

GM FEED

Soya rule could hit feed costs

■ Livestock feed costs could soar by 300% if Europe maintains strict import rules as global GM soya production rises, the government has warned.

Brussels' low approval rate for GM products and its refusal to sanction soya imports containing unauthorised GM material threaten to decimate the UK pig and poultry sectors, said a report by DEFRA and the Food Standards Agency.

Major soya exporting countries – including the USA, Brazil and Argentina – might authorise and cultivate new types of GM crop before they are cleared for EU import, causing supplies of GM-free soya to dry up, the document warns.

"Under a 'worst case' scenario, where there are no soya imports from either Argentina and Brazil, the impact would be very significant," says the report. "There would be a major increase in feed costs."



UK producers are dependent on GM-free Argentinian and Brazilian soya crops.

UK livestock farmers are dependent on soya imports from Argentina and Brazil, the document states. These two countries supply about 90% of UK soya imports, which totalled 3m tonnes in 2007/08.

Without soya imports from these countries, the report forecasts a 300% rise in UK animal feed costs, accompanied by a 10-68% drop in poultry production.

But anti-GM campaigners accused DEFRA and the Food Standards Agency of presuming a worst-case scenario while failing to take account long-term feed security and low farm gate prices.

South American governments would be very reluctant to close off lucrative European markets.

www.foodstandards.gov.uk

IN BRIEF

Osteoporosis study wins support

■ The British Free Range Egg Producers Association (BFREPA) has added its support for a research bid for a project looking at osteoporosis in laying hens.

The research would be carried out at the Roslin Institute and Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies in Scotland and would build upon work done over the past 12 years. The scientists are currently awaiting a decision from BBSRC.

Research scientist Ian Dunn and group leader at the Roslin Institute said the fact that BFREPA is willing to put money towards the research is a strong indication of support in the industry, so helping boost chances of a favourable decision. www.bfrepa.co.uk

Scots free-range unit to go ahead

■ Glenrath Farms has won its appeal to Scottish ministers to build a 25,000-bird free-range unit in the Stobo Valley.

Government reporter Philip Hutchinson upheld John Campbell's appeal in mid-August clearing the way for construction of the 160m shed. He said: "The farm should now be and up and running by 2012 and it's the company's intention to have added another 100 jobs to the area by then also."

The house is needed to help replace present production from cages, which are to be banned in 2012.

BROILER FEED

Additive trials given thumbs up

■ Two broiler producers have seen positive benefits in the first UK trials of a new additive widely used in Europe, including improved feed conversion.

After seeing a piece back in the March edition (p30), Patrick Wedgewood of North Riding Farm, Tholthorpe, North Yorkshire, decided to try the in-water additive in four of his 10 sheds on his 140,000-bird broiler unit.

BioAktiv is mainly a salt which has been oxygenised by a patented

process and is claimed to improve the bird's gut health and, hence, feed conversion.

Mr Wedgewood said: "After three weeks the litter was still dry and at the end of the crop I found the birds healthier not having had to treat them in the meantime. I estimate that I have made a saving on feed of about 5%. I have never suffered badly with mortality, but even this showed an improvement."

Another broiler producer, Dave Whistance of Abergavenny, Gwent,

who also tried the additive found that, according to his computer records, at the end of 42 days the average weight was 2.81kg against the normal average of 2.56kg.

More important was the improvement in feed conversion from 1.81kg feed/kg gain to 1.75. He said: "In the first trial crop, we saw lower on-farm mortality and lower factory rejects than the previous three crops off the farm with obvious financial benefits in flock health."

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