



11th March 2015

Dear Commissioner Andriukaitis,

Regarding: Lack of humane stunning and slaughter method for pigs

Around 250million pigs are slaughtered each year in the EU, but despite the common European claim that EU animal welfare standards are the highest in the world, a large proportion of these animals may experience ineffective, painful stunning before slaughter. We are extremely concerned that there remains no reliably humane method of stunning pigs, and that despite Article 13 of the TFEU requiring the EU and Member States to pay “full regard to welfare requirements of animals” in formulating and implementing EU agriculture policy, little is being done to address this issue.

Animal welfare groups, including Compassion in World Farming, have noted that this has been a known problem for almost 20 years. Currently, pig stunning is limited to electrical stunning and the use of high concentrations of carbon dioxide. While electrical stunning can lead to quick and effective loss of consciousness if properly performed, pigs are highly stressed at being separated from their groups for stunning, and this will regularly lead to poor handling through the need for use of force. In addition, electrical stunning may in some cases be ineffective - for example due to improper placement of equipment. Stunning with CO₂ allows pigs to remain in groups thereby leading to better pre-slaughter handling, but the high concentrations of the acidic gas have been shown to cause panic, pain and gasping, which can last for 60 seconds before loss of consciousness.

While animal welfare should be paramount, we recognise that there are economic considerations to take into account in all cases - however, there are more humane alternatives to these stunning methods which could be employed with relatively minimal costs. These include two-phase carbon dioxide, where a low CO₂ concentration is used followed by a higher one after loss of consciousness; carbon dioxide associated with inert gases; or inert gases without carbon dioxide. All three methods are currently in use for stunning poultry in the EU.

There is an urgent need for further EU and industry research into these three methods for use in stunning pigs, as well as Low Atmospheric Pressure Stunning (LAPS) which is in use in the US for stunning and slaughter of poultry. We urge the EU to move quickly to develop a more humane alternative for stunning pigs in order to enforce its own high standards on animal welfare during slaughter, and should it be found that alternatives to current stunning methods for pigs lead to reduced suffering for the animals with reasonable economic impacts then these should be implemented as the standards for pig stunning and slaughter as soon as possible.

We look forward to hearing back from you on this important issue at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Molly Scott Cato MEP

Keith Taylor MEP

Jean Lambert MEP