BRIEFING

European Parliament

The EU pig meat sector

SUMMARY

The 150 million pigs reared across the EU represent the largest livestock category before that of bovines, and the EU pig meat sector alone accounts for nearly half of total EU meat production. Germany, Spain and France contribute more than half of the total amount of pig meat produced in the EU. The sector is highly diverse, with huge differences in rearing methods and farm sizes across the Member States: from backyard farming to industrial installations with thousands of animals.

Within the common agricultural policy (CAP), the pig meat sector is covered by the common organisation of markets regulating trade and providing support in the event of a sectoral crisis. Farmers can also receive rural development funding under the second pillar of the CAP, for example, to make necessary investments on their farms.

A large number of EU legislative acts apply to this sector, covering various aspects of pig farming: environmental protection, food safety and public health, organic production, animal health and welfare. However, evidence shows a lack of compliance with EU regulations on the welfare of pigs and the persistence of harmful routine practices. Another challenge is the air, soil and water pollution caused by intensive pig farming, which takes a heavy toll on the environment.

The EU is currently the world's top exporter of pig meat products and its exports have been boosted by the fall in production in Asia, where African swine fever is decimating millions of animals. Increased demand for EU pork pushed prices to a peak in early 2020.

In the coming years, the pig production sector may be impacted by the evolution of the policy environment: negotiations on a new CAP are ongoing and the recently published Green Deal initiative and Farm to Fork strategy, both of which promote greener and more sustainable agriculture and food systems, mention the future revision of legislation relevant to the pig sector, including on animal welfare.

In this Briefing

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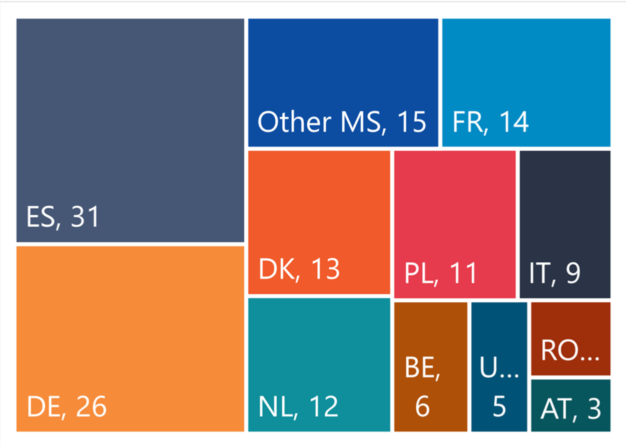
Facts and figures

Pig meat production in the EU

The EU herd

There were 148 million pigs in the EU in 2018. Pigs represent the largest livestock category in the EU, before bovines (around 87 million heads). Again in 2018, almost three quarters of the EU's pigs were being reared in six EU Member States: Spain (20.8 %), Germany (17.8 %), France (9.3 %), Denmark (8.5 %), the Netherlands (8.1 %) and Poland (7.4 %).

Figure 1: Distribution of the EU pig herd in the EU-28 in 2018 (million heads)



Source: Eurostat.

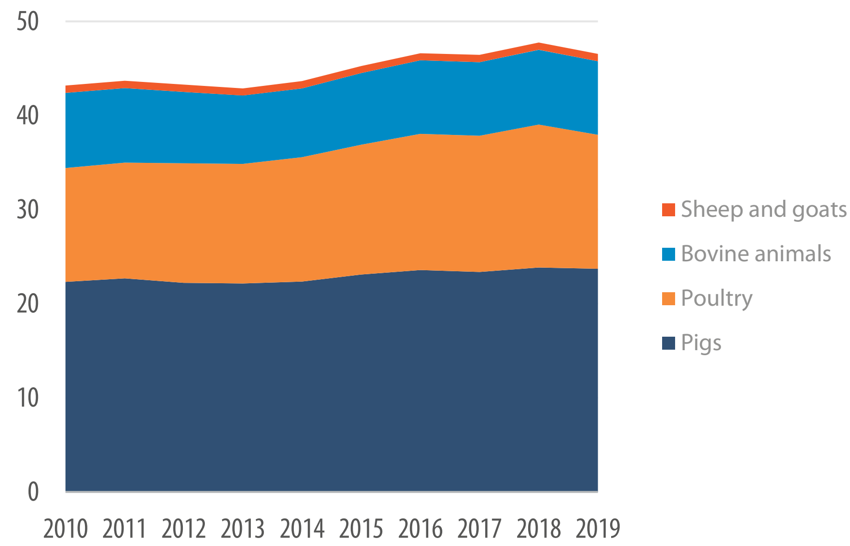
Pig farming, or the raising of pigs for meat, is based on a production cycle that can be divided into two parts: farrowing (birth-giving) sows for the production of weaned piglets (the total number of sows representing the production capacity), and the rearing of those piglets as future breeding animals or as pigs for slaughter.

The EU pig meat production

The pig meat sector constitutes 8.5 % of the total EU-27 agricultural output, which is the highest share compared to other meat sectors. Within the total EU meat output, the pig meat sector has a share of 35 %.

In 2016, around 260 million pigs were slaughtered in the EU. In 2018, the overall production of pig meat was 23.8 million tonnes, an increase of +2.1 % compared to 2017. The EU is the world's second biggest producer of pork after China and the biggest exporter of pork and pork products.

Figure 2: Pig meat production compared with other types of meat production in the EU-28, 2010-2019 (million tonnes)

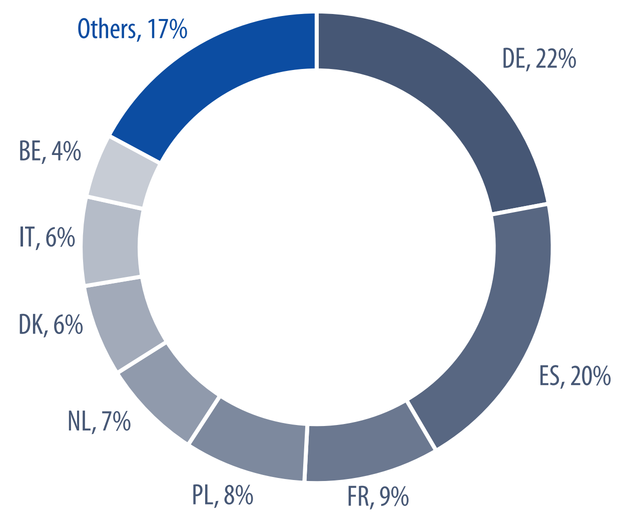


Source: Eurostat.

Leading pig meat producers in the EU

The EU countries with the highest production of pig meat in 2019 were Germany (5.2 million tonnes) and Spain (4.6 million tonnes), followed by France (2.2 million tonnes); together these three countries account for more than half of the EU's total production.

Figure 3: Leading producers of pig meat in the EU-27, 2019 (%)



Source: European Commission.

From a geographical point of view, the major production basin extends from Denmark through northern Germany into the Netherlands and Belgium. Pig farming is particularly concentrated in a number of regions: Capital, Central Jutland and North Jutland in Denmark, North Brabant in the Netherlands, West Flanders in Belgium, as well as western Lower Saxony and the northern parts of North Rhine-Westphalia. Other regions with a relatively high density of pigs include Catalonia, Aragon and Murcia (Spain), Brittany (France), Lombardy (Italy) and Wielkopolskie in central Poland. To some degree, the location of pig farming in Europe is linked to easy access to animal feed, and some of the above-mentioned regions are close to sea ports where imported feed is landed.

Overview of the Spanish pig farming sector

Having the largest pig herd in the EU, Spain is today the EU's second largest pig producer. Its farming sector is overwhelmingly intensive and heavily concentrated as a result of an ongoing process that began in the 1960s. Between 1999 and 2013 only, the number of pig farms decreased by more than two thirds (128 000 farms disappeared) while the number of pigs per farm quadrupled. The Spanish pork industry is export-oriented and very reliant on world markets, both for inputs (soya feed) and consumer demand. Very far from the prevailing industrial model, traditional pig farming still exists in Andalucia, Castilla y Leon and Extremadura, where pigs – mainly of the Spanish Iberian breed – roam freely and feed on grass and acorn in *dehesas* (traditional cultural landscape and agro-sylvo-pastural system). This type of extensive farming generates high quality, mainly dry-cured meat products.

