



Higher welfare chicken sales continue to rise

27/05/2008 09:00:00

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Higher welfare chicken sales have jumped significantly and there are indications that they will continue to increase as a result of January's high profile chicken campaigns, according to figures compiled by the [RSPCA](#).

Separate campaigns led by the RSPCA and celebrity chefs Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Jamie Oliver aimed to persuade consumers to opt for higher welfare chickens. The RSPCA challenged supermarkets to become the first to sell only free-range, organic or chickens reared to the RSPCA's standards by 2010. The charity has collated data from four supermarket chains and one processor, which it believes shows that significant numbers of consumers are making the switch.

Increase in sales

It claims that Waitrose highlighted that sales of its Select Farm chicken have increased by 15% since the campaign and are still increasing. Its free-range chicken sales have increased by 22% and its organic sales have increased by 39%.

ASDA plans to stock 25% more free-range chicken by the end of May and a further 50% increase by the end of September. It will also stock 50% more organic chicken and a Freedom Food corn-fed line in August.

Similarly, Somerfield has seen a dramatic lift in sales, with free range up 50% and sales of higher welfare fresh poultry have increased by 40%. The retailer expects sales of higher welfare and free-range poultry to increase from 5% of total fresh poultry sales in January to 14-15% by December. It plans to launch a new range of RSPCA Freedom Food assured higher welfare poultry which is expected to account for 5% of standard poultry sales.

Reviewing figures

Finally, South West chicken producer and processor Lloyd Maunder was producing 75,000 chicken under the Freedom Food scheme each week, which represented 15% of its total output. By August, it plans to produce 250,000 chickens per week under Freedom Food, which will represent 39% of its total output.

Reviewing the figures, Marc Cooper, an RSPCA farm animal scientist, said: "Because more consumers have been prepared to pay more for chickens which have been reared to higher welfare standards, they have created an increased demand for the product, which has encouraged more producers to change the way they rear their birds. If people keep up the demand for higher welfare chicken the revolution will continue."

Meanwhile, May 28 sees the return of Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall to the TV screens in a new series "River Cottage Spring" at 9pm.

Farmers Weekly is led to believe that a 10 minutes proportion of each of the four hour-long programmes in the series will be dedicated to updating viewers on his continuing attempts to persuade consumers to switch to free range chicken.

by Richard Allison ([About this Author](#))