

Egg industry research on carbon footprints

What matters more to you when you buy eggs? Would you choose free range over low carbon cage eggs, or the other way round?

Research from the Australian Egg Corporation Limited has shown that intensive egg farms are lower emitters than free range farms, but the free range industry says the research is flawed.

The research also suggests that eggs have a smaller carbon footprint than all the other main protein foods.

Egg corporation managing director James Kellaway says the findings help to inform consumers when they head to the supermarket.

"We compared the primary energy use of eggs, which was 45 per cent lower than pork and 59 per cent lower than beef, when measured on a megajoules per kilogram basis."

Free range eggs had a 20 per cent larger footprint than intensively-produced ones.

"We're certainly not promoting one production system over another what we're doing here is providing information with no fear or favour as it relates to independent research that we've commissioned."

But Phil Westwood from the Free Range Egg and Poultry Association of Australia says consumers won't be informed because the research is flawed. He says free range farmers do better in the carbon stakes in a number of ways.

"For example transport costs, most genuine free range farms either produce their own feed on farm or they buy feed very locally so there are fewer transport costs in getting the feed to the farm, whereas with the major operations they truck in feed from interstate or even overseas.

"Also in selling the eggs, most free range farms sell locally, they don't put their eggs in trucks and send them off to Western Australia, or Queensland, or wherever."

So what does he think it will mean for egg-buyers?

"They will scratch their heads and really not know what to do. They'll just grab whatever they can and they'll probably just be driven by price, so they'll buy cage eggs."