

Coalition for Sustainable Egg Supply Research Supports Informed Decision-Making
Research Looks at Sustainability Holistically, Assessing Trade-Offs of Housing Systems

Kansas City, Mo. (March 18, 2015) – Providing food system stakeholders with science-based information on sustainability factors to guide informed production and purchasing decisions, the Coalition for Sustainable Egg Supply (CSES) has publicly released the final results of its hen housing research, which evaluates three laying hen housing systems based on a variety of sustainability measures.

Over the past four years and through two hen flock cycles, CSES has been engaged in a holistic, commercial-scale study of conventional cage housing, cage-free aviary housing and enriched colony housing and their potential impacts on food safety, hen health and well-being, the environment, worker health and safety, and food affordability. These research results now provide producers, egg retailers, restaurants, suppliers and other stakeholders the information they need to make independent informed decisions that are ethically grounded, scientifically verified, economically viable and, ultimately, in alignment with the values of their customers and consumers.

“Before CSES, commercial scale research evaluating the different aspects of the sustainability of hen housing systems was lacking and a more holistic, integrative approach was necessary,” says Dr. Janice Swanson, CSES co-scientific director, and professor of animal science at Michigan State University. “With these science-based research results, we have a better understanding of hen housing sustainability and can provide that information to industry stakeholders to support informed decision-making.”

“The research found there are positive and negative impacts and trade-offs associated with each of the three hen housing systems. Depending on the goals and perspectives of a food production company, egg producer, or other food system stakeholder, those trade-offs may be weighed differently,” says Dr. Joy Mench, CSES co-scientific director, and professor of animal science at the University of California, Davis.

The results show the three systems researched each have associated trade-offs across those elements of sustainability. A complete research report and other research insights exploring the trade-offs associated with each system can be found at www.sustainableeggcoalition.org/final-results.

“When animals are involved, evaluating their welfare is a crucial aspect of any production system,” says Dr. Marion Garcia, chief veterinary officer and director of the Animal Welfare Research Institute, American Humane Association. “But to truly achieve sustainability, a variety of other factors such as the environment, the health and safety of the workers, food safety and quality, and affordability of what’s produced should also be considered, effectively evaluating the entire system.”

CSES, which was facilitated by the Center for Food Integrity, is a multi-stakeholder coalition of leading animal welfare scientists, academic institutions, non-government organizations, egg suppliers, and restaurant/foodservice and food retail companies. The research was led by researchers at Michigan State University and University of California, Davis, while researchers at Iowa State University, USDA Agricultural Research Service and Cargill also contributed.

Visit www.sustainableeggcoalition.org for more information about the Coalition for Sustainable Egg Supply.

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