

THE ÉTIQUETTE BIEN-ÊTRE ANIMAL : A LEADING EUROPEAN LABELLING SYSTEM



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BIEN-ÊTRE
ANIMAL





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A stylized map of Europe composed of blue dots of varying sizes, set against a dark blue background. The map is positioned in the upper half of the page.

The European Union (EU) intends to review its animal welfare policy and goals, in particular by spearheading the development of a labelling system.

The French Presidency of the EU represents an opportunity for the Étiquette Bien-Être Animal (EBEA) labelling system to be recognised as an initiative that fully satisfies the European Commission's vision.

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THE ÉTIQUETTE BIEN-ÊTRE ANIMAL LABELLING SYSTEM: A PROGRESS-DRIVEN APPROACH PROVIDING CLEAR INFORMATION TO CONSUMERS

The EBEA aims to educate consumers on how the animals whose products they might purchase were farmed, empowering them to make informed—and sometimes different—choices.

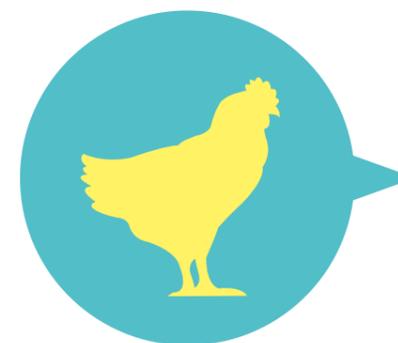
This initiative is part of a move toward greater transparency for all items on a supermarket shelf, regardless of how they were produced, and also aims to raise awareness about animal welfare issues. The initiative's visibility and specific requirements aim to support the animal sector in the adoption of better practices and to contribute to improving conditions under which farm animals are kept.



This labelling system, created in 2017, is managed by the Association Étiquette Bien-Être Animal, a non-profit organisation that brings together representatives from the food industry and key animal welfare NGOs to collaborate on this issue in a collegial way.

This pioneering initiative, unique in France, provides a thorough assessment of how an animal is treated and kept over the course of its life:

- It is based on species-specific technical standards.
- It combines obligations of means and results partially based on direct observation of the animals.
- Every operator (parent stock farm, rearing farm, transporter, slaughterhouse) is audited at least once a year by qualified third-party auditors.
- The result is displayed as a 5-level scale, ranging from minimum standards to higher levels of animal welfare.
- It summarizes the relevant farming method.



The EBEA system already covers the French broiler sector.

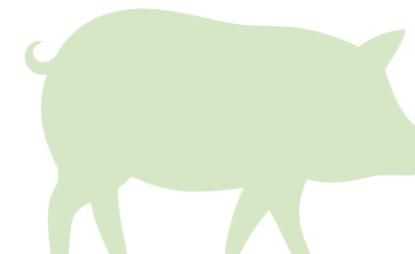
In 2021, 90 million broilers, including 60 million free range (Label Rouge or organic), were under this growing labelling system, with 3,000 poultry farmers involved in the initiative.



At the beginning of 2022, it expanded to cover two new members:

**volailles de Janzé
and volailles de l'Orléanais.**

The scheme should soon be rolled out to cover the pig sector, and the first labelled pork products could be available on shelves by the end of the year. A harmonized labelling system, at both the French and European level, could ensure it plays a full and active role.



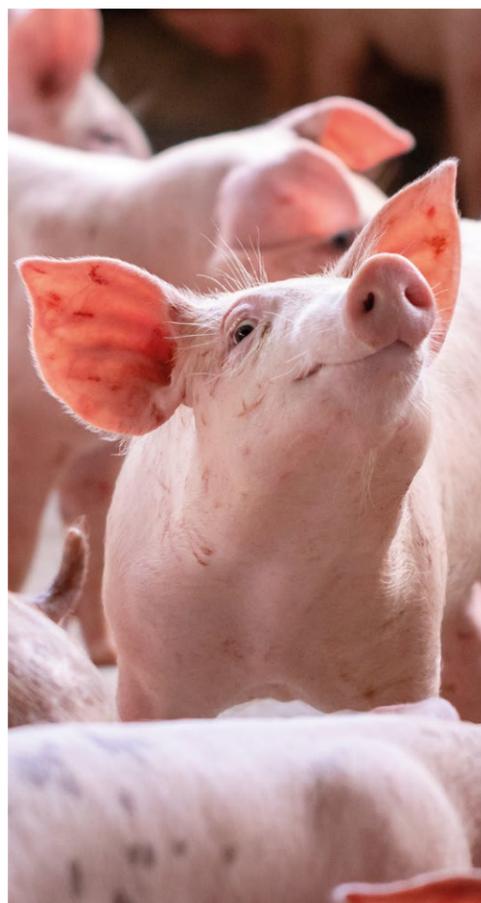
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SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE **FRENCH** PRESIDENCY OF THE **EU**

In 2022, the European Commission online public consultation indicated that 65 % of respondents felt that **they were not sufficiently informed about the conditions under which animals are farmed in the EU** (survey conducted from 15 October 2021 until 21 January 2022).

