



MERCY FOR
ANIMALS

Animal Welfare Report 2025: Japan

The Truth About Japanese Food
Companies and Hen Welfare



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Animal Welfare Initiatives by Japan's Leading Food Companies

Global stakeholders increasingly expect food companies to source ingredients responsibly, ethically, and sustainably—including by requiring suppliers to improve their animal welfare practices. In response to growing consumer, investor, and regulatory demand, food companies around the world, including in Japan, are committing to 100% cage-free egg sourcing—a practice that significantly reduces suffering for laying hens.

While the global cage-free movement has been underway since the early 2000s, progress in Japan is just gaining momentum. Currently, several major retailers offer cage-free eggs, while some smaller companies have adopted cage-free sourcing policies, and a few major food manufacturers have launched products made with only cage-free eggs. Many top food companies also recognize and aim to implement the [Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare](#), a set of internationally accepted standards that affirm every animal's right to be spared unnecessary suffering. However, the Five Freedoms focus primarily on the absence of negative experiences and do not fully represent what higher welfare should mean. In response, a more comprehensive framework—the [Five Domains of Animal Welfare](#)—is gaining traction. This model recognizes that animals' emotional well-being is just as important as their physical health and that the two are closely connected. It emphasizes the need to ensure animals can experience positive states, not just avoid negative ones.

Despite growing recognition of the Five Domains, [an estimated 95% or more of laying hens](#) in Japan still suffer in battery cages—a rearing method that flagrantly violates these very principles. Cramped in tiny cages with several other hens, birds often get stuck between cage bars, suffering injury and severe stress. Research suggests that [each hen in a cage system spends, on average, at least 60% more time in pain](#). Moreover, many commonly live amid excrement and even among the corpses of their flockmates.

Over the past decade, food companies, in cooperation with their suppliers, have taken important steps to move away from cage-based systems by changing the



Image represents typical factory farm conditions.

way they source eggs and egg products. Cage-free environments allow hens to engage in natural behaviors critical to their well-being, such as dustbathing, perching, and nesting.

Companies are more likely to achieve the Five Domains when they adopt and implement sourcing practices like cage-free housing for laying hens. In fact, over 150 major food companies worldwide have already committed to cage-free sourcing policies. Most have committed to going cage-free by the end of 2025, and many are on track to meeting that goal. This progress extends across Asia, where companies in Taiwan, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines are demonstrating leadership in animal welfare by responding to local and global stakeholder expectations and providing regular updates on the status of their cage-free commitments.

In Japan, awareness around animal welfare is growing, but corporate cage-free commitments remain noticeably limited. Now is the time for Japanese multinational food companies to enhance their global reputations and consumer appeal by taking a clear stand for animals.

Animal Welfare Report 2025: Japan explores the urgent issue of caging laying hens, examines consumer and stakeholder attitudes in Japan and around the globe, and evaluates the current state of cage-free initiatives by Japan's top multinational food companies. The report highlights ongoing corporate efforts, identifies areas for improvement, and aims to inform and encourage

concrete actions from companies in Japan to raise welfare standards for chickens, the most farmed land animal on Earth.

**Report is based on publicly available data as of August 1, 2025*

About Animal Welfare

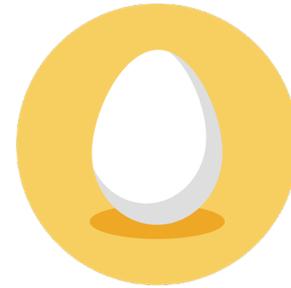


What Is Animal Welfare?

“Animal welfare” refers to the quality of life and well-being of animals, including their physical, mental, and emotional health. It extends beyond companion animals, such as cats and dogs, to all animals, including those raised for food, such as laying hens. Ensuring basic animal welfare involves providing species-appropriate living conditions, ensuring adequate access to food and water, protecting against suffering, and providing opportunities to engage in natural behaviors.

