



Vytenis ANDRIUKAITIS

Member of the European Commission

Berl [REDACTED]
Rue de la Loi, 200
B-1049 Brussels - Belgium
Tel. 00. [REDACTED]
e-mail: [REDACTED]@ec.europa.eu

Dr. Luis PLANAS PUCHADES
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries
And Food of Spain

Brussels, **06. 11. 2019**
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Dear Minister,

With this letter, I would like to ask for your active support to further improve compliance with the existing legal requirements concerning the welfare of pigs and in particular, the tail docking provisions of Council Directive 2008/120/EC laying down minimum standards for the protection of pigs.

During my mandate, this has been one of the Commission's animal welfare priorities. My services have undertaken a number of activities over the last three years aimed at assisting Member States and the pig sector to comply with the 2008 Directive and improve welfare standards including:

- a recommendation and staff working document on measures to reduce the need for tail docking;
- educational materials for farmers on cutting the need for tail docking;
- a three year project providing support to national authorities including study visits, audits, feedback on action plans to improve compliance, expert advice through TAILS visits, bringing together competent authorities, NGOs, the pig sector and veterinarians during three stakeholder meetings and disseminating good practice;

- the designation of the first EU Reference Centre for animal welfare focussing on pigs and specifically on avoidance of tail biting and prevention of tail docking;
- the creation of the Animal Welfare Platform and the sub-group on pigs which has focussed its activities in line with the above Commission objectives and actions.

I note that your services have not taken sufficient actions to clarify, strengthen and ensure compliance with the requirements on the prohibition of routine tail docking laid down in Directive 2008/120/EC.

This unsatisfactory situation must be rectified as soon as possible to ensure that Member State enforcement actions deliver real concrete outcomes so that conditions on farm start to improve and the number of tail docked pigs starts to decrease.

To be clear, routine tail docking is prohibited. The provisions of the existing Directives for pigs are clear and enforceable in relation to the results to be achieved, and at this stage the Commission does not envisage the need for legislative changes.

Therefore, I am urging you to reinforce your efforts and encourage cooperation with stakeholders to ensure that the remaining deficiencies are addressed quickly and before the end of 2019. My services will continue to facilitate Member States through regular contact with national contact points and EU stakeholders and by providing guidance upon request.

The Commission will remain vigilant on this issue and maintain pressure through all means at its disposal, including the option of infringement proceedings where necessary, to ensure that all Member States comply with the existing legal requirements in the shortest time frame possible and that Europe maintains its reputation as a world leader in animal welfare standards for our livestock sectors.

Yours sincerely,

