



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY
Health and food audits and analysis
F2 - Animals

Grange,
SANTE.F2 PC/jh

Dear Sir/Madam,

Subject: Petition to Speak out against pig cruelty behind Parma Ham

The Commission received an e-mail on 1 June 2018, as part of an online petition from change.org to speak out against pig cruelty behind Parma Ham. According to this e-mail Eurogroup is the instigator of this petition that is supported by seven signatures.

The petition refers to a video taken in pig farms in Italy and raises issues on the implementation of EU legislation on the protection of pigs¹ for which Member States are primarily responsible. These issues could therefore be better addressed by the Italian competent authorities. Since there is no evidence that you have contacted these authorities, we strongly invite you to do so, as they are in a better position to help you in this case.

The welfare of pigs is a Commission priority in the animal welfare area and the Commission is working with the Member States to improve implementation of the relevant EU rules. The Commission's activities in this sector are primarily to reduce the systematic tail-docking of pigs. The Commission is nonetheless aware that tail-biting is an issue influenced by multiple factors including enrichment material, environmental parameters, animal health, cleanliness, space allowances and cleanliness. All the Commission's activities therefore take these multiple factors into consideration.

¹ Mainly, Council Directive 2008/120/EC of 18 December 2008 laying down minimum standards for the protection of pigs (OJ L 47, 18.2.2009, p. 5–13)

Eurogroup for Animals
info@eurogroupforanimals.org

In this context the Commission published in 2016 a Recommendation² and an accompanying staff working document³ which provides additional guidance and useful tools for a harmonised understanding on how the provision of enrichment material and avoidance of tail-docking can be practically achieved.

The Commission also published in 2017 the deliverables of a communication initiative to prevent routine tail-docking. This objective of this project was to develop and disseminate good and best practices, through a series of factsheets and videos, to manage tail-biting and therefore reduce the need for tail-docking. For more information about the deliverables of this project you can visit the following website:

https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/welfare/practice/farm/pigs/tail-docking_en.

The Commission services are running a three-year project (2017-2019) to reduce the systematic tail-docking of piglets⁴. This project includes meetings, targeted audits to member States and a specialised technical group to support Member States in implementing the relevant legislation on the protection of pigs.

The Commission has recently created the EU Animal Welfare Platform⁵ of which Eurogroup is a member. This Platform brings together all stakeholders involved to enhance dialogue on animal welfare issues such as this and is intended to be an opportunity to discuss concrete improvements of the situation by sharing best practices, discussing new approaches and identifying shared paths of improvement. As you are aware the Commission has announced, during the Platform's meeting of 21 June, its intention to establish a sub-group on pigs. The scope of the sub-group shall be to promote the exchange of information, experience and good practices to reduce the systematic tail-docking of piglets, with the purpose of supporting the Platform's work and contributing to the achievement of its objectives. Given your strong interest in pig welfare I am confident that you will not miss this opportunity to contribute to this initiative.

² Commission Recommendation (EU) 2016/336 of 8 March 2016 on the application of Council Directive 2008/120/EC laying down minimum standards for the protection of pigs as regards measures to reduce the need for tail-docking (OJ L 62, 9.3.2016, p. 20–22)

³ https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/animals/docs/aw_practice_farm_pigs_stfwrkdoc_en.pdf

⁴ More detail about this project can be found in the 2017 work programme of DG SANTE's Health and Food Audits and Analysis Directorate published at:
https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits_analysis/audit_programmes_en

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/welfare/eu-platform-animal-welfare_en

Please rest assured that the Commission is strongly committed to achieving a high level of compliance with animal welfare rules and will continue working with Member States and relevant stakeholders to address, within the Commission's remit of competence, this issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ana Ramirez Vela", with a horizontal line underneath.

Ana Ramirez Vela
Head of Unit