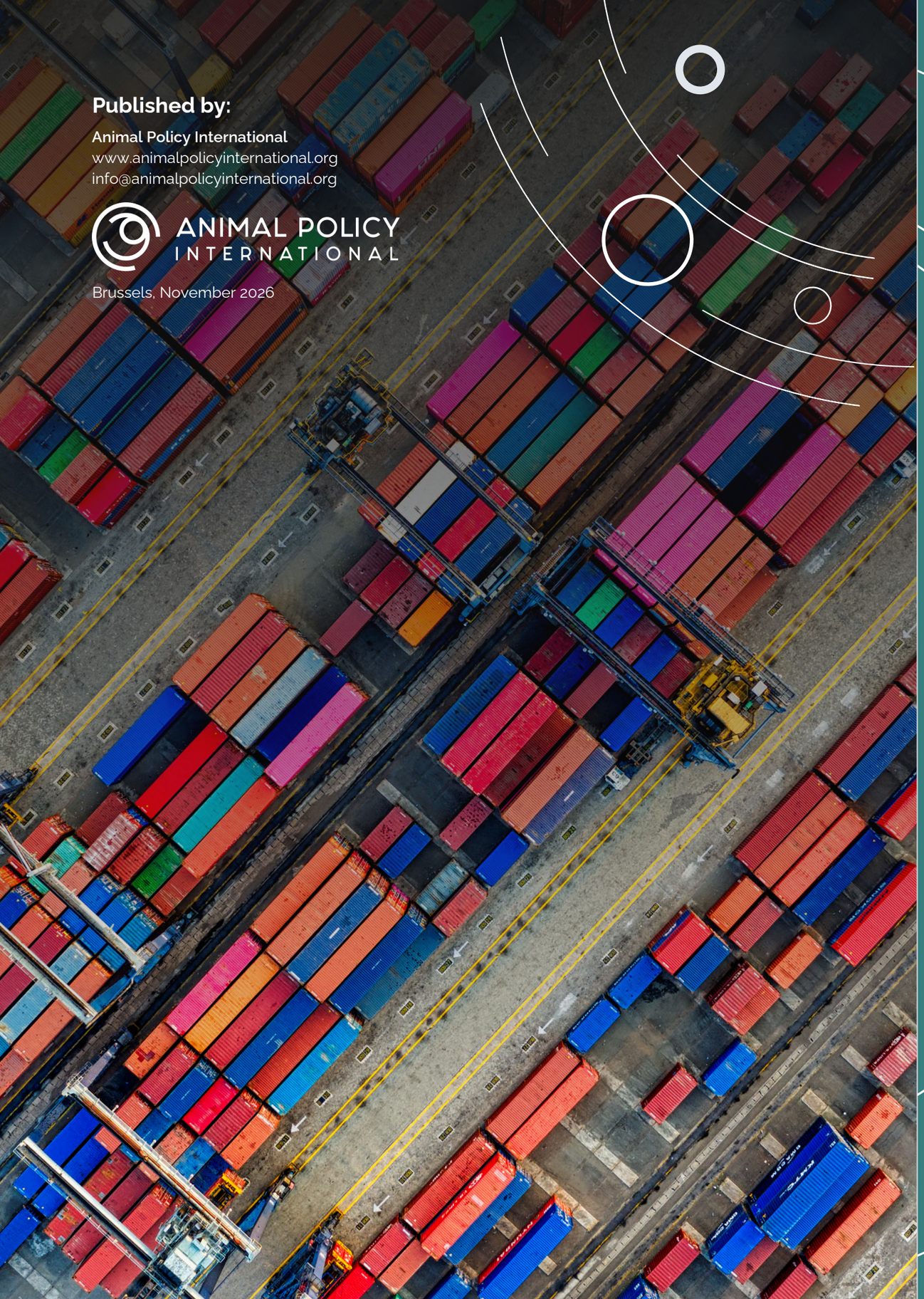
ANIMAL POLICY INTERNATIONAL

CLOSING THE WELFARE GAP & THIRD COUNTRIES

How trading partners may respond to EU requirements for imported eggs

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Introduction

Understanding how trading partners are likely to respond can help the EU design and implement an effective import requirement.