Table 1: Number of pigs per 100 inhabitants in some producing Member States (2016)

Denmark	The Netherlands	Spain	Belgium
215 pigs / 100 inhabitants	70 pigs / 100 inhabitants	63 pigs / 100 inhabitants	54 pigs / 100 inhabitants

Source: Eurostat.

Pigs are much scarcer in Greece and the United Kingdom (seven pigs per 100 inhabitants) and in Bulgaria and Malta (both nine pigs per 100 inhabitants).

Structure of the pig meat sector

Big diversity across Member States

Pig meat is produced across the EU, with huge differences in methods and sizes of farms in and between Member States: from small diversified farms keeping just one or two pigs to industrial installations with thousands of pigs, and from extensive organic farming to conventional intensive production.

The EU pig production sector does not have the level of vertical integration seen in the poultry sector: for instance, breeding and finishing of pigs are often carried out in separate facilities. Denmark has the most developed integrated production system. In Spain, pork production is controlled by vertically integrated companies providing the feed, pigs and production standards, while farmers are contracted to breed and fatten the animals. Slaughter houses and meat processing companies also have a high level of integration.

In 2015, there were 2.2 million pig farms in the EU, more than half of which were in Romania. This country's pig industry is highly polarised: at one end are very large intensive farms, mostly run with foreign capital, keeping thousands of animals and supplying 85 % of all the pig meat available on the market. At the other end are a high number of backyard pig farms, producing meat for home consumption or the local market. Some 99 % of Romanian pig farms have less than 10 pigs, yet account for half of the country's pig herd. In two other Member States, Slovenia and Lithuania, the pig industry is also quite polarised.

In general, only 3 % of the pig herd in the EU is kept in backyard farms, and this share is even lower in most major producing Member States. In Denmark, for example, 97 % of pigs are kept on farms with 1 000 or more animals. Overall, over 75 % of EU pigs are in large commercial holdings. Among the top nine producer countries, Denmark has the largest commercial holdings with an average of 4 700 heads and Germany the smallest with an average of 1 900 heads per holding.

One approach to analysing the structure of the pig sector in the EU is to look at the number of large farms, defined as those requiring an environmental permit as per Annex I to Directive 2010/75/EU on Industrial Emissions. Such a permit is required for intensive pig units with more than 2 000 places for production pigs (over 30 kg), or with more than 750 places for sows. The permit covers all aspects of farm management, including feed and manure, and is granted to farms that meet the criteria for minimising the risk of pollution to air, land and water.

Over the 2012-2013 reference period, there was a total of 8 443 such large farms in the EU. Spain alone accounted for 2 374 of them, followed by Germany and the Netherlands (around 1 200 each) and Italy (920).

Evolution of the pig farming sector over time

The number of EU farm holdings keeping pigs has decreased over the years, from 3.8 million in 2005 (excluding Croatia) to just under 2.2 million in 2013. However, as the number of pigs has not dropped in an equal proportion, this means that the average herd size has increased. The loss of numerous small pig farms and the increasing specialisation of the remaining farms have been key factors in improving the productivity and efficiency of the sector.

The organic pig farming sector

Despite its fast growth in recent decades, EU organic animal production remains small in comparison to total EU animal production, at about 3 %. In 2017, about 5 % of the cattle herd and 6 % of the sheep and goat flocks were estimated to be organic, while for poultry this was estimated at 3 %. The organic pig farming sector represents less than 1 % of all pig farming in the EU. Nevertheless, organic pig and poultry production shows higher annual growth rates (respectively 6 % and 10 %). Austria and Denmark have higher levels of organic pig farming (3 %), as does Sweden (2 %).Unlike conventional ones, organic pig production systems must include access to a free-range area.

Organic pig farms in Europe are modelled on three main breeding systems. Pigs may be reared mainly indoors, having access to a limited concrete outside run only (as is the case in Austria and Germany). Pigs can also be kept entirely outdoors in paddocks on pasture all year round with access to shelter (temporary huts or permanent buildings). This is the dominant system in Denmark, Italy and the UK. A third system, applied in France and Sweden, has organic pig farms combining outdoor and indoor access during different production stages or seasons.

