

## ANNEX: ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM TAILS EXPERTS TO THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES AND THE PIG SECTOR IN SPAIN

<b>For the pig sector</b>
<b>1. Pig's point of view</b>
<p>a) It appears that a large percentage of farms can manage tail-docked pigs without tail bites. These farms should – following a risk assessment and possible corrective actions - try to gradually stop tail docking. However, presentations indicated that some farms have pigs that are tail-docked very short. For such farms a two-step procedure could be considered in order to reach a situation where pigs are not tail-docked. The first step should be to leave at least half of the tail - this is already a recommendation of the Council of Europe (see rec. 5h below). If this leads to tail biting problems, further corrective measures both in relation to management and environment is needed. When there are no tail biting problems, c.f. rec. 5j below, the farmed should move to step two, which is a gradual cessation of tail-docking;</p> <p>A farmer with pigs that are tail-docked very short may also decide to move directly to undocked pigs. If this gives rise to tail biting problems, the farmer should use the two-step procedure described above and not go back to very short docked tails. Continuous efforts should be made to move towards keeping pigs with intact tails;</p> <p>b) Remember that every animal with an intact tail is not suffering from the docking procedure or from phantom pain. All animals suffer when their tails are docked. Animals with entire tails only suffer when bitten; they can be treated with painkillers if necessary. Therefore, when starting the rearing of pigs with intact tails, allow for higher biting figures initially. Furthermore, when tail biting occurs, it is important to intervene quickly - preferably already when indicators of an upcoming outbreak appear - to stop or minimize tail biting, so that the tail damage is not allowed to escalate leading to unnecessary suffering;</p> <p>c) Straw is considered one of the best enrichment materials. However, to use straw in the slurry systems, where the manure runs freely from the channels to the slurry basin, it is necessary to chop the straw or hay into small pieces (max 5 cm). A machine to chop the straw is on the market, but in fully slatted systems hay/straw racks are much better. They can be attached to the walls or the partitions between pens with or without a trough underneath.</p>
<b>2. Management</b>
<p>a) It is important to provide farmers and farm staff with guidelines on early indicators of an outbreak of tail-biting. Such early indicators include changes in general behaviour, such as activity of the pigs in a pen, changes in feeding and drinking patterns, and especially, cases of hanging tails or tails tucked between the legs. In addition, procedures for early interventions should be included in the guidelines. These include removing biters from the pen and adding proper amounts of novel enrichment material, proven to be attractive to the pigs. ‘First aid kits’ of such material should be readily available at first signs of a potential outbreak risk, and these materials should not be used as routine enrichment.</p> <p>Depending on the seriousness of the tail bite it may be necessary to move bitten pigs to hospital pens;</p> <p>Removing the biter may be one way to stop tail biting in a pen; however, in some cases it may be enough to give a proper amount of novel and attractive enrichment material. If removed, a biter should not be put in pens with larger animals due to the risk of it being attacked leading to poor welfare. Practical experience has shown that it may be possible to keep biters together without problems;</p> <p>b) Temperatures above a pig's comfort zone are a risk factor for tail biting. Therefore, measures should be taken to reduce this risk. One possibility is to install a misting system or something similar to help pigs regulate their body temperature. The system could be installed over the dunging area, as this may help to keep the lying area clean. The system should be operated, preferably automatically, at appropriate intervals. The intervals and misting periods should be weighed against the ambient temperature and the capacity of the ventilation system to keep humidity at an acceptable level. The system can advantageously be installed in older existing buildings;</p>

- c) Several trials on raising long-tailed pigs have been, or are currently undertaken by different organisations. This is very recommendable; however, it is of the utmost importance that these trials are well-designed. Instead of focusing on improving single risk factors, this includes holistic assessments of risk factors, farm-specific plans for improvements (which are developed further if needed to achieve good results), and proper evaluation of success at different stages of the trials. Economic evaluations should be carried out to provide information to farmers or companies on how the gradual change of the production system from routine tail docking towards rearing pigs with intact tails will affect the business. Financial evaluations should be done by an objective assessor, preferably by a university or an academic institute, to avoid bias. It should be kept in mind that there are also benefits to better management of a pig farm and better health status of animals, not only costs, and that these benefits might only become apparent in the long-term;
- d) Training of staff in pig farms is important to move away from the old procedures and to improve the management of pigs. Better understanding of risk factors and early detection of tail biting signs should be included in the training. It should also be kept in mind that staff might speak other languages than Spanish. It is therefore recommended that fact sheets or guidelines are translated if needed;
- e) As many veterinarians have only worked in pig farms with tail-docked pigs, attention should be given to the need to update the pig veterinarians' skills and knowledge of preventive measures and of risk factors for tail biting. Intervention procedures in case of tail-biting outbreaks should be included in the herd health plan of the farm and farm veterinarians should be able to advise on that;
- f) A network of farmers, possibly including their veterinarians, should be established. This would enable the sharing of experience on how to improve farm and management conditions, and on how to handle pigs with intact tails.

