Chicken welfare: KFC leads while Subway & Starbucks lag behind

Monday 19 July, 2021

Embargoed 19 July 2021 00:01 KFC is leading UK fast food chains in the welfare of chickens raised for their meat while Subway, Starbucks, Domino's and McDonald's fall far behind according to a new report from World Animal Protection.

'The pecking order 2021' ranks fast food restaurants globally on how they are performing on their commitment, ambition, and transparency on chicken welfare in their supply chains. This year's report shows that while the hospitality market has changed profoundly since the last report due to the global pandemic – alarming trends are still rife.

Most of the chicken meat served by the major fast food brands comes from chickens who live in cramped and barren environments with no sunlight, and many suffering from lameness and skin lesions. Intensive farming methods also often rely on routine antibiotic use as a quick fix solution to keep stressed and sick animals alive. This over-use of antibiotics is fueling the deadly superbug crisis that kills over 700,000 people a year and rising. Not only are these chickens suffering – human health is also being jeopardized.

For the first time, in addition to the global assessment, 14 local rankings have been also created to reflect the realities in different geographies. The brands assessed are Burger King, Domino's, KFC, McDonald's, Nando's, Pizza Hut, Starbucks and Subway.

The UK companies in 'The pecking order 2021' received the highest scores meaning it places first out of the 14 countries included in the global assessment, with an average company score of 45%.

'The pecking order' assesses companies via publicly available information on three areas:

- Commitment (corporate commitments), their policies clearly state how important the welfare of chickens is to the company;
- Ambition (objectives and targets), a defined timeline that demonstrates the objectives, targets and promises a company has made to improve chicken welfare and when they will meet them; and
- Transparency (performance reporting), through their performance reporting, and how clear the company is about living up to its promises on chicken welfare.

The key findings for '*The pecking order 2021'* in the UK are:

- KFC, out of all eight global brands assessed, is the clear leader of 'The pecking order 2021'. It is the only company in Tier 1 (Leading) in the UK. This is through alignment with the Better Chicken Commitment (BCC) and KFC reporting on its performance against the company's chicken welfare standards in Western Europe.
- Nando's, Burger King and Pizza Hut also scored high points in 2021 due to signing up to the Better Chicken Commitment (BCC) in the UK, and to other markets in some cases.
- Starbucks and Subway both scored zero points and are right at the bottom of the ranking sitting in Tier 6 with a score of 'Very poor'.
- Domino's sits in Tier 5 (Poor) and McDonalds in Tier 4 (Getting Started) these are the last remaining fast food companies in the ranking that have not committed to the BCC.
- Despite moving up one tier, from 'Poor' to 'Getting started', McDonald's, unlike many of its competitors, is still unwilling to sign up to the BCC in any market globally. The company has some standards that align with the commitment.
- Burger King, Nando's and Pizza Hut – have aligned with the BCC in the UK since the previous assessment. They are starting to demonstrate a serious intention to improve chicken welfare in this market. As a result, Burger King and Pizza Hut – have moved up two tiers, and Nando's has moved up one tier. This is encouraging as it will improve the lives of millions of chickens. World

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Animal Protection urges other companies featured in the UK – Starbucks, Subway, McDonald's and Domino's – to follow suit soon.

Jonty Whittleton, Global Campaign Head at World Animal Protection says: *"Many big brand restaurants are denying billions of birds the chance to see sunlight, grow at a healthy rate or behave naturally. COVID-19 has taught us that the welfare of animals and human health is interlinked – there should be no business as usual. Commercial motives are driving cruelty and suffering, and this needs to end.*

"KFC once again has shown leadership in the UK and Europe since they signed up to the Better Chicken Commitment in 2019, which will improve the lives of millions of chickens. But it is disappointing that companies such as Starbucks, Subway, McDonald's and Dominos are refusing to change for the better.

"As more people take an active interest in the ethics of their food, more companies are willing to act. Now is the time for real change to happen, and companies that fail to move with the demands of the market are not only causing misery to millions of animals but are also risking their reputation."

World Animal Protection is calling on these global companies to lead and ensure that any chickens that are being served at their restaurants are guaranteed a life worth living.

To find out more, visit: www.worldanimalprotection.org.uk

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Notes to editors

- Images and video available here
- View the full UK report here

World Animal Protection has launched 'The pecking order' as part of its campaign challenging the fast-food industry to stop the cruelty and suffering in meat chicken production worldwide by committing to source from higher-welfare farms rather than factory farms.

World Animal Protection's campaign urges the food industry to commit to global policy changes that will improve the welfare of billions of chickens. In particular, companies are expected to:

- Use chicken breeds that grow at a healthier rate.
- Ensure that chickens have the space to behave more naturally. Cages must never be used.
- Give chickens the opportunity to enjoy natural behaviours via enrichment – including perches or platforms and pecking objects – natural lighting and high-quality bedding.
- Ensure that chickens are slaughtered using more humane methods that avoid live shackling and render all animals unconscious before slaughter.

Currently, it's estimated that nearly 50 billion chickens around the world each year are subjected to significant cruelty in factory farms. They are given around 40 days to live until they are slaughtered, when they are still effectively babies. In that time, they live in crowded, barren, dark warehouses. Grown with little, if any, consideration for them as living, breathing, inquisitive animals, they are genetically selected to develop unnaturally fast, which places huge pressure on their heart, lungs and legs. As a result, they often live their entire lives in chronic pain, suffering from lameness, skin lesions and even heart failure.

About World Animal Protection

World Animal Protection has moved the world to protect animals for more than 50 years.

World Animal Protection works to give animals a better life. Its activities include working with companies to ensure high-standards of welfare for the animals in their care, working with governments and other stakeholders to prevent wild animals being cruelly traded, trapped or killed, and saving the lives of animals and the livelihoods of the people who depend on them in disaster situations.

World Animal Protection influences decision makers to put animals on the global agenda, and it inspires people to protect animals and to change animals' lives for the better. More information on can be found at: www.worldanimalprotection.org.uk

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