

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 15, 2021

Acting Chair Rebecca Kelly Slaughter  
Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20580

Dear Chairwoman Slaughter,

We are writing to express our concern around possible false advertising in Costco's animal welfare policy. As recently revealed by an undercover investigation by animal rights group Mercy For Animals, which was highlighted by Nicholas Kristof in a February 2021 New York Times column titled "The Ugly Secrets Behind the Costco Chicken", the superstore's current production standards offer cause for alarm. The conditions seen in Mercy For Animals' undercover video include birds crowded in their own feces who are so ill or injured that they die before making it to slaughter.

Costco has deemed these conditions "normal and uneventful,"<sup>1</sup> which is incompatible with its previous public statements that the company owes "an important moral and ethical obligation"<sup>2</sup> to these animals. Moreover, the company's claim that "animal welfare is part of Costco's culture and responsibility"<sup>3</sup> and that Costco serves "as stewards of the animals, land, and environment entrusted to the company,"<sup>4</sup> as stated on their website is misleading to consumers.

Although Costco profits off its marketed claims that "animal welfare is a critical component that has been integrated into all aspects of"<sup>5</sup> its vertically integrated chicken supply chain, this structure results in systemic, inhumane treatment of these chickens. More than 200 food companies in North America have already adopted humane guidelines, such as those outlined in the Better Chicken Commitment,<sup>6</sup> that address the worst suffering for chickens. Costco has not. For this reason, Costco's claim that it is "committed to maintaining the highest standards of animal welfare"<sup>7</sup> is deceptive to stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/06/opinion/sunday/costco-chicken-animal-welfare.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.costco.com/sustainability-animal-welfare.html>

<sup>3</sup> "Ibid"

<sup>4</sup> "Ibid"

<sup>5</sup> "Ibid"

<sup>6</sup> <https://betterchickencommitment.com/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.businessinsider.com/costco-accused-of-animal-cruelty-for-rotisserie-chickens-2021-2>

The conditions revealed at the facility are an affront to Costco members who, based on the company's many representations relating to animal welfare, expect farmed chickens to be treated ethically and humanely within their supply chain. Based on public response to this investigation within the "Costco Rotisserie Chicken" fan page on Facebook, members are clearly appalled by what has been uncovered.

We urge the Federal Trade Commission to investigate Costco's advertising for consumer deception, in the hopes that they will swiftly adopt guidelines that mirror the ethical, moral, and humane treatment of chickens that they promote.

Thank you for giving our concerns your full and fair consideration, consistent with applicable statutes and regulations.

Sincerely,



Haley Stevens  
Member of Congress



Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress