

E-10052/10EN
Answer given by Mr Dalli
on behalf of the Commission
(20.1.2011)

First, the Commission would refer the Honourable Member to its answer to written question E-6187/09¹.

Different alternatives to surgical castration such as rearing entire male pigs or vaccination to reduce boar taint are already being applied in and outside the EU. Several EU countries (Germany, The Netherlands, Austria, Belgium) have recently adopted national voluntary agreements between governments and main stakeholders of the pig sector aiming at ending surgical castration of male piglets in the long term; in the meantime these agreements provide for the alleviation of the pain of the surgical procedure of pig castration by using either analgesia or anaesthesia.

The Commission is following this welfare issue closely: the Commission organized a workshop on 2 June 2010² where all interested parties (pig producers, representatives of pig meat industry, scientists, retailers and NGOs) were invited. The main conclusion of the workshop was that a common approach at European level would be useful.

Consequently, the Commission in collaboration with the Belgian presidency convened a pilot group to draft a common European position on pig castration. On 15 December 2010, representatives of European farmers, meat industry, retailers, scientists, veterinarians and animal welfare NGOs endorsed the European Declaration on alternatives to surgical castration of pigs³ in which they committed to a plan to voluntarily end surgical castration of pigs in Europe by 1 January 2018. Furthermore, they agreed that, in the meantime from 1 January 2012, surgical castration of pigs will be performed with prolonged analgesia and/or anaesthesia, if carried out. A European partnership will be established to develop the tools to reach these goals and ensure that costs are fairly shared.

¹ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/QP-WEB>

² http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/seminars/index_en.htm

³ http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/farm/initiatives_en.htm