90 % of respondents believed that an EU-wide animal welfare label would be a “useful tool for informing consumers on the conditions in which animals are treated”.¹

These expectations were restated in the Eurobarometer 2015 in which 64 % of **Europeans indicated that they would like more information about how farmed animals are treated** and 47 % believed that the choice of animal welfare-friendly food products in shops and supermarkets was insufficient. Furthermore, 59 % of respondents declared that **they were prepared to pay more for products sourced from animal welfare-friendly production systems.**²



PATCHWORK OF EUROPEAN INITIATIVES

The European Parliament identified 24 distinct labelling systems covering animal welfare issues, all voluntary private sector (producer association, NGO, etc.) initiatives.

A non-exhaustive classification of these initiatives can be found in the appendix.

¹European commission (2022). Factual summary report of the online public consultation in support to the fitness check and revision of the EU animal welfare legislation. Available at : https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12400-Fitness-Check-of-the-EU-legislation-on-animal-welfare/public-consultation_fr

²European commission (2016) Eurobarometer: Attitudes of Europeans towards Animal Welfare. Available at : <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2096>

PLANNED REVISION OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE LEGISLATION BY THE END OF 2023

The concern expressed by European citizens over farm animal welfare is included in the Farm to Fork Strategy adopted in November 2021 by the European executive. This roadmap was built to ensure “enhanced sustainability at every step of the food supply chain” as MEPs highlighted in a press release on 20 October in which they also reiterated that “everyone - from farmer to consumer - has a role to play”

When it comes to animal welfare, the Farm to Fork Strategy strives, in particular:

- To create an **EU-wide labelling system** to increase transparency on methods of animal rearing, transport and slaughter.
- To clarify existing rules and continue working on their **harmonization at the European level.**

Moreover, the Parliament asked that animal welfare goals aim higher as early as October, proposing legislation “with the objective of phasing out the use of cages in EU animal farming” ideally by 2027.

USING THE FRENCH PRESIDENCY OF THE EU AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT AND PROMOTE THE EBEA SYSTEM

France took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union on 1 January 2022 for a six-month term.

The European Commission has been working on the issue of animal welfare labelling for several months. In its final study report from March 2022³, it estimated that EU-wide legislation might “contribute to add value to the food chain”, especially given the “clear consumer demand that is currently not being met, and a clear need for raising awareness and simplifying the existing state of play of labelling schemes with animal welfare claims in the EU”.

This represents an opportunity to contribute to animal welfare advocacy and to prove that **the French EBEA labelling system meets and exceeds every EU expectation.**

³European commission (2022) Study on Animal Welfare Labelling. Final Report. Available at : <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/49b6b125-b0a3-11ec-83e1-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

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ADAPTING THE ÉTIQUETTE BIEN-ÊTRE ANIMAL STANDARDS TO THE FUTURE EU LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

In June 2021, the animal welfare labelling subgroup of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare published a report and a set of recommendations for a relevant and effective system.⁴

The subgroup considers that the scheme should :

- Provide consumers with “clear and reliable information on the way farmed animals are treated.”
- Offer each consumer “the possibility to choose their food products on the base of the level of animal welfare that they are willing to pay” for.
- Offer “business operators, including farmers”, the framework and “incentives to improve their animal welfare standards at their own pace.”
- Offer stakeholders a “level playing field across animal welfare label initiatives.”
- Be widespread in terms of number of species and sectors covered.



The recommendations focus on the scope of animal welfare assessment, auditing procedures, nature of checked criteria, the progressiveness of standards and the quality of communication to consumers.

These European recommendations exceed the targets and align with the EBEA labelling system.

A MULTI-TIER LABEL PROVIDING CONSUMERS WITH THOROUGH INFORMATION

The animal welfare labelling subgroup of the EU Animal Welfare Platform recommends a multi-tier label, judged beneficial in several ways:

- The multiple tiers give more choice to a diverse consumer base.
- Displaying several levels creates an incentive for the food supply chain to improve and to make step-by-step progress on animal welfare issues.
- It raises animal welfare practices for the greatest number of animals.
- It better accommodates existing labels and standards.



