



Proposition 2: The UN-SAFE Food Initiative Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is Proposition 2?

The UN-SAFE Food Initiative is a November 2008 ballot measure that places risky, dangerous, and costly mandates on how egg-laying hens are housed. The measure also includes provisions affecting housing requirements for veal calves and pregnant pigs, which are misleading and irrelevant because they do not apply to current California farming practices.

This risky, dangerous, and costly ballot measure, sponsored by a well-funded, Washington, DC-based special interest group, has many negative, dangerous and expensive consequences for California. The measure jeopardizes our food safety and public health, putting us at greater risk for *Salmonella* and Avian Flu outbreaks; wipes out Californians' access to locally grown, fresh eggs, and harms consumers by driving up prices at grocery stores and restaurants and creating a dependency on eggs shipped from other states and Mexico.

What is the impact if Proposition 2 passes?

Proposition 2 bans almost all current modern and safe housing systems for egg-laying hens on California's egg farms; wiping out almost all modern egg production in the state. This dangerous measure jeopardizes food safety and public health in California, forces a reliance on out-of-state and foreign egg imports, and drives up restaurant and consumer prices.

How will food safety be affected if Proposition 2 passes?

California egg farmers, working with leading animal scientists have developed modern housing systems to ensure that fundamental components of sound animal care are provided to egg-laying hens: optimal feed, light, air, water, space and sanitation for egg-laying hens. As recently reported in the news media, California and the nation's food safety is already at risk with infection, poisoning and even death caused by food borne illnesses such as *Salmonella*. Banning these modern systems forces Californians to rely almost solely on egg imports at increased risk for dangerous diseases like *Salmonella*, which can be transmitted in the feces of egg-laying hens and other animals. Because California's modern housing systems effectively separate eggs from feces and other fluids, *Salmonella* contamination has been virtually eliminated in California eggs over the last decade. There has not been a reported case of *Salmonella* linked to California eggs in nearly a decade. However, 118,000 Americans become ill each year from *Salmonella*-contaminated eggs coming from other states, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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How will public health be affected if Proposition 2 passes?

Modern housing systems were developed to protect egg-laying hens from direct contact with migratory and wild birds, which can carry life threatening Avian Influenza (Bird Flu), Exotic Newcastle Disease and other diseases that can be deadly to humans or hens. According to the World Health Organization, transmission of Bird Flu from poultry to humans results in “very serious disease” and “could mark the start of a global outbreak (a pandemic)”. Proposition 2 wipes out almost all modern egg production in California, despite the U.S. Animal Health Association’s assertion that moving flocks inside has “contributed significantly to the improvement in health of the nation’s chicken and turkey flocks”.

How will California consumers be impacted by Proposition 2?

The proposition wipes out Californians’ access to locally grown, fresh eggs, and harms consumers by driving up prices at grocery stores and restaurants and creates a dependency on eggs shipped from other states and Mexico. It will also significantly increase – and could nearly double – the price of locally-produced California eggs, forcing consumers to pay higher prices for eggs at a time when Californians are already experiencing sky-rocketing prices for groceries, gasoline, and other basic living expenses.

Do Mexico and other states have the same high standards for food safety as California egg farmers?

Under the California Egg Quality Assurance Plan (CEQAP), California has the toughest, most stringent food safety guidelines in the U.S. CEQAP requires that egg farms use the most modern, safe and practical egg farming techniques and standards. Out-of-state and foreign egg importers, including Mexico, do not have these same high food safety standards.

If Proposition 2 passes, where will California families get their eggs?

Californians will be forced to get their eggs trucked in from out-of-state and from foreign producers like Mexico that do not have the same high food safety standards as California.

What impact will Proposition 2 have on California farmers?

Agriculture is California’s #1 industry. The UN-SAFE Food Initiative wipes out an entire segment of that industry, as egg production costs will rise by an estimated 76 percent under the measure. If the initiative is passed, California will lose thousands of jobs and \$615 million in economic activity, and millions more lost in state and local tax revenues. The measure is unnecessary as California farmers are already committed to caring responsibly for their hens, employing methods based on sound scientific research.