The European Commission has committed to introducing legislation to phase out cages for laying hens in the EU, and establish equivalent requirements for imported eggs. The intended outcomes for the proposal are to improve animal welfare, ensure EU farmers are not disadvantaged by imports produced to lower standards, and meet citizens' expectations for higher welfare standards.

This report assesses the likelihood of adaptation, diplomatic engagement, legal challenge through the World Trade Organization (WTO) and trade retaliation. It draws on WTO precedent, experience with existing EU welfare import requirements, and exporters' incentives and capacity to comply.

These responses are not mutually exclusive, and diplomatic objections do not necessarily indicate that a country intends to challenge or retaliate against the measure. Governments may raise concerns, seek clarification or press for changes to its implementation while their exporters prepare to comply if it is enacted.

As the measure's scope will affect both its legal defensibility and the reaction it attracts, the report also considers whether the measure should cover egg products as well as shell eggs.

Overall, the evidence suggests that major exporters would be more likely to comply with an EU measure requiring imports of eggs to match EU standards than they would be to retaliate.



Key findings

4 in 5

of the EU's egg and egg-product imports by value in 2025 came from countries that are candidates for EU membership

Candidate countries are required to adopt EU law, including its animal welfare legislation, before they can join.

0

formal challenges were brought against the EU's 2013 welfare requirement for imported meat

In 2012, meat made up about 20 times the share of total EU imports that eggs made up in 2025.

84%

of Europeans back action on imports that don't meet EU welfare standards

This demonstrates clear public morals support, supporting WTO-eligible import measure.

Most imports come from countries with strong incentives to align with EU welfare standards. Over 80% of current egg and egg-product imports into the EU come from EU accession candidates, whose membership ambitions provide an incentive to align with EU welfare standards. Accession already requires candidates to align their domestic legislation with EU law, meaning that preparing for higher EU welfare standards forms part of changes they will be expected to make in any case.

Other major suppliers have sufficient cage-free production to serve the EU market. Several non-candidate countries already produce substantially more cage-free eggs than their current exports to the EU. For all of these countries, we estimate that less than 5% of their cage-free production would cover their 2025 exports to the EU.

Comparable market-access requirements have been implemented on short timelines. California voters approved Proposition 12 in November 2018. From January 2022, shell and liquid eggs sold in the state, including eggs produced elsewhere, were required to come from cage-free systems. This gave suppliers just over three years to adapt their production and supply chains and establish the necessary certification arrangements. This precedent shows that equivalent welfare requirements can be introduced within a relatively short period, although the time needed for an EU-wide measure would depend on its final scope and implementation arrangements.

The most similar EU import requirement points to adaptation without retaliation. The EU has required imported meat to meet equivalent slaughter welfare standards since 2013. At that time, meat imports accounted for around 20 times the share of total EU goods imports that eggs account for today. According to the Commission, no trading partner brought a formal challenge to the requirement.[1]

Diplomatic engagement is more likely than legal challenge or retaliation. Similar previous EU import requirements have prompted questions, objections and requests for clarification from trading partners. However, these concerns have rarely developed into formal WTO disputes and have not resulted in retaliation.



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Public morals as the legal basis for the requirement



As is now well understood, animal welfare is an accepted public morals concern under GATT Article XX(a). If challenged, the EU could defend an import requirement for eggs from caged hens under GATT.

This provision permits trade measures that are necessary to protect public morals. The EU has restricted imports on animal welfare grounds for four decades, covering whale products, cat and dog fur, seal products, inhumanely trapped wild animals, animals not stunned before slaughter, and cosmetics tested on animals. Only one has been challenged at the WTO: the 2009 ban on seal products, brought by Canada and Norway.[3][4]

To withstand a WTO challenge, a measure relying on Article XX(a) would need to pursue a genuine public-morals objective, be necessary to achieve the EU's chosen level of protection, and be applied without arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination. For an egg-import requirement, this means ensuring that its coverage reflects the stated welfare objective and that domestic and overseas producers receive equivalent treatment.

The Seal Products case provides the clearest indication of how the WTO would assess such a measure, if a challenge was raised. It reinforces both that animal welfare concerns can fall within the public morals exception and that the way a restriction is designed and applied will determine whether it can ultimately be justified.

WTO challenge example: EC–Seal Products

Following public concern over the ethics of seal hunting, the EU enacted a series of restrictions on the import of seal products, culminating in an EU-wide ban enacted in 2009.

This measure was disputed by Canada and Norway, with the pair taking the EU through the WTO's dispute resolution process. At both stages of challenge, the WTO accepted that protecting animal welfare fell within the EU's public morals concern, and that a ban on placing seal products on the market was necessary to address it.

However, the EU was required to address some aspects of the requirement's design. A measure that pursues a permitted objective must also be applied without arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination; the WTO found that exemptions for indigenous and marine resource management hunts did not meet this requirement.

The EU complied with the request in 2015 by removing the marine resource management exception and tightening the conditions on the indigenous exception, while maintaining the broader ban. No further challenges followed.

The case shows that a measure banning the import of eggs and egg products from caged hens can be defended under Article XX(a), provided that its design and application meet the correct WTO requirements.

Applying the WTO requirements to eggs

To withstand a WTO challenge, an import requirement for eggs needs to show three things:

01 A genuine moral standard - ***The EU must show that opposition to cages reflects a genuine public concern rather than a preference asserted for the purpose of restricting trade***. Nearly 1.4 million citizens signed the End the Cage Age European Citizens' Initiative.[5] In 2023, 94% of Europeans said farmed animals should have room to move and 84% supported taking action on imports that do not meet EU animal welfare standards.[6] In 2024, nine in ten wanted cages banned and 76% wanted imports held to the same standard.[7]

02 Necessity - ***The requirement must make a meaningful contribution to its moral objective, and there must not be another reasonably available measure that would restrict trade less while achieving the same result***. The European Commission has previously suggested a labelling regime as a possible alternative.[8] However, labelling would continue to allow products from caged hens to be placed on the EU market and would depend on consumers choosing not to buy them. It would therefore not achieve the same level of protection if the EU's objective is to exclude products associated with cage production from its market. It would also require much of the same verification infrastructure as a prohibition.[9]

03 Consistent design - ***The measure must not be applied in a way that amounts to arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination, or a disguised restriction on trade. In practice, this means the restriction must track the moral objective throughout, without exceptions or gaps that admit the practice it exists to exclude.*** Extending the restriction to both shell eggs and egg products would create the strongest connection between the measure's animal-welfare objective and its application. Egg products make up more than a quarter of imports by value, and excluding them would allow products from the same cage systems to continue entering the EU market.



A shell-egg-only requirement would not necessarily be inconsistent with WTO rules. However, including egg products would strengthen the idea that the measure pursues its animal welfare objective consistently.

Unequal treatment presents a separate and potentially greater risk. Origin-based carve-outs or different transition periods for domestic and overseas producers could attract greater scrutiny if they placed overseas producers at a disadvantage without an objective justification.

A formal WTO challenge would not itself authorise countermeasures. A trading partner would first need to challenge the requirement successfully, after which the EU would have an opportunity to comply with the ruling. WTO-authorised countermeasures could arise only if the EU subsequently failed to do so.

The legal precedent therefore supports proceeding with an equivalent import requirement while designing its scope, transition periods and certification arrangements to minimise avoidable grounds for challenge. Covering shell eggs and egg products and applying equivalent conditions to domestic and overseas producers would strengthen the EU's position. The remaining legal risks can be managed through a coherent scope, objectively justified distinctions and equal treatment of domestic and overseas producers.



Partner responses to existing EU import requirements



Some previous EU animal-welfare import requirements have prompted objections, requests for clarification and, in one case, a formal WTO challenge. However, trading partners have generally adapted to the requirements, and we could find no evidence that existing measures resulted in retaliation.

EU Slaughter Regulation

The most comparable precedent to the proposed laying hen requirement is the EU's 2009 Slaughter Regulation which has applied since 1 January 2013. The regulation requires that meat imported into the EU from third countries come from animals slaughtered to similar standards as those held in the EU.

The measure is similar to an import requirement for eggs from caged hens in several respects:

- Both apply an EU animal welfare standard to imported products based on how animals are treated during production, rather than on the physical characteristics of the final product.
- Both also require overseas producers and authorities to demonstrate compliance while seeking to improve animal welfare and avoid placing EU producers at a competitive disadvantage.

Brazil was the largest non-EU meat supplier affected when the requirement took effect and remains one of the EU's largest external meat suppliers.

In the preceding three years, it exported an average of €919 million in meat to the EU annually, accounting for just over one-fifth of EU meat imports.[10]

Rather than retaliate or dispute the measure, in January 2013 Brazil and the EU committed to cooperating on advancing animal welfare in farming systems.[11] An EU-commissioned study in the years following enactment found Brazil was operating a government-run system to certify compliance with animal welfare standards for export purposes, with equivalent standards at slaughter mandatory for establishments certified to export to the EU.[12] Cooperation between the two areas led to further progress on Brazilian animal welfare, such as on industry commitments to phase out sow crates and move to group housing systems.[13]

We found no clear indication to suggest the measure's implementation damaged the EU's trade relationship with, and exports to, Brazil. In the three years following the measure's introduction, EU27 member states accounted for 19% of Brazil's imports by value, unchanged from the three years before implementation.[14]

Among other trading partners, there is little evidence of formal opposition raised in regard to the measure. Before the requirement took effect, India and Argentina raised questions in WTO meetings about how the measure would operate. They sought clarification on whether its requirements went beyond international standards and whether the certification process would create unnecessary obstacles for exporters. The EU responded that exporting countries would not be required to reproduce EU rules exactly, provided that they achieved equivalent animal-welfare outcomes. These exchanges remained within WTO committees, and neither country initiated a formal dispute.[15] [16]

Indeed, the absence of challenges is supported by the Commission's own assessment. In its 2022 report on the application of EU health and environmental standards to imported agricultural and agri-food products, the Commission stated that the measure had "never been challenged by trade partners".[17] The available evidence therefore suggests that trading partners responded through adaptation, technical cooperation and diplomatic engagement. Ultimately, the measure appears to have advanced the Commission's animal welfare priority in "promoting animal welfare and fair competition globally", without producing signs of wider trade retaliation.[18]

The EU's 2009 Slaughter Regulation for imported meat covered about 20 times more trade than an egg rule would today
No trading partner formally challenged it.

Value of imports as a share of everything the EU imports from outside the EU



Source: Eurostat Comext, extra-EU imports by value, extracted 13 September 2026. Eggs include egg products; hatching eggs excluded. Bars drawn to scale.

The Slaughter Regulation also affected substantially more trade than an import requirement for eggs would today. In the year prior to the measure's introduction, EU meat imports accounted for 0.26% of total EU goods imports by value. By contrast, imports of eggs and egg products represented only 0.013% of EU goods imports for 2025, a share roughly 20 times smaller than that affected by the EU's Slaughter Regulation.[19] An import requirement for eggs would therefore apply to far less trade than a measure that trading partners responded to through adaptation and diplomatic engagement rather than a formal challenge.

Given that a measure affecting substantially more trade prompted adaptation and diplomatic engagement, but no formal challenge or retaliation, there is little reason to expect a well-designed import requirement for eggs from caged hens to provoke trade retaliation.

Other EU precedents

EC–Seals

The EC-Seals dispute provides a demonstration of where legal trade concerns can coexist with broader economic and political cooperation.

Canada's challenge to the ban began in 2007 and continued until the EU amended the measure in 2015. During almost the same period, the EU and Canada continued negotiating the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

The seal-products dispute was reportedly kept outside the CETA negotiations, with Canada pursuing its concerns through the WTO process instead. The EU and Canada completed the text of CETA less than four months after the WTO ruling, which, as referenced earlier, accepted that animal welfare concerns could justify the restriction while requiring the EU to amend the way some exemptions operated.[20] The dispute therefore remained confined to the measure itself and did not prevent progress on the countries' wider trade relationship.

What this precedent shows: legal trade concerns can coexist with broader economic and political cooperation. The dispute remained confined to the measure itself and did not prevent progress on the countries' wider trade relationship.

Leghold Trap Regulation

The 1991 Leghold Trap Regulation banned domestic use of leghold traps and restricted imports of wild-trapped furs from countries still using them.[21] The EU represented 70% of US and Canadian wild-caught fur exports, and 12 of the 13 species covered by the restriction were trapped mainly in North America. Key species trapped within the EU were exempt, creating an apparent inconsistency between the measure's treatment of domestic and overseas practices.

The combination of concentrated commercial exposure and inconsistent exemptions strengthened pressure from the United States and Canada. The EU repeatedly postponed implementation before agreeing alternative trapping standards with Canada and Russia, and separately with the United States.

