



Rt Hon Emma Reynolds MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
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Dear Secretary of State,

On behalf of Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to raise significant concerns from across our agri-food membership regarding the UK Government's current review into a potential ban on egg production from caged systems.

Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC) is one of the UK's largest and most active Chambers of Commerce, representing over 1,350 businesses and collectively employing more than 100,000 people - over half the population of our region. We are part of the British Chambers of Commerce network, which brings together 51 accredited UK Chambers and represents over 50,000 businesses. In North-east Scotland, the food and drink industry employs 22,000 people and accounts for more than 20% of Scotland's total output, underlining the sector's critical importance to the regional economy.

While many businesses within the sector have already invested in and transitioned towards alternative systems, there is strong and consistent concern that the proposed ban, as currently framed, could have serious unintended economic consequences - both for the UK as a whole and for key rural economies such as Aberdeenshire.

Our members are clear that the central issue is not the direction of travel on animal welfare, but the absence of equivalent measures applying to imports. A unilateral ban on domestic production risks undermining the competitiveness of UK producers by exposing them to lower-cost international competition operating under significantly different, and often less rigorous, regulatory conditions.

The potential economic impacts are substantial:

- **Reduced competitiveness of UK producers:** Businesses operating to higher UK welfare and regulatory standards face materially higher production costs. Without import parity, this places them at a structural disadvantage in both consumer and processing markets.
- **Pressure on jobs and rural economies:** In regions such as Aberdeenshire - where agriculture and food & drink are major employers - reduced domestic production risks job losses not only on farms, but across the wider supply chain including packing, processing, logistics, and support services.
- **Increased reliance on imports:** As domestic supply becomes more constrained or expensive, there will be strong commercial incentives for retailers and manufacturers to source eggs and egg products from overseas markets with lower production costs.
- **Downward pressure on investment:** Policy uncertainty and reduced competitiveness risk deterring further investment in UK agri-food businesses, particularly in rural areas where economic resilience is closely tied to the success of this sector.


There is already evidence that lower-cost production can access the UK market. Imports of eggs from countries such as Ukraine - where conventional 'battery' cage systems (now banned in the UK and EU) remain in operation - demonstrate how cost differentials can influence sourcing decisions. Expanding this dynamic risks displacing UK production rather than improving overall outcomes.

In effect, a domestic-only ban risks exporting both production and associated economic activity, weakening the UK's food security, reducing the resilience of rural economies, and placing additional strain on communities that are heavily dependent on agriculture and food & drink.

Given these concerns, our members strongly urge the Government to ensure that any policy intervention does not undermine the economic viability of the UK sector. At a minimum, a ban on caged systems should only be considered if accompanied by equivalent restrictions on the import of eggs and egg products produced under such systems, ensuring a level playing field for UK businesses.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage further with officials to ensure that any future policy strikes the right balance between animal welfare ambitions, which we and the industry support, and the need to protect UK competitiveness, jobs, and regional economic stability.

Yours sincerely



Russell Borthwick
Chief Executive