Although the Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare have served as a benchmark for many years, a newer framework—the Five Domains of Animal Welfare—has recently gained traction. This model not only assesses negative elements and experiences but emphasizes the importance of positive ones. While including references to the Five Freedoms or Five Domains in procurement policies is a promising step, companies must go further by implementing specific, concrete policies, such as cage-free egg commitments, to holistically meet important welfare assessment criteria under the Five Domains:

- Nutrition
- Physical environment
- Health
- Behavioral interactions
- Mental state



Why Focus on the Welfare of Hens in Cages?

Chickens are the most farmed land animal in the world, with an estimated global population of about [8.3 billion](#) laying hens.

In Japan, an estimated 95% or more of eggs are sourced from laying hens kept in battery cages. These birds are crammed into cages, each with standing space smaller than an A4 or B5 sheet of paper (about the size of an iPad).

Japan ranks among the top three egg-consuming countries, with a per capita annual consumption of approximately [340 eggs](#).

Welfare scientists and other experts agree that hens in cages suffer immensely, enduring [several thousand hours of pain](#). They also suffer various injuries, including from getting caught in cage bars. Many birds die in confinement, their bodies left to decay beneath the feet of their living flockmates.

Hens in cages are denied the freedom to engage in natural behaviors essential to their welfare, such as dustbathing, perching, and wing flapping.

Caging hens is a direct violation of the Five Domains. Cage confinement is also associated with [significantly higher rates of Salmonella](#), raising serious food safety concerns.



What Are Cage-Free Eggs?

Cage-free eggs come from hens who are not housed in any type of cage.

Shifting from battery cages to cage-free housing reduces pain and suffering for hens by thousands of hours.

Cage-free eggs in Japan often come from single- or multi-tier aviary systems where hens are uncaged but kept indoors. Some cage-free egg systems may also be free-range, meaning hens can roam outdoors.

Cage-free eggs are sold at major supermarkets and retailers across Japan, including Aeon, Costco, and Ito-Yokado.

Some farms work with certifiers to ensure that cage-free farms meet animal welfare standards. [Eco-Design](#) is a private Japanese certification program, and [Certified Humane](#) is a U.S.-based international certification group that also operates in Japan.



What Is the Cage-Free Movement?

The cage-free movement is a global effort to eliminate cages for laying hens—driven by companies, governments, and consumers.

More than 150 multinational food companies have already committed to sourcing 100% cage-free eggs across their global operations. Many of the companies, such as Costco, Danone, and Compass Group, do business in Japan.

The European Union [banned battery cages in 2012](#). In 2021, over one million people signed a citizens' initiative urging legislation to ban cages throughout the EU.

In the United States, [most major food companies](#) have pledged to go 100% cage-free, and [10 states](#) have already banned cages for hens, making cage-free production the legal standard in these states.

The cage-free movement has also gained traction in Asia, with several nations and companies implementing progressive policies and guidelines:

- In Taiwan, egg packaging is legally required to disclose the type of [hen housing](#) used. As of 2023, all 6,500-plus 7-Eleven locations started [selling cage-free eggs](#).
- The China Chain Store and Franchise Association has established [cage-free egg-labeling standards](#)—providing a great marketing opportunity and encouraging producers to transition away from cages.
- In Thailand, major egg producer Charoen Pokphand Foods has pledged to increase [cage-free egg production by 10% annually](#). Thawnee Phant Farm in Phuket also completed its transition to a cage-free system, becoming the first cage-free egg farm on the country's largest island.
- In 2023, the Indonesian government published a set of guidelines for [cage-free egg](#) production.
- In November 2024, the Japan Mayonnaise and Dressing Association published [Animal Welfare: The Japan Mayonnaise and Dressing Association's Philosophy and Initiatives](#), encouraging member companies to prioritize the welfare of laying hens as a social responsibility.



Image represents typical factory farming conditions.

Cage-Free Companies in Asia

Asia is the world's largest producer of eggs, accounting for approximately [64% of global production](#) and home to around 5.3 billion laying hens. Like Japan, many countries in the region continue to confine laying hens in [cage systems](#). However, growing stakeholder demand for improved animal welfare standards is driving more global food companies in Asia to adopt cage-free egg policies and demonstrate progress.

