

SUSTAINING SUFFERING

*The truth behind
the 'Sustainable'
Chicken Forum*



Photo: Andrew Skowron | Open Cages

THE HUMAN LEAGUE 
UNITED KINGDOM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
INTRODUCTION	4
UNRELIABLE EVIDENCE	6
LEGITIMACY IN QUESTION	13
THE CULPRITS	18
CONCLUSION	25



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report finds that the Sustainable Chicken Forum is an industry-led initiative that abandons the scientifically supported Better Chicken Commitment while exaggerating the environmental and economic costs of higher welfare chicken production.

- *The Sustainable Chicken Forum has **no measurable welfare targets, no reporting framework and no independent oversight**, raising serious questions about its credibility.*
- *Scientific research leads to one undeniable conclusion: conventional fast-growing breeds, known as Frankenchickens, have poorer welfare outcomes than slower-growing breeds.*
- *The sustainability claims of the Sustainable Chicken Forum are flawed, with the Better Chicken Commitment creating around half as many emissions as they claim.*
- *7 of the 8 businesses behind the SCF have unveiled expansion plans in the last year, growing an already giant poultry industry and further polluting the environment.*
- *The BCC would dramatically improve chicken welfare for an estimated 46p extra each week for the average Brit.*
- *The SCF's reliance on Frankenchickens will condemn an estimated 479 million animals to a life of misery every year.*



INTRODUCTION

FROM CLAIRE WILLIAMS

Campaigns Manager, The Humane League UK

On the 19th February 2026, eight companies, owning eighteen of the UK's best-known restaurant brands, **abandoned The Better Chicken Commitment** (BCC), a pledge to improve the wellbeing of the hundreds of millions of chickens raised for meat in their supply chains every year.

These brands include household names Burger King, KFC, Wagamama, Nando's and Popeyes.

The BCC, also known as the European Chicken Commitment (ECC), was designed by scientists and leading animal protection organisations to target the very worst sources of suffering experienced by chickens raised for meat. A central part of this policy is stopping the use of ultra-fast-growing breeds of chicken dubbed 'Frankenchickens', who have suffering encoded into their DNA.

The majority of the UK chicken industry has met **most** of the criteria of the BCC. Especially promising were the announcements, throughout 2024 and 2025, that supermarkets would give their birds more space, equivalent to BCC standards. This was a positive change, which many have now implemented, leading to the vast majority of birds in the country having a bit more room to breathe.

But there was one outstanding issue. These companies had made no progress toward changing the breed of chicken they used.

"THE USE OF FAST-GROWING CHICKENS DESERVES SUCH SCRUTINY BECAUSE OF HOW THEY ARE RAISED.

A chicken is naturally a curious and energetic animal, while many Frankenchickens can barely walk or stand. They spend their lives in constant pain, whether from their aching legs while standing or from the burns from their excrement while sitting. Over a billion chickens live this way. It is an unrivalled animal cruelty crisis.

The SCF is a charade. It is companies that make billions of pounds from keeping intensely suffering animals marking their own homework. It's a triumph of greed and callousness over compassion and progress, and its formation was one of the darkest days for animal welfare in a long time.

This report sets out to forensically investigate the Sustainable Chicken Forum and its claims."

“THE DECISION BY SEVERAL MAJOR FOOD COMPANIES TO STEP AWAY FROM THE BETTER CHICKEN COMMITMENT IS DISAPPOINTING.

The BCC sets out a clear, evidence-based pathway to addressing welfare concerns in broiler production, and it reflects growing public expectations for higher standards.

If anything, this moment has strengthened the group of animal welfare organisations and campaigners in the UK. When progress is rolled back, it reinforces why a united and determined coalition is essential and why we will continue pushing for meaningful, lasting change across the food industry.”

*Emily Harris,
Campaigns Manager,
RSPCA*

Despite being aware of the suffering within their supply chains – the very reason they signed up to the BCC in the first place – they developed no plan and simply allowed time to run out. When the deadline approached, they abandoned the BCC altogether.

Instead, they have set up the **Sustainable Chicken Forum (SCF)**, allegedly “to advance chicken welfare while balancing environmental sustainability, carbon reduction and supply pressures.”

Crucially, the forum has rejected switching to slower-growing breeds, citing a number of impacts this report will examine.

Not only does this put these companies at loggerheads with the British public, 73% of whom oppose factory farming practices¹, but also the Government, whose animal welfare strategy mentions the transition away from fast-growing chickens as a priority.

¹ Markus Ostarek, Cathy Rogers, Sam Naden. 2025. Knowledge and attitudes to factory farming practices in the UK and US: Can minds and behaviour be changed? Social Change Lab., unrivalled

UNRELIABLE EVIDENCE

The key impacts claimed by the SCF regarding slower-growing breeds focus on costs, emissions, and meat yields. These claims are sourced from the industry-commissioned report 'Costs and implications of the European Chicken Commitment in the EU', published in 2024², known as the ADAS Report. While the credibility of this report can be questioned purely for its inherent industry bias, having been commissioned by The Association of Poultry Processors and Poultry Trade in the EU Countries, it is the specific data, methodologies, and results of this report that demonstrate a dishonest and misleading narrative.

SCIENCE-BASED WELFARE OUTCOMES

SCF Claim: High welfare can be achieved with fast-growing breeds

Reality: A shift to slower-growing breeds is essential to meaningfully advance chicken welfare

The SCF claims a future objective of "Advancing chicken welfare across each business's supply chain, led by science-based welfare outcomes." The science has never been more robust and clearer in its findings. A multitude of both experimental and commercial research all lead to the same conclusions: **conventional fast-growing breeds have poorer welfare outcomes than slower-growing breeds.**

The slower-growing breed is the underpinning factor that allows other changes to create meaningful welfare improvements. A chicken with poor health and mobility can only receive limited benefits from additional space or enrichment. If these companies are serious about animal welfare as part of their sustainability goals, they will find a way to incorporate slower-growing breeds into their operations. There are already companies and suppliers producing BCC-compliant chicken while still balancing cost, sustainability, and expansion capacity.

² Gittins, Jason, Ryan Douglas, and Toby Townsend. 2024. "Costs and Implications of the European Chicken Commitment in the EU." RSK ADAS Ltd.



Photo: We Animals

EMISSIONS

SCF Claim: Implementing the BCC results in a 24.4% increase in GHG emissions per kg of meat produced

Reality: Implementing the BCC is estimated to result in a 11% increase in GHG emissions per kg of meat

One of the biggest claims is that the BCC would lead to ‘producing 24.4% more greenhouse gas emissions’ (GHG). The biggest flaw with this calculation is that it only covers the broiler farm stage of production. The emissions calculations exclude multiple stages: the parent flocks, those at the hatchery, and beyond the farm gate (e.g. transport to slaughter, the slaughter process). Therefore, **the stated increase in greenhouse gas emissions is both incomplete and biased in its portrayal of BCC production.**

More recently, Wageningen University published the first unbiased comprehensive study on greenhouse gas emissions of the full broiler lifecycle, ‘Impact of the European Chicken Commitment (ECC) broiler production system on economics, the environment and food safety’³. This study included all stages omitted by the ADAS Report and therefore provides a much more accurate estimate of GHG emissions, underscoring the importance of including all stages of production. The report shows that **ECC birds at the parent flock stage have lower mortality, produce more eggs overall, and those eggs have a higher hatchability rate.** It also shows that these same parent flocks have overall lower emissions, including feed emissions, in the first 20 weeks, the same emissions after 20 weeks, and lower emissions per hatched egg at the hatchery. Another study, by Mostert et al (2022)⁴, not only demonstrated that higher welfare systems have lower GHG emissions during the rearing breeder stage of production, but they also found that the diets in the highest welfare system used the lowest amount of soy products, which are responsible for significant land use change emissions.



When all production stages are included, the Wageningen University report estimates that **BCC production emissions are only 7.2% higher per kg of carcass weight and 11.0% higher per kg of total meat, significantly lower than industry claims.** To put this difference into perspective, this report directly compares BCC production to standard conventional production. The industry-wide shift to lower stocking densities in the UK means that the actual increase in GHG emissions from converting full BCC production would be much smaller than this. When the broader context of meat and animal products is considered, meat from chickens raised to BCC standards remains more sustainable than meat from other animals.

“IT IS EXTREMELY DISAPPOINTING THAT LEADING COMPANIES HAVE WITHDRAWN THEIR PLEDGES OF SUPPORT TO THE BETTER CHICKEN COMMITMENT. Despite decades of selection to improve the welfare of fast-growing strains, the scientific evidence unquestionably demonstrates that slower growing strains of chickens experience better welfare than their fast-growing counterparts, even when the latter are given more space and enrichment. We also know that consumers are confused about labelling and how the chicken they consume is produced, and so it is not accurate to assume that consumers vote against welfare with their purchases. The body of evidence shows that most citizens choose to prioritise animal welfare over environmental impacts, therefore environmental concerns including those other than carbon footprint, should be addressed without compromising welfare, not the other way around.”

Dr Siobhan Abeyesinghe, Associate Professor in Animal Behaviour and Welfare Science, Royal Veterinary College

³ Horne, Peter van, Jan van Harn, Pim Mostert, Bondt Nico, and Luuk Vissers. 2025. “Impact of the European Chicken Commitment (ECC) Broiler Production System on Economics, the Environment and Food Safety.” Wageningen Social & Economic Research

⁴ Mostert, P. F., A. P. Bos, J. van Harn, and I. C. de Jong. 2022. “The Impact of Changing toward Higher Welfare Broiler Production Systems on Greenhouse Gas Emissions: A Dutch Case Study Using Life Cycle Assessment.” *Poultry Science* 101 (12): 102151



WATER USAGE

SCF Claim: BCC production would require '34.5% more water'

Reality: This is a misleading claim based on incomplete data

From the same report, the SCF claims that BCC production would require '34.5% more water than the existing industry-standard for the production of broiler chickens'. However, this report also omits the difference in water usage between electric waterbath stunning systems and controlled atmospheric stunning (CAS) systems.

Electric waterbath stunning involves inverting and live-shackling birds onto a conveyor, which then dips the chickens' heads into electrified water, stunning them before slaughter. It involves a lot of handling and potential for mis-stuns, so, on average, it is worse for welfare. CAS systems involve stunning and killing birds by placing them in a gas chamber, which has higher welfare outcomes due to the reduction in handling and pre-slaughter injuries.

The European Commission Directorate General for Health and Consumers (2012)⁵ calculates that **electric waterbath systems use almost three times as much water per day compared with CAS systems**. Calculated for a slaughterhouse with the capacity of 12,000 birds per hour, they calculate that an electric waterbath system uses 9.0 m³ of water per day, compared to only 3.5 m³ for a CAS system. This is an extremely important consideration, given that the BCC mandates the use of CAS slaughter.

Many members of the SCF source chicken from multiple regions, some of which will still be using more intensive electric waterbath systems.

⁵ European Commission Directorate General for Health and Consumers. 2012. "Study on Various Methods of Stunning for Poultry." European Commission Directorate General for Health and Consumers.

SCF Claim: Implementing the BCC would increase production costs by 37.5% per kg

Reality: Implementing the BCC would increase production cost by 19% per kg

The ADAS report gives a very exaggerated estimate of the overall cost of chicken production increasing by 37.5% per kg. As above, due to a number of assumptions and omissions, this figure is artificially inflated. One of these assumptions is the broad approach to new housing and to fitting windows to existing housing. Many suppliers who have recently transitioned to either some or all of the BCC who require additional housing have utilised existing infrastructure, renovating existing unused buildings. These are often unused pig or layer hen houses. The study assumes all existing houses would need to be fitted with windows at a cost of 11 Euro per m² of growing space, paid over 10 years at 5% interest, adding to the 'Capital repayment and interest' costs. It does not take into account that many regions already have compliant windows and would not have this additional cost.

The study assumes a 0.5% difference in mortality between the 2 breeds, based on 'industry views'. This is lower than most other estimates. The mortality and morbidity rates associated with current, faster-growing birds and intensive production systems mean around **half a million chickens die each week before ever reaching the processing plant**, or are rejected once they get there. Wageningen uses mortality figures across the 6 major EU markets of 4% (standard) and 2.66% (ECC), a difference of 1.33%. A 2021 commercial study of 6 broiler farms for 17 production cycles, comparing the same two breeds, Ross 308 and Hubbard Redbro, found a difference of 1.58% in mortality figures⁶. Other studies show even higher differences. For example, an on-farm study in 2020 found a 3.65% lower mortality in a slower-growing breed compared to a conventional breed when both were stocked at 34 kg/m²⁷.

A failure to consider rejections at slaughter – estimated to be between 15 and 55% higher in fast-growing breeds⁸ – further inflates these cost predictions. For example, the same 2021 commercial trial above found that downgrades and 'dead on arrivals' were 29.5% and 10% lower for the Redbro, respectively.

When the necessary additional factors are considered, and assumptions are based on data, the real cost estimate is a ~19% increase per kg. However, for countries such as the UK, where a vast majority is already switching to lower stocking densities, this cost increase would be much lower.

Taking the average cost per kg of chicken meat in the UK to be ~£3.50, and assuming the average person consumes 36kg of chicken each year, or 0.69 kg of chicken each week (costing ~£2.42 per week), the weekly cost increase would be **46 pence per week** for the average Brit, or an extra £23.98 a year.

⁶ Baxter, Mary, Anne Richmond, Ursula Lavery, and Niamh E. O'Connell. 2021. "A Comparison of Fast Growing Broiler Chickens with a Slower-Growing Breed Type Reared on Higher Welfare Commercial Farms." *PloS One* 16 (11): e0259333

⁷ Rayner, Ann C., Ruth C. Newberry, Judit Vas, and Siobhan Mullan. 2020. "Slow-Growing Broilers Are Healthier and Express More Behavioural Indicators of Positive Welfare." *Scientific Reports* 10 (1): 15151

⁸ Open Wing Alliance. 2023. "Sustainability and the Better Chicken Commitment." Open Wing Alliance



ANTIBIOTICS

SCF Claim: Ignores the UK broiler industry's excessive antibiotic usage, and the fact that fast-growing breeds require more antibiotics to stay healthy, promoting the growth of antibiotic-resistant bacteria – a major threat to human health

Reality: Switching to slower-growing breeds is the only solution to reducing antibiotic usage within the sector

The SCF claims to be taking a more holistic approach to chicken production, but fails to acknowledge the human health impact of current production. Excessive antibiotic usage in broiler chickens has been repeatedly linked to the fast-growing chickens that these companies want to continue using. Studies have consistently shown that conventional farming systems that include these breeds use significantly more antibiotics overall than systems with slower-growing breeds.

The latest figure cited by the British Poultry Council in 2024 for overall antibiotic usage in broilers is 11.33 mg/pcu (the industry metric for measuring antibiotics per kg of animal). This figure is almost twice as high as the 5.8mg/pcu recorded in the Netherlands in 2022 – a country which has taken animal welfare seriously and reformed its poultry industry to phase out fast-growing breeds. Dutch figures show that their industry antibiotic usage dropped by 40% between 2017 and 2022 – mainly driven by many broiler farmers switching to slower-growing breeds and by reductions in the amounts of antibiotics used in those slower-growing breeds - SDa (2023)⁹.

Antibiotic usage in broilers is strongly linked to antibiotic resistance. In 2018/19, UK government data¹⁰ showed a shocking 51% of *Campylobacter* isolated from retail chickens were resistant to fluoroquinolones. This is a group of last-resort antibiotics used to treat multiple infections in humans, including *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* infections, the two most common infections people receive from eating chicken.

Switching to slower-growing breeds is the only solution to reducing antibiotic usage within the sector, and is a core pillar of sustainability.