In France, farrowing (giving birth to piglets) mainly takes place in the open area, where sows have a shed littered with straw, whereas in Sweden this happens indoors. EU legislation provides that a sow and her piglets must have a surface of at least 10 m^2, including an outdoor exercise area of at least 2.5 m^2. Suckler sows must have freedom of movement. In organic breeding, piglets cannot be weaned before their 40th day.

CAP support to pig farmers

First CAP pillar: The common organisation of markets

Within the common agricultural policy, pork is covered by the common organisation of markets (CMO) under EU Regulation No 1308/2013 (the CMO Regulation), and has never been subject to linked payments or production quotas. Only in very limited cases have private storage schemes[1] been used to stabilise pig markets during times of crisis. The CMO Regulation lays down rules on:

- trade: import quotas, import duties (as a way to ensure that EU economic operators are able to face the competition from third countries on the internal market), import and export licences that enable trade flows to be monitored; and export refunds;
- regulation of supply for ham with a protected designation of origin or protected geographical indication;
- measures related to animal diseases and loss of consumer confidence due to public, animal or plant health risks.

In 2017, the European Commission agreed to allow the use of CAP funds to help Polish pig farmers forced to cease their activity due to the African swine fever (ASF) (see box below). The aid was extended in accordance with the provisions of the CMO Regulation, which allow the Commission to propose temporary support measures (for no more than 12 months) to any sector covered by the common market organisation that is considered to be in a situation 'likely to cause a rapid deterioration of production and market conditions'.

In the case of mixed farming (combining livestock breeding and crops), pig farmers would benefit from direct payments linked to the surfaces farmed.

Second CAP pillar: Rural development funding

EU support for rural development (second pillar) is co-funded by EU countries and regions. They can choose to fund specific measures through their rural development programmes. There is a 'menu' of 20 measures in total, co-financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), which can benefit EU farmers and rural stakeholders. Such measures may, for example, contribute to necessary investments on the pig farm to make it more sustainable and profitable (see text box).

> **Piloting the 'Stable of the Future' for the pig farming sector**
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> This Dutch project, implemented with EAFRD support in the amount of €125 000, created an innovative demonstration pig farm producing renewable energy from fresh manure in the form of biogas, and recovering nitrogen. Accordingly, the farm uses a combination of techniques to prevent the release of ammonia and other harmful gases and to support the generation of sustainable energy. The farm aims to eventually make this system a widely acknowledged and approved best practice that other pig farmers can adopt.

Within the EU rural development policy, the agricultural European Innovation Partnership (EIP Agri) seeks to strengthen research and speed up innovation in agriculture. EIP-Agri focus groups temporarily bring together around 20 experts (farmers, advisers, researchers, businesses and NGOs) to develop solutions within their field. They can receive funding from the EAFRD or from the Horizon 2020 programme for international projects. In the area of pig farming, examples of focus groups are the one on Reducing antibiotic use in pig farming and the one on New feed for pigs and poultry. The latter is researching new sources and strategies to reduce pressure on natural resources while producing feed for pigs and poultry.

The Horizon 2020 programme can fund research and development in the field of pig farming. A large ongoing international project, implemented with an EU contribution of €2 million, is the EU PiG innovation group, which aims to raise the competitiveness of the EU pig industry by connecting producers and sharing tried and tested best practices and innovation.

EU legislation on pig meat production

The EU pig meat sector is regulated by a number of legislative acts with relevance to food safety, public and animal health, environmental protection and animal welfare throughout the whole production process.

All food production in the EU is subject to Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 (the General Food Law Regulation) covering all food production, processing and distribution stages. It laid an overarching and coherent framework for the development of food and feed legislation at both EU and national levels. It also set up an independent agency responsible for scientific advice and support, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). It ensures protection of human life and consumer interests in relation to food, while also ensuring the effective functioning of the internal market.

Environmental protection

Directive 2010/75/EU on industrial emissions applies to installations for the intensive rearing of pigs, each having more than 2 000 places for the production of pigs (over 30 kg) or more than 750 places for sows. Under this directive, Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2017/302 establishing best available techniques (BAT) conclusions for the intensive rearing of poultry and pigs, covers a number of on-farm processes and activities such as nutritional management, storage and processing of manure and storage of dead animals.

