



# CORE organic Cofund



Photo: Monique Bestman

## Encouraging organic chickens and hens to be more outdoors

FreeBirds



Photo: Monique Bestman



Aim of the project:

To develop successful husbandry practices in organic poultry production in order to make the chickens spend more time outdoors, in accordance with the intentions of organic farming.





Photo: Frank Tuytens

## Main activities:

- ▶ Different ranging patterns of the birds will be compared using an innovative automatic tracking system.
- ▶ The relation between range use and parasite infections in organic broilers and layers will be investigated.
- ▶ Environmental consequences of manure nutrients in the soil of the range area will be studied.
- ▶ Suitability of different strains for meat or egg production will be evaluated regarding behaviour, health, performance and welfare.

## Introduction

The goal for FreeBirds is to develop more successful husbandry practices in organic poultry production in order to make the chickens spend more time outdoors, in accordance with the intentions of the organic concept.

The outdoor stay improves the birds' welfare and consolidates consumer acceptance and marketing of the organic products.

The welfare of organic broiler and egg production can be improved all over Europe.

## Background

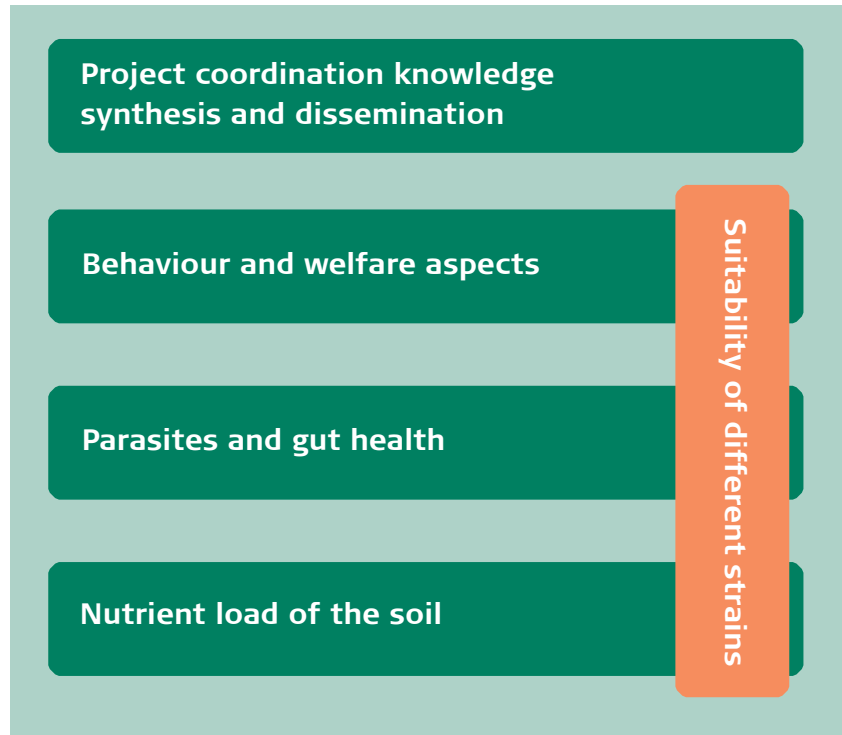
Studies show that birds with less access to outdoor areas have more welfare problems such as injurious pecking and parasites. Therefore, birds that spend more time outdoors have a better welfare.



Photo: Stfan Gunnarsson



Photo: Jenny Yngvesson



The schematic design of integration and interactions in the projects.

However, free range access may have negative impacts: it can increase the risk for diseases carried by wildlife, predation and contact with soil contaminants. Manure produced in the free range can also have a negative effect on the environment.

## Societal and long term benefits

Many organic food consumers value not only the product quality of the eggs and the chicken meat. They also acknowledge the perceived welfare status of the chickens and hens as an important aspect of the food. Thus, they rely on the perceived welfare friendliness of the production.

Therefore, producers of organic chickens and egg need to live up to the expectations of consumers and ensure high levels of welfare for the birds.

Organic systems are viewed as having the potential to ensure good animal welfare, but these objectives are not always achieved. The FreeBirds project specifically addresses these issues of bird health and welfare and environmental impact for more knowledge for improving the welfare of organic laying hens and broiler chickens.



## How to reach target groups

We aim for reaching farmers producing organic broilers and eggs, as well as, the advisors in the sector. Farmers and advisors will get knowledge about the results from our project by popular reports and articles in agricultural press.



Photo: Thijs Decroos

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## Further information

This transnational project is funded via the ERA-net CORE Organic Cofund based on funds from participating countries and funding from the European Union.

CORE Organic Cofund is a collaboration between 26 partners in 19 countries/regions on initiating transnational research projects in the area of organic food and farming. CORE Organic Cofund has initiated 12 research projects. Read more at the CORE Organic Cofund website: <http://projects.au.dk/coreorganiccofund/>