

27th March 2015

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about Compassion in World Farming's 'Charter for a Caring Food Policy'.

Many of the actions for which this campaign calls would need to be taken either by the European Union as a whole, or by individual farmers and consumers. I can assure you, however, that the UK Government and the Conservative Party support the highest standards of animal welfare, including on farms. I share this commitment.

I am pleased to say that all livestock farms must comply with comprehensive environmental and welfare legislation. It is important to recognise that poor welfare may occur within intensive or extensive farming systems, as well as ones that involve both indoor and outdoor housing. I therefore agree with the Farm Animal Welfare Committee, which advises the Government and the industry on these issues, that the most important influence on farm animal welfare in any production system is the knowledge, skills and experience of the stockmen.

I am especially proud of the work the Government has done to implement EU-wide bans on sow stalls and battery cages for laying hens. It has worked closely with the UK egg industry, processors, food manufacturers, caterers and retailers to reach a consensus that they will not sell or use battery-farmed eggs, helping British consumers avoid buying them unwittingly. Sow stalls have been illegal in this country from 1999 but were only outlawed throughout the EU as a whole on 1st January 2013.

The UK has long been calling for tough EU enforcement regimes in each of these areas aimed at ensuring welfare standards are driven up, preventing producers who have not converted away from these systems from profiting.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP