



LA project: "LEGLANGER, responsibly extending the laying period".

Dear poultry farmer

With this brochure we would like to ask for your inform you about a new project within the Flemish laying hens sector. The project will start on 1 December 2018 and is supported by the Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship of the Flemish Government.

The general purpose of the LegLanger project is to provide Flemish laying hen farmers with tools to keep their hens for a longer period of time through new insights, concepts and innovations that have been developed by and for the sector. Longer maintenance starts with the rearing of hens and can only be done in combination with an adapted feed and management. It is essential for individual poultry farmers to be able to predict the turning point at which production will decline, as much as possible in advance, so that the advantage of a longer cycle does not turn into a disadvantage. Therefore, this project will determine the optimal time to achieve the highest profitability by carrying out a cost-effectiveness analysis. In addition to applied advice, this will also result in the development of an online calculation tool that indicates the expected production age of a flock based on the animal and stable data that have been submitted.

In addition to the feed cost, the purchase of the laying hens is, after all, the most important cost when producing eggs. Therefore, keeping laying hens for a longer period of time is an important strategy, both for sustainable reasons and to increase the profitability on the farm. In practice, the average keeping time is 75-80 weeks of age with a production of about 360 eggs per hen. Until now little use has been made of the existing genetic potential of laying hens to keep them up to 100 weeks of age or longer and thereby reach the production of about 500 or more eggs per hen.

The advantage of keeping laying hens for a longer period of time is also the fact that flocks have to be replaced less frequently. Furthermore, the CO₂ production will be significantly lower with this sustainable extended production cycle.



From a practical point of view, 60 laying hen farms are asked to cooperate. From three different housing types (enriched cage, aviary without a pen and aviary with a pen), 20 farms will be intensively monitored. During this production period, the company will be visited seven times. During the first visit, a survey is held together with the poultry farmer. Furthermore, during each visit, scoring techniques regarding feathering (as an indirect parameter for animal welfare), bone quality, digestion and parasitic infections (such as blood lice counting) will be completed. Also, 100 eggs are collected each time that undergo an internal and external quality control.

These parameters are then all used to develop the online calculation tool and to give advice on how to keep laying hens longer. The visits take place during these life weeks: 20, 25, 30, 45, 60 and 75 and pre-slaughter. The participating poultry farms are compensated for the eggs that are analysed at each visit. During the project period, they also receive a free licence from LayInsight (Porphyrio).

A completely anonymous processing of the data as well as feedback of the measurement results and the overall results of the project to the poultry farmer are ensured.

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