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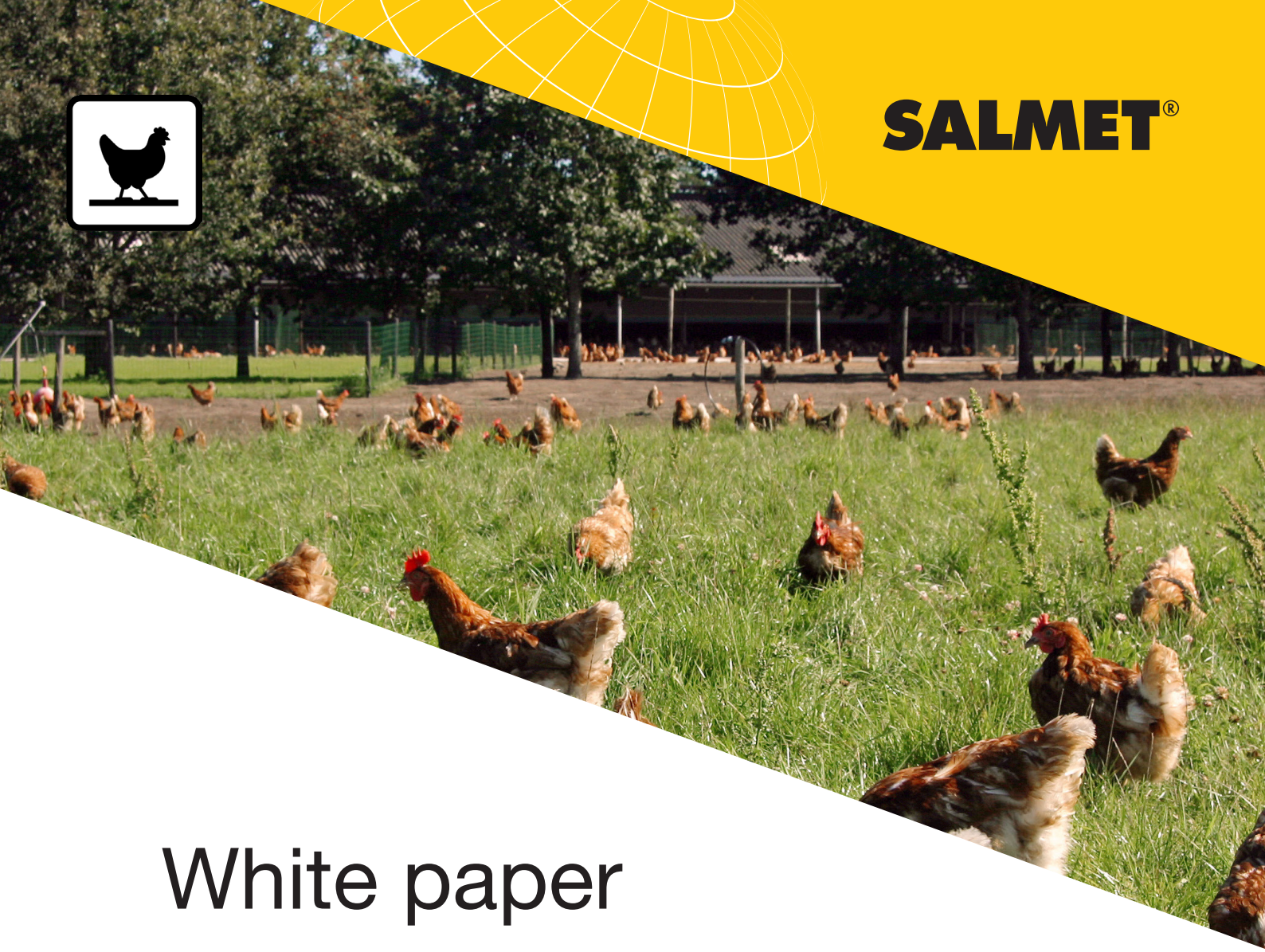

White paper

Checklist:

How to change successfully from conventional to cage-free egg production

... for your success!

