

Chicken Run

Written by John Eager

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The Independent newspaper, Channel 4 and TV celebrity chefs, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Jamie Oliver, are turning up the heat on chicken factory farmers and their intensive farming methods.

Yesterday [The Independent featured a video](#) of the conditions at Uphampton Farm, near Leominster, which has forced Sun Valley of Hereford to announce that it will investigate conditions at the farm.

Meanwhile, Channel 4 tonight starts its own investigation into our farming practices with Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's part one of '*Chicken Run*', which is being screened at 9pm.

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'Chicken Run' continues for another two days, while Jamie Oliver's 'Fowl Dinners' will be broadcast on 11th January. To visit their websites and join their campaign follow the links below:

[Hugh's Chicken Out](#)

[Jamie's Fowl Dinners](#)

Local interest centres upon Sun Valley of Hereford, who intensively produce and process broiler chickens. Greenpeace are one organization who have in the past criticized Sun Valley and by association their main customer, McDonalds, for feeding their chickens with feed made from Santarem soya beans. Greenpeace claim these soya beans have been grown on land in the Amazon, which has been illegally cleared and exported using an illegal export terminal at Santarem owned by Cargill of the USA.

Cargill are the owners of Sun Valley. This family business started out as grain traders in the 1860s as the railroads pushed back the American frontier. Their success in America soon saw them become international traders and by the 1950s Cargill was also dealing in soya beans, seed and vegetable oil.

From this platform Cargill diversified into, amongst other things, petroleum trading, international metals, fertilizer production and beef, pork and poultry processing. More recently Cargill have moved from trading soya beans to processing them into animal feeds and oil.

Sun Valley Foods Europe state that they adhere to the standards and practises set out by Farming Standards, who use British athlete Sally Gunnell OBE to endorse their message. On the Farming Standards website she states:

"I try to buy as much British produce as possible – as a farmer's daughter I've always supported local food producers and, as a parent, I like to know that the food I feed my family

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has been produced to the high standards of our own British farms."

Indeed, our British standards may be higher for the 95% of 855,000,000 broiler chickens intensively reared here in the UK, as opposed to the similar number that are imported each year from abroad. But will the TV chefs' argument be convincing enough to turn our stomachs and change our minds?

And how far should we tolerate a company that says one thing in Britain, but practises the opposite where it can legally get away with it.

Follow this link to [You Tube to watch a video on Gemperle Farms in the USA](#) , who farms intensively under the Sun Valley label.

To read about the history of turkey farming and watch videos of intensive turkey farming follow this link: [The Turkey Story](#)

Sources:

[Greenpeace](#) , [Cargill](#) , [Farming Standards](#) , You Tube, Wikipedia, The Independent newspaper and TV chef celebrity websites.

The views and information in this article are the responsibility of the author.