The case has limited value as a guide to how partners would respond to an egg-import requirement today. The legal context has developed since EC–Seal Products confirmed that animal welfare concerns can justify trade restrictions, and a consistently designed egg requirement would not reproduce the leghold measure's central weakness.

What this precedent shows: the case has limited value as a guide to how partners would respond to an egg-import requirement today. Its narrower lesson is that exemptions and differences in treatment should be clearly justified and remain consistent with the measure's welfare objective.

Cosmetics

The 1993 cosmetics directive banned the sale and import of cosmetics containing animal-tested ingredients from 1998. Implementation was delayed first to 2000 and then to 2002 because validated alternatives to animal testing were not yet available.[22] In 2000, the Commission proposed removing the import element because of concerns about compatibility with WTO rules, but Parliament retained it and set a 2013 deadline for full implementation.[23]

Canada, Japan and China raised concerns at the WTO, arguing that adequate alternatives to animal testing were still unavailable.[24] [25] The Commission's 2011 review also concluded that alternatives would not be available in every area by 2013, but the EU maintained the deadline.[26] The measure took effect without a formal WTO dispute, and no further concerns were raised.

Subsequent developments have moved two of the three objecting countries closer to the EU's position. Canada has prohibited the sale of cosmetics tested on animals, while China has removed mandatory animal testing for imported general cosmetics.[27] [28] Japan was among the countries whose concerns contributed to China changing its requirements.

What this precedent shows: initial objections can subside as requirements take effect and regulatory approaches develop.

Whale products and cat and dog fur

The EU's 1981 regulation on cetacean products stopped commercial imports of whale, dolphin and porpoise products, including meat, oil and whalebone, from 1982. It was adopted on conservation grounds. The 2007 cat and dog fur regulation banned the sale, import and export of cat and dog fur from 2009, responding to consumer concerns that such fur, mostly imported, was entering the EU market unlabelled.[

What this precedent shows: neither measure sparked trade concerns or threats of retaliation.

Taken together, other EU measures addressing animal-welfare concerns, including restrictions on whale products and cat and dog fur, have not resulted in formal WTO disputes.

The Slaughter Regulation provides the closest existing precedent for an equivalent animal-welfare requirement on imported eggs. It shows that a measure affecting substantially more trade can prompt suppliers to establish the systems needed to maintain EU market access, while governments pursue clarification and cooperation rather than escalation.



3

Egg exporters to the EU: Exposure and incentives to respond



The evidence suggests that most major suppliers would be more incentivised to adapt or seek practical changes through diplomatic engagement than to challenge an import requirement or retaliate.

Over 80% of EU egg and egg-product imports come from countries seeking EU membership, giving them an additional incentive to align with EU standards. Most other major exporters have large cage-free industries and could already comply with policy changes with little disruption. Countries that could not immediately comply would receive the same transition period to adapt as EU producers.

Exporters may still seek clarification on implementation or request technical support. However, accession-related incentives, existing cage-free capacity and the commercial importance of maintaining EU market access make adaptation or diplomatic engagement more attractive than formal challenge or retaliation.

How much notice would the EU give suppliers ahead of implementing import standards?

The EU's 1999 ban on conventional battery cages gave producers 12 years' notice, at a time when over 90% of hens were kept in these systems.[29] Today, around a third are in enriched cages. Given this, we expect the EU to provide a much shorter transition period of around five years, aligning with industry research suggesting the majority of EU producers could comfortably transition within this period.[30]

Experience elsewhere shows that equivalent import requirements can also be introduced on shorter timelines. California voters approved Proposition 12 in November 2018, and its cage-free requirements for shell and liquid eggs, including eggs produced outside the state, took effect in January 2022. Suppliers had just over three years to adjust production and supply chains and establish the necessary certification arrangements.[31]

These precedents support a transition period of around five years rather than repeating the earlier 12-year period. The longer period began when more than 90% of EU hens were kept in conventional battery cages and most of the sector needed to change. The scale of adjustment is smaller today, while the California example shows that equivalent market-access requirements can be introduced in just over three years.

The same five-year period should apply to non-EU suppliers to ensure equivalent treatment. Those suppliers would not need to convert their entire domestic industries as they would only need to ensure that enough cage-free eggs were available. Existing cage-free production in most major exporting countries suggests that this adjustment could be made within the same period.