The EBEA labelling system is based on a 5-level animal welfare scale (A, B, C, D or E), ranging from superior welfare standards (level A) to minimal requirements (level E) so as to empower consumers and to ensure progress throughout the food production chain. The scheme’s standards and guidance pave the way towards improving animal welfare practices.

It is worth noting that a semantic distinction was made between the French terms “étiquette” and “label”, the latter referring to the fact that a product meets a specific set of criteria. The EBEA, on the other hand, was designed to be displayed on the packaging of any animal product to reflect its animal welfare level. This information is therefore not exclusively provided for premium products, ensuring that consumers can access thorough information and distinguish between two products based on comparable criteria.



⁴European commission (2021) Conclusions of the animal welfare labelling subgroup of the EU Animal Welfare Platform. Available at : https://ec.europa.eu/food/system/files/2021-06/aw_platform_plat-conc_awl-subgroup-conclusion.pdf

A THOROUGH ASSESSMENT OF FARMED AND BREEDER ANIMALS' LIVES

According to the European animal welfare labelling subgroup, the scope of the EU labelling system should:

- Include the whole production cycle, including transport and slaughter for animals farmed for food production.
- Widen the scope of the animal welfare assessment to other animals involved in the production process,
- Cover processed products or products used in food services.

This is a clear citizen demand: 83 % of respondents to the European Commission's online public consultation expressed that "the label should be based on broader animal welfare criteria, including requirements on animal transport and slaughter"

- > The focal points and actions selected by the EBEA labelling system cover the animal's whole life span. The assessment includes all phases of production: birth, rearing, harvest, transport and slaughter.
- > One of the EBEA's strengths is its assessment of breeder animals' welfare. The non-profit organisation managing the scheme's standards is committed to auditing the conditions under which farmed animals are kept, and also seeks to cover those indirectly involved or linked to production, e.g. breeder birds (hens and roosters) in the case of broilers, or pullets and males ("brothers") in the case of laying hens. For the upcoming application of the scheme to the pig sector, gilts and boars will also be targeted.
- > The EBEA's goal is to be rolled out on all products, including processed products, and to expand its use by food suppliers.

THE ÉTIQUETTE BIEN-ÊTRE ANIMAL IS COMBINED WITH AN EXTENSIVE AUDIT

The EBEA developed its own set of standards. The assessment grid includes obligations of means (outdoor access requirements, stocking density in the barn, etc.) and obligations of results (animal behaviour, lesions, etc.). It mixes input- and output-based requirements.

For broilers, the EBEA's standards are based on the scoring of nearly 230 criteria. Inspections are carried out by independent third parties; auditors are themselves trained to use the grid. Every single party involved in the scheme undergoes an annual audit. Association Étiquette Bien-Être Animal also sets up additional surprise audits, underscoring the strength of yearly audits.



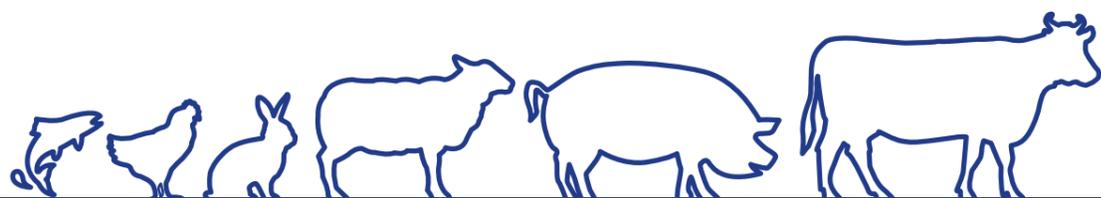
A SCHEME DEVELOPED THROUGH ANIMAL SECTOR STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

The European animal welfare labelling subgroup requires that all stakeholders (food supply chain entities, civil society representatives, scientists, governmental organisations) actively participate in the development of an EU label's regulatory framework so that a balance can be found between the label's different objectives.

- A multi-stakeholder working group bringing together representatives from the agrifood sector (from producers to retailers to animal welfare NGOs) designed and created the EBEA labelling system. All stakeholders participate in the implementation, roll-out and promotion of the scheme through Association Étiquette Bien-Être Animal, which convenes:



> THE ÉTIQUETTE BIEN-ÊTRE ANIMAL SATISFIES ALL EUROPEAN COMMISSION EXPECTATIONS



As this French initiative clearly **fulfils all recommendations** made by the EU animal welfare labelling subgroup, it can legitimately position itself **as a successful solution for common EU-wide technical standards**.

