

Egg producers see big shift to cage-free eggs by 2025



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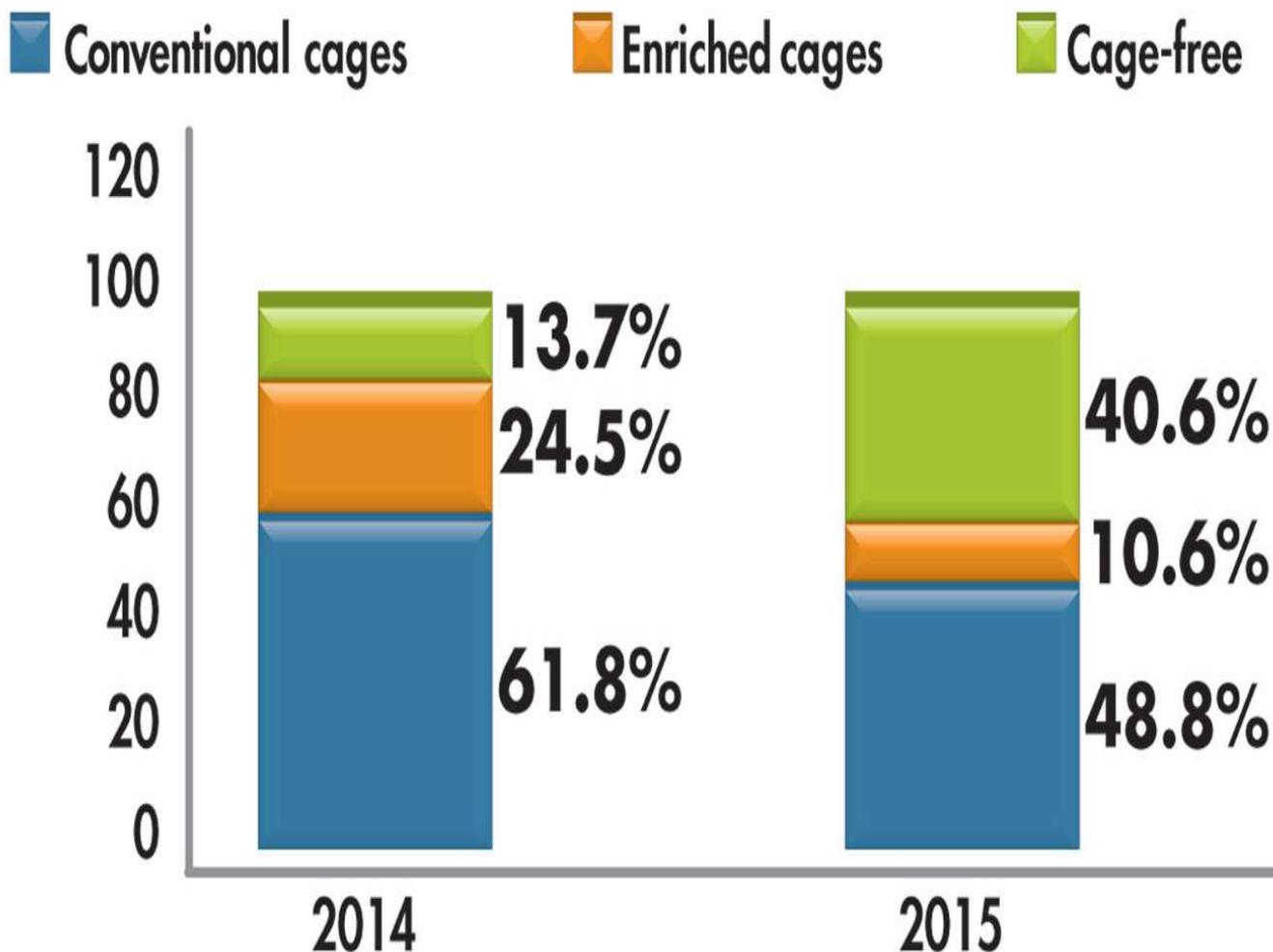
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The cascade of foodservice and food manufacturing companies' pledges to shift egg purchases to cage-free has had a big impact on how US egg producers view the future.

For each of the past two *Top Egg Company Surveys*, U.S. egg producers were asked to project what they thought the breakout for egg production by housing system will be in 2025. In just 12 months, egg producers changed from predicting that 13.7 percent of hens would be housed cage-free in 2025 in last year's survey to 40.6 percent in this year's survey.

The breakout for egg production in the U.S. by housing system in 2025 will be roughly...

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Egg producers predict that cage-free egg production will grow much more rapidly than they did just one year ago.

In this year's survey, 29 egg producers housing about 130 million hens submitted their predictions for what the future holds for hen housing in the U.S. The predictions for the percentage of hens that will be raised cage-free in the U.S. in 2025 ranged from a low of 10 to a high of 80.