Asia Based Companies with Cage-Free Commitments

These companies are pioneering the cage-free movement in Asia, offering higher-welfare and higher-quality products to customers and reducing suffering for laying hens:.



Carrefour Taiwan – One of Taiwan's largest retailers, Carrefour has pledged to go 100% cage-free by 2028. The company received the [Good Egg Award](#) in 2021 as a result of its pledge.



One of the largest food manufacturers in Korea, Ottogi has committed to 20% cage-free sourcing by 2030.



A Philippines-based restaurant company with significant operations across Asia, Jollibee has pledged to go 100% cage-free by 2030.



Japan's leading mayonnaise manufacturer has committed to increasing the use of cage-free eggs in Kewpie mayonnaise, a popular product globally, from the current 3% to 10% by 2027.



ASCOTT

A leading international hospitality company based in Singapore, Ascott has pledged to use only cage-free eggs at 50% of its properties globally by 2027 and at all properties by 2030.



Thailand's largest restaurant group has committed to sourcing only cage-free eggs by 2028.

WILLINICE

One of China's largest bakery chains, with over 800 stores, Willinice has made a 100% cage-free commitment with a 2027 deadline.

MINOR HOTELS

Headquartered in Bangkok, this international hotel brand—with over 550 properties across the Asia Pacific region—has committed to sourcing 100% cage-free eggs by 2027.



Global Companies in Asia Advancing towards 100% Cage-Free

Global companies headquartered overseas are also honoring their commitments in Asia, with many advancing their global cage-free goals—either via physical sourcing or through cage-free credits. These are some of those companies:



Pledged to go cage-free globally by the end of 2025 and has outlined a roadmap for using credits to fulfill its commitments in Asia and other markets.



FOUR SEASONS

Pledged to go cage-free globally by the end of 2025 and currently reports 47% progress in Asia.



Pledged to go cage-free globally by the end of 2025 and has outlined a roadmap for using credits to fulfill its commitments in Asia and other markets.



(a Brazilian food company with subsidiaries in Asia). Pledged to go 100% cage-free globally by the end of 2025.



Pledged to go cage-free globally by the end of 2025 and has outlined a roadmap for using credits to fulfill its commitments in Asia and other markets.



Cage-Free Egg Credits

Cage-free egg credits, or Impact Incentives, are a new and improved book-and-claim system—think of it as Plastic or RSPO credits, but for eggs.

When faced with sourcing challenges, global food companies can purchase cage-free egg credits to cover volumes they cannot source from cage-free farms. Impact Incentives, a form of cage-free egg credit, are available across emerging markets including in Asia, in countries such as Japan, China, Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, India, and Singapore. Companies can buy physical cage-free eggs wherever available and fill the gap (offset) using Incentives. They can then switch to cage-free eggs gradually as the market matures. This system enables companies to take immediate action to reduce suffering for laying hens, support the development of local supply chains, and accelerate progress toward 100% cage-free sourcing in Asia. Interested companies are encouraged to visit the [Impact Incentives website](#) for more information.

Benefits of Cage-Free Egg Credits



Make immediate progress via certified farms.

Cage-free egg credits help companies jumpstart and accelerate their transitions to cage-free supply chains in Asia. Global Food Partners ensures that farms adhere to specific animal welfare standards via an expert certification, such as Certified Humane.



Take concrete steps toward physical sourcing.

Cage-free credits offer an interim solution for companies facing challenges sourcing cage-free eggs. This approach is endorsed by Mercy For Animals and other prominent animal protection organizations around the world. By purchasing cage-free egg credits, companies support the production of cage-free eggs and demonstrate their commitment to transitioning to cage-free sourcing as soon as possible. Companies can confidently count credits as progress toward their 100% cage-free commitment, even as they work to expand physical sourcing.



Demonstrate transparency and leadership.

Transparent communication about challenges and solutions related to cage-free sourcing demonstrates leadership and a genuine willingness to advance animal welfare around the world. Through credits, companies commit to publicly reporting the percentage of eggs acquired via this mechanism in every country of operation, as well as the percentage of actual eggs or egg products sourced. Clear plans and regular updates on transitioning to actual cage-free sourcing build consumer and public trust.



