



**To:**

***Executive Vice-President Raffaele Fitto, Cohesion and Reforms***

***Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi, Health and Animal Welfare***

***Commissioner Christophe Hansen, Agriculture and Food***

**Brussels, 23 June 2025**

**Subject: Call for an EU-wide Ban on the Culling of Male Chicks and Female Ducklings**

Dear Commissioners Hansen, Várhelyi and Fitto

We, Members of the European Parliament, hereby wish to draw your attention to a practice that is considered unacceptable by 75% of EU citizens according to the 2023 Eurobarometer: the culling of day-old chicks and ducklings by grinding or gassing, and to stress the importance of prohibiting this practice throughout the European Union. To date, five Member States have already adopted full or partial bans on this practice.

It is estimated that 330 million male chicks and millions of female ducklings are culled each year in the EU. These animals are deemed to have no economic value: male chicks born into the egg-laying industry cannot lay eggs and do not grow fast or large enough to be profitable in the broiler sector. Female ducklings, on the other hand, are considered less suitable for foie gras production due to their smaller, more innervated livers. As a result, they too are routinely culled.

Under current EU legislation, two methods are authorised for the killing of day-old chicks and ducklings: maceration (more commonly referred to as “grinding” or “shredding”) and carbon dioxide asphyxiation.

In its 2019 scientific opinion, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) highlighted several welfare concerns with maceration, including slow blade rotation, machine overloading, and inappropriate spacing between rollers. These issues can result in animals remaining conscious during the process, exposing them to significant pain, distress, and fear.

Footage documenting these practices has been made public by several organisations, including L214 as early as 2014. The shocking nature of the images provoked widespread public outcry and spurred political action. In response, then French Minister of Agriculture Stéphane Le Foll announced investment in research into alternatives to male chick culling, following the earlier initiative of his German counterpart Christian Schmidt, who committed to implementing *in-ovo sexing* technology.

This investment led to the development of technologies capable of determining the sex of embryos during incubation – a technique known as *in-ovo sexing*. This encompasses a range of methods, such as spectroscopy and MRI, that allow for precise and early detection of embryo sex (prior to the 12th day of incubation, when pain perception begins to develop in the embryo).

These technologies have evolved rapidly and are now technically and economically viable for implementation throughout the European Union. They have proven both effective and financially acceptable for the sector.

Their viability has prompted a growing number of Member States – France, Germany, Austria, Italy, and most recently the Netherlands – either to prohibit the culling of chicks within their jurisdictions or to announce a forthcoming prohibition.

France offers a compelling example of how agreements between the egg industry and large retailers can help offset the costs associated with in-ovo sexing equipment. A national agreement reached in February 2025 between the French egg industry (CNPO) and distribution chains introduced a levy of €0.39 per 100 eggs sold, translating to a negligible cost of €0.0039 per egg for the consumer. It is worth noting that the CNPO itself now publicly calls for an EU-wide ban on chick culling.

While Member State-level bans demonstrate responsiveness to citizen demands on animal welfare, they also generate distortions within the internal market. It is therefore crucial that these national measures be harmonised through EU-level legislation.

Currently, the culling of these animals is regulated under Annex I of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing. We therefore urge the Commission to consider amending Annex I by way of an Implementing Act, in order to remove maceration from the list of approved killing methods under EU law. The regulation should also specify that culling is prohibited beyond the 12th day of incubation, subject to revision in line with scientific progress.

Such a prohibition should be introduced with minimal transition periods and without derogation, except in clearly demonstrated cases where no viable alternative exists – and only where such exemptions are consistent with the most up-to-date scientific knowledge.

Sincerely,

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