⁹ SDa, 2023. "Usage of Antibiotics in Agricultural Livestock in the Netherlands in 2022." SDa

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-one-health-report-joint-report-on-antibiotic-use-antibiotic-sales-and-antibiotic-resistance/executive-summary-third-uk-one-health-report>



Photo: Jo-Anne McArthur | We Animals

• AVIAN INFLUENZA

SCF Claim: The impact of avian influenza is highlighted, with no causal link to slower-growing breeds

Reality: Implementing the BCC does not increase the risk of avian influenza

The SCF also references avian influenza – “Avian flu outbreaks across the world, particularly in the UK and Europe, have led to millions of birds being culled.” Although this is true, it is of no relevance to their unwillingness to switch to slower-growing breeds. While avian influenza is an extremely serious concern that needs to be addressed, the risks are not negatively impacted by a phase-out of fast-growing breeds. **To meaningfully address avian influenza outbreaks, a far-reaching reform of intensive chicken production is needed.**



Photo: Andrew Skowron | Open Cages

LEGITIMACY IN QUESTION

COMMENT FROM JODI DARWOOD

Campaigner, The Humane League UK

The Sustainable Chicken Forum is a masterclass in corporate gaslighting.

The forum’s inaugural act, under the guise of “advancing” chicken welfare, was to abandon the Better Chicken Commitment – a scientifically validated framework for improved chicken welfare.

The forum seems to be defined by what it doesn’t say: the SCF launch communication provides no specific welfare targets, no roadmap for implementation, no transparent reporting framework and no information on who its alleged “independent experts” will be.

This move appears to be nothing more than a sustainability smoke-screen designed to mask a coordinated retreat from accountability, treating the suffering of sentient beings as a negotiable business expense.

CHERRY-PICKED SCIENCE AND “INDEPENDENT” EXPERTISE

To justify its regression, the SCF relies on cherry-picked statistics, specifically the industry-commissioned ADAS Report, which has been widely debunked for overestimating greenhouse gas emissions, water usage, and production cost increases. The SCF, bolstered by the ADAS report, also conveniently omits the many benefits associated with a move to slower-growing breeds, such as improved welfare, lower mortality rates, and reduced antibiotic use.

While the SCF claims it will comprise “independent experts”, the voices quoted in its launch press release are deeply embedded in the industry they are meant to be scrutinising. This is not independent oversight, but an attempt to provide academic cover for the SCF’s member companies’ welfare rowback, raising serious questions about its legitimacy as a forum presented to the public as championing sustainability and welfare progress.

SIX YEARS OF INACTION

The member companies of the SCF adopted the BCC around six years ago. At the time, the brands were keen to reap the PR rewards. KFC boasted of “becoming the first in its sector to sign up”; Wagamama declared that they were “striving to lead the change” and Popeyes promised delivery by “2026 at the latest.”

Nando’s Chief Executive also openly acknowledged the balance between welfare and sustainability at the time, stating: “We are particularly proud that, with these targets,



Photo: Open Cages



Photo: Open Cages

we will become the first in our industry to combine improvements in environmental sustainability with animal welfare. "The restaurant giant even recognised that "higher welfare poultry has a higher carbon footprint" and said it "would also work to reduce emissions" alongside welfare improvements.

Six years later, after making negligible progress in phasing out fast-growing breeds, they are now suggesting that the situation has changed, placing sustainability at the centre of their defence of their welfare row-back. The SCF companies have had more than half a decade to prepare their supply chain for this transition. Instead, they have dragged their heels and are now looking to stick a 'sustainable' label on their intensively farmed chicken products while maximising their profit margins on the backs of millions of suffering animals.

EXPANSION HYPOCRISY

These companies' concerns about environmental sustainability seem even less genuine when we consider that these brands are pursuing massive expansion:

Last year, Yum! Brands declared it is investing £1.5 billion as part of a KFC expansion plan that will see the restaurant chain open 500 new restaurants. Nando's said it would open 14 new stores following an 8% climb in sales to £1.48bn. Burger King UK has announced plans to open 30 new restaurants annually from 2026, and The Restaurant Group announced an expansion of its Wagamama brand, aiming for 6 new restaurants and 8-12 new franchise sites. At the beginning of 2025, UK newcomers Popeyes and Wingstop also shared news of planned expansions, with

Popeyes aiming to open one shop each week in 2025, and Wingstop targeting 20 new sites after a “landmark” 2024. Loungers also set out plans to expand its UK footprint, aiming to double its 291 locations following 15% sales growth.