Organic production

The main legislative instruments regulating organic production are:

- Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products;
- Commission Regulation (EC) No 889/2008 of 5 September 2008 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 on organic production and labelling of organic products with regard to organic production, labelling and control;
- Regulation (EU) No 2018/848 of 30 May 2018 on organic production and labelling of organic products and repealing Council Regulation No 834/2007.

The last regulation in the above list, applicable from 1 January 2021, broadens the scope of the existing legislation to cover products – such as cork, salt, essential oils, cotton or wool – that are closely linked to agriculture. It reviews the organic livestock production rules, taking into account the experience gained, and sets out production requirements for a number of species, including rabbits, bees and aquaculture animals.

Pig welfare

Council Directive 98/58/EC of 20 July 1998 concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes lays down the basic principle that pigs should be offered an adequate level of welfare.

The first EU pig welfare legislation, agreed in 1991, was initiated as a result of the industrialisation of the livestock sector and the evidence of poor pig welfare on some farms. This legislation was revised in 2008 with Council Directive 2008/120/EC of 18 December 2008 (the Pig Directive), which lays down minimum standards for the protection of pigs and applies to all categories of pigs for rearing and fattening. It regulates accommodation, feed and environmental conditions of pigs: the living space per animal, the quality of floorings, the permanent access to fresh water and to material for rooting and playing, as well as the level of light and noise.

The directive lays down rules concerning painful operations such as castration, tail docking (amputation of the tail) and the elimination of corner teeth. Routine tail docking and teeth removal is prohibited. Castration of male piglets can only be carried out by a veterinarian and under anaesthesia, with additional prolonged analgesia, and provided the piglet is older than seven days. The directive has also put a ban on individual sow stalls (metal enclosures in which farmed sows used for breeding may be kept during pregnancy) from 1 January 2013 and sets a minimum weaning age of four weeks.

The legally binding Commission Recommendation (EU) 2016/336 of 8 March 2016 on the application of Council Directive 2008/120/EC requires Member States to ensure that farmers carry out a risk assessment for factors leading to tail biting and enact corrective measures. It also lists the characteristics of optimal enrichment materials (materials such as hay or silage, which can satisfy many of the pigs' behavioural and physical needs). The accompanying staff working document contains further details and suggests tools and indicators that can be used in assessing the on-farm situation.

Additional legislation on animal welfare includes:

- Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations;
- Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing.

Major challenges in EU pig production

The vast majority of pigs in the EU are bred, kept and slaughtered for meat within an intensive system that gives rise to numerous issues linked in particular to animal welfare and pollution.

Non-compliance with the EU legislation on pig welfare

The physical and mental wellbeing of pigs is compromised by periods of confinement in cages, barren environments and mutilations. Living in an environment devoid of stimulation deprives them of the possibility to express their natural exploratory behaviour (rooting) which can cause frustration, leading to an increase in harmful behaviour. They also suffer during transport and pre-slaughter handling, which can be a source of intense stress. EU legislation still allows sows to be kept in stalls from weaning of a litter until the end of the first four weeks of gestation. Just before farrowing, a sow is moved to a farrowing crate, also severely restricting her movements. Commercial sows usually have two litters of 10-12 piglets a year. Pre-weaning piglet mortality varies largely between farms and ranges from 5 % to 35 %.

Despite EU regulations prohibiting routine mutilation, most piglets in the main pig producing Member States are routinely subjected to harmful practices. One is tail docking, done to prevent tail biting (an abnormal behaviour resulting, among other factors, from the lack of a stimulating environment). Another is male piglet castration, practiced to avoid boar taint, an unpleasant odour or taste of pig meat (obtained from male adult pigs) when cooked.

Routine tail docking has been banned in the EU since 1994, but there are still widespread problems with the implementation and enforcement of this ban in the vast majority of Member States, in addition to serious shortcomings concerning the provision of adequate enrichment. The European Commission audits carried out in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, and Denmark between 2016 and 2018 indicate that 95 % to 100 % of pigs are still being tail docked. Only a couple Member States are respecting the ban (Sweden and Finland).