Most imports come from countries seeking to join the EU

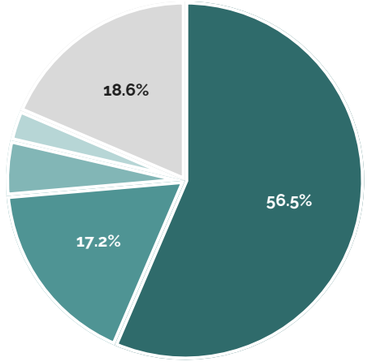
Four-fifths of EU egg and egg-product imports come from official candidates for EU membership.[32] This gives the countries responsible for most EU imports a broader obligation to move towards EU welfare standards.

To join, each must adopt the full body of EU law and bring all domestic production up to EU standards, a far higher bar than an import requirement covering products entering the EU market. This accession process is organised around negotiated benchmarks and timelines and ultimately applies to domestic production as a whole. Meeting an import requirement for the smaller share of production destined for the EU would be a narrower adjustment.

This process materially changes the incentives these governments face. A country pursuing EU membership has a wider strategic reason to prepare for higher EU standards and less reason to escalate a dispute over a requirement it may need to ultimately adopt domestically.

FIGURE 1: EGG AND EGG-PRODUCT IMPORTS INTO THE EU BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (JAN-25 – JUN-26)

Over 80% of the EU's egg and egg-product imports came from countries that are candidates for EU membership



Ukraine	€338.5 million	**56.5%**
Türkiye	€102.8 million	**17.2%**
North Macedonia	€29.8 million	**5.0%**
Other candidate countries	€16.5 million	**2.8%**
All candidate countries	**€487.6 million**	**81.4%**
All other countries		**18.6%**

Source: Eurostat Comext. Chicken eggs and egg products for consumption imported from outside the EU. Other candidate countries are Bosnia and Herzegovina (€8.3 million, 1.4%), Moldova (€5.4 million, 0.9%) and Albania (€2.8 million, 0.5%).

In July 2026, the EU held accession conferences with three of these countries, Ukraine, Moldova, and Albania,[33] and their leaders have publicly targeted membership by 2030.[34]

If the import requirement includes a transition of around five years, its implementation would overlap with the period in which these countries are working towards closer alignment with EU law. Accession by 2030 is not assured, but the timetable gives them a concrete reason to prepare for higher EU animal welfare standards now.

Ukraine has particularly strong incentives to adapt

Ukraine has been the EU's largest external source of eggs and egg products for several years.[35] The vast majority (73% in 2025 according to industry sources) of Ukraine's egg exports are currently sent to EU markets, with an overwhelming share produced in cage systems.[36] Nevertheless, Ukraine has particularly strong reasons to preserve EU access and prepare for the new standard.

Since 1 January 2026, Ukrainian farms have had to meet new welfare requirements for laying hens, pigs, calves and broilers, set by Ministry Order No. 224 of 2021. Under the revised EU–Ukraine trade agreement concluded in 2025, Ukraine has also committed to align its legislation with further EU animal welfare law by 31 December 2028, and the EU may suspend some or all of the trade preferences if it judges the alignment unsatisfactory.

1. Ukraine depends heavily on the EU market

The EU accounted for around 65% of Ukraine's goods trade in 2025 and is the principal destination for its egg exports. Ukraine accounted for just over 1% of the EU's goods exports.[37] Ukraine has also been an EU candidate since 2022. While Ukraine is unlikely to join by 2027, membership by the end of the decade appears achievable, with the EU ambassador to Ukraine recently referring to 2030 as a "very realistic target date for accession".[38] [39] These factors provide Ukraine with a broader incentive to maintain alignment with EU requirements while pursuing membership.

2. Any realistic transition period would run past Ukraine's target accession date

As set out above, we expect a transition period of around five years for the requirement. Given that the legislation has yet to be adopted, such a transition would be likely to extend beyond Ukraine's target accession date. Ukraine would therefore be working towards alignment with EU law over the same period in which its exporters would be preparing for the import requirement.

Even if accession takes longer, Ukraine's direction of travel remains clear. Its dependence on the EU market and its commitment to membership give it stronger incentives to adapt or seek practical support than to pursue a formal challenge or retaliation.[40]

The incentive is weaker for candidates whose accession processes are less advanced, but it does not disappear. North Macedonia, for example, retains a standing obligation to align as its negotiations progress.

