

GUIDELINES

Commission Regulation (EC) No 543/2008 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) 1234/2007 as regards the marketing standards for poultrymeat European Communities(Marketing Standards for Poultrymeat) Regulations 2010 (S.I. No 328 of 2010).

- **REGISTRATION AS A FREE RANGE POULTRY PRODUCER**
- **USE OF SPECIAL TERMS SUCH AS ‘FREE RANGE’, ‘CEREAL FED’ ETC ON POULTRYMEAT LABELLING**

Poultrymeat labels may not bear an indication of how the poultry was reared or fed unless the relevant requirements of EU and national legislation are fulfilled. Only the following terms (and no other) may be used to describe the farming or feeding method:

- (a) ‘Fed with ... % ...’;
- (b) ‘Extensive indoor’ (‘Barn-reared’);
- (c) ‘Free range’;
- (d) ‘Traditional free range’;
- (e) ‘Free range — total freedom’.

The following are the detailed conditions to be fulfilled in each case:

(a) ‘Fed with ... % of ...’

Reference to the following particular feed ingredients may only be made where:

- in the case of cereals, they account for at least 65 % by weight of the feed formula given during the greater part of the fattening period, which may not include more than 15 % of cereal by-products; however, where reference is made to one specific cereal, it shall account for at least 35 % of the feed formula used, and for at least 50 % in the case of maize,
- in the case of pulses or green vegetables they account for at least 5 % by weight of the feed formula given during most of the fattening period,
- in the case of dairy products, they account for at least 5 % by weight of the feed formula given during the finishing stage.

The term ‘Oats-fed goose’ may however be used where the geese are fed during the finishing stage of three weeks not less than 500 g of oats per day.

(b) ‘Extensive indoor’ (or ‘Barn reared’)

This term may only be used where:

- (i) the stocking rate per m² floor space does not exceed, in the case of:
 - chickens, young cocks, capons: 15 birds but not more than 25 kg liveweight,
 - ducks, guinea fowl, turkeys: 25 kg liveweight,
 - geese: 15 kg liveweight,
- (ii) the birds are slaughtered, in the case of:
 - chickens at 56 days or later,
 - turkeys at 70 days or later,
 - geese at 112 days or later,
 - Peking ducks: 49 days or later,
 - Muscovy ducks: 70 days or later for females, 84 days or later for males,
 - female Mulard ducks: 65 days or later,
 - guinea fowl: 82 days or later,
 - young geese (goslings): 60 days or later,
 - young cocks: 90 days or later,
 - capons: 140 days or later.

(c) 'Free range'

This term may only be used where:

(i) the stocking rate in the house and the age of slaughter are in accordance with the limits fixed under (b), except for chickens, for which the stocking rate may be increased to 13, but not more than 27,5 kg liveweight per m² and for capons, for which the stocking rate shall not exceed 7,5 m², and not more than 27,5 kg liveweight per m²,

(ii) the birds have had during at least half their lifetime continuous daytime access to open-air runs comprising an area mainly covered by vegetation of not less than:

- 1 m² per chicken or guinea fowl,
- 2 m² per duck or per capon,
- 4 m² per turkey or goose.

In the case of guinea fowls, open-air runs may be replaced by a perchery having a floor surface of at least that of the house and a height of at least 2 m. Perches of at least 10 cm length are available per bird in total (house and perchery),

(iii) the feed formula used in the fattening stage contains at least 70 % of cereals,

(iv) the poultryhouse is provided with popholes of a combined length at least equal to 4 m per 100 m² surface of the house.

(d) 'Traditional free range'

This term may only be used where:

(i) the indoor stocking rate per m² does not exceed in the case of:

- chickens: 12 but not more than 25 kg liveweight; however, in the case of mobile houses not exceeding 150 m² floor space and which remain open at night, the stocking rate may be increased to 20, but not more than 40 kg liveweight per m²,
- capons: 6,25 (up to 91 days of age: 12) but not more than 35 kg liveweight,
- Muscovy and Peking ducks: 8 males but not more than 35 kg liveweight, 10 females but not more than 25 kg liveweight,
- Mulard ducks: 8 but not more than 35 kg liveweight,
- guinea fowl: 13 but not more than 25 kg liveweight,
- turkeys: 6,25 (up to seven weeks of age: 10) but not more than 35 kg liveweight,
- geese: 5 (up to six weeks of age: 10), 3 during last three weeks of fattening if kept in claustration, but not more than 30 kg liveweight,

(ii) the total usable area of poultryhouses at any single production site does not exceed 1 600 m²,

(iii) each poultryhouse does not contain more than:

- 4 800 chickens,
- 5 200 guinea fowl,
- 4 000 female Muscovy or Peking ducks or 3 200 male Muscovy or Peking ducks or 3 200 Mulard ducks,
- 2 500 capons, geese and turkeys,

(iv) the poultryhouse is provided with popholes of a combined length at least equal to 4 m per 100 m² surface of the house,

(v) there is continuous daytime access to open-air runs at least as from the age of:

- six weeks in the case of chickens, and capons,
- eight weeks in the case of ducks, geese, guinea fowl and turkeys,

(vi) open-air runs comprise an area mainly covered by vegetation amounting to at least:

- 2 m² per chicken or Muscovy or Peking duck or guinea fowl,
- 3 m² per Mulard duck,
- 4 m² per capon, as from 92 days (2 m² up to 91st day),
- 6 m² per turkey,
- 10 m² per goose.