Surgical castration of male piglets, a routine and long-standing practice in pig husbandry, is common across many EU countries. Its sole objective is to prevent boar taint, although this only affects a small percentage of pigs. The results from a series of surveys carried out by the Commission and the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) among 24 EU countries show that around a third of male pigs are raised as entire males, while a large majority (61 %) are still surgically castrated. Among the latter, the majority do not receive pain relief.

The Commission has been working with Member States and has taken a number of actions to ensure that they improve their application of existing legal requirements and adopt appropriate measures to prevent animal suffering. In 2017, the Commission launched an action plan 2017- 2019 on rearing pigs with intact tails and requested Member States to provide national action plans detailing how they intend to reach compliance with the Pig Directive. In March 2018, the Commission designated the first EU Reference Centre on Animal Welfare dedicated to pig welfare (EURCAW Pigs), with its main objective to ensure the Member States' harmonised compliance with EU legislation on pig welfare. In September 2018, a thematic sub-group on welfare of pigs was established within the EU Platform on Animal Welfare. Its task is to coordinate and complement any ongoing activities in the area of tail docking such as the activities of EURCAW Pigs and the Commission's three-year project on reducing systematic tail docking of piglets in the EU.

In a scientific opinion published on 17 June 2020 at the Commission's request, the European Food Safety Authority concludes that most issues linked to the welfare of pigs at the time of killing result from inadequate staff skills/training and poorly designed and constructed facilities. The comprehensive opinion covers the slaughter process from arrival and unloading of pigs through stunning to bleeding and killing. It proposes preventive and corrective measures, where possible, to prevent welfare issues such as heat stress, thirst, prolonged hunger and respiratory distress.

Environmental impact of intensive pig farming

The environmental impact of intensive livestock farming was not properly recognised until the 1980s. A major challenge facing the pig production sector is the need to balance the reduction of its negative impact on the environment with meeting increasing welfare demands, while at the same time maintaining the profitability of the sector.

Intensive pig production is associated with environmental issues concerning mainly water and air pollution. The quality and composition of the large quantity of manure generated and the way it is handled and disposed of largely determine the emissions levels of harmful elements. At farm level, negative environmental consequences of intensive pig farming include:

- surface water and groundwater pollution by nitrates (NO_3^-) and ammonium (NH_4^+);
- eutrophication (excessive growth of algae in water ecosystems through leakage of nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P);
- acidification mainly through emissions of ammonia (NH_3);
- air pollution, in particular ammonia and nitrous oxide (N_2O);
- emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG): mainly methane (CH_4) and nitrous oxide (N_2O).

In the pig production cycle, N_2O constitutes around half of the GHGs produced, while the other half is shared between CO_2 and CH_4. Fifty to seventy per cent of all greenhouse gas emissions result from the growing of feedstuff for the animals,[2] first with the production and application of nitrogen fertilisers, then with the cultivation of the crops. CO_2 emissions result from direct energy consumption in the running of pig installations: heating and ventilation account for most of the energy used in intensive systems.

According to the European Environment Agency, in 2015 agriculture was responsible for 94 % of ammonia emissions in the EU. Manure management alone accounted for almost three fifths of these. Since 1990, the EU's total emissions of ammonia have declined by 23 % – a drop mainly due to changes in the management of organic manures, to the decreased use of nitrogenous fertilisers and to some reduction in livestock numbers. However, since 2014, the emissions of ammonia have been continuously increasing again.

African swine fever (ASF)

ASF is a deadly viral and infectious disease affecting both domestic pigs and European wild boar in the EU. It can be transmitted through direct animal contact, infected material or contaminated food. It is not transmissible to human beings. ASF is present in 11 EU Member States. There are no efficient prevention methods and the only way to control it is through the elimination of infected pig populations and strict control of movement of animals and pork products. The EU has set up very stringent veterinary measures to prevent the spread of the virus from wild boars to domestic pigs and to contain any outbreaks in domestic pigs.

ASF spread from Russia and Belarus to the EU in early 2014, with Lithuania reporting cases of ASF in wild boar in January 2014, followed by Poland, Latvia and Estonia later that year. Globally, ASF is an unprecedented animal health crisis. The epidemic started in August 2018 in China and spread rapidly to the whole country and neighbouring Asian countries. China's pig herd reduction was estimated at a third in 2019 and could reach 50 %. Now present in more than 50 countries, the ASF virus continues its infectious journey around the globe.