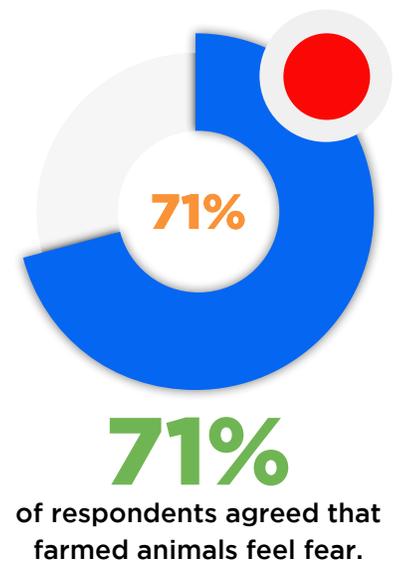
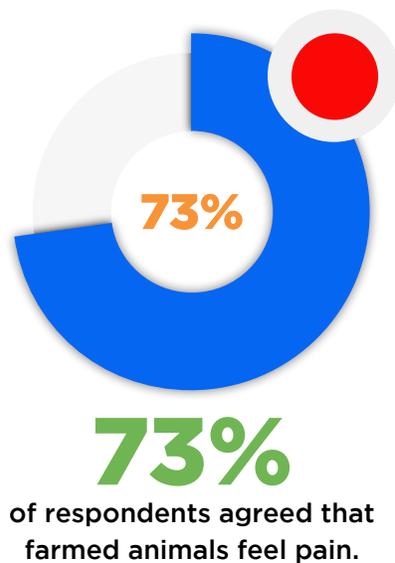
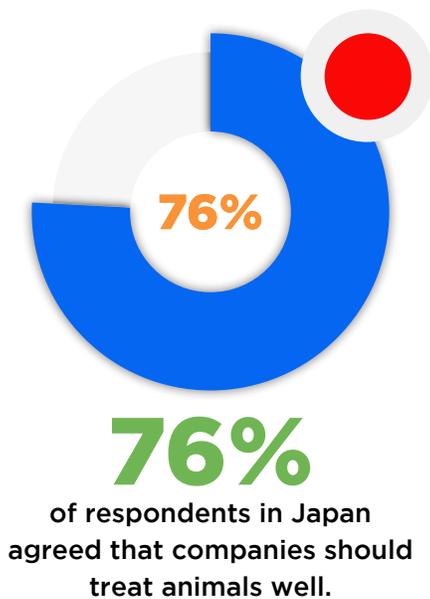
Reduce logistical costs.

While the availability of cage-free eggs is expanding, utilizing credits can help offset logistical costs, making them a viable option in the transitional phase. This book-and-claim accounting system supports the growth of cage-free production while reducing implementation costs. Combined with market demand, investor interest, and public expectations, this approach helps drive meaningful solutions for billions of hens in Asia.

Japanese Consumers and Travelers to Japan Care About Animal Welfare

Quick Facts about Consumers in Japan

A [multinational public opinion survey](#)* commissioned by Mercy For Animals found that Japanese consumers care deeply about animals and expect corporations to uphold strong animal welfare standards:



*This survey was conducted in 2021 in collaboration with third-party experts. Data was collected by Cint, an independent third-party agency.

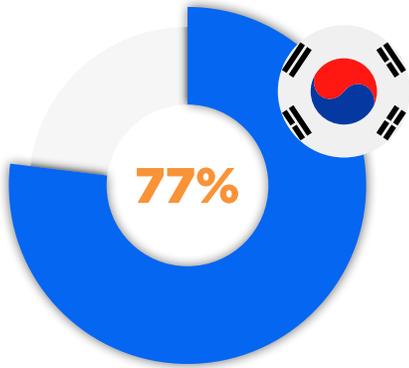


Additional research by Mitsubishi UFJ Research & Consulting Group suggests that Japanese consumers are willing to [pay a premium for eggs from higher-welfare hens](#):

43% of respondents said they would pay 5%–21% more for eggs produced under higher-welfare conditions.

