

German organic egg demand spikes: experts

BERLIN, GERMANY: Demand for organically produced eggs in Germany has shot up, experts and retailers said on Tuesday, 11 January 2011, with shortages feared as consumers shun battery-farmed goods in the wake of a dioxin scandal.

"It's certain that people are increasingly reaching for organic eggs," which are unaffected by the crisis, Margit Beck from poultry market research firm MEG said, adding there was a "clear drop" in demand for eggs overall.

Crisis

Since last week, consumers in Europe's top economy have been spooked by a crisis that at its high point forced 4,700 farms to stop selling produce and more than 100,000 eggs to be destroyed as a precaution.

A firm in northern Germany is suspected of knowingly supplying animal feed manufacturers with fats intended only for industrial use. This was then used to make some 150,000 tonnes of animal feed.

Tests have found higher than permitted levels of dioxin, which can cause cancer, in eggs and in three chickens, according to the federal agriculture ministry.

Going organic

With a poll of 500 people in mass circulation Bild suggesting 20% of Germans are steering clear of eggs after the scandal, anecdotal evidence suggests organic eggs and meat are flying off the shelves.

The manager of Bio-Insel, an organic produce store in Berlin, said: "More organic eggs are being bought, that is for sure.

"I think in the next few days, we will see shortages."

The chairman of the German Federation for Organic Food, Felix Prinz zu Loewenstein, also confirmed his members were reporting shortages.

"The market was not very well supplied before the crisis and the chickens are not laying any more quickly," he said.

"I have the feeling that there is an increasing scarcity."

While demand was shooting up, organic producers are scrambling to keep up supply but finding it difficult, said Beck.

"The amount of organic eggs cannot be increased in the short term. There is only a certain number of organic chickens and they cannot work overtime," she said.

Source: AFP

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