The expansion in cage-free egg production is predicted to come largely at the expense of enriched cages, which this year were predicted to make up just over 10 percent of total hens housed in 2025, down from a prediction of almost one-quarter of total hens housed last year. The predictions for enriched cages ranged from seven responses of 0 percent to a high of 30 percent.

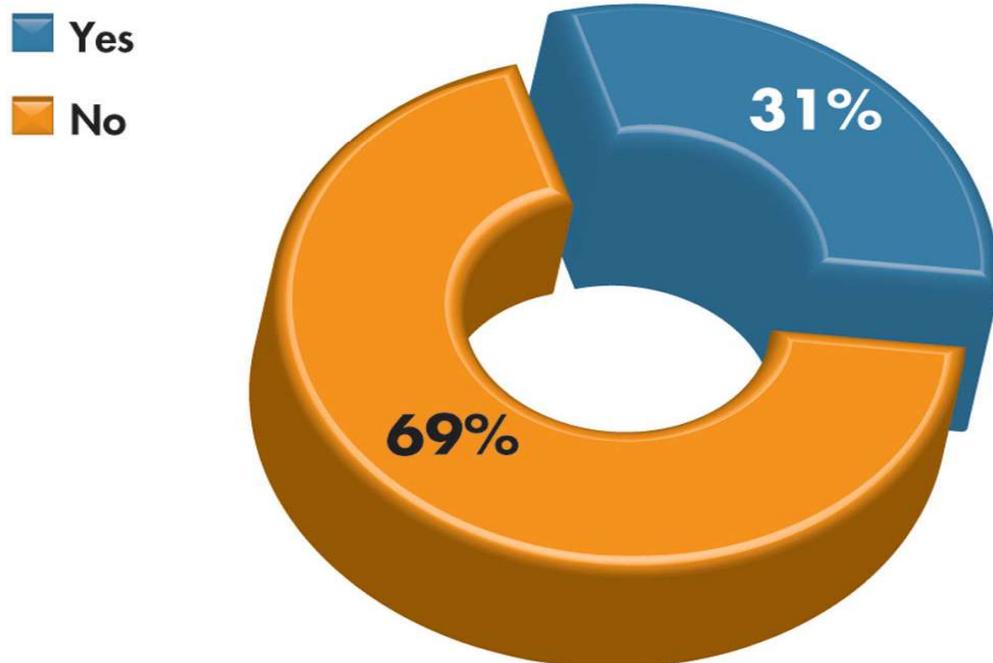
Conventional cages are still predicted to be the predominant means of housing hens in 2025, according to this year's survey respondents, with almost 49 percent of housed this way, a significant decline from the prediction of last year, almost 62 percent.

Foodservice cage-free egg sales

McDonald's pledge to switch all of the company's egg purchases in the U.S. and Canada to cage free by 2025 is seen by some as pivotal for the U.S. egg industry. In this year's survey, egg producers were asked if they agreed with the statement, "McDonald's decision to transition to cage-free egg purchases will ultimately lead to the end of cage housing for foodservice egg production." More than two-thirds of egg producers responding to the survey disagreed with this statement.

Do you agree with the statement, "McDonald's decision to transition to cage-free egg purchases will ultimately result in the end of cage housing for food service egg production"?

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Almost one-third of responding egg producers believe McDonald's cage-free announcement will result in end of cage housing for foodservice in the U.S.

