

Sectoral Road Map: Pigs

Market and policy issues

World

The supply and price of feed grains and soya bean meal fluctuates widely and exerts a very significant impact on the profitability of pig meat production. Demand for pig meat world wide continues to increase, but increases in production have been curtailed by periods of very high feed prices that have lead to reductions in breeding pig numbers.

European Union

Currently, imports of pig meat into the EU are quite insignificant in terms of EU pig meat production. Within the EU overall, sow numbers have been in decline. The decline in sow numbers will result in a somewhat smaller reduction in pig supplies due to the higher output per sow of the remaining herds.

Ireland

Despite significant imports of pig meat annually, Ireland is a net exporter of pig meat and of live pigs.

Shape and size of the sector in 2018

There are about 425 commercial pig units in Ireland with a total breeding herd of just under 150,000 sows. The average size of commercial sow herds is 496 sows.

Food Harvest 2020 proposes increased production to achieve annual disposals of 4.8 million head by:

1. Expanding the national breeding herd to 200,000 sows.
2. Increasing sow productivity from 21.8 to 24 pigs produced per sow per year.

Three key performance indicators are identified:

1. Sow productivity: The increase will have to come from a

Targets proposed for the pig production sector.

Factor	Sector average		Top 10% of producers 2018
	Current	Target 2018	
No pigs produced/sow/year	21	24	27
Average slaughter weight kg dead	79	80	80
Feed conversion weaning to sale	2.46	2.35	2.3



- significant improvement in the number of piglets born alive per litter.
2. Slaughter weight: The small increase in carcass weight at slaughter to 80kg is based on the continued use of entire males as opposed to castration, either surgical or by vaccination.
3. Feed conversion: Currently over 30% of the feed used by the pig sector is home milled and mixed, and this is expected to increase.

Environmental implications

The density of pig production in Ireland is not a constraint on the expansion of production within the existing environmental regulations.

The environmental impact of the projected increase can be substantially offset by improvements in feed formulation. The location of the increased production in areas with low density of production and in tillage areas would reduce the cost of transporting pig manure to be used as a valuable grassland and crop fertiliser.



Research and knowledge transfer actions

1. Conduct relevant pig research in the areas of nutrition, welfare and pig management at Moorepark with the financial support of the sector.
2. Increase the number of producers that fully participate in the PigSys herd recording system and benchmark herd performance.
3. Continue availability of farm visits to deal with specific problems/issues on units.
4. Provide focused workshops for pig producers and staff, both at central locations and on farm for larger herds.
5. Continue the Fetac Level 6 course commencing every second year.
6. Increase the use of electronic methods of communication.

Comment

There are a number of key issues for pig producers in Ireland at present:

1. Failure to maintain a reasonable return on investment in recent years.
2. A high level of indebtedness to the feed sector.
3. Pig producers will be required to invest in dry sow housing before the end of 2012 in order to comply with EU legislation and national regulations (SI 311 of 2010).
4. The extension of the transitional arrangements in relation to the use of pig manure as a fertiliser is to be phased out over six years.
5. Feed represents 70% of the cost of producing pig meat. National and EU policy in relation to the approval of genetically modified varieties of soya bean and also maize, impact directly on the cost of ingredients.

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The road map for pigs is available on www.teagasc.ie.