First trayless, UCSB dining halls go cage free

Eliminating trays in dining halls allows school to afford more expensive cage-free eggs

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So-called trayless dining at UCSB has proven so successful, it's costing the school 60 percent more in eggs.

"That's no contradiction," said Bonnie Crouse, UCSB's assistant director of dining. "Because the 4,700 plus students who participate in our residential dining hall program waste less food, we've been able to afford more costly cage-free eggs."

The humane driven cage-free policy was initiated by the school on Monday. It means that UCSB and UC Berkeley no longer use eggs from hens confined for a lifetime in battery cages with hardly enough space to breathe.

Prior to the passage of the Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act in 2008, U.S. factory farms confined almost 300 million hens annually to the cages. Now, according to the U.S. Humane Society, more hens have room to walk, spread their wings and lay their eggs in nests.

By switching their residential dining services to exclusive cage-free eggs, UCSB has taken an important stand against one of the most inhumane factory farming abuses," said Karin Olsson, outreach manager for the U.S. Humane Society's factory farming campaign.

Battery opponents say that hens caged for life without exercise while constantly drained of calcium to form eggshells, develop the severe osteoporosis of intensive confinement known as caged layer fatigue.

The changeover eggs from cage-free chickens is part of UCSB's policy over the next decade to provide organic produce, fair trade coffees and other sustainable foods whose costs can be amortized by such programs as trayless dining. The program, initiated last fall, delivers food on plates instead of trays in the four dining commons that serve students who pay for the school's food and board program.

According to Ms. Crouse, the program has been a "big success" with students no longer loading up their trays.

According to earlier statistics compiled by Mark Rousseau, energy & environmental manager for UCSB Housing & Residential Services, the average food waste at just one dining room went from 6.4 ounces of food person to 2.95 ounces in the first quarter of operation.

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