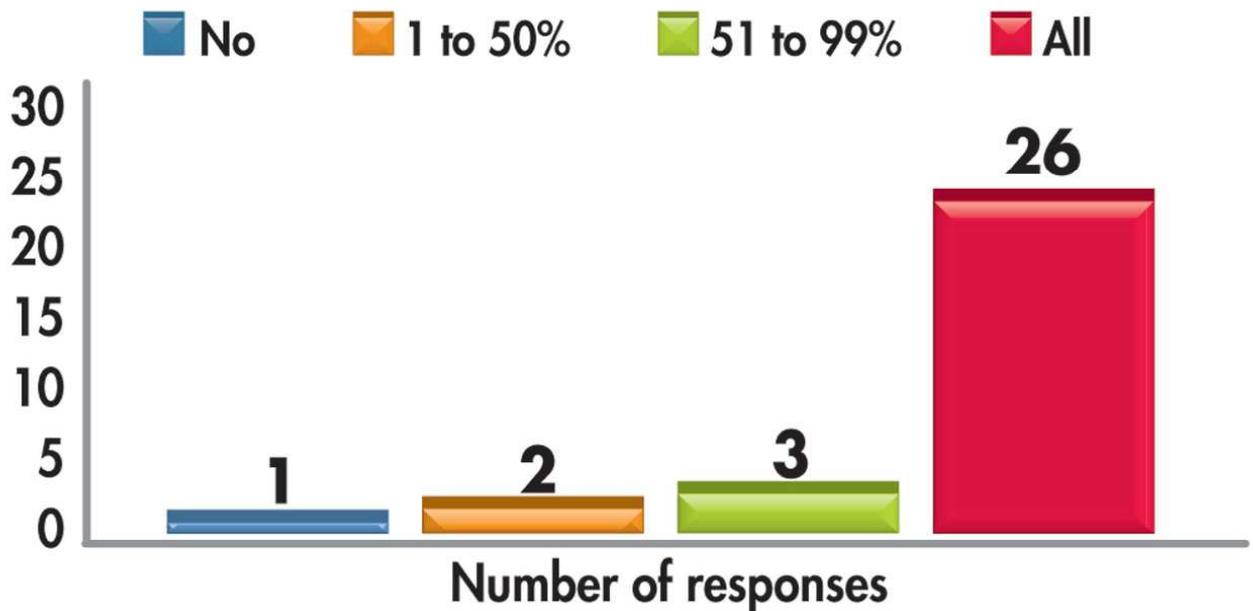
Farm-specific biosecurity plans

The avian influenza outbreaks of 2015 in the U.S. caused more damage to the egg industry than to the other poultry sectors. The loss of about 40 million layers and pullets highlighted the importance of effective biosecurity programs for pullet and layer farms.

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has issued guidance on farm biosecurity, and a site-specific biosecurity program is named as one imperative for poultry farms.

Do your pullet and layer farms have site specific biosecurity plans?

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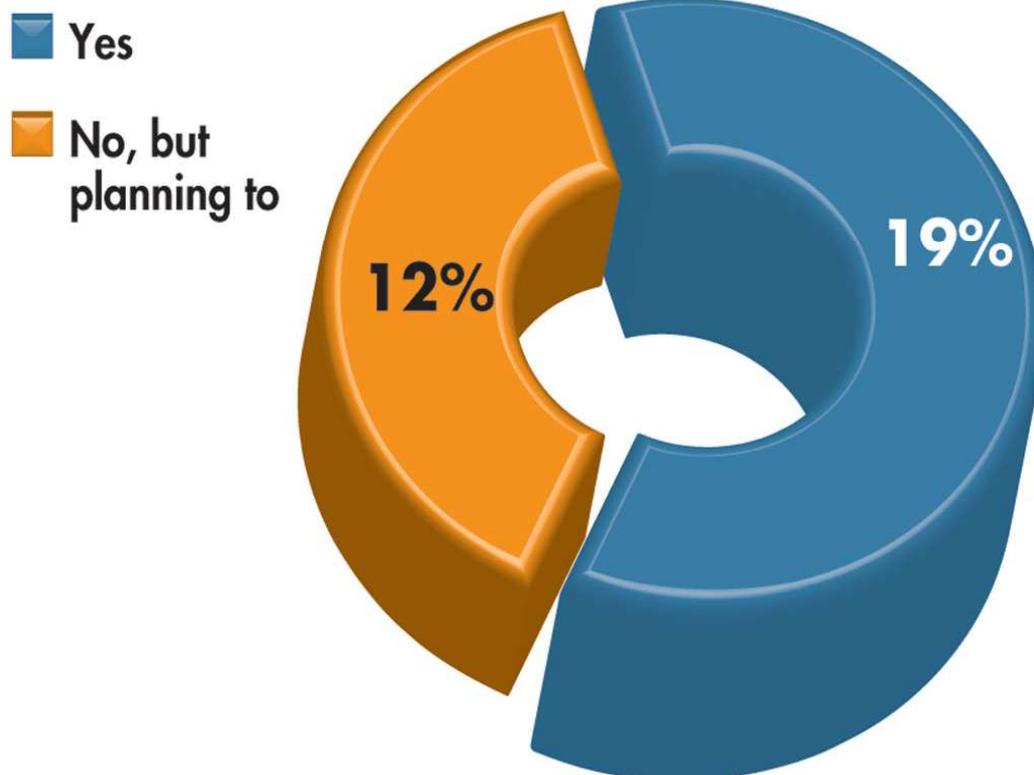
More than 80 percent of responding egg producers say they have site-specific biosecurity plans for each farm.

In this year's survey, egg producers were asked if their pullet and layer farms had site-specific biosecurity plans. Twenty-six of the 32 egg producers who responded to the question said that all of their farms had site-specific biosecurity plans (Figure 3). Five egg producers reported that some of their farms have site-specific programs, and only one said that they had no site-specific biosecurity plans.

Egg producers were asked if their on-farm biosecurity plans are audited to validate compliance with the plans. Nineteen of the 31 egg producers answering this question report that they are being audited. The other 12 respondents said that they are making plans to be audited.

Are your farms audited for compliance to your biosecurity plans?

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More than 60 percent of responding egg producers say they are audited to check compliance of their biosecurity programs.