Gender identification in the hatching egg – a process to avoid the killing of male day-old chicks

SITUATION
Each year, around 45 million male chicks of the egg-laying breeds are killed in Germany alone because they do not lay eggs and because it is uneconomical to fatten them.

The German Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture (BMEL) has given funding to universities with the aim of creating practice-ready processes for identifying the gender in the hatching egg and thus ending the chick culling of male chicks.

ABOUT SELEGGT GMBH
SELEGGT GmbH was founded in March 2017 as a joint venture of the REWE Group, one of the biggest German grocery retailers, and the leading Dutch incubation technology firm HatchTech in cooperation with the University of Leipzig.

SELEGGT GmbH aims to further develop its research with the University of Leipzig into endocrinological gender identification in the hatching egg to create practice-ready solutions that can be used to the highest possible extent in the future. This way, male chicks will no longer need to be killed.

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THE SELEGGT PROCESS
In the SELEGGT process, the hatching eggs are incubated in the setter for nine days and then candled. A minimal amount of allantois fluid is extracted from the fertilised eggs using a fine needle – this is before the embryo can feel any pain. The drops of liquid are placed into a patented marker outside of
the hatching egg. The marker shows whether the hatching egg is male or female by changing colour.

The male hatching eggs are then separated and the female hatching eggs are returned to the incubator. Consequently, only the female chicks hatch on the 21st day.

**The SELEGGT process has a very high accuracy of determination and no negative influence on the development of the embryo to becoming a laying hen. Since autumn 2017, the SELEGGT process has been extensively and successfully tested under the normal field of conditions in a hatchery.**

**USAGE OF MALE HATCHING EGGS**

Thanks to the SELEGGT process, male hatching eggs can be separated long before they would hatch. This means, no chicks are killed.

On the ninth day of incubating, both the unfertilised and male hatching eggs are separated from the female hatching eggs. These are around 55% of the hatching eggs that were previously in the setter. By using a technological process, the separated hatching eggs are swiftly turned into high quality feed (powdered hatching eggs). The essential and valuable components of the powdered hatching eggs will provide a more efficient way of feeding young farm animals in the future. The powdered male hatching eggs therefore gain economic added value and can be integrated into the feed recipes for farm animals.