

Season of Creation 2026

Living Water – Uncage Our Rivers, Restore Creation

Water is the sacred thread of life, a gift held in trust by all creation. Yet, the industrial food system treats water not as *Living Water*, but as a dumping ground and a private commodity. Due to the lack of consideration for animal welfare in factory farming, over 95% of South Africa's 25 million laying hens live their entire lives in battery cages—wire prisons so small that each hen has less space than a sheet of A4 paper. They cannot spread their wings, build nests, or express any of their God-given natural behaviours. These hens are sentient beings, part of God's creation, denied their basic freedoms. Beyond this abuse, factory farming is one of the major drivers of contamination.

As people of faith, we are called to protect both the animal life held in divine trust and the waters that sustain us. What the scripture says:

"Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."
— Amos 5:24

Sermon Points: water cost of factory farming

Industrial factory farming and battery cage production rely on massive concentrations of waste. Untreated runoff filled with nitrogen, phosphorus, and pharmaceutical residues leaks directly into local rivers and groundwater networks. Confining millions of hens to battery cages, we poison the very *Living Water* that downstream communities and ecosystems rely on for survival. South Africa confines 95% of its egg-laying hens to battery cages; from this percentage, we can deduce that high amounts of fresh water are needed for cleaning, which ends up in rivers, having negative impacts on rivers and endangering human and environmental health.

It takes thousands of liters of water to produce feed (maize and soy) for industrial poultry facilities, driving water scarcity in drought-prone regions across our country. Factory farming infringes local food sovereignty and drains regional aquifers to sustain corporate greed. True eco-justice requires shifting toward agroecology and cage-free systems that respect water cycles and environmental health.

Corporate greenwashing offers "water efficiency" metrics while maintaining cruel, intensive confinement. True repentance (*metanoia*) requires addressing the root cause: an extractive food system that commodifies both animals and natural resources for corporate profit. This is why we call for a #CageFreeSA as part of SAFCEI-wide #NoFaithinFalseSolutions campaign.

Call to action:



- **Examine Our Sourcing:** Audit faith community kitchens, events, and personal plates. Commit to promoting cage-free eggs and spread the message in your community.
- **Preach Water & Animal Compassion:** Dedicate a Season of Creation service to reflecting on how our food choices directly impact river health, smallholder farmers, and animal welfare.
- **Support #CageFreeSA:** Join SAFCEI's Fast Action Network to call on South African retailers and corporate hospitality groups to end battery cage confinement and honor their ethical commitments.

Closing prayer:

Creator God, Source of Living Water, forgive us for polluting the streams of Your Earth and turning Your creatures into industrial commodities. Grant us the courage to dismantle cruel systems, protect our rivers, and reclaim a food system rooted in compassion, justice, and respect for all life.

Amen.