Indeed, Association Étiquette Bien-Être Animal successfully developed and implemented a proven model in the broiler sector. Its collaboratively designed standards are based on animal welfare criteria linked to both implemented means and output requirements, relying on a tried and tested inspection system.

THIS « MADE IN FRANCE » INITIATIVE IS READY FOR AN EU-WIDE ROLL-OUT.



TO KEEP IN MIND :

The EU animal welfare labelling subgroup expressed the following concerns:

A label applied on a voluntary basis risks limited product coverage, hindering the label's impact on improvements to animal welfare.

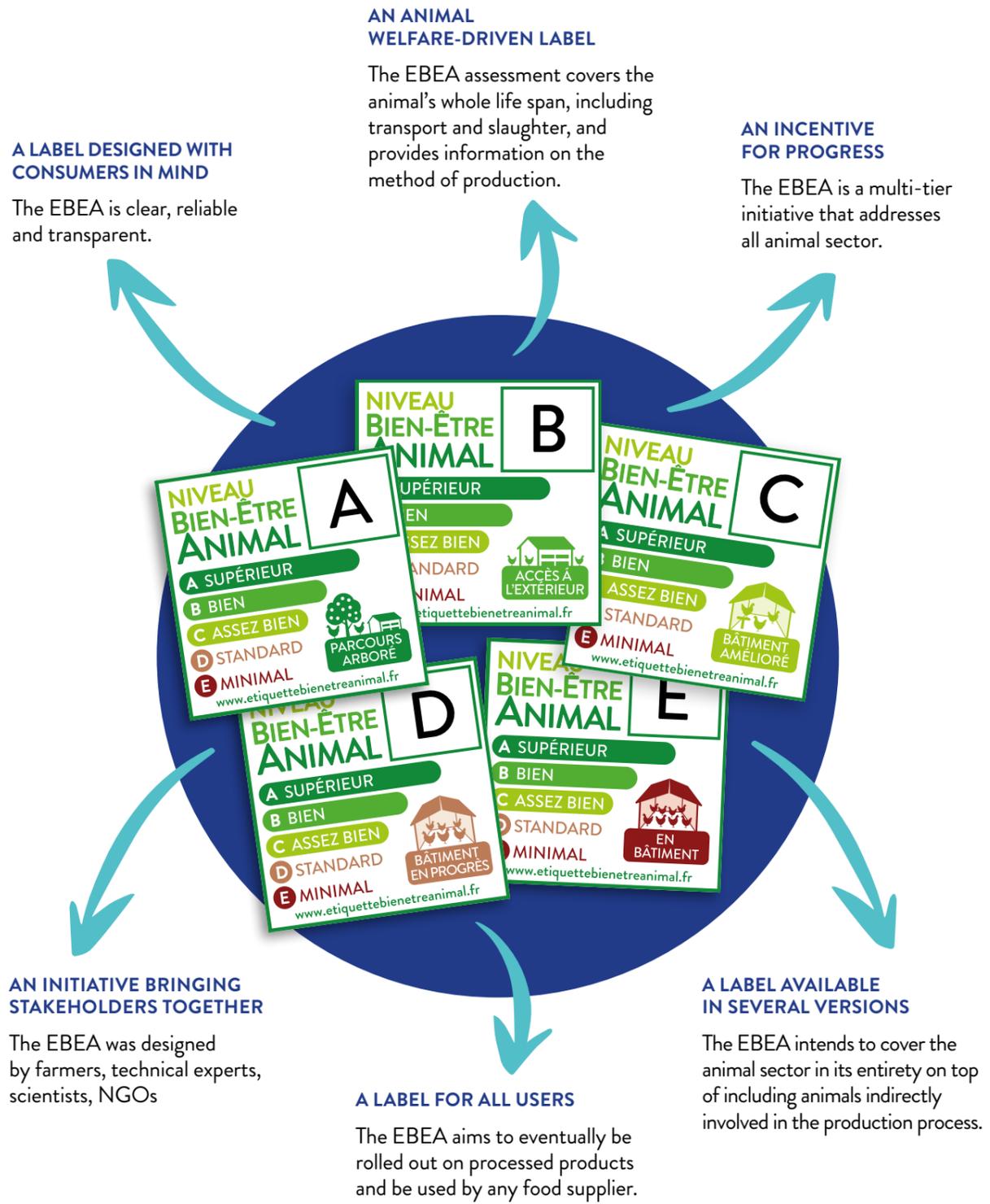
If the EU adopts an overall product sustainability label, subgroup experts recommend that key animal welfare information remain visible, for example with specific terms and/or a logo and images, and not get lost in an overall assessment.