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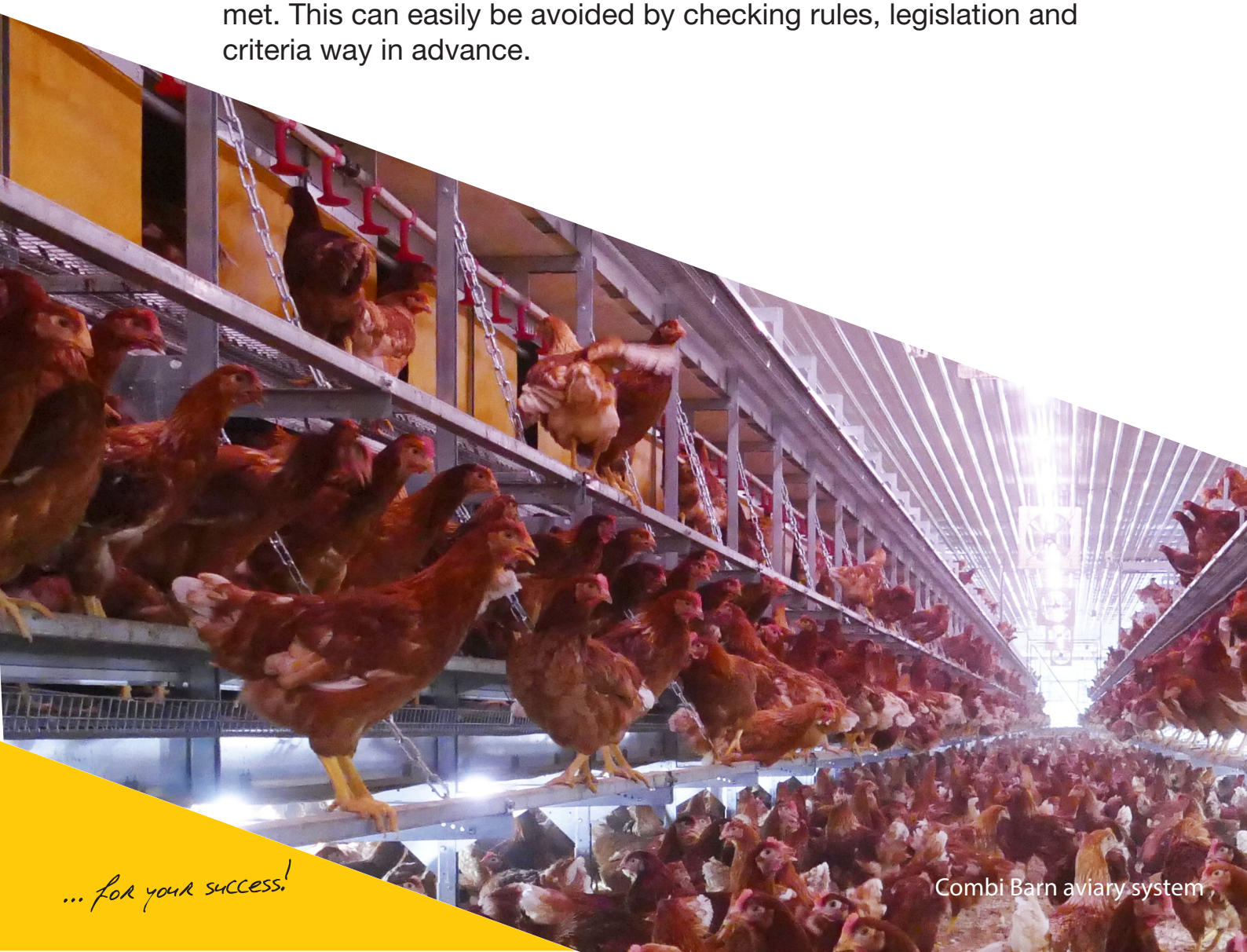
Introduction

This document is written for egg producers who are considering converting to cage-free egg production, either due to changed customer demand, changed regulation or creating a niche egg market.

There are many mysteries about cage-free egg production. In this document we are describing the most important key factors about cage-free egg production. There is no reason for fearing that performance will stay behind compared to conventional production. But there are important rules to follow. Do not forget that the industry has already produced multi-billions of cage-free eggs.
That experience is available for the entire world.

The rules

It is important to understand the rules for production in your country or, when exporting, in the country of the destination of the eggs. This does not only apply to the formal, governmental rules, but also to specific market demand. We have seen situations where customers had to change bird numbers simply because certain criteria were not met. This can easily be avoided by checking rules, legislation and criteria way in advance.



Combi Barn aviary system

Rearing / pullet production

2.

