

Petition No: HA10 of 2014

RESPONSE TO PETITION

TITLE OF PETITION: "Fair Egg Regulations for Smallholders"

The petition of the undersigned Citizens of Tasmania draw to the attention of the House:

Tasmanian Primary Produce Safety (Egg) Regulations unfairly discriminate against small egg producers; imposing costs that will see small egg producers become unviable.

This configuration of the regulations is unnecessary to ensure food safety, as demonstrated by other States having created provisions catering for small egg producers without compromising national food safety standards.

Your Petitioners therefore request that the House:

- Acknowledge the contribution of smallholder food producers to Tasmania's economy.
- Acknowledge the primary goal of small farm businesses is to be financially viable and provide nutritious and safe food.
- Recognise poultry are integral to many smallholders' production systems, cleaning up pests and weeds, producing fertiliser, and providing income from selling eggs and birds.
- Ensure small egg enterprises are nurtured by an administration taking interest in their success, working with them to ensure compliance and appropriate management of food safety issues.

Calls on the Government to amend Tasmanian Primary Produce Safety (Egg) Regulations to:

- a) Recognise the capacity of smallholders to achieve compliance in a cost effective manner, by creating a charter producers can complete with a checklist of risks involved with small scale production, handling and sale of eggs and clear guidelines on how these can be implemented. We request this charter be based on the Victorian egg safety regulations for small producers; and
- b) Amend the definition of 'egg laying in bird' to allow for breeding stock, retired birds and family pets.

GOVERNMENT POSITION:

On 1 February 2015, the Tasmanian Government introduced the *Primary Produce Safety (Egg) Regulations 2014*, made under the *Primary Produce Safety Act 2011*. These regulations establish the Egg Food Safety Scheme.

The Egg Food Safety Scheme was developed in consultation with a range of egg producers as well as through feedback received from a broader public consultation process. The Scheme balances food safety without over-regulating small egg producers. It replaces the *Egg Industry Act 2002* and brings Tasmania into line with National requirements.

The Government has met national food safety obligations, but has also addressed public concerns about the impacts on smallholders. Adjustments have been made to ensure the Egg Food Safety Scheme does not unnecessarily burden small egg producers and poultry fanciers.

The Egg Food Safety Scheme introduces a mandatory accreditation requirement for commercial egg producers based on the volume of eggs produced. The production threshold is 20 dozen eggs in any week, which is the equivalent of keeping around 50 egg laying hens.

Small commercial egg producers who are under the production threshold will not be required to hold an accreditation or to pay for annual food safety audits. Such producers will simply need to register with Biosecurity Tasmania, comply with the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, and stamp their eggs with a unique identifier number supplied by Biosecurity Tasmania. The stamp is free and there are no other fees for these small-scale commercial producers.

Non-commercial home egg producers who produce eggs on their property primarily for their own consumption are fully exempt from the requirements that apply to small commercial producers.

Larger commercial producers simply continue to do what they've always done. Their approval under the previous *Egg Industry Act 2002* rolls over to the new Egg Food Safety Scheme. They are already accredited and have audited food safety systems in place.



Jeremy Rockliff MP

MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND WATER

Date:

11/3/15