



European Regulation on organic farming/Implementing acts

ERPA proposals on production rules for organic poultry

THE ISSUES OF THESE PRODUCTION RULES ON ORGANIC POULTRY FOR ERPA:

- ERPA defends a "traditional" organic poultry farming, that is to say with a human scale, which does not give an industrial image of the organic production and which gives confidence in all transparency. For this ERPA proposes several production rules:
 - Limitation of building sizes, of aviary sizes, and of production unit sizes
 - Real outdoor access for poultry for meat and layers, including maximum ages to go outside, and good management of the outdoor runs.

- ERPA also defends **technically and sanitarly viable and consistent production rules**. This means in practice that for pullets and for organic breeders, which are highly technical and light-sensitive productions, the possibility of a veranda as an alternative to the outdoors, as defined in the basic Regulation, should be able to apply in a simple way. Farmers need visibility over time with sustainable rules that do not apply on a case-by-case basis.

PROPOSALS OF PRODUCTION RULES CONCERNING ORGANIC PULLETS, LAYING HENS AND POULTRY FOR MEAT

[in blue: explanations about the proposal]

1. Characteristics and technical requirements of buildings

The external boundary of the house, i.e. including a possible veranda, shall have exit/entry pop-holes of a size adequate for the poultry, and those pop-holes shall have a combined length of at least 4 m per 100 m² area of the house available to the poultry. *[it is the current regulation]*

Where a veranda is present, the internal pop-holes between the house and the veranda shall have a combined length of 2 m per 100 m² area of the house. *[from the proposal of the EC of March 2014]*

Twenty-four hour access to the veranda must be allowed (except for pullets). *[from the proposal of the EC of March 2014]*

Poultry houses shall be constructed in a manner allowing all poultry easy access to open air area, i.e. the maximum distance from any point within the house to the nearest external pop-hole shall not be more than 20 m. *[15 m is not sufficient in some cases when there is a veranda]*

For poultry for meat, multi-layer systems are not allowed. *[it is the current situation, it favors the access to outside]*

For pullets and laying hens, multi-layer systems shall have no more than three levels of usable area including the ground floor. There shall be no more than 1 m between levels or intermediate areas, such as nesting areas. *[the limitation of levels favors the access to outside]*

For laying hens, higher tiers shall be capable of having manure removed by an automated system.

For new buildings in laying hens production: if the hens have access to the outdoor area only on one side of the building and if there is a central nest, it is necessary to encourage the exit of the hens via the nests, with 10% of passageway distributed over the length of the nests. *[this favors real the access to outside]*

For poultry for meat, the maximum size of the poultry house is 480 m² *[it is the current regulation]*.

For laying hens: the maximum size of buildings is 2,000 m² of usable area, and the usable area of the buildings in the production unit is 4000 m² maximum.

For pullets: the maximum size of ground floor area in buildings is 2000 m².

2. Stocking density and minimum surface for indoor and outdoor areas

The minimum surface area indoors and outdoors and other characteristics of housing for birds of the species *Gallus gallus* shall be as follows:

	Pullets 0-8 weeks	Pullets 9-18 weeks	Laying hens
In house stocking rate (poultry per m ² of usable area)	24 birds with a maximum of 21 kg liveweight/m ²	16 birds with a maximum of 25 kg liveweight/m ² <i>[the liveweight of a pullet at about 18 weeks is 1,5 kg => 25 kg]</i>	6 birds per m ² of usable area
Perch space (cm)	2 cm minimum/pullet from 4 weeks		According to Directive 1999/74 : 15 <i>[Too much perches are not necessary to the welfare of hens, and 15 facilitates the conversion between poultry house of free range hens and organic hens]</i>
Multilayer systems additional limits/m ² of ground floor area (including veranda if 24h access)	36 pullets (excluding veranda area)	26 pullets	9 birds