Unfortunately, we need to keep repeating this: producing cage-free eggs in aviary systems, without rearing the pullets in corresponding rearing aviaries, will lead to a disaster. In that case birds will not be able to move correctly throughout the entire aviary, or reach the nest, feeders, drinkers and perches. With cage-free production already common in Europe for decades, we still see that new cage-free egg producers are suggesting to take cage-reared birds and stock them in aviary systems. Putting cage-reared birds into aviary production systems is a no-go direction and the fastest track to the loss of valuable eggs.

The transfer from rearing into production

3.

It sounds logical, but quite often forgotten: the transfer from the rearing to the production houses needs to be aligned.

Feeding and drinking systems need to be the same, or at least alike, so birds who are used to certain systems in the rearing phase do not need to search for completely different systems in the production systems. An example could be a rearing system with pan feeders and a production system with chain feeders. It sounds simple, but it happens.

Another very important aspect is the alignment of lighting schedules. When birds are used to a certain light schedule in the rearing phase, the bio rhythm may not be disturbed by having a completely different start of the day timing and light schedule in the production house. Should this happen, then you are creating a massive “jet lag” feeling for the birds, causing stress and a poor start of production.

The first important weeks in the production aviary system

Needless to say, but in the production house the goal is to have the maximum amount of eggs inside the laying nest. In order to achieve this, birds first need to be reared in an aviary rearing system as in checkpoint 2.

But once in the production aviary, the birds must also be stimulated to jump and fly like they do in nature and do not stay only at floor level. Production aviaries can best be described as a tree in nature: birds freely scratch at the floor, fly and jump to branches and ultimately sleep safe high up on the perches. The stimulation of natural behavior is taught during the rearing phase, and the possible wrong behavior must be discouraged during the first weeks in the production system.

Some birds may not show such behavior, and this means that during the first week(s) any bird staying at the floor at night must be put into the aviary system by the farm staff. Doing this in the beginning of the flock will mean that the risk for floor eggs is minimized for the entire production period.

The importance of light control

In the previous checkpoint we described the tree principal of an aviary. There is a relatively easy way to stimulate this “tree behavior” of your birds: when birds are supposed to perch in the system at the day-end, first dim the lights in the outer walkways, forcing the birds already to move inwards in the aviary areas. Then start to dim the lights at the lower aviary levels to stimulate the birds to move up to the higher areas where there is still light. And ultimately dim and stop the last lights.

Some people think that a good way of attracting birds to the nest is to equip the nest with a lighting system. This is a big mistake. In the mentality of the laying hen, the egg is produced in a quiet, comfortable and dark area. Installing lights in nests will create the opposite effect to keep the birds away from the nest and creating floor and system eggs.

