



ASSOCIATION EUROPÉENNE DE VOLAILLES RURALES  
EUROPEAN RURAL POULTRY ASSOCIATION

# Definition by the member states on slow growing organic poultry strains

Civil Dialogue Group on Organic Farming - 16/12/15  
Brussels                      Agnès LASZCZYK - ERPA





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EUROPEAN RURAL POULTRY ASSOCIATION

- **ERPA represents rural poultry producers** in the European Union
- **Rural poultry** : organic, free range, young birds sold alive directly or at markets...  
=> strong social links
- **The aims of ERPA:**
  - ✓ Supporting and developing the production of rural poultry in Europe in its diversity
  - ✓ Defending extensive and family farming, including organic and free range poultry rearing
  - ✓ Explaining the characteristics of these methods of poultry production and the necessary adaptation of EU regulation
  - ✓ Preserving rustic traditional breeds and biodiversity in accordance with animal welfare
- **Our members** : breeders, hatchers, farmers, small poultryslaughters, rural poultry producers groups in all Europe

## « Slow growing strains » in Rgl (EC) No 889/2008

### Whereas:

(10)...

Organic husbandry practices should **prevent poultry from being reared too quickly**. Therefore specific provisions to **avoid intensive rearing methods** should be laid down. In particular poultry shall either be reared until they reach a **minimum age** or else shall come from **slow-growing poultry strains**, so that **in either case there is no incentive to use intensive rearing methods**.

**But...** what is a poultry « reared too quickly », a « slow-growing poultry strain », an « intensive rearing method » ?

# « Slow growing strains » reference in Rglt (EC) No 889/2008

## Article 12(5) :

5. To prevent the use of intensive rearing methods, poultry shall either be reared until they reach a minimum age or else shall come from slow-growing poultry strains. Where slow-growing poultry strains are not used by the operator the following minimum age at slaughter shall be:

- (a) 81 days for chickens,
- (b) 150 days for capons,
- (c) 49 days for Peking ducks,
- (d) 70 days for female Muscovy ducks,
- (e) 84 days for male Muscovy ducks,
- (f) 92 days for Mallard ducks,
- (g) 94 days for guinea fowl,
- (h) 140 days for male turkeys and roasting geese and
- (i) 100 days for female turkeys.

The competent authority shall define the criteria of slow-growing strains or draw up a list thereof and provide this information to operators, other Member States and the Commission.

# Notifications from Member States to Commission submitted in 2014 for year 2013

## ➤ **No definitions**

- ✓ **no organic production** : Malta
- ✓ **no use** : Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Estonia, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania (excepted goose)
- ✓ **still in process** : Romania, Sweden

## ➤ **Definitions for chickens**

- ✓ **Max average daily gain** : Denmark, Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Germany, United Kingdom
- ✓ **List of slow-growing strains** : Belgium-Flanders, Czech Republic, Spain, Hungary, Portugal, Slovenia
- ✓ **List of non-slow-growing strains** : Slovakia
- ✓ **List of slow-growing strains and a minimum age** : Belgium-Wallonia
- ✓ **List of slow-growing strains and Max average daily gain** : France, Poland

## Definition of slow-growing chicken with a max Average Daily Gain

ADG max (g/day)	27	35	40	44	45
France	x				
Austria, DK, Finland		x			
NL			x		
Germany				x	
Poland, UK					x
Weight at 81 days	2,200 g	2,800 g	3,200 g	3,560 g	3,650 g
Nb days to 2 kg	74	57	50	45	44

**In comparison** : a chicken at commercial weight : 2 kg alive = 1,3 kg ready-to-cook

- For a 81 days chicken (organic or traditional free range chicken) :  
ADG = 2000 : 81 = 25 g/day
- For a 40 days standard broiler : ADG = 2000 : 40 = 50 g/day => more proteins in feed

