



ASSOCIATION EUROPÉENNE DE VOLAILLES RURALES
EUROPEAN RURAL POULTRY ASSOCIATION

ERPA: a European rural poultry association

Why and what for?

The background that triggered it

The last sanitary crisis put the spotlight on rural poultry in all the countries of the European Union.

During these periods of crisis, the European Commission and the Member States imposed restrictions on flocks including free range birds and on markets selling live birds.

These types of production were thus significantly reduced or even disappeared in certain States despite the fact that they play an important social role and are a positive force in maintaining rural society and traditional forms of agriculture.

The organisations that represented these producers felt the need to form groups across state borders to defend this type of production and anticipate problems in the future.

Rural poultry in Europe: a significant level of production with a strong social role

By “rural poultry” is meant any poultry production system that ensures the continuation of a family activity that forms part of traditional smallholding agriculture.

Rural poultry is highly diverse in nature and varies according to the country:

- Family poultry,
- Young stock sold alive directly or at markets,
- Poultry sold with national quality certification, under PGI or PDO, or reared organically,
- Free range poultry produced by organised outlets, etc.

What is common to all of these types of rural poultry is that they are reared extensively in accordance with animal welfare and are from coloured rustic breeds with slow rates of growth. They concern two distinct sectors of production: poultry for meat and eggs.

Rural poultry farmers may be organised in groups or remain independent, but they have the common characteristic of obtaining their chicks from breeders offering rustic breeds that are specifically suited to this type of rearing.

These forms of production involve a significant number of different stakeholders: breeders, hatchers, the rearers of young birds, producers, retailers and distributors.

There are no comprehensive data available on the economic importance of rural poultry.

However, as an example, the production of rural meat poultry represents approximately:

- in Italy: 50 million coloured chicks of which 10 million are sold to other countries in Europe. Rural poultry represents approximately 15% of national consumption and covers the activity of 1,500 people directly and 5,000 indirectly.
- in France, 160 million coloured chicks of which 120 million are Label Rouge traditional free range poultry produced by 7,000 farmers and sold under 31 PGI. Label Rouge chickens represent 1/3 of the purchases by French households.
- in Spain: 24 million coloured chicks for a level of rural poultry production of 46 to 48,000 T.

Why is an association needed?

In spite of the size of rural poultry production, the people involved in it have little representation at European level, with most poultry organisations representing intensive production.

What is more, there is very little communication between the producers of rural poultry in the various States.

For this reason, the ERPA association was created in May 2007 to:

- **Defend**, by all means, **support and develop the production of rural poultry** in the European Union. This defence is to be carried out in particular by emphasising the social links it maintains in rural society.
- **Defend the extensive and family methods of rearing**, including free range poultry rearing
- **Represent its members** to European professional and public bodies, in particular to the European Commission
- **Inform its members, co-ordinate their actions and adopt common positions** in order to encourage this defence and representation at European level
- And in general, implement any action to encourage the production and sale of rural poultry and **take into account their specific characteristics** in the establishment of European regulations and European agricultural, economic and health policies.

Who currently constitute ERPA?

- The **founding members** are organisations in Belgium, Spain, Italy and France. Actual states represented in ERPA: Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Italy, Hungary, Romania, Spain.
- The ERPA association is made up of :
 - **Members:** organisations representing producers (generally speaking) of rural poultry
 - **Associate Members:** selectors of breeds intended for the production of rural poultry
- ERPA is an association registered under the French law of 1901 while awaiting registration under European statutes.
- Head office: 5 Rue de Charonne 75011 PARIS (France).
- Chairman: Oscar BERLANDA (Italy); General Secretary: Agnès LASZCZYK (France)
- ERPA is currently financed by member subscriptions.

The values defended by ERPA

- The preservation of existing **traditional** forms of production because of their important **social function** (markets, links between town and country, the maintenance of rural society, etc.)
- The encouragement of rearing methods that respect **animal welfare and the environment**
- The encouragement of **sustainable agriculture** and the maintenance of small-scale farming through these complementary activities
- The contribution made to the **sustainable development of rural areas**, in particular disadvantaged ones in which traditional farming is significantly present
- The preservation of **local agriculture** and **local sales**, since these local activities are a positive force in favour of the environment and rural development
- The maintenance and development of **genetic biodiversity** through encouraging the selection of rustic breeds based on the diversity of local breeds
- The provision of a **range of high quality, varied and guaranteed products** in terms of taste and health
- The provision of **suitable health protection** for these forms of production in the face of the possible risks of epizootic disease

The projects of the ERPA association

ERPA has identified several projects for action to be carried:

- **To undertake a study to identify the units of production of rural poultry** in the various Member States: types of production, economic importance, stakeholders, the breeds used and sales circuits, etc.
- **To develop a professional network** between economic stakeholders and the collective organisations involved in the production of rural poultry in the various Member States, so as to enable ERPA to expand its communication and representation
- **To establish a comparison of national regulations** and specific standards relating to this type of production: health, biosecurity measures, certification, marketing standards, etc.
- **To carry out actions to encourage the maintenance and development of selection** of appropriate rustic breeds (research, support given to breeders, etc.)
- **To draft proposals for alternative biosecurity measures** to cover the risk of Influenza that are suited to these types of production and that might become a reference at European level.
- **To communicate with institutional and professional organisations and the general public** to gain recognition for the production of rural poultry, its specific characteristics and its importance in Europe.

For more information on ERPA and its activities:

www.erpa-ruralpoultry.eu