

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party  
*for the South East of England*

Commissioner Mariann Fisher Boel  
DG Agriculture  
European Commission  
200 Rue de la Loi  
B-1049 Brussels  
Belgium

5th June 2007

Dear Commissioner,

I am writing to you about the proposal for a Council Regulation on Organic Production and Labelling of Organic Products. It has been brought to my attention that, in its present state, the regulation would allow the production of organic foie gras. The mechanical force feeding of ducks and geese, even with organic feed, is an unacceptable practice.

The great suffering imposed on ducks and geese kept for foie gras production was highlighted in 1998 by a report of the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare, which concluded that force-feeding is highly detrimental to the welfare of the birds. Force-fed birds have a mortality rate 10-12 times higher than birds reared normally, and insertion of the feeding pipe can result in bruising and even perforation of the oesophagus. Force-feeding results in the liver of birds swelling to 6-10 times its normal size.

Foie gras production has not been adequately addressed by EU legislation in the past. Council Directive (98/58/EC) on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes, for example, is vague and the interpretation of "unnecessary suffering" is ambiguous. This has meant that a number of Member States have been able to continue their force-feeding practices unabated.

Equally, the proposed regulation on Organic Production and Labelling of Organic Products, which calls for the respect of "high animal welfare standards", is ambiguous and would allow force-feeding of birds to continue, albeit with organic feed. I hope that the Commission will strengthen the proposal by clearing stating that foie gras production is not permitted, thereby ensuring the welfare of ducks and geese.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.

Cc Commissioner Kyprianou