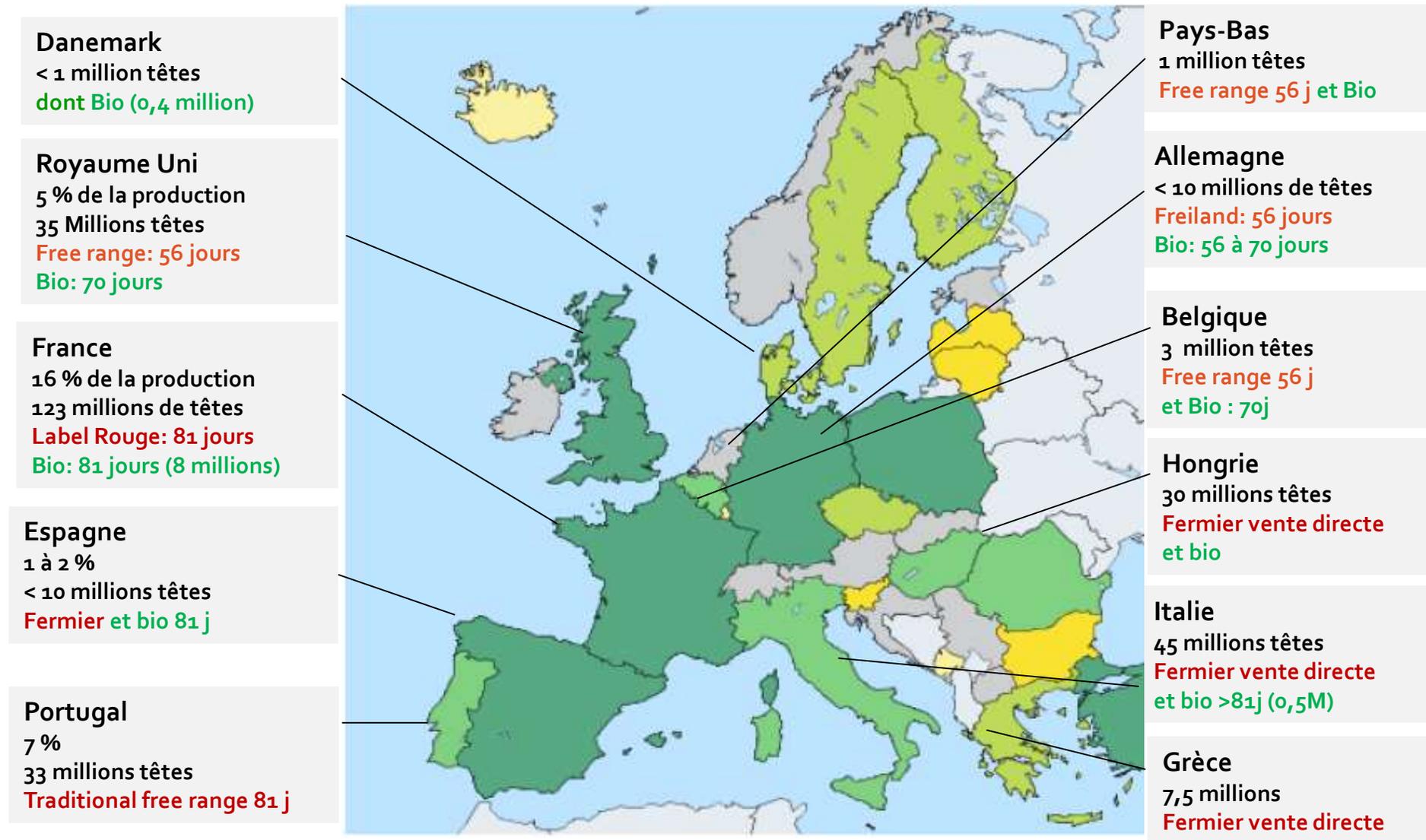
# Definition based on a list of strains

- Mostly it is a list of meat chicken crosses from different breeders : Sasso (F), Hubbard (F), Kabir (Israel), Cobb (USA), Ross/ Aviagen (D)...
- with various ADG : from 27 g/day to 45 g/day
- Or a list of local traditional strains in some MS (eg. Spain, Slovenia)
- Or crosses also used for laying hens (Sussex, Plymouth Rock, Lohman...)
- Some ask in complement a minimum age (Wallonia) or a max ADG (France - 27g/d, Poland - 45g/d)
- One MS (Slovakia) gives a list of intensive rapid growing strains => these strains can be used if slaughtered at 81 days.

# Analyse of these MS notifications

- No harmonization => various types of definition and different levels : 27 g/day to 45 g/day
- Are they all **in compliance** with the aims of the regulation : Slow-growing ? Non-intensive ? Animal welfare ?
- **No consistency** between age requirements and some growth rates defined
- Some are far below the requirements for conventional alternative types of rearing ("traditional free range" = 81 days min)
- These definitions give very different practices in organic chicken productions in Europe
- They are used to circumvent the minimum age requirement of the Regulation and then to allow intensive farming (lower age / rapid growing breeds / more proteins)
- It causes competitive distortions and a risk of loss of consumer confidence.

