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GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Lower Saxony's Stricter Rules for Chicken Production Could Affect Competitiveness

Report Categories:

Poultry and Products

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Report Highlights:

The German Federal State of Lower Saxony has introduced stricter rules for broiler production. Lower Saxony is the center of chicken production in Germany and the new rules could put the competitiveness of the German poultry industry at risk.

General Information:

The German Federal State of Lower Saxony has introduced stricter rules for broiler production. The stricter rules are laid down by the Minister of Agriculture in Lower Saxony by decree. The new rules specifically address injuries to chicken feet. According to the Ministry of Agriculture in Lower Saxony, the number and severity of injuries to chicken feet will be examined in the future. If violations are not corrected and conditions don't improve, farmers need to reduce their stocking density. Therefore, data in slaughterhouses will be collected and reported to the competent veterinary authorities. If more than 20 percent of severe injuries to chicken feet are being tracked, the stocking density is automatically reduced by the legally permitted 39 kilograms per square meter to 35 kilograms, and then to 32 kilograms per square meter. The goal of the new rule is to provide more space for the animals. The state of Lower Saxony is the center of German chicken production with two-third of the German chicken being produced there, and the percentage of poultry exports from Lower Saxony is also two thirds of total exports.

Potential Impact on Trade

There are two trade-related aspects arising from stricter rules for chicken production in Lower Saxony. First, within the EU, implementation of national standards or standards on state level prior to the EU puts German farmers at a cost disadvantage. Germany's poultry industry has expanded dramatically in the past decade, fueled by exports. The industry's ability to mitigate costs while still meeting new standards poses a challenge.

Second, longer-term, there is the real possibility that today's standards will become tomorrow's trade restrictions. Clearly, animal welfare has become an important political topic in Germany and, in the run up to elections last fall 2013, the Green Party has made it a campaign issue. The Green Party's main initiative is restricting large scale animal operations, which are portrayed as having more animal welfare problems than smaller farms.