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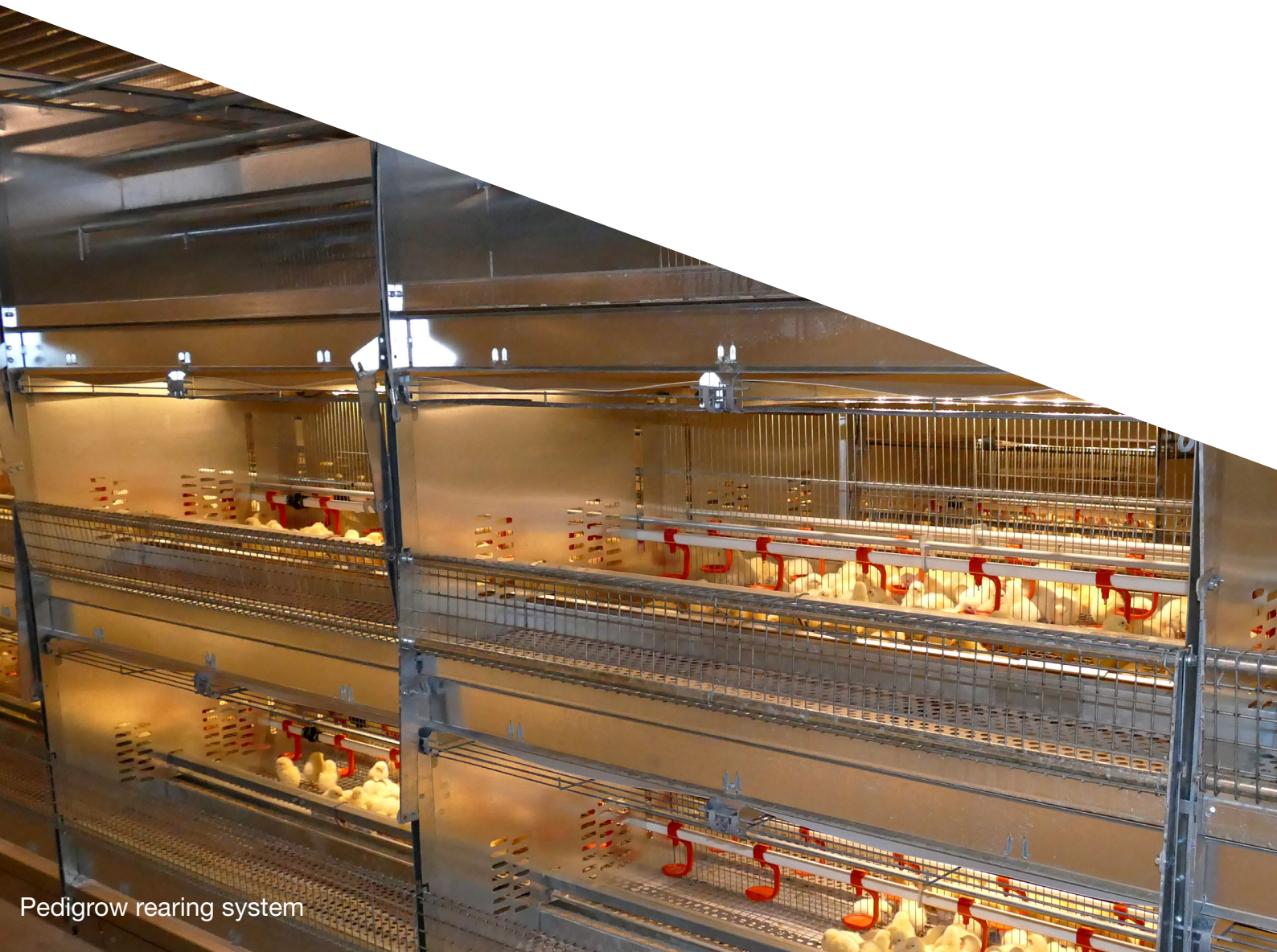
The importance of daily management

6.

Like any other way of egg production, the role of the farm management is extremely important to see, feel, hear and smell what is going on in the poultry house. In aviary production there is an additional element, and that is the behavior of the animals both in pullet and production phases.

Make sure your people are well-prepared and trained to do this. The best is to be trained in existing cage-free farms. If you need help on this, at the end of this article there is an email address to contact a specialist.



Pedigrow rearing system

The importance of floor egg prevention

Like written in checkpoint 5, eggs are produced in a quiet, comfortable and dark area. This means that birds will be laying eggs on the floor should this floor show the same characteristics. So a nice thick layer of litter in a quiet corner will definitely create a big risks for floor eggs.

Floor eggs are dirty, require manpower to remove them and have a big risk even to be lost. So it is quite clear that this must be avoided by all means by having enough light in potential dark areas, keep litter to a minimum and in good condition, and take floor eggs away several times per day.

Do not forget that a floor egg acts as an example to the next bird: take floor eggs away as often as possible to discourage similar behavior by other birds.

The result of these checkpoints

Ultimately your goal is to reach the highest amounts of sellable eggs without dirt, without cracks.

Also, you do not like to see your feed conversion to go up beyond the given standards.

Following the above mentioned 7 checkpoints will mean that you have reached similar performances in cage-free systems as you are used to in conventional production.

The difference between the theory about this and the practice is given in the last paragraph of this article.

