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**Free Range Egg Producers Deserve State Support says MEP**

Free-range egg producers who face substantial monetary losses, due to restrictions placed on them in relation to Avian Flu must be compensated by the State.

This was urged by Independent MEP Marian Harkin when she referred to the precedent set some years ago when poultry producers were compensated for economic losses which arose from a previous outbreak of Avian Flu.

It was a government requirement that all free-range poultry be kept indoors, while the Avian Flu outbreak persisted, and this would result in the loss to producers of the premium associated with the sale of eggs designated as free-range, she said. The free-range designation under EU regulations was removed when hens were kept indoors for 12 weeks, Marian Harkin said

“Free-range egg production is an important niche activity in our agriculture sector and the producers involved deserve the support of the State at a time when they are required to accept a measure which is very damaging to the premium price their product commands in the marketplace” Independent MEP Marian Harkin concluded.

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