Attitudes of Overseas Travelers in Japan

Statistics suggest that many travelers are accustomed to higher-welfare food products and are likely to expect the same standards from Japanese brands.

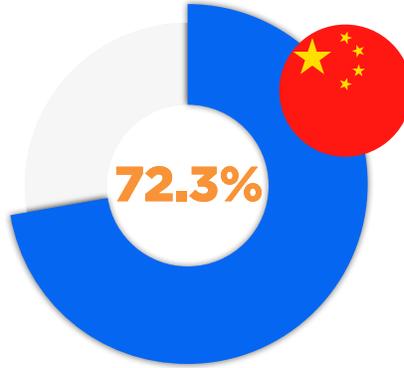


SOUTH KOREA

77%

surveyed agree:

Corporations should ensure that farm animals' needs are met.

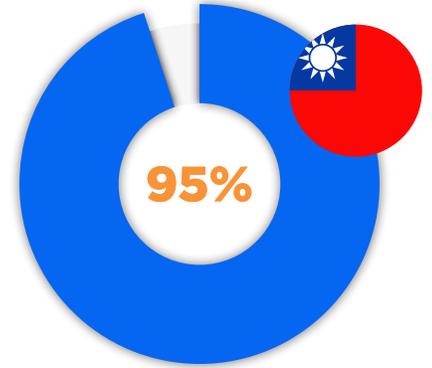


CHINA

72.3%

surveyed agree:

It matters to me that chickens producing eggs do not suffer.

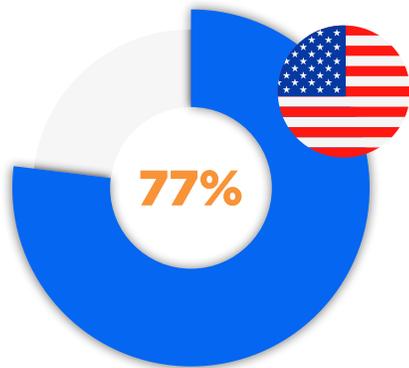


TAIWAN

95%

surveyed agree:

I am willing to pay more for higher-welfare eggs.

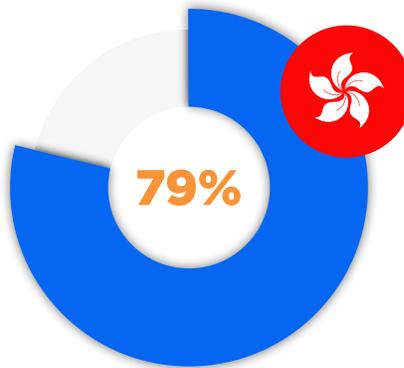


UNITED STATES

77%

surveyed agree:

I would prefer to buy eggs from chickens that have not been kept in cages.

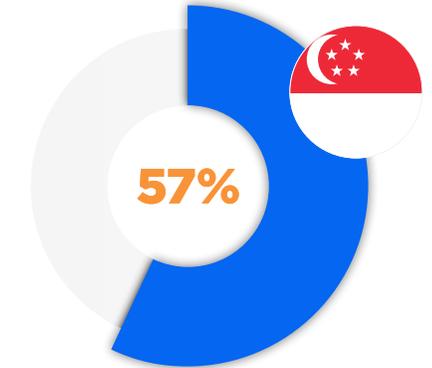


HONG KONG

79%

surveyed agree:

I would be willing to pay at least 4% more for cage-free eggs.



SINGAPORE

57%

surveyed agree:

I would be willing to pay at least 10%-25% more for cage-free eggs.

*Countries represent the top six nationalities by [number of overseas visitors](#) to Japan in August 2025.

Results at a Glance

Is laying-hen welfare a priority for Japan's food industry? This report looks at the laying-hen welfare policies of 21 multinational food companies either headquartered in Japan or foreign and conducting significant business in Japan. The table below categorizes companies according to published evidence of their commitments to and progress toward cage-free sourcing.

