



News Release

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Animal Welfare Revolution Continues In Economic Recovery

Freedom Food announces record number of animals reared to RSPCA standards

British shoppers are standing firm by animal welfare in 2010 as Freedom Food today reported a record breaking 532 million farm animals are being reared under its scheme to the RSPCA's higher welfare standards. This is a **46 per cent increase** since 2008.

Early signs this year already show the trend is set to continue, with more than 13,000 animals coming on board just last month. This is proof Freedom Food says that despite the credit crunch, higher welfare food continues to make an impact on British shoppers.

This news follows a recent consumer survey from IGD, the food and grocery research body, that found that animal welfare standards have risen up the list of priorities for shoppers when choosing food and grocery products. In January 2010, **19 per cent** of shoppers said that animal welfare standards influenced their shopping decisions, compared with just 10 per cent in 2006.

Freedom Food saw an annual rise in animal numbers from more than 363 million at the end of 2008 to 532 million at the end of last year. This means that nearly 170 million more animals are now benefitting from being reared to the RSPCA's higher welfare standards compared to just over a year ago.

Top of the Freedom Food charts is salmon – up a whopping 56 per cent in 2009, from just over 281 million in 2008 to nearly 440 million fish. This represents about 60 per cent of Scottish salmon production.

Pigs also showed a 23 per cent growth from nearly 1.6 million (2008) to more than 1.9 million (2009), accounting for 20 per cent of UK production. This result comes a year after separate campaigns were launched by the RSPCA ('Rooting for Pigs') and Jamie Oliver ('Jamie Saves Our Bacon' on Channel 4) to improve pig welfare.

Other Freedom Food highlights include:

- Number of ducks in the scheme up 84 per cent (about 42 per cent of UK production)
- 17 per cent increase in turkeys (nearly seven per cent of UK production)
- Chicken up by nearly nine per cent – following a 125 per cent hike in 08 versus 07 (more than seven per cent of UK production)**

Leigh Grant, Chief Executive of Freedom Food, said: "Faced with the credit crunch we were worried the number of animals under Freedom Food would also take a downturn.

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“But thanks to consistent consumer demand for higher welfare, the opposite has happened. More than 530 million animals are now being reared to the RSPCA’s welfare standards, compared to one million when the scheme began 15 years ago. We had more applications from farmers wanting to join the scheme last year than ever before.

“It’s incredibly encouraging that in spite of the economic decline, people don’t want to compromise on animal welfare and are still prepared to pay a little more for Freedom Food labelled products. And as we start to head out of recession I’ve no doubt we will see the trend accelerate even more.”

Last year Sainsbury’s reported a mammoth 164 per cent increase in sales of Freedom Food year-on-year.

And not only are sales of Freedom Food products on the up but the range of products on offer is also at an all-time high, with more than 700 different lines now available across major retailers, independents and online. These include chicken, eggs, salmon, pork, duck and dairy products.

For further information on Freedom Food visit www.freedomfood.co.uk

For all media enquiries contact the press office on 0300 123 0134 or 0300 123 0244/0288.

*All Freedom Food animal figures in this release were correct in January 2010

**Freedom Food market penetration – with the exception of salmon - has been calculated against Defra’s farm census 2008

Notes to editors:

- Freedom Food (FF) labelled products come from farms that are assessed to strict RSPCA welfare standards which go beyond the industry standards and legislation in many key welfare areas
- All FF members (farms, hauliers, processors, packers and abattoirs) receive annual assessments, and visits by RSPCA farm livestock officers to check standards are maintained
- Traceability checks are also carried out on FF labelled products from supermarket shelf back to farm - through processor, packer, abattoir and haulier - to ensure the product is correctly labelled
- FF was set up by the RSPCA in 1994 to help improve the lives of animals farmed for food and act as a catalyst for change throughout the food and farming industry. It is a registered charity and non-profit making
- For more information on IGD’s consumer research, contact the IGD media team on 01923 851916 or www.igd.com/media

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