The SCF companies are very willing to inevitably increase their environmental footprint when it inflates their profit margins, but not when it comes to fulfilling their promises to end the single greatest cause of animal suffering in the UK today: the use of cruelly-bred, fast-growing breeds.

FOOD SECURITY FALLACY

The SCF’s attempts to position itself as a defender of UK food security are also disingenuous.

As hospitality companies in the business of out-of-home food, these brands are not the cornerstone of national nutrition; they are selling intensively farmed, low-welfare, low-quality animal products to their customers, often in the form of fried or processed food.

The fact is, as a nation, we do not need to be eating more chicken, and the expansion of these inherently unsustainable businesses is not the solution to a healthier, food-secure nation. Food security is not threatened by animal welfare improvements, but by the industry’s determination to perpetuate the status quo of intensive livestock production while pursuing aggressive growth. By driving and expanding the demand for the most intensively farmed chickens, the SCF is only adding to the pressure on the health of our population and our planet, and jeopardising our ability to deliver long-term food security.



“ACROSS THE 70+ ORGANISATIONS IN THE EATING BETTER ALLIANCE THERE IS CLEAR CONSENSUS THAT BROILER PRODUCTION MUST MOVE AWAY FROM THE MOST INTENSIVE, HARMFUL SYSTEMS. Our Sourcing Better framework recognises the Better Chicken Commitment as a key benchmark for improving broiler welfare. Crucially, it shows that under a ‘less and better’ approach to meat and dairy sourcing, higher welfare production can be achieved alongside environmental sustainability. Businesses serious about future-proofing their supply chains recognise this direction of travel. I commend the companies that continue to uphold the Better Chicken Commitment and show leadership in supporting the transition to more resilient, higher welfare chicken supply chains.”

*Myrtle Gregory,
Research and Policy Officer,
The Eating Better Alliance*



As said by Inside Track, a group of senior professionals working within some of the UK's biggest food retailers, producers and manufacturers: "Continued focus on growth in meat and dairy sales will also lead to both poorer animal welfare and greater public health threats that come from increasingly intensive industrial livestock production".

The stark reality is that the SCF lacks the essential components of a legitimate forum genuinely striving to improve sustainability and welfare: it has abandoned a science-based welfare framework without presenting any meaningful alternative, it has no measurable targets, no roadmap for change, no transparent reporting, and no impartial voices.

To claim that the Sustainable Chicken Forum will drive progress without these elements is a disgusting display of greenwashing. As a nation of animal lovers, the UK public expects better from brands they trust.

THE CULPRITS

The 8 companies behind the SCF represent:

- 3,641 locations.
- Just under £5.5 billion in revenue.
- And an **estimated yearly chicken usage of 479 million birds.**

NANDO'S

Name: Nando's UK & IRE

Date of Commitment: 27/07/2020

Number of locations: 485

Annual turnover: £1.47 billion

Estimated yearly chicken usage: 67 million chickens

At the time of committing in mid 2020, Nando's commented that *"We are particularly proud that, with these targets, we will become the first in our industry to combine improvements in environmental sustainability with animal welfare."*

However, Nando's only shared progress on switching to slower-growing breeds in April 2025, reporting 0% compliance. Progress on the rest of the BCC criteria has been made in Nando's UK supply; however, improvements to lower stocking densities came after many supermarkets had fulfilled their own pledges to lower stocking densities for their UK-produced chicken. News that Nando's turnover increased 8% last year was coupled with the announcement to open a further 14 restaurants in the coming 3 months, but we have never seen a pledge to invest in slower-growing breeds.

There has been no visible advancement in the purchasing of slower-growing breeds – the most impactful part of the BCC – by Nando's in the six years it has had this commitment to improve chicken welfare.

