

**Voluntary Report** – Voluntary - Public Distribution

**Date:** July 14,2020

**Report Number:** E42020-0035

**Report Name:** EFSA Scientific Opinion Evaluates EU Pig Animal Welfare Rules at Slaughter

**Country:** European Union

**Post:** Brussels USEU

**Report Category:** Agricultural Situation, Livestock and Products

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**Report Highlights:**

In view of the animal welfare discussion in the OIE, the European Commission (EC) mandated the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) to review the latest scientific insights on animal welfare at slaughter. On June 17, 2020, EFSA published a Scientific Opinion on the welfare of pigs at slaughter, evaluating the adequacy of Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing', and with the aim to serve as a guide in the OIE discussion on animal welfare at pig slaughter. This report may also guide new animal welfare initiatives as part of the Farm to Fork Strategy.

## **Background**

Animal welfare (AW) has been part of European Union (EU) policy since 1974 and was enshrined in the EU's fundamental Treaty of Lisbon (2009) through Article 13. This mandates that AW must be considered in all EU policies, including in its international policies. The EU has been actively working to promote AW in multilateral standard setting bodies like the OIE and the FAO, but also bilaterally in trade agreements.

## **General Information on the Scientific Opinion**

On June 17, 2020, the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) Panel on Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW) published a Scientific Opinion on the welfare of pigs at slaughter. This report aims at evaluating the adequacy of Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 ‘on the protection of animals at the time of killing’, which was adopted in 2009, against the latest scientific publications and is a follow-up of a first evaluation from 2013. The 2009 regulation upgraded and harmonized animal welfare standards in pig slaughterhouses in EU member states (MS), but the implementation and enforcement of these standards is the responsibility of the MS. Varying levels of implementation and enforcement between MS may lead to uneven animal welfare levels and competition distortion across the EU. The verification of the even implementation and enforcement of the regulation is executed by the EU Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) as part of periodical audits.

The European Commission requested this Scientific Opinion with the dual purpose:

1. For use in the discussion on animal welfare standards in the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code
2. For upgrading EU animal welfare standards as part of the Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy

EFSA consulted three main sources of information in developing this opinion:

- (i) literature search
- (ii) consultation of MS representatives,
- (iii) expert opinion through working group (WG) discussion.

## **Overview of the Scientific Opinion**

The Scientific Opinion assessed the different processes of slaughtering for welfare, from the arrival of pigs until their death. They were grouped into three main phases: pre-stunning (including arrival, unloading from the truck, lairage, handling and moving of pigs); stunning (including restraint); and bleeding. Stunning methods were grouped into three categories: electrical, controlled atmosphere and mechanical. Twelve possibly problematic welfare situations the pigs can be exposed to during slaughter were identified: heat stress, cold stress, fatigue, prolonged thirst, prolonged hunger, impeded movement,

restriction of movements, resting problem, negative social behavior, pain, fear and respiratory distress. Welfare consequences and relevant animal-based measures were described.

In total, the opinion identified and characterized 30 welfare hazards that could occur during slaughter, most of them related to stunning and bleeding. Staff were identified as the origin of 29 hazards, mainly because of the lack of appropriate skill sets needed to perform tasks or because of fatigue. Corrective and preventive measures to correct these hazards were identified, with management shown to have a crucial role in prevention. For each process, outcome tables linking hazards and their origins, welfare consequences, animal-based measures, and preventive and corrective measures were developed. Mitigation measures to minimize welfare consequences also are proposed.

**Attachments:**

No Attachments.