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What onerous changes will California egg farmers have to make if Proposition 2 passes?

The cost to comply is at least 76 percent higher than that for current modern housing systems. California farmers would be obligated to build 8 to 16 times more hen houses as currently are in use to comply with the new law's requirements and maintain current egg production. Buying the land and securing the necessary capital is prohibitively expensive and economically infeasible, given that California farmers will be forced to compete with out-of-state and foreign egg producers, who won't be subject to these onerous restrictions.

Aren't there already laws and guidelines in place to assure food safety?

Yes, 98% of California egg farms already adhere to the toughest, most stringent food safety standards in the U.S. under the California Egg Quality Assurance Plan (CEQAP). CEQAP requires that egg farms use the most modern, safe and practical egg farming techniques and standards. According to the California Department of Food and Agriculture, CEQAP standards have been credited with helping control egg-associated *Salmonella enteritidis* (SE) infections in California.

Aren't there already laws in place to protect animal welfare?

Yes, the humane treatment of animals, including farm animals, is already required by California law. Enclosing animals without proper care and treatment is prohibited and California law requires that animals have adequate room to "exercise" themselves. The United Egg Producers Certified Animal Welfare Program, established and maintained by an independent scientific advisory board, mandates that certified egg farmers follow responsible, science-based modern production methods in the care of their hens.

Who is sponsoring Proposition 2?

The UN-SAFE Food Initiative is part of a nationwide effort by a well-funded Washington D.C.-based special interest group to limit food choices by banning current and safe humane farming practices, particularly impacting the housing requirements of egg-laying hens. This group has raised hundreds of millions of dollars to run political and legislative initiatives in six other states, all of which have failed, and is now targeting California with their special interest agenda.

Why has the group circumvented the State Legislature and directly sponsored this November ballot initiative?

The Washington D.C.-based special interest group behind the measure has already failed to enact similar bans through the legislative process in six other states. The group has now decided to circumvent the scrutiny of California's policymakers and scientific experts, and attempt an emotionally-charged appeal directly to the voters.

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Who opposes Proposition 2?

Proposition 2 is opposed by Californians for SAFE Food, a broad-based and growing coalition of public health and food safety experts, labor unions, consumers, family farmers and veterinarians.

Our coalition consists of leading experts from the University of California at Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, widely considered the number one veterinary school in the nation, and the California Animal Health and Food Safety (CAHFS) Laboratory System, which is the backbone of California's warning system that helps to protect the health of California's livestock and poultry and serves the people of California by safeguarding the public health with rapid and reliable diagnoses for animal diseases affecting humans.

Proposition 2 is opposed by groups like the Agricultural Council of California, Armstrong Egg Farms, Association of California Veterinarians, California Agricultural Teachers' Association, California Grocers Association, California Women for Agriculture, Kern County Taxpayers Association, Mexican American Political Association and National Animal Interest Alliance.

What are the benefits of modern housing systems for egg-laying hens?

Modern housing systems were developed using independent scientific guidelines to ensure the fundamental components of animal care – optimal feed, light, air, water, space and sanitation for egg-laying hens. Modern housing systems for egg-laying hens are designed so hens can groom, lie down, stand, stretch, turn around and engage in other natural behaviors. By arbitrarily altering space configurations, Proposition 2 ignores how this change could negatively impact these other essential animal care components.

This measure is confusing in terms of what space requirements are actually needed for egg-laying hens. What do scientists recommend?

The United Egg Producers Certified Animal Welfare Program, established and maintained by an independent scientific advisory board, mandates certified U.S. egg farmers follow responsible, science-based modern production methods in the care of their hens. Certified farmers must place top priority on the comfort, health and safety of hens and submit to independent USDA audits. Nearly all of California egg farmers are UEP certified. These certification guidelines specifically address adequate space requirements. These guidelines specify that all certified egg farmers must place top priority on the comfort, health and safety of their hens. To certify their modern housing systems, farmers have to assure that all egg-laying hens must be able to groom, lie down, stand, stretch, turn around and engage in other natural behaviors.

What are the differences between eggs produced by modern housing, cage-free and free-range systems?

