

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY.

Voluntary - Public

Date: 9/6/2019

GAIN Report Number: GM19034

Germany

Post: Berlin

Federal Voluntary Label for Pork to Promote Animal Welfare

Report Categories:

Livestock and Products

Agricultural Situation

Policy and Program Announcements

Approved By:

Emily Scott

Prepared By:

Leif Erik Rehder

Report Highlights:

On September 5, 2019, the German Government introduced a voluntary animal welfare label for pork products. This still needs to be discussed and voted on in German Parliament with the outcome unclear. Regardless, animal welfare labelling will be a priority for Germany during its EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2020. Higher domestic animal welfare standards already limit the competitiveness of German farmers and consequently reduce import demand for soybeans.

General Information:

Animal welfare is at the heart of a discussion about an “agricultural turnaround” and the future of farming in Germany. This puts the German Government under pressure to implement stricter national animal welfare regulations. Thus, on September 5, 2019, the German federal cabinet introduced a voluntary animal welfare label for pork products. The voluntary label would mark the level of standard for animal husbandry, transport and the slaughter of hogs. (Note: Germany is self-sufficient in pork production and this is a voluntary label; therefore no requirements for imported product.)

The cabinet’s decision goes back to plans of Julia Kloeckner, Minister for Agriculture, who said that the aim is to "make it clear to the consumer which products meet higher standards than those laid down by law." The Agriculture Ministry stated that in order to "optimize marketing opportunities," the welfare label would have three levels. Criteria of all levels would go beyond the requirements of the legal minimum standard with increasing requirements from level to level." The Bundestag still needs to approve the regulations. The label would initially apply to pork with planned later introduction for beef and poultry.

The planned criteria of the national animal welfare label for hog farming include space per animal, activity material, nest building material, suckling phase, tail docking, piglet castration, drinking water, self-monitoring with stable climate and drinking water check, animal welfare training, recording of animal welfare indicators, transport to slaughterhouse and slaughter.

Following the government's passing of the plan, the label was heavily criticized by different stakeholders. The criticism focused on the aspect that the label is voluntary (i.e. not mandatory) and that exact criteria still needs to be set by consent with the Environment Ministry. Now, it is also unclear how and when the animal welfare label will be voted upon in parliament and how this decision will be transformed into regulations. In any case, the Animal Welfare Labelling Act has been notified to the European Commission. And, the agricultural ministry has announced that it will promote binding European animal welfare labelling during the German EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2020.

Among critics is also ruling coalition partner SPD. The Social Democrats (SPD) announced that they would only agree to a mandatory but not a voluntary animal welfare label in the Bundestag. "Without a livestock strategy and a mandatory commitment, there will be no label," SPD deputy parliamentary faction leader Matthias Miersch told the German Press Agency. The German Green Party also criticized the plans by commenting that "having an animal welfare label is step forwards but being voluntary and not mandatory is problematic". For the liberal party FDP, the main problem is that "there will be only precise details once there is consent between Agricultural Ministry and Environment Ministry". In addition, the FDP also criticizes "that the animal welfare label is not mandatory and will therefore compete with existing labels of the Animal Welfare Initiative and organic labels which will create additional confusion for consumers".

The animal welfare discussion has already changed the situation for German pork farmers. German pork farmers face stricter regulations than most of their European competitors and this trend will continue. Stricter animal welfare regulations already played a role in the reduction of pork numbers in Germany, which reduced import demand for soybeans. As a result, there is less Germany pork available to export. In recent years, Germany has become one of the main competitors for U.S. pork in Asia. The German

government will continue to lobby towards the improvement of animal welfare standards at the European level, especially during its EU Council Presidency in the second half of 2020.

For more information please see following GAIN reports:

[Pork Production in Decline - Eroding Soybean Meal Demand](#)

[Animal Welfare Takes Center Stage](#)