Companies with published cage-free commitments covering their global operations present the strongest evidence of prioritizing hen welfare. Those in the emerging-evidence category have no global commitment to 100% cage-free sourcing but have demonstrated some degree of public cage-free initiative. Companies in the limited- or no-evidence category have shown minimal or no public cage-free initiative or no interest in cage-free sourcing.

Companies ranked on public evidence of prioritizing hen welfare

 <p>Strong Evidence</p>	 <p>Emerging Evidence</p>	 <p>Limited or No Evidence</p>
		
	 <p>株式会社トリドールホールディングス</p>	
		
		 <p>お口の恋人</p>
		
		
		 <p>For the People</p>

In Detail: Progress and Opportunities for Animal Welfare in Japan

Each company's progress and critical opportunities for improvement are detailed below, with special attention to global cage-free commitments and progress reporting for Japan.



Commitment: Company has published a commitment to transitioning to 100% cage-free egg sourcing across its global operations.



Progress: Company has shown progress toward cage-free sourcing but has not published a global cage-free commitment.



Opportunity: Company has opportunities to strengthen its policies.

Foodservice and restaurants: Cage-free progress and opportunities



RBI's global cage-free commitment includes the company's Japanese operations.



RBI should increase its transparency through improved regional timelines that break down the company's roadmap to reaching 100% in each of its countries of operation.



Yum! Brands' global cage-free commitment includes the company's Japanese operations.



Yum! Brands should increase its transparency by reporting global cage-free progress and regional cage-free progress for each of its countries of operation.



Toridoll's current cage-free commitment covers most of its brands, and the company has demonstrated progress in the United States. Toridoll has also promised to transition part of its shell-egg supply in Japan to cage-free for Marugame Seimen restaurants.



Toridoll should strengthen its commitment by publicly expanding it to all brands and operating regions. It should strengthen its domestic commitment by increasing the percentage goals for cage-free egg use in Japan.



Colowide uses cage-free eggs in some of its operations. For example, Colowide's SilsMaria brand sells cage-free baked goods.



Colowide should publicly disclose the percentage of cage-free eggs it sources, identify the products that use cage-free eggs, and establish a global cage-free commitment, inclusive of Japan.



Zensho, with no published statements or initiatives promoting hen welfare to date, should publish a global cage-free commitment.

For the People
YOSHINOYA HOLDINGS



Yoshinoya, with no published statements or initiatives promoting hen welfare to date, should publish a global cage-free commitment.

Manufacturers: Cage-free progress and opportunities



Danone's global cage-free commitment includes the company's Japanese operations. The company achieved 100% cage-free sourcing globally in 2020.



Compass Group's global cage-free commitment includes the company's Japanese operations. The company also plans to use cage-free credits in Asia to accelerate its transition in the region.



Compass Group should focus on accelerating its global cage-free sourcing to remain on track and accountable to its 2025 commitment deadline.



Nestlé's global cage-free commitment includes the company's Japanese operations.



Nestlé should focus on accelerating its global cage-free sourcing to remain on track and accountable to its 2025 commitment deadline. It could also utilize cage-free credits in its Japanese operations.



Kewpie has a partial global cage-free commitment and a separate cage-free commitment for Japan for mayonnaise. The company has also expressed interest in using cage-free credits for its Asian markets.



Kewpie should expand its cage-free commitment to its entire product line and increase its percentage goals for cage-free.



Ajinomoto has published a 100% cage-free commitment for Europe with a 2025 deadline for France.



Ajinomoto should modify its cage-free statement to include the company's operating regions outside Europe, like its key market of Japan.



Nisshin Seifun periodically includes cage-free eggs in its menu for company employees.



Nisshin Seifun should expand its initiative to customer-facing products and publish a global cage-free commitment.



Nissin Brazil and Nissin USA have already introduced cage-free eggs, and Nissin Food Products has started sourcing cage-free eggs.



Nissin Foods should publicly disclose the percentage of cage-free eggs it sources, identify the products that use cage-free eggs, and establish a global cage-free commitment, inclusive of Japan.



Meiji should modify its cage-free statement to include the company's key market, Japan.



Lotte, with no published cage-free statements or initiatives, should publish a global cage-free commitment.



