

POST IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW OF THE WELFARE OF FARMED ANIMALS (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2007

March 2017

Introduction

1. This document provides a Post Implementation Review (PIR) of the implementation of Council Directive 2007/43/EC (“the Directive”) laying down minimum rules for the protection of chickens kept for meat by the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007 (WOFAR 2007) (“the Regulations”). WOFAR 2007 was amended by the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010 to implement the Directive.

2. The Directive lays down, for the first time, specific EU-wide standards for the welfare of meat chickens. The Directive is unique in that it measures welfare outcomes and provides for a feedback mechanism between enforcement bodies and the producer, thus identifying those who are operating at unsatisfactory levels of stockmanship.

3. The purpose of this PIR is to fulfil a non-statutory review provision to establish whether, and to what extent, the Directive has achieved its original objectives. The review has focussed on the domestic implementation and enforcement of the Directive in England through the relevant provisions of WOFAR 2007.

4. We have taken a proportionate approach to the PIR in line with better regulation guidance. We commissioned a research study to evaluate the effectiveness of the Directive in England and Wales, which was undertaken by a joint team from the Universities of Bristol, Cardiff and Reading. This level of evidence was sought since the Directive was considered high impact (estimated net impacts above £50m). “The Study to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Regulation (Directive 2007/43/EC) in England and Wales” (Defra project code AW1144) is published at the same time as this review and can be found on the Defra [search science](#) website.

Background

5. The Regulations aim to improve welfare conditions for chickens kept for meat production, whilst balancing economic, social and environmental impacts. They set welfare requirements for keeping conventionally reared meat chickens, from the time chicks are brought to production sites until they leave for slaughter. They do not apply when fewer than 500 meat chickens are kept, or to parent flocks, or to birds marketed as extensive indoor, free range or organic.

6. The Regulations detail two sets of standards, using stocking density as a criterion for the level of intensity of production:

- i) producers who stock up to a maximum of 33kg live weight per m² have to comply with standards relating to drinkers, feeding, litter, ventilation and heating, noise, light, inspection, cleaning, record keeping, training and surgical interventions.

ii) producers who stock above 33kg up to a maximum of 39kg live weight per m² have to comply with an additional set of standards. These include notification and documentation requirements as well as controls on environmental parameters such as ammonia concentrations, temperature levels and humidity standards.

7. Under the Regulations, producers stocking above 33kg live weight per m² have to comply with certain monitoring conditions at the slaughterhouse. In line with the requirements of the Regulations, a GB-wide meat chicken “trigger system” was introduced in July 2010. The system uses the results of post-mortem inspections carried out at the slaughterhouse by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to identify possible welfare problems on-farm. Cumulative daily mortality rate and eight post-mortem conditions are monitored. When the levels of these conditions exceed a set threshold, a “trigger report” is sent to the meat chicken producer and to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) for assessment and follow-up action. Depending on the specific circumstances, the producer may be asked to submit an action plan to identify how they will resolve the problem identified or the holding may be inspected by APHA.

8. In addition, the Regulations set out training and guidance requirements for those persons dealing with meat chickens. Training and guidance should be offered such that keepers have sufficient knowledge of stockmanship, especially with reference to welfare aspects. Keepers should be in possession of a certificate recognised by the Secretary of State, attesting to the completion of such training courses as required.

Policy evaluation

9. The Regulations require the collection and monitoring of post-mortem condition data when meat chickens are slaughtered to help identify poor welfare on-farm. The research study found that the mechanism to achieve this (the “trigger system”) has been successfully implemented in England. It concluded that a semi-automated data analysis system has been created which analyses collated data, and identifies farms requiring further investigation. These steps are significant achievements in line with the structure for data required under the Regulations.

10. The study found that meat chicken producers have fully engaged with the requirements of the Regulations. They respond to trigger reports raised by the FSA and produce action plans when requested. Focus group work carried out with producers identified that they view the requirements of the Regulations as an integral part of an overall system put in place by the industry and retailers’ schemes, rather than as (only) a top-down approach from regulators. The study noted that industry representatives were positive about the extent to which the requirements of the Regulations have been embedded within the market-based system, encouraging the involvement of producers in the improvement of meat chicken welfare.

11. The study found that the trigger system processes have a measurable and significant positive effect on flock performance or welfare values on farm. The response by producers to receiving a trigger report and the production of an action plan can be seen to create positive measurable changes in the trigger measures

identified. The study analysed a very large FSA dataset which indicated that flocks show improvement after a trigger report has been generated and over the next two subsequent flocks. For some conditions there was an overall increase in the number of trigger reports generated each year in the period analysed, whilst for others there was a reduction. By comparing the relative importance of the conditions and the action taken, the study concluded that trigger reports result in pragmatic responses from meat chicken producers.

12. The research also found that important and common conditions (particularly foot pad dermatitis and ascites) are readily identified by the trigger system, and this is communicated to producers and is prioritised for action.

13. Although not a specific objective, the study found that a further positive aspect is that, where there are systematic increases in the levels of some conditions, this is detected through the monitoring of the trigger system data. Seasonal and year by year changes in the pattern of conditions can be derived from the FSA data. This enables the potential for targeted action to explore, and alter, the underlying causes of these changes.

14. The research study concludes that the policy objectives of the Regulations have been achieved.

Economic evaluation

15. As well as reviewing the welfare implications of the Regulations, the research study also considered its economic consequences by quantifying, through surveys, the costs to producers of implementing the Regulations and the benefits to consumers.

16. In terms of the benefits to consumers of the Regulations, a survey was carried out which sought consumer views on meat chicken welfare and consumers' stated willingness to pay (WTP) for the welfare measures introduced. The survey analysed over 650 usable responses and found that chicken was consumed by 95% of respondents, with households eating chicken an average of about 3 times per week, at an average cost of £8.33. Respondents provided a high rank score when expressing their specific level of concern for the welfare of meat chickens. The study suggested that about 63% of consumers would be willing to pay around 10% more on chicken purchases per week in order to secure the welfare measures for meat chickens contained in the Regulations. This positive WTP suggests that consumers would derive an increase in their economic welfare from improved meat chicken welfare. Respondents were also of the opinion that the Regulations would yield such improvements in meat chicken welfare. In aggregate the study estimated that the present value of the benefits over a 10 year period was around £6,238m.

17. In terms of the additional costs of meat chicken production resulting from one-off capital and ongoing production costs and losses resulting from lower stocking rates, the present value over a 10 year period was around £142m. These figures were derived from the results of a postal survey of 119 meat chicken producers. The survey of producers recorded capital investments linked to the requirements of the Regulations, for example, changes in lighting provision. However, it is apparent that

the meat chicken industry had been in the process of making changes as part of its ongoing commercial activity. Indeed, industry representatives suggested that the majority of changes over the period analysed had come under routine and anticipated business improvement. For example, changes to feeders and inclusion of windows in some buildings are not required in the Regulations but, according to industry representatives, they were implemented in response to retailers' requirements and as part of overarching trends in business improvement. The cost to industry is therefore less apparent than had the changes been "additional" to industry's direction of travel.

Summary of cost increase resulting from WOFAR 2007 as incurred by the meat chicken sector in England

	Average cost increase per farm in 2011 (£)	Sector increase for single year (£m)	Sector increase for 10 years (£m present value)
Capital costs (one-off)			
New housing	14,117	13.3	13.3
Replacement housing	11,036	10.3	10.3
Fixtures and equipment (1)	18,311	17.2	17.2
Other costs			
Training (one-off)	541	0.5	0.5
Production losses	1,292	1.2	9.8
Production costs	12,538	12.2	91.0
Total	57,835	54.7	142.1

(1) Light fittings, ventilation, skylights/windows, feed and water dispensers.

18. The conclusion of the economic analysis is that the benefits (to consumers of chicken) were significantly greater than the costs (to producers), implying that the changes brought about by the Directive, as implemented by WOFAR 2007, have overall had a net beneficial impact on society.

19. Further details of the surveys and analysis are set out in the research report.