

U.E.P. Consumer Trends Analysis: What Eggs Do American Consumers Really Want? Cage? Cage-Free? Enriched Colony? Free Range?

American Consumers Choose 'Regular' Eggs Over Cage-Free By 40-To-1 Margin And Pay Three Times Less For Eggs Than Europeans; But Support Enriched Colony Housing Systems As An Alternative

WASHINGTON, May 10 /PRNewswire/ -- American consumers continue to buy "regular" eggs over cage-free eggs by a margin of 40-to-1, according to data from Information Resources, Inc. (IRI) which tracks checkout scanner data from 34,000 grocery, drug and mass merchandiser stores across the U.S.

"Regular" eggs produced in traditional cage housing systems continued to be the most popular eggs among supermarket shoppers, accounting for 92 percent of the 21 billion eggs bought at retail last year, according to the IRI data. According to the data, cage free eggs only account for 2% of all retail eggs bought, and organic/free range eggs accounted for only 1 percent. Sales of all three types of eggs were relatively flat compared to the previous year, with organic/free range egg sales falling by 1.67 percent, cage free eggs up slightly by 1.25 percent and regular eggs down less than 1 percent, all of which are statistically immaterial changes from the previous year.

"Our farmers produce all of these types of eggs, and more," said Gene Gregory, president of United Egg Producers, a national farmer cooperative and trade association for America's egg farmers, which was meeting here this week. "We've always said that consumers should be free to choose which types of eggs they prefer to buy, based on their own personal opinions and abilities to pay. It's disturbing to see animal rights activists try to force retailers and restaurant companies take away that consumer choice by making them buy only cage free eggs, especially when regular eggs have similar nutritional content . This data clearly indicates that consumers...when given free choice...still prefer regular eggs to cage free or other types of eggs by an overwhelming majority."

The average advertised price for one dozen Large, Grade A eggs from hens in traditional cage housing today is \$1.10, according to the latest USDA statistics (April 30, 2010). Cage free eggs are nearly three times more expensive (\$2.99 per dozen) and organic/free range eggs are four

times more expensive (4.38 per dozen) than eggs from hens in traditional cage housing, according to USDA.

Other research presented at the meeting of America's egg farmers showed that American consumers pay nearly three times less for eggs than European consumers, according to data compiled from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Eurostat analyzed by Promar International, a Washington D.C. economic consulting firm.

On average, U.S. consumers paid \$1.63 for one dozen eggs (a weighted average of regular eggs, cage free and free range) in the U.S., compared to \$5.81 in Luxembourg, \$5.76 in Denmark, \$5.54 in Austria, \$5.19 in Ireland and \$4.89 in the United Kingdom. U.S. egg farms tend to be larger and more efficient than many European egg farms, and Europe also is adding new and costly requirements for changes in housing systems for egg-laying hens that could cause severe egg shortages and higher prices in the coming years.

In other research presented at the meeting, a nationwide survey of Americans showed that while consumers still overwhelmingly buy "regular" eggs by a margin of 40-to-1 over cage free eggs and 90-to-1 over organic/free range eggs, they also support the use of "enriched colony housing" systems that are being phased in by many European egg farmers. Nearly one-third of Americans would choose that type of egg housing for egg-laying hens in their state if they had a choice, according to the survey conducted by independent research agency Bantam. Enriched colony housing systems provide hens more space and the ability to nest, scratch and perch unlike most of the egg housing systems used today.

About United Egg Producers

United Egg Producers (UEP) is the nation's leading egg farming cooperative for U.S. egg farmers, representing 97 percent of U.S. egg farmers, whose members produce eggs including modern cage production, cage-free, organic/free range and other specialty eggs. UEP is based in Alpharetta, GA. To learn more about the egg industry visit www.uepcertified.com.

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