

NEWS RELEASE



Compassion in World Farming
Tel: +44 (0) 1483 521 950
+44 (0) 7771 926005

ILLEGAL PIG FARMING CONDITIONS EXPOSED IN NEW EU INVESTIGATION

An undercover investigation – together with a report by the European Food Safety Authority – suggests that the vast majority of the 250 million pigs reared each year in the EU are being farmed in illegal conditions.

The investigation's findings – including a film – will be launched at a **Press Conference at 10:00 on Thursday 21 January at the Residence Palace in Brussels** organised by the investigators - Compassion in World Farming (Compassion) and the European Coalition for Farm Animals (ECFA).

In 2003 tough new EU legislation designed to improve pig welfare came into force. The law requires pigs to be given enrichment materials such as straw so that they can engage in their natural behaviour of rooting, foraging and exploring. The law also bans the routine cutting off (docking) of the tail – it stipulates that farmers must not use routine tail docking to prevent tail biting but must instead keep the pigs in good conditions.

In December 2007 the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published a report showing that - despite the ban on routine tail docking - over 90% of EU pigs were still being tail docked.

Compassion and ECFA decided to find out for themselves if the new rules were working. During an 18 month undercover investigation starting in 2008 Compassion and ECFA visited 74 pig farms in six Member States: Denmark, Hungary, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands and the UK. The study, coupled with the EFSA report, provides a snapshot of pig farming across Europe.

The investigation found that the new laws were being flouted in the vast majority of the farms we visited. This reflects EFSA's finding that 90% of pigs reared in the EU are tail-docked and 67% are housed in fully slatted systems where it is almost impossible to provide effective enrichment materials.

The investigation, together with EFSA's report, suggests that the vast majority of Europe's pigs are being reared in breach of EU animal welfare rules. Despite the new laws, most of Europe's pigs are still farmed industrially in conditions of utter deprivation. They are packed into overcrowded, barren pens without straw or any other enrichment materials. Nearly all are tail docked.

Based on the investigation and the EFSA report, Compassion and ECFA have made Formal Complaints for failure to enforce EU law to the European Commission against Belgium, Ireland, Spain, Germany, Hungary and Denmark.

Chief Policy Advisor for Compassion in World Farming, Peter Stevenson said; "It's a scandal that, seven years after the new laws came into force, they are still being ignored by most of Europe's pig farmers. Pigs are inquisitive intelligent animals, with a real zest for life – it is both illegal and inhumane to keep them in barren factory farms where there is simply nothing for them to do. We call on Member States to enforce the law that requires pigs to be given enrichment materials such as straw and that bans routine tail docking."

Peter Stevenson added: "Consumers can help by only buying pork, bacon and ham that is free range, organic or reared under a high welfare scheme such as *Thierry Schweitzer* in France, *Neuland* in Germany or *Freedom Food* in the UK."

Nearly all the breeding sows seen during the investigation were confined in sow stalls during their pregnancy (though not in the UK where stalls are banned). In the EU most sows are kept confined in sow stalls and then moved to farrowing crates to give birth; they then remain in these crates for 3-4 weeks until their piglets are weaned. These stalls and crates are so narrow that the sow cannot even turn round. Sow stalls will be illegal EU-wide from 2013 though even then farmers will be able to use them for the first four weeks of each

pregnancy. So, even after 2013 many of Europe's sows will spend almost 20 weeks of each year in stalls and crates so narrow that they cannot turn round.

Notes for Editors

Background to the law:

In natural conditions pigs spend 75% of their daylight hours in activity - rooting, foraging and investigating their world. None of these behaviours are possible in the barren world of industrial farming. Bored and frustrated, they turn to the only thing in their pens – the tails of other pigs. They begin to bite these tails. To prevent this, farmers slice off part of the tail. Scientific research shows that the correct way to prevent tail biting is to keep the pigs in good conditions, above all to give them straw or similar material that they can chew and investigate. That is why EU law prohibits routine tail docking and requires pigs to be given enrichment such as straw.

More about pig welfare in Europe:

Download Compassion in World Farming's report

[*Welfare of pigs in the European Union 2009*](#)

Contact: For broadcast quality film footage and photos, contact Rebecca Deeny + 44 (0)1483 521973, + 44 (0)7771 926005 or press@ciwf.org.

Compassion in World Farming

Compassion in World Farming is the leading international farm animal welfare NGO. Our aim is to end the suffering of farm animals and promote farming systems which are beneficial to animals, people and the planet. Compassion leads the European Coalition for Farm Animals (ECFA), which comprises 39 animal welfare organisations in 25 EU Member States as well as in Norway, Switzerland and Israel. In addition, Compassion has representatives in China, India and South Africa.