### **3. Consumer's expectations and market**

- a) In intra-EU trade it is important to create an intact tail pig market in order to reduce the risk of losing the market of live animals all together. This being one of the biggest challenges for the pig sector, initiatives by Member states should be encouraged;
- b) An animal welfare labelling system for pork meat is an excellent and ambitious project. It should include pigs reared with intact tails as a minimum requirement. The label would be an excellent tool to inform consumers of the conditions under which the pigs have been raised. Getting consumer support for Spanish pig farmers who raise pigs with intact tails is greatly supported.

### **For the competent Authority**

### **4. Funding**

- a) Member states and regions are encouraged to apply for funding of farm advisory services from the EU Rural Development Programme (Pillar II), which is co-financed by EU funds and regional, national and local funds;
- b) Funding from the EU Rural Development Programme (Pillar II) is also available for animal welfare compensation as a supporting measure for farmers. This compensation system is an important tool for farmers to make management changes at the pig farm. It can be used to put measures in place to prevent tail biting which go beyond the legislation's requirements, e.g. by creating more space. Use this compensation wisely and only for a transition period, to avoid any possible risk of affecting market prices;
- c) EU Rural Development Programme (Pillar II) funding is also available for promotional campaigns focusing on animal welfare (raising pigs with entire tails), for example for the training of pig veterinarians and pig farm staff;
- d) It is recommended to use the EU Rural Development Programme (Pillar II) funding to invest in new pig premises or to refurbish old ones, so that pigs can be reared with intact tails under more stress-free conditions, e.g. decreased stocking density, an increased percentage of solid floor, optimal cooling systems and manure systems that allow for the use of optimal enrichment materials such as straw.

## 5. Enforcement

- a) It is recommended that slaughterhouses should record tail-bites both at *ante mortem* and *post mortem* inspections. This should include a more precise recording of the seriousness of the tail bite. The findings should be recorded as a welfare indicator, and not hidden in “other finding”. Tail biting lesions should be recorded independently of whether they cause a food safety risk or not. The meat inspector or the official veterinarians at the slaughterhouses should be given guidelines by the central authority on how this is correctly done. This is important as the pig farmer can use this information as a first step to benchmark the findings between batches and find out the more evident risk factors in his/her own farm. It should be ensured that the pig farmer is informed about the findings. The competent authority should also have access to the findings in order to be able to carry out targeted inspections on farms with a high level of tail biting;
- b) To give inspectors better tools to assess compliance, compliance criteria in the action plan should be mandatory and this should be clearly agreed with the pig sector;
- c) The checklist to support official controls should be supplemented with a chapter on risk assessment. Detailed guidelines should be given on how inspectors should assess whether the different elements of the farmers risk assessment mirror the conditions on the farm, and whether the action plan will lead to improved conditions;
- d) Ensure that inspectors in all regions have access to equipment to measure gasses such as CO<sub>2</sub> and NH<sub>3</sub>. To rely on subjective criteria such as eye irritation is a too coarse and unreliable indicator to assess whether there is a need to improve indoor climate;
- e) The ‘Document on the management of pig farms in order to avoid tail biting’ gives good guidelines on enrichment materials. Nevertheless, it appears that many farms still use inappropriate material. Measures should be taken to ensure that only enrichment materials, which fulfil the pig’s need for investigation, manipulation and rooting are used;
- f) It was mentioned by the representative of the competent authority in the autonomous region of Catalonia that during inspections, farmers are only sanctioned if less than 80% of pens have been equipped with proper enrichment materials. This should be amended, as the aim should always be that 100% of the pigs have access to enrichment materials as legally required;
- g) It is suggested that the elements in the risk assessment form are described in more detail, setting concrete thresholds whenever possible, based on good practices of rearing pigs with intact tails. Such examples include recommendations on feeding through space per animals of different ages, as well as adding recommendations for the number of animals per drinker, water flow and proper functioning of water sources.
- h) It is acknowledged that farmers carry out a risk assessment, which identifies risk factors, and that farmers have to draw up action plans on how to address these risks. However, the action plan for the farms should not only include timelines for the proposed improvement actions regarding risk factors, but also a plan, which aims at raising pigs with intact tails only. To this end the action plan should also include timelines for how and when the farm will gradually begin to raise pigs with intact tails;
- i) The ‘Document on the management of pig farms in order to avoid tail biting’ from 2017 includes guidelines for recommended docking length. The document, however, only mentions a minimum length, without clarifying that the aim should always be to dock as small a proportion of the tail as possible. The Council of Europe Recommendation concerning pigs Article 24 states that ‘no more than half of the tail should be docked within the first 7 days of life’;
- j) In the decision support diagram for farmers, a threshold for tail biting of 2% is suggested for assessing when docking is no longer necessary. It is necessary to define what kinds of lesions are calculated: how severe does a lesion have to be to be included? It is recommended that only score 2 lesions should be included here. In addition, it is recommended to set different thresholds for intact and docked tails, as it is reasonable to assume that, at least initially, intact tails will have more lesions than docked tails. The threshold for intact-tailed pigs is suggested to be twice that for docked ones, i.e. 4% of score 2 lesions. It is important to remember that measures should still be taken to reach as low a level of biting as possible.