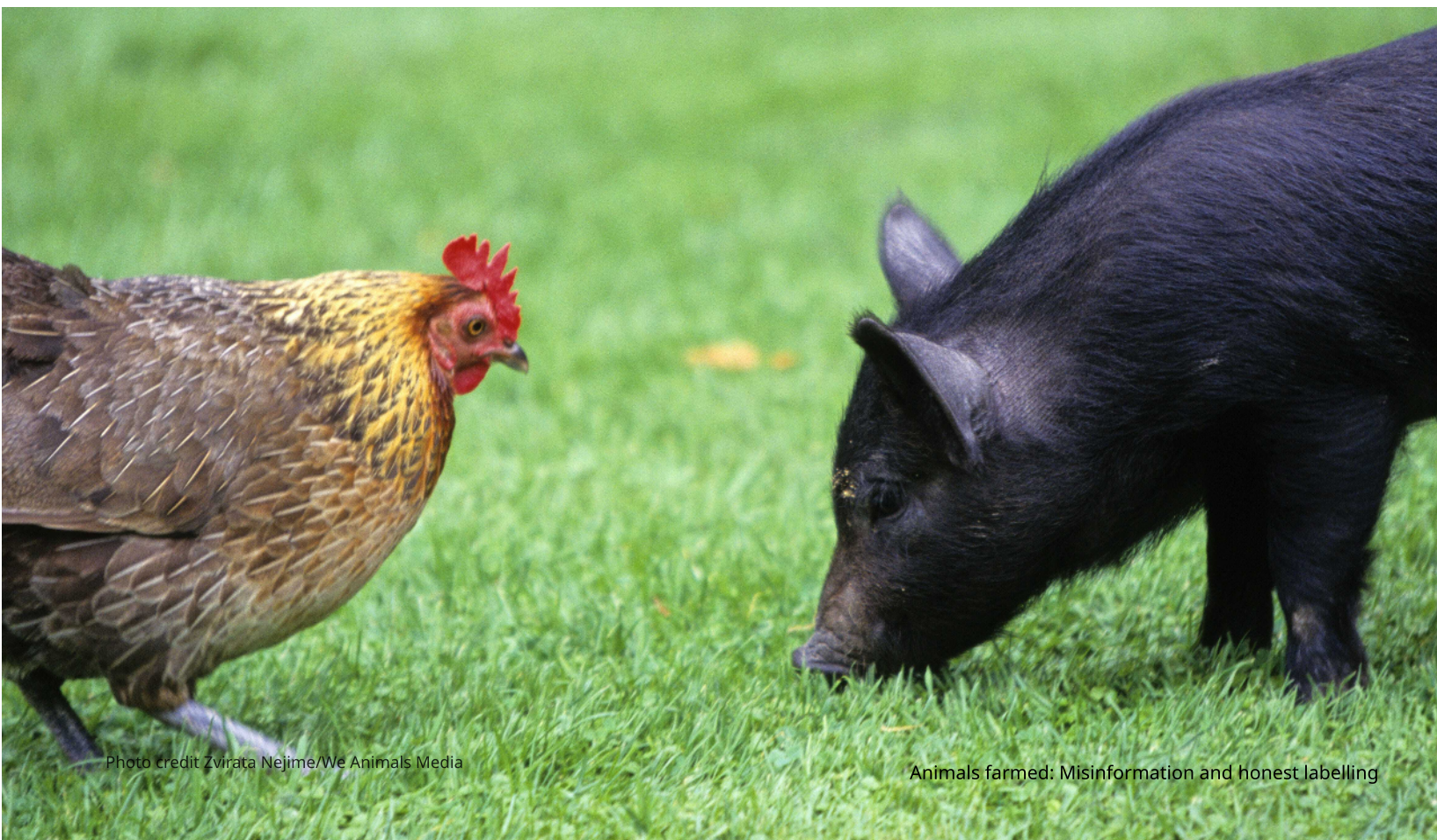
### 1. Mandatory Method of Production labelling

The Government should advance the proposals set out in the 2024 Fairer Food Labelling consultation, which received resounding public support. There should be a short but reasonable implementation period for industry to prepare and adapt to these requirements and;

### 2. Labelling requirements for imports and in trade deals

British farmers who uphold higher welfare standards should be protected from being undercut by lower welfare imported animal products. To achieve this, MMOP labelling should also be required on all comparable imported goods. Imports would be able to compete on the same basis as now but could not hide lower standards by the absence of labelling.

Introducing the proposed MMOP label would give consumers clarity over welfare standards, allowing them to purchase in line with their values and help differentiate British farmers from imported products that fall below our standards whilst rewarding higher welfare farmers that are going above baseline requirements.



## References

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