In the case of guinea fowls, open-air runs may be replaced by a perchery having a floor surface of at least double that of the house and a height of at least 2 m. Perches of at least 10 cm length are available per bird in total (house and perchery),

(vii) the birds fattened are of a strain recognised as being slow growing,

(viii) the feed formula used in the fattening stage contains at least 70 % of cereals,

(ix) the minimum age at slaughter is:

- 81 days for chickens,
- 150 days for capons,
- 49 days for Peking ducks,

- 70 days for female Muscovy ducks,
- 84 days for male Muscovy ducks,
- 92 days for Mulard ducks,
- 94 days for guinea fowl,
- 140 days for turkeys and geese marketed whole for roasting,
- 98 days for female turkeys intended for cutting up,
- 126 days for male turkeys intended for cutting up,
- 95 days for geese intended for the production of foie gras and magret,
- 60 days for young geese (goslings),
- (x) finition in claustration does not exceed:
 - for chickens after 90 days of age: 15 days,
 - for capons: four weeks,
 - for geese and Mulard ducks intended for the production of foie gras and magret, after 70 days of age:

(e) ‘Free range – total freedom’

The use of this term shall require conformity with the criteria set out under (d), except that the birds shall have continuous daytime access to open-air runs of unlimited area.

In the event of restrictions, including veterinary restrictions adopted under Community law to protect public and animal health, having the effect of restricting the access of poultry to open-air runs, poultry reared in accordance with the production methods described in points (c), (d) and (e) of the first subparagraph, with the exception of guinea fowls reared in percheries, may continue to be marketed with a special reference to the method of rearing for the duration of the restriction but under no circumstances for more than 12 weeks.

Registration of slaughterhouses and producers using special terms

Slaughterhouses wishing to use any of the aforementioned special terms on poultrymeat labels must be registered by this Department in accordance with European Communities Labelling and Marketing Standards for Poultrymeat and for this purpose they should contact the address at the end of this note for the designated application form.

Applications for registration of slaughterhouses wishing to use special terms must include the names and addresses of the producers of the poultry. These producers will be required to apply for registration under the aforementioned legislation and they may be registered if their facilities are considered satisfactory and in conformity with the legislation in every respect. In addition, good animal health and welfare practices must be in place.

Records to be kept by slaughterhouses and producers

Slaughterhouses authorised to use any of the special terms will be required to maintain records of

- the names and addresses of the producers of the poultry
- the number and total weight (live or carcase) of birds delivered and processed including dates and details of from whom received
- the details of sales including dates and names and addresses of purchasers.

Registered producers must maintain current records of

- The number of birds on hand
- Details of sales including dates, number of birds sold and names and addresses of purchasers
- Purchases of feed including dates, description, quantities and from whom bought
- Dates when birds were first given access to range (in case of free range only).

Slaughterhouses and producers must keep separate records for each type of farming method.

In cases where claims are made in regard to the feed used as described at (a) above it will be necessary that the manufacturers and suppliers of the feed in question keep records showing that the composition of the feed supplied supports the claims made. These records should also indicate the dates on which feed was supplied to the registered producers in question and the description of such feed.

Where the special terms 'traditional free range' and 'free range – total freedom' are used it will also be necessary that the hatchery of origin of the birds keep records concerning birds of the strains recognised as slow growing.

All the aforementioned records should be retained for at least 6 months and must be of such quality that they provide clear evidence that poultrymeat bearing the aforementioned special terms has been produced in full conformity with the applicable legislation and has genuinely been produced by the farming method claimed.

Official checks

Registered slaughterhouses and farms as well as feed manufacturers and (where applicable) hatcheries will be subject to regular official checks. Slaughterhouses and producers who are found not to be in full conformity with the regulatory requirements will have their registrations revoked. It is an offence to market poultry bearing the special terms listed at (a) to (e) above unless the relevant provisions of the legislation have been complied with during the rearing of that poultry and unless this fact can be verified by reference to the records available.

This note is intended for **information only** and is not a legal or comprehensive statement of the legislation governing this subject. That legislation comprises EU Regulations 1234/2007 and 543/2008 and the European Communities Labelling and Marketing Standards for Poultrymeat. Organic poultrymeat does not come within the scope of this information note.

Enquiries about this matter should be directed to Poultry & Eggs Section, Meat Policy Division, Department of Agriculture and Food, Kildare St, Dublin 2 - telephone 01 607 2263 or 01 607 2064, fax 01 676 2823 or e-mail address: info@agriculture.gov.ie