Türkiye's current exports to the EU are equivalent to approximately one-fifth of its existing cage-free production. It could therefore maintain its current EU exports using existing cage-free capacity, without converting its wider egg industry.[41] Bosnia and Herzegovina may face a greater adjustment: its current exports to the EU may exceed its existing cage-free production, meaning that it would need to increase cage-free production to maintain current export levels.

However, Bosnia and Herzegovina accounts for only 1.4% of EU egg imports.[42]

Previous trade behaviour provides further evidence that formal escalation has been limited. Formal challenges to EU measures by these candidate countries have been rare. North Macedonia, Moldova and Albania have not brought WTO disputes against the EU, while Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a WTO member and cannot initiate WTO dispute-settlement proceedings.

Ukraine has raised some concerns through WTO processes: in 2014–15 as part of a lobbying effort against tobacco packaging rules, which it later distanced itself from, and one in 2020 seeking the lifting of poultry import restrictions imposed after avian-influenza outbreaks, resolved by the EU accepting imports from regions it was satisfied were disease-free.[43]

Türkiye brought the group's only dispute over the EU's 2018 steel safeguard; a panel found it partly inconsistent with WTO rules and the EU amended it within the agreed period.[44] None of these countries has challenged an EU animal-welfare measure at the WTO or taken WTO countermeasures against the EU.[45] [46]

Major non-candidate suppliers have sufficient cage-free production

The major suppliers that are not EU candidates also appear capable of continuing to serve the EU market.

The United Kingdom, United States, Norway and Switzerland together account for more than a tenth of the EU egg and egg-product imports examined. Each has a comparatively low and declining (bar Switzerland, which has an absolute ban on cages) share of cage production. The estimated quantity currently exported to the EU represents no more than approximately 2% of each country's cage-free production. Maintaining these exports would therefore require only a small share of existing national capacity.[47]

For the United States specifically, bans on the import of eggs from caged laying hens are well precedented.

Eight U.S. states have passed legislation banning the import of products from caged hens, starting with California's Proposition 12, and continuing most recently to Arizona.[48] It is unlikely the U.S. would raise concerns over international policy echoing the policy of much of its domestic market.

A smaller share (around seven per cent) of imports comes from countries with high cage use: China, Argentina, Mexico, and India. Their egg industries are immense relative to the quantities they export to the EU. For all of these countries, we estimate that less than 5% of their cage-free production would cover their 2025 exports to the EU.



4

Recommendations and conclusions

The Commission should proceed with equivalent welfare requirements for imported eggs and egg products. If designed and applied consistently, such a measure has strong justification and basis to withstand a WTO challenge. The evidence examined in this report also suggests that most trading partners would adapt or seek practical changes through diplomatic engagement rather than retaliate.

Some opposition remains possible as exporting countries may raise clarifying questions at the WTO or request changes to implementation. A formal challenge would become more likely if the measure contained inconsistent exemptions or treated overseas suppliers less favourably than EU producers. These risks call for careful design and early engagement.

The proposal should:

01 **Cover both shell eggs and egg products.**
Excluding egg products would allow goods derived from the same cage systems to continue entering the EU market, weakening the measure's animal welfare rationale.

02 **Apply equivalent treatment to domestic and overseas producers.**
Both should be subject to the same underlying welfare standard and receive the same transition period. A period of around five years should give most suppliers sufficient time to adjust without unnecessarily delaying implementation.

03 **Use the certification model established by the Slaughter Regulation.**
Eggs and egg products placed on the EU market should be accompanied by an official certificate from the exporting country's competent authority confirming that they came from hens kept under the required conditions. This would give compliant producers a clear route to maintain EU market access without requiring their country's entire domestic industry to adopt the EU standard.

04 **Engage major suppliers early.**
Technical discussions should focus on equivalence, certification and the treatment of egg products. Cooperation may be particularly useful for Ukraine and other candidate countries already working towards closer alignment with EU law.

Most leading suppliers either have sufficient cage-free production to maintain their EU trade or have broader political and commercial reasons to move towards EU standards. Therefore, the evidence suggests fear of possible retaliation should not prevent the EU from adopting a consistent requirement that protects animal welfare and ensures imported products are not produced to standards prohibited within the EU.



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