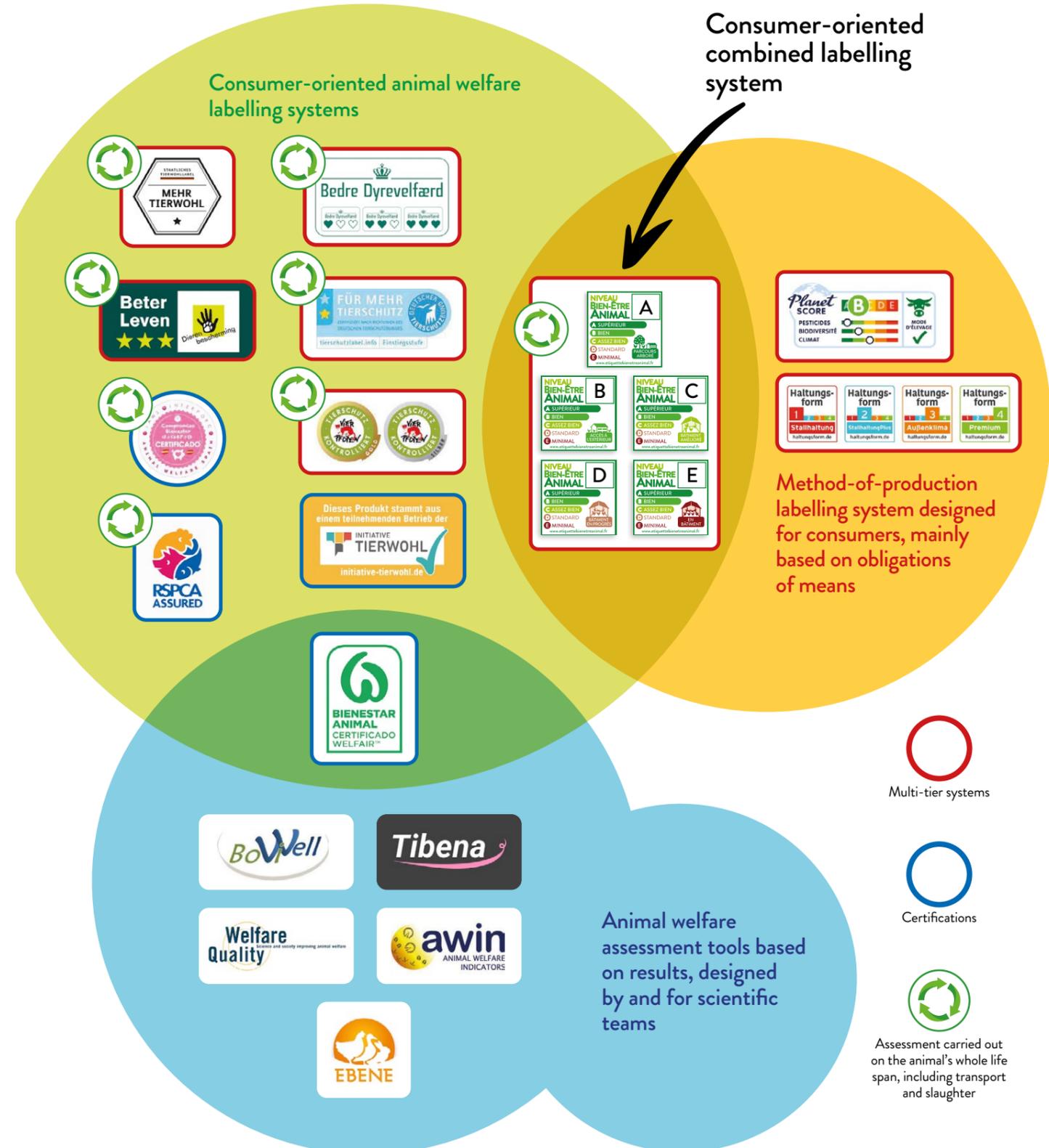
This is also a question at the national level.

Some labels already tend to display certain information on farming methods and could eventually incorporate the animal welfare level information provided by the EBEA.

> THE ÉTIQUETTE BIEN-ÊTRE ANIMAL LABELLING SYSTEM: A EUROPEAN LEADER



> ANIMAL WELFARE ASSESSMENT



Non-exhaustive classification

KEY FIGURES



90
millions

broilers labelled, including
60 million free range
(Label Rouge and organic)



3000

French poultry
farmers involved
in the initiative

MEMBERS OF THE ÉTIQUETTE BIEN-ÊTRE ANIMAL LABELLING SYSTEM



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