
NEW STANDARDS FOR HUMANE EGGS

As of February 2012, The Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture (CUESA), the nonprofit that manages the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market, has adopted a new standard that allows only pasture-raised eggs to be sold by farmers in our markets. *

Pasture-raised (or pastured) hens are kept outside as the season and daylight hours permit, utilizing a movable or stationary house for shelter, and they have constant access (as conditions allow) to fresh-growing palatable vegetation, with protection from predators when needed. We believe that only pastured systems are humane and sustainable, and we believe pastured eggs are what customers expect to find at the farmers market. We have received complaints from shoppers who have purchased “free-range” eggs at the market and were disappointed to learn that the hens did not spend much, if any, of their lives in the sunshine.

The USDA does not regulate the terms “cage-free” and “free-range” for egg production. These hens are typically kept in large barns or warehouses, often thousands of hens per building. Outdoor access, if any, is generally limited to a small enclosed yard that goes mostly unused and offers little or no vegetation. Industrially raised hens are subject to debeaking (to keep hens from pecking each other in a crowded environment), wing clip-

ping (to prevent flight), and forced molting through starvation (to regulate the timing of feather molting, which halts egg production). Their feed may include animal byproducts, antibiotics, and hormones.

CUESA’s new policy affects only one market seller: Petaluma Farms, which offers cage-free eggs. We discussed this policy change with the owners and assured them that when their practices meet our 2012 standards, they will be invited back to sell in the market. Currently they do not have plans to produce pasture-raised eggs.

This decision was not made lightly by the CUESA team. Our mission is to cultivate a sustainable food system—one that is environmentally sound, socially just, humane, and economically viable. These principles, outlined in our sustainability frameworks (www.cuesa.org/page/sustainability), guide our education efforts and changes to our market rules and selection criteria. The new rule was made by our Market Policy & Operations Committee, which includes five market sellers, and was adopted by the full board.

We feel it is our responsibility to improve our farmers market and encourage our sellers to become more sustainable. Our scholarship program pays for sellers to attend workshops and classes to make their businesses more sustainable, and we are also exploring how to implement a micro-funding program that supports such projects.



We know price is a concern to many shoppers, especially in the current economy. And until good food is affordable to all, our food system is not sustainable. But we feel strongly that low prices cannot come at the expense of farmers, farm workers, animals, or the environment. We feel that only pasture-raised eggs reflect the values of a sustainable food system, and we believe that \$0.60 per egg (the approximate price of a pastured egg) is a good value for a high-protein, flavorful, humane product.

- FPFM pastured egg sellers:**
- ~ Eatwell Farm (Sat.)
 - ~ Happy Quail Farms (Tue. & Sat., seasonally)
 - ~ Marin Sun Farms (Sat.)
 - ~ Rolling Oaks Ranch (Tue. & Sat.)
- Restaurants that use pastured eggs (may depend on supply):**
- ~ Hapa Ramen ~ Namu ~
 - ~ Pizza Politana ~ Prather Ranch ~
 - ~ Primavera ~ 4505 Meats ~
- Learn more:** cuesa.org/article/eggs

* The new standard currently applies only to fresh eggs sold by farmers, not to ingredients used by restaurants or artisans.



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