



Local Characteristics of Pig Production in Germany and Bavaria

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Pig farming in Germany

Around 26 million pigs, 1.8 million of which are sows, are kept at 22,400 farms in Germany. That puts Germany in second place in Europe after Spain (30 million pigs). The number of pigs in Germany has decreased by about 4% within the last year.

Pig farming in Germany is mainly concentrated in the north-west, in the states of Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia. In Bavaria, pig farming can primarily be found in the southeast.

The structures in pig farming vary greatly between the different regions of Germany. In contrast to eastern Germany, the farms in southern Germany are relatively small, whereas the farms in northwestern Germany are of intermediate size.

Pigs in Germany are mainly kept on slatted floors. However, straw is increasingly used as an enrichment material, for example to prevent tail biting. New pens are to some extent built with closed floor areas covered with a light layer of straw for bedding and outdoor access for the pigs.

Division of labour is the standard in German pig farming, i.e. the majority of pigs are reared in farms specialised in producing either piglets or fattening pigs. In Bavaria, about 65% of piglets are transferred to specialised pig fattening units by the piglet production farms. The remaining 35% are kept in so-called combined farms which integrate piglet production and fattening.

The number of piglets produced in Germany is not sufficient for our fattening capacities, therefore, Germany imports around 11 million piglets from Denmark and the Netherlands annually.

Pork is still the most important type of meat in Germany. However, per capita consumption decreased from 56.5 to 49.5 kilos between 1998 and 2018. The level of self-sufficiency for pork is around 120% in Germany (compared to around 97% in Bavaria). The proportion of organic pork production is about 1%.



Agriculture and pig farming in Bavaria

With around 100,000 agricultural farms, Bavaria is a core agricultural region in Europe. Agriculture and animal husbandry in Bavaria are characterized by relatively small farms. The average farm size is about 30 ha. Rental prices up to €1,000 per hectare and more are paid in the good farming areas.

The proportion of farms whose main source of income is agriculture amounts to about 40%. The remaining farms are managed as a sideline business (mainly non-agricultural income).

Livestock farms are an essential part of Bavarian agriculture with dairy cattle being the most important sector. However, pig farming also plays a very large role for Bavarian agriculture: around 3.2 million pigs, approximately 220,000 of which are sows, are kept at 4,800 farms in Bavaria. That is about 12% of Germany's pig population.

Pig farms in Bavaria are only about half as big as those in the rest of Germany. We have a relatively large amount of small farms in particular in piglet production with an average of 109 breeding sows per farm.

On average, 24.6 piglets are weaned per sow per year in Bavaria. However, the mean is biased by the contribution of smaller farms whereas the average performance in specialised farms is considerably higher. In our state's experimental farm with 250 hybrid sows from the Bavarian breeding programme, 29.5 piglets are weaned per sow per year. The average daily gain of fattening pigs in Bavaria is about 800 g, with a lean meat content of 59.5%. Pietrain boars are usually used as terminal sires mated to hybrid sows, or to purebred sows from German Landrace.

A relatively high proportion of the marketing for the slaughter pigs in Bavaria is done by producer associations.

Surveys have shown that locally-produced food is important to consumers, and that they are also willing to spend more on such products. In this regard, we have developed the state label "Certified Quality – Bavaria". Meat carrying this label must come from pigs that were born, fattened and slaughtered in Bavaria. There is high demand for this label in the food retailing industry. About 60% of Bavarian pigs are marketed under this label. The surcharge for labelled pigs is up to €5 per animal.

The aim of Bavaria's agricultural policy is the area-based, animal- and environmental-friendly production of pork which is also accepted in public. Furthermore we want competitive, family-run farms.