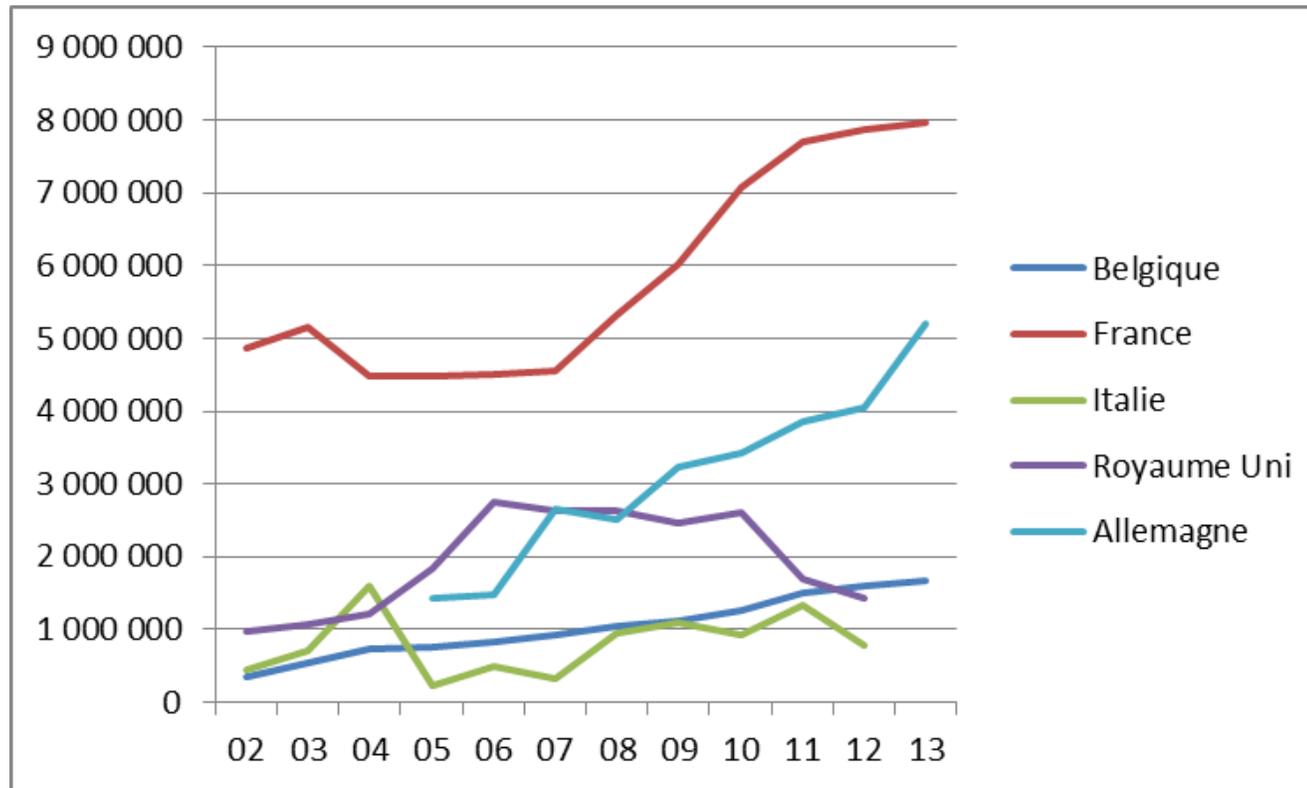
# Free range chicken productions : overview in Europe