Brands: KFC, Pizza Hut, Taco Bell

Estimated yearly chicken usage: 315 million

KFC

Name: KFC UK & Ireland

Date of Commitment: 12/07/2019

Number of locations: 1,000+ with plans to open 500 more stores in the next 5 years

Annual turnover: near £2 billion

KFC committed to the BCC in mid-2019, proudly becoming the first in their sector to do so. At the time, stating, *"KFC UK & Ireland has announced the bold move of becoming the first in its sector to sign up to the Better Chicken Commitment... Our business depends on the health, sustainability and reputation of chicken farming and, our customers care about improving the lives of the chicken we buy."*

In their annual reports, they have diligently recorded their compliance with the BCC criteria, but the lack of progress that has been made in seven and a half years is notable. Over the years, there has been a very small amount of slower-growing breeds accounted for in KFC's reporting, but this tracked at 0.7% in their most recent report. This indicates that there is no active drive to procure any regular supply of slower-growing breeds in their operations. Last year, KFC announced it would be investing £1.5 billion into its UK & Ireland operations, with a promise of 500 new restaurants. While this announcement talked about investing in their supply chain, KFC has never announced any investment in the switch to slower-growing breeds. It should be noted that KFC also committed to the BCC in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. Despite their lack of progress, KFC continued to reiterate that they remained committed to the BCC framework and slower-growing breeds until joining the Sustainable Chicken Forum.

PIZZA HUT

Name: Pizza Hut UK

Date of Commitment: 31/01/2020

Number of locations: 62 restaurants, 343 delivery outlets

Annual turnover: £28.5 million

Another well-loved brand in the UK, Pizza Hut was a relatively early adopter of the BCC. Whilst some closures were announced last year, they still maintain a significant delivery service. There have not been any updates on the progress of their BCC since their initial statement was published on their website or via Yum! Brands. They have never engaged in dialogue with THL UK.

TACO BELL

Name: Taco Bell UK

Date of Commitment: 21/05/2021

Number of locations: 155

Annual turnover: £21.1 million

Reaching 100 locations in 2022, Taco Bell UK has increased its footprint by 50% over the past few years. There have not been any updates on the progress of their BCC since their initial statement was published on their website or via Yum! Brands. Since signing up, Taco Bell UK has not engaged in dialogue with THL UK.

BURGER KING

Name: Burger King UK

Date of Commitment: 15/10/2021

Number of locations: 574

Annual turnover: £408.3 million

Estimated yearly chicken usage: 30 million

As a long-standing American brand in the UK, Burger King has published reporting on their BCC progress in recent years, but has shown little progress on the majority of criteria. Burger King is a Restaurant Brands International brand, but a UK-based investment company acquired the master franchise for Burger King UK in 2017 and has reportedly injected millions of pounds into the business in recent months, with plans to open further restaurants this year.

POPEYES

Name: Popeyes

Date of Commitment: 24/09/2021

Number of locations: 111

Annual turnover: £118.8 million (targeting sales of over £200 million in 2025)

Estimated yearly chicken usage: 21 million

Another Restaurant Brands International brand, Popeyes, committed to the BCC in late 2021 when it launched into the UK market. In just over 4 years, their UK footprint is now at 111 locations and growing, but this chicken-focused brand has not published any updates on how they are progressing on their commitment to improve chicken welfare, beyond the initial launch statement, despite THL UK's efforts to engage in dialogue.

WINGSTOP

Name: Wingstop

Date of Commitment: 12/10/2021

Number of locations: 70 restaurants, 18 delivery outlets

Annual turnover: £125 million

Estimated yearly chicken usage: 16 million

Wingstop has been named as the fastest-growing restaurant group for three years in a row, targeting the Gen Z audience. In late 2024, the UK franchise was sold to a US investment company, but the chicken-focused brand has never published any reporting to update how it was progressing its supply chain against the BCC standards publicly, despite THL UK's requests to do so.

THE RESTAURANT GROUP

Name: Wagamama, Bar Burrito, Brunning & Price and The Restaurant Group Concessions

Date of Commitment: 10/10/2019

Number of locations: 303

Annual turnover: £868.1 million

Estimated yearly chicken usage: 12 million

Wagamama is committed to '*kaizen – the Japanese philosophy of continuous improvement*', but neither they nor any of The Restaurant Group brands have published reporting on their progress towards fulfilling the BCC in the six years since this commitment was made, even though THL UK has regularly attempted to engage with them. With 50% of its menu now being plant-based, Wagamama has demonstrated that change and progress are possible, but this has yet to be reflected in improvements in chicken welfare.

