HOW DO COMPANIES STACK UP?

chicken welfare in the meal kit sector
AS OF THE 17.09.2020, 6 OF THE LARGEST MEAL KIT COMPANIES OPERATING IN THE UK HAVE COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE WELFARE STANDARDS OF CHICKENS RAISED FOR MEAT IN THEIR SUPPLY CHAINS.

HOWEVER, A NUMBER OF THESE CONTINUE TO SERVE CHICKEN THAT DOES NOT MEET MINIMUM STANDARDS defined by leading animal protection organisations that eradicate the most extreme forms of suffering and show no intention to change or consider this important issue.

Chickens are inquisitive, friendly and playful birds, and are more intelligent than most people think, yet they are one of the most abused land animals in the world. In the UK alone, over one billion are killed for food each year.
why does this matter?

Chickens’ bodies are bred to produce as much meat muscle, particularly on the breast—for fillets—in as little time as possible. This leads to painful leg weakness and bone problems. As a result, many struggle to walk, suffering from pain, lameness and decreased energy levels. Despite what is often argued by the agricultural industry, it is not “normal” or “natural” for a young chicken to be sitting down to ‘rest’ most of the time. Like other animals, chickens love to explore and play, but are unable to. Along with cramped conditions, intensive chicken breeds are the source of the majority of welfare issues encountered in the industry. But, it doesn’t have to be this way. By signing up to the Better Chicken Commitment (BCC), companies can raise the welfare of the birds that they use.

what is the Better Chicken Commitment?

The BCC is a set of standards for improving the lives of chickens raised for meat. These standards were agreed by a group of leading animal protection organisations including the RSPCA, Compassion in World Farming, World Animal Protection and The Humane League UK, and have already been adopted by food industry leaders such as KFC, Pret a Manger, Nestlé and Marks & Spencer.

there are 6 essential requirements:

1. USE BREEDS WITH BETTER WELFARE. Intensive breeds are at the core of health and welfare problems for broiler chickens. By transitioning away from the common intensive breeds, many of these can be improved or avoided altogether.

2. COMPLY WITH EU ANIMAL WELFARE LAWS. All EU animal welfare regulations must be adhered to, even when chicken is produced outside of the EU and imported into the UK.

3. REDUCE DISTRESS AT SLAUGHTER. Current stunning and slaughter methods are highly distressing. In waterbath stunning systems, birds are hung upside down while fully conscious, their legs placed in metal shackles, causing pain and distress. Rather than effectively being stunned to avoid the pain of a neck cut, birds often receive an insufficient stun. Controlled atmospheric killing (CAK) offers the opportunity to vastly reduce suffering by ensuring effective stunning and less handling.

4. IMPLEMENT THIRD-PARTY CHECKS AND PUBLIC REPORTING. We’re asking for greater transparency in the industry, ensuring the public is kept informed of progress towards achieving corporate welfare commitments and farms are audited to ensure compliance of standards.

5. IMPROVE AIR QUALITY, LIGHT, & ENRICHMENT. Chickens should be provided with perches to help satisfy their natural impulses. Housing must give natural light to a specific, measured standard.

6. GIVE BIRDS MORE SPACE. Chickens should be stocked at a maximum of 30kg/m² (approximately 14 birds per m² at a slaughter weight of 2.2 kg). More space allows movement and better quality life.
At Fit Kitchen we have been conscious for some time that a major overhaul needs to happen in the way animals in our food chain are treated. We were approached by animal protection charity The Humane League to help affect this change by committing to the Better Chicken Commitment, an initiative advancing the welfare of broiler chickens. Fit Kitchen fully supports this campaign and will continue to work alongside THL to be part of this much needed change for the better treatment of animals.

Amar Lodhia
Founder of Fit Kitchen UK
REGRETTABLY, SEVERAL COMPANIES HAVE NOT GONE FAR ENOUGH WITH SOME COMPANIES BEING UNWILLING TO ENGAGE IN, OR PROGRESS DISCUSSIONS AROUND THEIR COMMITMENT TO ANIMAL WELFARE.

Companies owe it to consumers and stakeholders to be open about their commitments to improve animal welfare—especially when they directly impact millions of chickens’ lives. Meal kit companies must be held accountable for producing meaningful public commitments to improve broiler chicken welfare across the board. They must give continual reporting and demonstrate an ongoing commitment by having third-party audits. This way, we know that there will be no drop in standards.

This report is intended to provide more transparency for key stakeholders and consumers alike and find out which meal kit companies are lagging behind.

TO SEE HOW THE TOP MEAL KIT COMPANIES PERFORM ON CHICKEN WELFARE, CLICK HERE.