While scientists, animal welfare and food safety experts have studied modern housing systems, there has been little research into cage-free and free-range production systems in the U.S. Cage-free simply means that eggs are laid by hens in enclosed, indoor “floor” operations such as a building, barn, poultry house or large room. Both cage-free and free-range systems are effective, but both are banned under Proposition 2.

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Free-range eggs are those produced by hens raised outdoors or by hens that have access to the outdoors (which can sometimes mean as little as adding a small door at the end of a barn that is opened periodically for access). Free-range hens are more susceptible to *Salmonella* contamination. Additionally, free-range hens are exposed to migratory birds which can carry Avian Flu (Bird Flu), Exotic Newcastle Disease and other life threatening diseases. Cage-free and free-range hens typically have a higher mortality rate than those housed in modern systems.

What type of housing system do egg farmers primarily use?

Nearly all of U.S. egg production and California egg production is in modern housing systems.

Will Proposition 2 also impact cage-free eggs?

According to a recent economic study by Promar International, both modern and cage-free egg production in California are effectively banned under the UN-SAFE Food Initiative.

How many egg-laying hens are in California?

According to a recent economic study on the egg production industry in California, in 2007 there were approximately 19.4 million egg-laying hens in the state, producing 4.9 billion eggs.

How does California rank nationally in terms of egg production?

California ranks fifth in egg production behind Iowa, Ohio, Indiana and Pennsylvania in that order, according to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Statistics Service.

Who are the egg producers in California?

California's egg industry is comprised of mostly family-owned businesses that have worked hard to build up California's egg industry. California is now ranked the fifth largest egg producing state in the U.S. It is these family egg farms that would be effectively eliminated under this proposal, leaving California consumers with virtually no source for safe, local, and affordable eggs.

Will we be paying more for the price of eggs if Proposition 2 passes?

The price of eggs continually fluctuates, depending on a number of factors. Under Proposition 2, production costs for eggs are projected to increase by 76%. The initiative will significantly increase – and could nearly double – the price of locally-produced California eggs, forcing consumers to pay higher prices for eggs at a time when Californians are already experiencing sky-rocketing prices for groceries, gasoline, and other basic living expenses.

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What other impacts are associated with Proposition 2?

The UN-SAFE Food Initiative will also have negative environmental impacts. Because the measure would effectively wipe out egg production in state, eggs would have to be transported in from out-of-state and Mexico. Trucking associated with the transport of eggs from out-of-state creates additional carbon emissions, known to contribute to global warming and other environmental, health and lifestyle hazards, like poor air quality, asthma and traffic congestion.

We know how Prop. 2 will impact private industry, are there any government entities that will be impacted by it?

Yes, the California Prison Industries Association runs an egg production program out of Avenal State Prison. This program generates all of the eggs for the California State Prison System, the California Youth Authority and all of the state hospitals. If Proposition 2 passes, this program will cease and the state will have to purchase eggs from neighboring states and Mexico that have much lower food safety standards than here in California.

How would Proposition 2 be enforced? Would our public safety officers be obligated to monitor farms too?

The ballot language is not specific, but according to a recent legal analysis detailed in a *Feedstuffs* article, California is unique in that enforcement of animal welfare statutes can be undertaken by an individual or non-profit organization when issued with a warrant. The individual or representative of the non-profit organization may compel the issuance of a warrant to a law enforcement officer or officer of a legally qualified organization by making a complaint under oath.ⁱ If law enforcement officers are compelled to enforce the measure, issued with warrants that have been compelled by animal-rights activists, it will significantly decrease their time with other public safety issues.

Where can I get further information?

For more information, visit www.NOonProp2.com, or call 213-362-9539 to join the Californians for SAFE Food coalition.

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ⁱ Smith, Rod. "Law Gives Police Powers to Activists". *Feedstuffs*. July 18, 2008.
<http://www.feedstuffs.com/ME2/dirmod.asp?sid=F4D1A9DFCD974EAD8CD5205E15C1CB42&nm=Breaking+News&type=news&mod=News&mid=A3D60400B4204079A76C4B1B129CB433&tier=3&nid=C221CC6DEC2B4D30BF38E2BA6418F22A>

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