Morinaga, with no published statements or initiatives promoting hen welfare to date, should publish a global cage-free commitment.

Retailers: Cage-free progress and opportunities



Costco's global cage-free commitment includes the company's Japanese operations.



Costco should focus on accelerating its cage-free sourcing for all of the company's operating regions.



IKEA's global cage-free commitment includes the company's Japanese operations.



IKEA, with no regional progress reporting to date, should increase its transparency by reporting cage-free progress for all its operating regions.



Aeon sells cage-free eggs at its retail locations in Japan and has a cage-free policy for its Malaysian operations.



Aeon should cover key Japanese markets and other regions by publishing a global cage-free commitment.



Lawson sold a cake containing cage-free eggs for a limited time at some of its retail locations in Japan.



Lawson should publish a global cage-free commitment.



Seven & i sells cage-free eggs at some of its retail locations in Japan. Seven & i has also published a cage-free statement for its U.S. and Canadian 7-Eleven locations.



Seven & i should publish a global cage-free commitment.



Summary and Recommendations for Improving Animal Welfare in Japan

Many Japan-based companies have published general statements about animal welfare, and some have taken steps toward using more cage-free eggs. But few Japanese companies have implemented the concrete, time-bound policies that are critical to laying-hen welfare—transitions to 100% cage-free eggs across all operating regions. While challenges remain, like a relatively new cage-free infrastructure, Japan has to start somewhere. And growing cage-free production and alternative sourcing options, such as cage-free credits, provide ample opportunity to begin advancing. Without clear commitments, Japanese companies will remain decades behind in animal welfare standards, falling further behind their peers, and their global reputations will likely suffer.

Foreign companies with cage-free commitments doing business in Japan must be accountable to their commitments and increase transparency. They can achieve this by publishing their cage-free progress in Japan as part of ESG reporting and using cage-free credits as an interim solution to fill the gap.

Below are recommendations for global food companies headquartered in Japan and elsewhere:



Make a Concrete Commitment

Publish a commitment to 100% cage-free sourcing across your global egg supply chain with a specific, ambitious time frame.



Use Cage-Free Credits

Purchasing credits when actual cage-free eggs are unavailable is a viable method for transitioning to cage-free. Credits showcase your commitment to cage-free sourcing while supporting the growth of a sustainable and reliable cage-free supply chain.



Engage with Producers

Multinational companies can influence producers to improve animal welfare. Communicate your cage-free requirements and co-develop a long-term plan with new and existing egg suppliers to fulfill your animal welfare goals.