Flock size limits per compartment		3 000
Number maximum of flocks per poultry house		4
Flock size limits per unit of production	-	24 000
Outdoor access: veranda or free range area		<p><i>[extract of the basic regulation]</i></p> <p><i>By way of derogation from point 1.6.5, in the case of breeding birds and pullets aged under 18 weeks and when the conditions specified in point 1.7.3 as regards restrictions and obligations related to the protection of human and animal health imposed on the basis of Union legislation are met and prevent breeding birds and pullets aged under 18 weeks from having access to open air areas, verandas shall be considered as open air areas and in such cases shall have a wire mesh barrier to keep other birds out.</i></p>
		<p>The minimum surface of the outdoor access (veranda or free range area) is at least 1/4 of the developed area of the building.</p>

		Outdoor access (veranda or free range area) at the latest from 12 weeks	<p>Laying hens must have access to the free range area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no later than 25 weeks (175 days) - no later than 11 am in the morning and until dusk. <p><i>[we want a rule to favorize the access to outside]</i></p>
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	Chickens		Pouardes <i>[= young hen that has never laid an egg]</i>
Age	Starter 0-28 days maximum <i>[in the cases of chickens aged of 81 days, the age of starter ends at 28 and not 21 days]</i>	Finisher after 28-days	91-120 days
In house stocking rate (poultry per m ² of usable area) for fixed and mobile houses	20 birds with a maximum of 21 kg liveweight/m ²	<p>10 birds with a maximum of 25 kg liveweight/m²</p> <p>However, for mobile houses less than 150 m² and opened at night, the stocking density may be increased to 16 birds with a maximum of 35 kg liveweight/m²</p> <p><i>[the liveweight of a chicken at about 81 days is 2,2 kg => 25kg - we would like to adapt the maximal density to the real weights of slow growing chickens]</i></p>	9 birds with a maximum of 35 kg liveweight/m ²
Flock size limit per poultry house	10 000*	4 800	4 320
Open-air run stocking rates	1	4	4

(m ² /poultry), provided that the limit of 170 kg of N/ha/year is not exceeded		Poultry must have access to the free range area no later than 42 days. <i>[we want a rule to favorize the access to outside]</i>
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* sub-dividable to produce 3x3000 or 2x4800 flocks.

The minimum surface areas indoors and outdoors and other characteristics of housing for birds of species other than *Gallus gallus* shall be as follows:

Type	Turkeys		Geese	Ducks				Guinea fowl
	Male	Female	All	Peking	Male Muscovy	Female Muscovy	Mallard	All
In house stocking rate (poultry per m ² of usable area) for fixed houses	6,25 birds with a maximum of 35 kg liveweight/m ²		5 birds with a maximum of 30 kg liveweight /m ²	8 birds with a maximum of 35 kg liveweight /m ²	8 birds with a maximum of 35 kg liveweight/m ²	10 birds with a maximum of 25 kg liveweight /m ²	8 birds with a maximum of 35 kg liveweight /m ²	13 birds with a maximum of 25 kg liveweight /m ²
<i>[All the proposed stocking density come from the marketing standard for poultry meat (regulation 543/2008) for the highest category "traditional free range"]</i>								
In house stocking rate (poultry per m ² of usable area) for mobile houses less than 150 m ²	16 birds with a maximum of 35 kg liveweight /m ²							
Flock size limit per poultry house	3 000	3 000	2 500	3 900	3 900	4 800	3 900	6 300
Open-air run stocking rates (m ² /poultry), provided that the limit of 170 kg of N/ha/year is	Poultry must have access to the free range area no later than 56 days. <i>[we want a rule to favorize the access to outside]</i>							
	6	6	10	2	2	2	3	2

not exceeded								
<i>[All the proposed stocking density come from the marketing standard for poultry meat (regulation 543/2008) for the highest category "traditional free range"]</i>								

3. Vegetation requirements and characterizes of protected facilities and open-air areas

The open air areas shall not extend beyond a radius of 150 m from the nearest pop-hole of the poultry house.

However an extension of up to 350 m from the nearest pop-hole of the poultry house is permissible provided that a sufficient number of shelters or shrubs or trees are evenly distributed throughout the whole open-air area with at least four shelters or shrubs or trees per hectare.

Vegetation is essential for a good access and a good circulation of poultry outdoors. For this, for instance: obligation to plant trees or shrubs on the outdoor area from the first year of production, with the objective that 10% of the inner surface of the outdoor areas is covered with shrubby vegetation or trees. Vegetation elements must be spaced no more than 30 meters apart, to encourage the real circulation of poultry on the whole open-air area.