Other environmental issues include local disturbance, such as odour and noise, the spreading of heavy metals, pesticides, toxic substances and pathogens (including antibiotic resistant pathogens), water pollution by residues of pharmaceuticals, excessive use of groundwater, etc. Another impact, according to an OECD study, is the loss in pig genetic diversity: there are globally 650 recorded breeds of pigs, of which 150 have become extinct. A further 164 are at risk of being lost. Over 95 % of European pork production revolves around a few breeds only, genetically selected for their performance so as to increase the profitability of the farm. Meanwhile, many traditional breeds have been abandoned and are now endangered.

EU trade in pig products – Situation and prospects

The world's top exporter of pig products

The EU, the world's second-biggest producer of pig meat, is the world's top exporter of pig products, ahead of the United States, Canada and Brazil. In 2020, its top export destinations are China, the UK, Japan and Korea. Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, France and Ireland are the Member States that ship pig meat to China. Between early 2019 and early 2020, the EU's pig products exports to China have increased by around 80 % due to the acute ASF outbreak in this country, as mentioned in the box above. The 1.6 million tonnes of pig meat exported by the EU to China between January and June 2020 represent 54.5 % of the total EU exports of pig meat to third countries over the same period. The EU's pig meat trade balance is largely positive, as its total exports amounted to 5.6 million tonnes in 2019, against imported quantities of some 229 000 tonnes.

African swine fever and coronavirus causing uncertainties

The continued ASF outbreak in China and its neighbouring countries means that their pig meat imports have risen significantly; an additional surge is expected before the end of 2020. EU export levels are expected to remain high in the coming years, although there are uncertainties as to what will happen once China and other Asian countries have eradicated ASF and rebuilt their herds, and what level of disruption will the coronavirus pandemic inflict on the EU pig production sector. Another uncertainty is linked to the ASF outbreak in a Polish commercial farm with 23 000 animals in the Lubuskie voivodship in the west of the country, close to the German border. Many German farmers fear that the outbreak will spill over into Germany; should this happen, it would have huge economic repercussions. The country would see its exports significantly reduced, as China would most likely list it as an ASF-affected country and impose a total ban on its pork imports. This would result in pig meat oversupply that would pull down pig prices across the EU.

As a consequence of increased demand for EU pork products in recent years, prices have been constantly increasing, culminating in early March 2020 at €195/100 kg. By October 2019, the price of pork traded within the EU was typically 20-40 % higher than in 2018. Since that period, the coronavirus and the resulting disruption and market uncertainty have put downward pressure on prices. Furthermore, the pandemic is expected to cause disruptions to Europe's pork supply. Slaughter and processing, where worker absences can limit production, could suffer.

Policy framework 2021-2027 and impact on the sector

The communication on the European Green Deal, published in December 2019 by the newly constituted European Commission, is a response to the current challenges of climate change and environmental degradation. It is an integral part of the Commission's strategy to implement the United Nations' 2030 Agenda and sustainable development goals. It provides a blueprint for how to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

One of the building blocks of the European Green Deal is the Farm to fork strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system, published on 20 May 2020. The strategy addresses the challenges facing the sustainability of food systems, from production to consumption, that EU citizens are facing. It includes a draft 27-point action plan indicating what legislative and non-legislative measures the EU will be taking by the year 2023 to reach the different targets set in the strategy.

On the production side, the strategy recognises clearly that there is an urgent need to reduce dependency on pesticides and antimicrobials, reduce excess fertilisation, increase organic farming, improve animal welfare and reverse biodiversity loss. It states that the Commission will take action to reduce overall EU sales of antimicrobials for farm animals by 50 % by 2030. It would also revise animal welfare legislation, including on animal transport and slaughter, to align it with the latest scientific evidence, broaden its scope, make it easier to enforce and ensure a higher level of animal welfare. To reduce the environmental and climate impact of animal farming, the Commission plans a number of actions such as placing sustainable and innovative animal feed additives on the market, fostering EU-grown plant proteins and alternative feed materials.