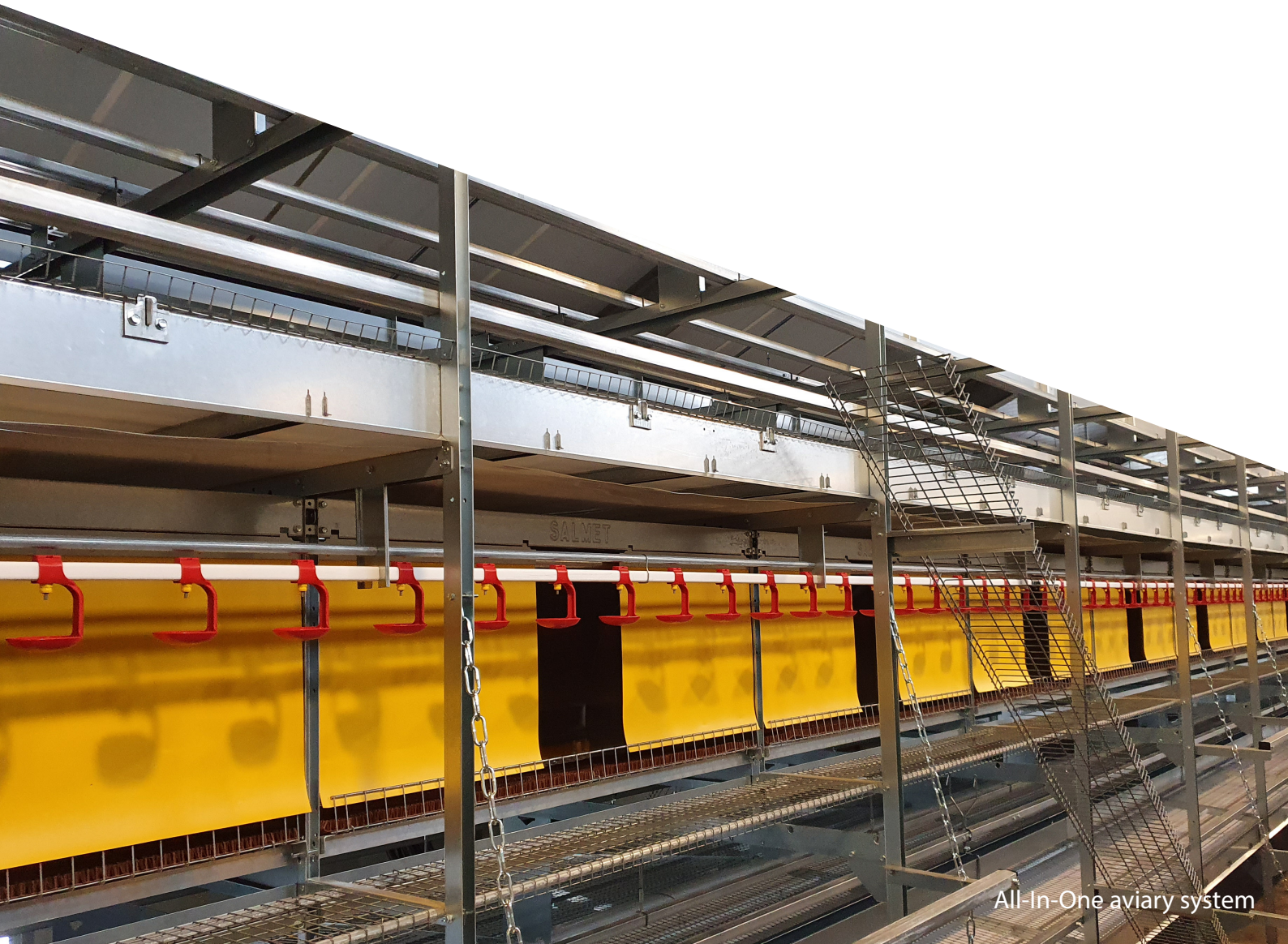
How to proceed if you need more information?

This document is published by Salmet GmbH & Co.
Salmet is, already for 60 years, a supplier of turn key poultry housing systems to world-wide egg producers. Next to that, the Salmet group operates its own egg production farms. On these farms customers are trained by their colleague egg producers highlighting every single aspect of successful pullet or cage-free egg production.

We will show how to reach egg performances beyond the targeted figures and with floor and system eggs way below the absolute minimum.

Would you like to learn more from one of our cage-free farm managers or poultry specialists?

Please contact us at training@salmet.de



All-In-One aviary system

Dear colleague,

As a fellow egg producer and on behalf of my entire family and company I would like to show to you in this white paper how professional egg farming, professional poultry equipment and good poultry management will lead to success for your business.

I hope you enjoy reading the advice in this white paper, and you are always welcome to contact us for further guidance. It is my personal challenge to further improve the performance of the worldwide poultry community, and I am always eager to learn. Therefore all your input and experiences are very welcome to me at any time.

Best regards,

Gregor Zimmerer
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