PROPOSALS OF PRODUCTION RULES CONCERNING ORGANIC BREEDERS (ELPHA & ERPA PROPOSALS)

The minimum surface area indoors and other characteristics of housing for organic breeders of the species *Gallus gallus* shall be as follows:

	Production period For poultry meat production: from 18 weeks For table eggs production: from 18 weeks	<i>Justification</i>
In house stocking rate (poultry per m ² of usable area) (maximum)	6 females/m ² + 1 male/m ² , as appropriate	<i>As an alternative max. 21 kg/m² could be considered in line with EGTOP conclusions.</i>
Perch space (cm)	(no obligation of perch)	<i>Based on some broiler breeds, we could face keel bone deformation Slats may be considered as perch as they are always present in breeder housing</i>
Multilayer systems additional limits/m ² of ground floor area (including veranda if 24h access)	multi-layer systems shall have no more than 4 levels of usable area including the ground floor	<i>This way birds can express their natural behaviour during night period (birds want to go up).</i>

Flock size limits per compartment	6 000 females	<i>More convenient because less separation on the flocks (meaning less doors, less stress for the birds and for the workers). Health and safety: less points of entry mean less risks of contamination</i>
Flock size limits per unit of production	24 000 females	<i>In case of a larger demand of organic DOC, we may be able to have such sized unit of production</i>
Outdoor access: veranda	No free range access ; access to a veranda on concrete floor from 30 weeks. Minimum surface of the veranda: 20% of usable area of the poultry house. Twenty-four hour access to the veranda is not mandatory. In case of adverse weather conditions which may harm the welfare of the bird: possibility of a building with no veranda but with windows instead, this would be an indoor house with a stocking density similar to the use of a veranda system without 24 hour access.	<i>To be sure to continue to provide good and safe DOC exempt of -Salmonella -Mycoplasma (to avoid serious leg health issues in the progeny)</i>
Origin of breeder pullets	Non-organically reared breeder pullets may be brought into an organic breeders production unit.	

The rearing period should be excluded from the requirements for organic production (before 18 weeks) for breeders.

However, if that would not be accepted, then the requirements below may apply.

	From day 1 till 8 weeks	Production period For poultry meat production: from week 8 to 18 weeks	<i>Justification</i>
In house stocking rate (poultry per m ² of usable area) (maximum)	24 (to be checked)	15 birds or 21 kg (liveable area)	<i>Column 1 - 2: based on EGTOP report</i>
Perch space (cm)	(no obligation of perch) Slats can be useful to train the birds for the future	(no obligation of perch) Slats can be useful to train the birds for the future	<i>Based on some broiler breeds, we could face keel</i>

	breeder housing	breeder housing	<i>bone deformation Slats are always present in breeder housing</i>
Multilayer systems additional limits/m2 of ground floor area (including veranda if 24h access)	multi-layer systems shall have no more than 4 levels of usable area including the ground floor	multi-layer systems shall have no more than 4 levels of usable area including the ground floor	<i>This way birds can express their natural behaviour during night period (birds want to go up).</i>
Flock size limits per compartment	6 000 females	6 000 females	<i>More convenient because less separation on the flocks (meaning less doors, less stress for the birds and for the workers). Health and safety: less points of entry mean less risks of contamination</i>
Flock size limits per unit of production	24 000 females	24 000 females	<i>In case of a larger demand of organic DOC, we may be able to have such sized unit of production</i>
Outdoor access: veranda	No free range access	No free range access	<i>To be sure to continue to provide good and safe Pullets exempt of -Salmonella -Mycoplasma</i>

Contact : Marie GUYOT, Secretary-General - m.guyot@erpa-ruralpoultry.eu - www.erpa-ruralpoultry.eu

ERPA, the European rural poultry association, represents the rural poultry producers in Europe, to defend their types of farming and their own characteristics. Rural poultry is highly diverse in nature and varies according to the country:

– Poultry sold with national quality certification, under PGI or PDO, or reared organically

– Free range poultry

– Young stock sold alive directly or on markets.

All of these types of rural poultry are reared extensively in accordance with animal welfare and from colored, rustic, slow-growing breeds.