At the same time, the proposed new 2021-2027 CAP is being negotiated by EU legislators. The Commission expects it to play a key role in managing the transition to sustainable food systems. A key feature of the proposed regulation for the CAP post-2020 is the requirement for EU Member States to propose interventions to achieve the nine specific CAP objectives in the form of a CAP strategic plan. The new delivery model of the CAP shifts the policy focus from compliance to performance, and gives Member States more flexibility in designing their strategic plans. According to the Commission, the specific CAP objectives are already in line with the focus of the Green Deal in relation to food systems, especially regarding, inter alia: increased contribution of agriculture to climate change mitigation and adaptation, improved management of natural resources, effective sustainability of food systems in accordance with societal concerns regarding food and health on e.g. animal welfare, and use of pesticides and antimicrobial resistance. The Green Deal emphasises that 'The Commission will work with the Member States and stakeholders to ensure that from the outset the national strategic plans for agriculture fully reflect the ambition of the Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Biodiversity strategy.'

Parliament's position

During its 7th and 8th terms, Parliament closely scrutinised the lack of implementation of the Pig Directive, with its Members (MEPs) submitting numerous parliamentary questions to the Commission. Moreover, the Petitions Committee received three petitions on the question of tail docking and enrichment materials. During the current 9th term, a number of parliamentary questions on pig welfare and other issues have already been addressed to the Commission.

As regards the transport of live animals, a resolution adopted on 14 February 2019 called for better enforcement, sanctions and reduced journey times. MEPs demanded stricter controls, tougher penalties and shorter traveling times to increase animals' welfare across the EU.

In its resolution of 15 January 2020 on the European Green Deal (2019/2956(RSP)), Parliament considered it important to raise existing animal welfare standards, to develop new ones, and to start infringement procedures against systemic non-compliance.

On 19 June 2020, the Parliament voted overwhelmingly to set up a new animal transport enquiry committee to examine alleged breaches in the application of animal welfare rules during transport within or outside the EU. The enquiry committee should consist of 30 MEPs and would submit its final report within 12 months from its establishment.

In 2014, Parliament's Policy Department on Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs produced a comparative study on the routine tail docking of pigs, revealing a 'persisting high rate of non-compliance in the large majority of Member States'.

The Intergroup on the welfare and conservation of animals, which brings together MEPs from all political groups to debate and take action on animal welfare issues, was very active during the most recent parliamentary terms and sent numerous letters to the Commission, asking it to take action to address the Member States' lack of compliance with the Pig Directive.

Stakeholders

Eurogroup for animals is a pan-European animal advocacy organisation made up of 70 animal protection organisations in 25 EU Member States, the UK, Switzerland, Serbia, Norway, Australia and the US. Its primary focus is to improve the wellbeing of as many animals as possible and defend animals' interests. The organisation denounces the lack of enforcement of existing animal welfare legislation within the EU, quoting the Pig Directive and the Transport Regulation as patent examples, and also identifies serious problems in protecting animals at the time of slaughter in particular. Eurogroup for animals would like to achieve a number of targets, among which the end of live animal transport, a ban on cage systems for farm animals, the phasing-out of mutilations, and the enforcement of the current pig welfare legislation. Its 2017-2018 campaign 'End Pig Pain' collected over one million signatures from citizens of the EU and beyond.

European Livestock Voice is a multi-stakeholder group of EU partners in the livestock food chain. The associations represent sectors ranging from animal health to feed, to breeding and animal farming and farmers. The group provides an online platform with information on livestock in Europe and aims to influence the ongoing debates by informing the public on livestock farming from its perspective. According to the group, European livestock farmers are already taking action to deliver on animal welfare, public health demands and environmental concerns. It claims that the European livestock sector is constantly making improvements to ensure sustainable farming practices and recalls that European farmers produce meat with the highest animal welfare standards in the world.

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ENDNOTES

1 European Commission implementing Regulation (EU) 2016/1240 and Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1238 on private storage during periods of crisis.

2 Conventional pig production systems often depend to a large extent on concentrated feed imported from outside the farm. Imports of feed, the two main components of which are grain and oilseed, add to the environmental footprint due to production and transportation. According to the FAO, feed is the first largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the global pig supply chain, the second being manure storage and handling.

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