Source : ERPA / Itavi /Sasso – 2015

# Repartition of organic chicken production in principal MS

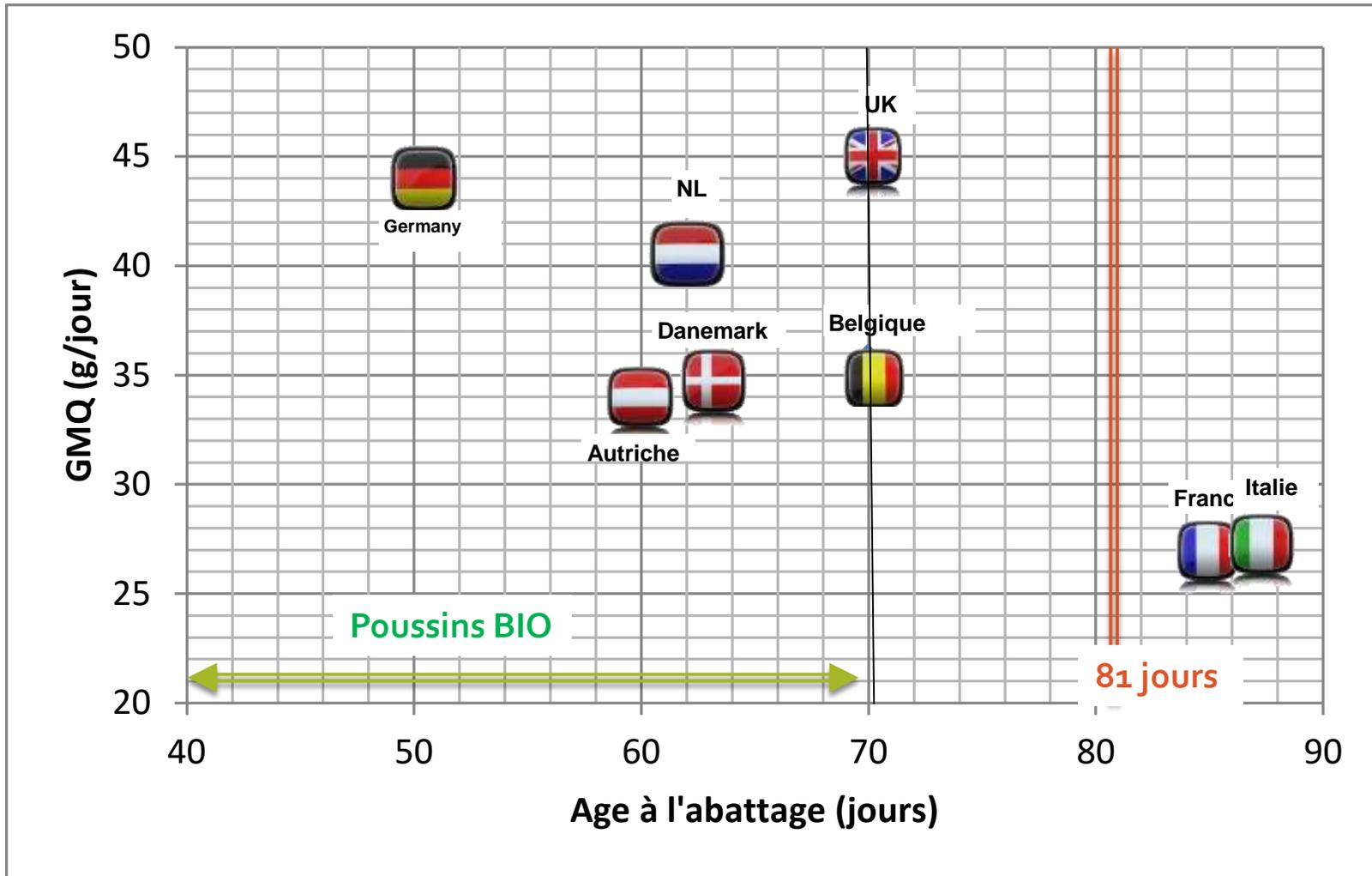
(Nb birds / year)



Source : Itavi – 2015

France : **1st producer** of organic broilers, with the use of only **slow-growing strains (25 g/day)** and an age of **81 days** minimum => **Progression in 2014** : 8,6 M birds = **+8%** / 2013