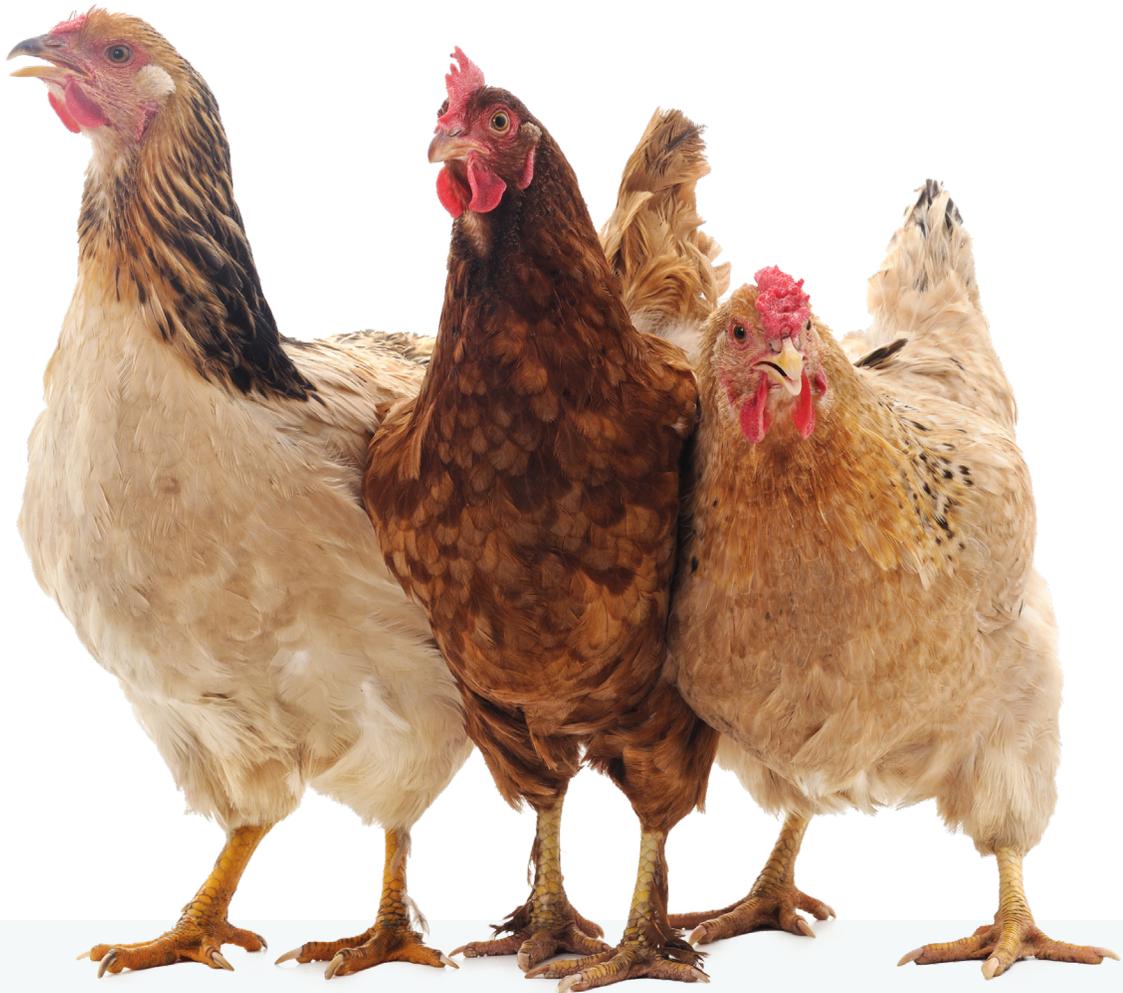
Educate Customers

Alert your customers and clients to the benefits of cage-free. Cage-free eggs are associated with higher welfare, higher quality, and greater sustainability than conventional cage eggs.



Report Progress and Be Transparent

Include quarterly or annual global cage-free progress in ESG or sustainability reports. This will keep your investors and customers updated and ensure they recognize that your company strongly prioritizes animal welfare.



Contact Us

Corporate animal welfare policies have the power to reduce suffering for millions of animals by banning cruel practices common at factory farms. Mercy For Animals' corporate engagement work moves the food industry's biggest players to adopt meaningful standards to help protect farmed animals in Japan and around the world.

If you work for a food company and would like to collaborate to improve its animal welfare standards, please contact us at asiacorporatepolicy@mercyforanimals.org.

Appendix: Company Initiatives

Company	Cage-free egg initiative in Japan
Seven & i Holdings	Sells cage-free eggs at retailers (Japan only)
Toridoll Holdings	Partial cage-free egg commitment
Meiji Holdings	N/A
Lotte	N/A
Aeon	Sells cage-free eggs
Ajinomoto	Sells products using cage-free eggs
Colowide	Partial cage-free egg commitment
Kewpie	Partial cage-free egg commitment
Lawson	Sold products using cage-free eggs (Japan only)
Morinaga	N/A
Nissin Foods Holdings	Partial cage-free egg commitment
Nisshin Seifun	Serves cage-free eggs periodically at company eatery as an employee education initiative
Costco	Global cage-free commitment inclusive of Japan
IKEA	Global cage-free commitment inclusive of Japan
Yum! Brands	Global cage-free commitment inclusive of Japan
Restaurant Brands International	Global cage-free commitment inclusive of Japan
Zensho Holdings	N/A
Yoshinoya Holdings	N/A
Danone	Global cage-free commitment inclusive of Japan
Nestlé	Global cage-free commitment inclusive of Japan
Compass Group	Global cage-free commitment inclusive of Japan