THE BIG TABLE GROUP

Name: Banana Tree, Bella Italia, Las Iguanas and Frankie & Benny's

Date of Commitment: 12/08/2019

Number of locations: 208

Annual turnover: £32.5 million

Estimated yearly chicken usage: 16 million

Originally adopting the BCC under the rebranded '*Casual Dining Group*', The Big Table Group has been reporting annually on progress, but with fluctuating levels of compliance, which likely reflects a supply chain that is highly variable. Whilst a few years ago, progress in switching to slower-growing breeds was reported, compliance has recently fallen back to 0%. This group operates a set of brands that are well known and embedded in UK high streets and leisure parks.

LOUNGERS

Name: Lounge Café Bars, Brightside Roadside Dining and Cosy Club

Date of Commitment: 15/10/2021

Number of locations: 312

Annual turnover: £406.3 million

Estimated yearly chicken usage: 2 million

With an ethos to embed itself in the local communities they are located in, Loungers published reporting on the progress of their BCC that demonstrated transparency and an ambition to engage their supply chain with the challenge to improve welfare standards for the chickens in their supply chain. Loungers was bought out by a US investment group at the start of 2025, and the rapid expansion of its brands continues under this new ownership.



CASE STUDY

WAITROSE

“WE’RE PROUD TO RAISE THE BAR ON WELFARE STANDARDS, DELIVERING THE BETTER CHICKEN COMMITMENT FOR ALL WAITROSE CHICKEN. We’re the only UK supermarket to sell slower-reared, higher welfare chicken across our entire own-label range; fresh, frozen, sandwiches, stocks and ready meals.

“Our customers are definitely noticing an improvement, not least because we’ve introduced a welfare rating label to help boost transparency. We have been outperforming the market in terms of sales since we introduced BCC, proving that backing British and welfare really matter to our customers.

“We are really proud to deliver the BCC in partnership with our farmers. They are reporting a more positive experience managing their flocks who have more space to peck, roost and roam. Our commitment to animal welfare and BCC is unwavering and we continue to stand by and support our amazing British farmers who are the backbone of our UK food system.”

Charlotte Di Cello, Chief Commercial Officer, Waitrose

“YOU NEED LONG-ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIPS TO MAKE BIG MOVES SUCH AS THIS. When you’re walking amongst the birds, they are really curious and active. They seem happier and exhibiting natural behaviours.”

Jonathan Allen, farmer

CONCLUSION

FROM CLAIRE WILLIAMS

Campaigns Manager, The Humane League UK

These eight businesses were committed to a meaningful pledge in the Better Chicken Commitment. They claimed to believe in the pledge and the science which supports it. **This policy would have improved the lives of hundreds of millions of chickens every single year.**

For companies like Waitrose and M&S, who implemented this policy, it has been a great success, an example of business and civil society cooperating for a more ethical world.

But forming the Sustainable Chicken Forum has ruptured the bonds between animal charities and these companies. **Instead of partnership, they have chosen profit.** They have declared to the world that nothing matters more than short-term profits and have circled their wagons.

Animal charities were open to extending deadlines and discussing sustainability concerns. But we would have asked hard questions and represented the interests of chickens. It seems this level of scrutiny has proved too uncomfortable for these companies, who'd rather mark their own homework.

The SCF may be enough to soothe the conscience of restaurant executives. But anyone informed of the relevant science can see that **changing the breed of chickens is foundational to securing good welfare.**





Photo: Andrew Skowron | Open Cages

More space is of little use to a bird with bone and cartilage deformities; lacing feed with painkillers will not stop a Frankenchicken's organs from failing.

The overbreeding of chickens is one of the cruellest practices in animal farming. That is a fact. As long as the SCF remains a pro-Frankenchicken pressure group, it won't just be guilty of breaking a few promises. It will be guilty of sustaining more suffering than the human mind can imagine.



"I'M VERY ANGRY BECAUSE I DON'T LIKE REGRESSION."

I don't like it when we make progress, and then we go back again, particularly in a world where it's tougher to make progress in the first place.

We are not going away.

We will continue to fight for the rights of animals in the 21st century, and we will continue to demand progress, not going backwards.

*Chris Packham,
Broadcaster and naturalist*