# In Practice : Organic chickens in UE are highly variable

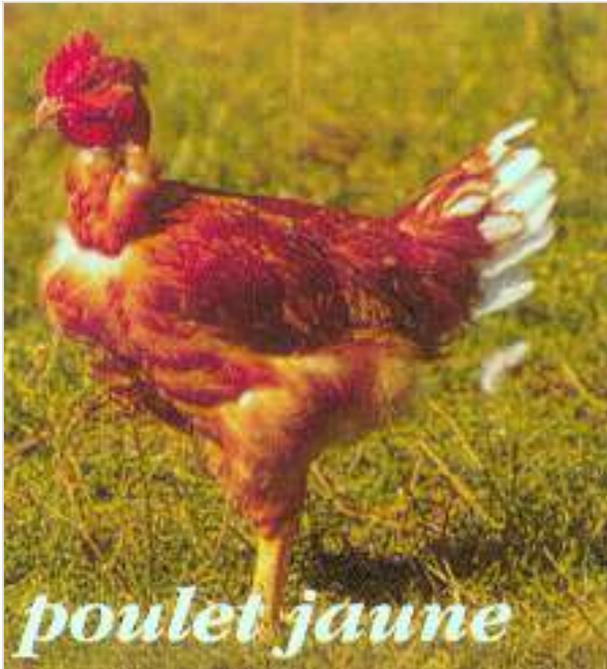


Source : P. Magdelaine - Itavi d'après enquêtes et données des EM – June 2015

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## Example in France

more than 40 slow-growing crosses  
available for organic production



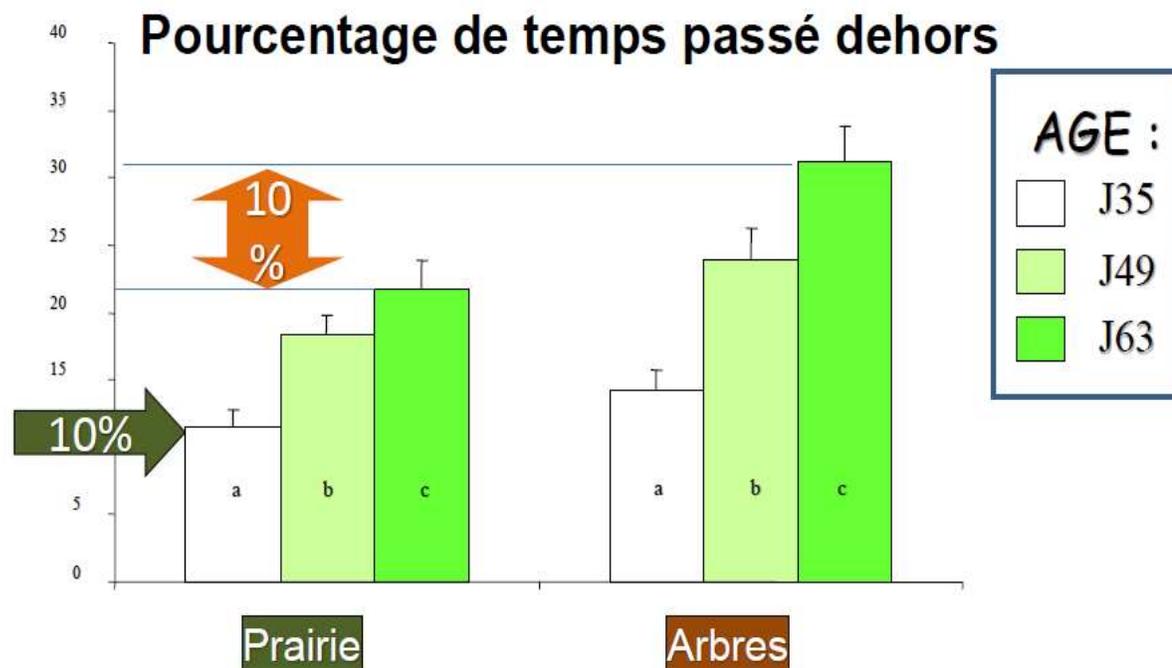
Rustic colored  
strains adapted  
to outside rearing



# Free range = long time rearing = slow-growing

Chickens go outside progressively

➤ from 35 days old



Source : C. Leterrier - INRA

# Slow-growing strains are available in all Europe

- In Europe, there is a long experience and a strong genetic biodiversity for alternative poultry production
- Some breeders in Europe have a broad range of slow-growing crosses adapted to organic extensive rearing.
- **They can already provide slow-growing breeds** for the total volume of organic chicken production in all member states.
- The objectives of the regulation **“to avoid intensive rearing methods”** can be assured by using these strains.

# ERPA's propositions for the future organic regulation

- **Mandatory slow-growing poultry strains** adapted to outdoors for organic production
- **And an harmonization of the definition** of slow-growing chickens based on a max ADG : **35 g/day** max in chicken
- **And mandatory minimum ages** at slaughter for **all** organic birds :

**70 days** for chickens;

150 days for capons; 49 days for Peking ducks; 70 days for female Muscovy ducks; 84 days for male Muscovy ducks; 92 days for Mallard ducks; 94 days for guinea fowl; 140 days for turkeys, males and females, and geese marketed whole for roasting; 98 days for female turkeys intended for cutting up; 126 days for male turkeys intended for cutting up.



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Thanks for your attention !

