FACT FILE
– Danish pig production
Danish pig meat is produced to the highest standards, in all important areas such as animal health and welfare, food safety, and the environment. This Fact File seeks to provide a brief explanation as to why Danish pig meat represents such a unique choice for its customers.

Contents

The Danish model 3
Control 4
Quality 5
Food safety 6
Traceability 7
Veterinary system 8
Welfare on the farm 10
Welfare during transport and at the slaughterhouse 12
Feed 13
Environment 14

The Danish model

The whole Danish production chain is owned by the pig producers themselves. In practice, this means that they are better able to control all stages of the production: from the choice of genetics, which feed to use, how the pigs are housed and the slaughter process. Because the farmers own the whole chain, they are able to take effective decisions to adapt production to customers’ requirements.

In Denmark, 90% of pigs are slaughtered within the co-operative system by Danish Crown (80%) and Tican (10%).

The Danish pig industry

Approx. 4,200 pig farms
29.1 million pigs

Live exports:
9.2 million piglets
0.5 million slaughter pigs/sows

Slaughterings DK
19.4 million

Exports:
approx. 90%
DKK 32.3 billion
DK:
approx. 10%
DKK 3.2 billion

Approx. DKK 35.5 billion in total
Quality

Danish pig meat is characterised by its uniform quality. Maintaining strict standards demands action throughout the entire chain, with a view to supplying pig meat of the highest quality.

Following many years of meticulous pig breeding work, Danish pigs provide pork with good eating quality. Today, the average lean meat content of a typical Danish pig carcase is around 60%. This means that Danish pig meat is a lean product, which makes it ideal for further processing, because the product is better suited for curing and for absorbing other ingredients. At the same time, Danish pig meat has sufficient fat marbling to ensure succulence, tenderness and flavour, fundamental to good eating quality of pork.

- Consistent focus on achieving the highest possible meat quality.
- Suitability for processing.
- Uniform size of all cuts.
- Tender and tasty meat, with good eating quality.
- High animal welfare standards.
- Consistency.
- Good shelf life.

Control

The Danish quality system for pig meat, also known as the Quality and Safety Guarantee (QSG), also covers the whole production chain. The requirements of the system are based on Danish and EU legislation. There are also further requirements set out by the Danish pig industry itself. All herds are visited by an independent certification body at least every third year to ensure that all requirements for animal welfare, traceability and food safety are being met. Other specialist schemes require an annual audit. The slaughterhouses must be certified to the Global Red Meat Standard (GRMS) in order to qualify for the Danish quality assurance guarantee. GRMS is the only commercial standard developed specifically for abattoirs and includes requirements for animal welfare during transport and the lairage and slaughter of the pigs.
Food safety

Food safety is a cornerstone of the production of pig meat in Denmark. Throughout an integrated chain, production is optimised to ensure healthy and safe pig meat. In addition to meeting Danish and EU legal requirements, the Danish pig meat industry has taken a range of independent initiatives aimed at improving product safety and shelf life.

- Denmark has a unique Salmonella control programme covering the entire production chain.
- The occurrence of Salmonella in Danish pig meat is low (just over 1.0%).
- The slaughterhouses operate a comprehensive monitoring programme for the control of residues in fresh meat. Together with government controls, approx. 18,000 random samples are taken every year – nearly four times the level required by EU legislation.
- No trace of hormones have been found and any traces of pesticides have always fallen within the agreed Maximum Residue Level (MRL).
- Residues of veterinary medicines / antibiotics are rarely found – just 1 or 2 samples per year in the many thousand tests carried out.
- Danish pig meat has been free of trichinella since 1929 and Denmark has been officially recognised as ‘trichinella-free’ by the EU since 2007.

Traceability

Denmark operates comprehensive registration, marking and documentation throughout the production of its pig meat. All pigs are marked with a unique ID-number and all herds are registered in a public database, in which all movements of pigs are also registered. The Danish traceability system allows the opportunity to trace pig meat from a slaughterhouse to a small group of farmers and pigs arriving at the slaughterhouse can be traced directly to an individual farm. Only pigs born and reared in Denmark are slaughtered in Danish abattoirs, thus assuring the quality of Danish pig meat.

- The Danish traceability system guarantees that the meat is Danish and comes from healthy animals.
- All Danish pigs have a unique ID-number.
- An open system of animal registration puts information about individual farms into the public domain.
- Comprehensive registration, marking and documentation ensures excellent traceability throughout the production chain.
Veterinary system

In Denmark, a strong partnership exists between the authorities, veterinarians and farmers. This collaboration has helped ensure the high health status of Danish pig herds. All use of medicine in animal production is registered and monitored in the Danish authorities’ central database, Vetstat. Data is submitted by dispensing pharmacies, vets and feed mills. Denmark is the only country in the world that registers the consumption of medicine within individual herds and animal groups. This provides a robust database to underpin specific initiatives to eliminate unnecessary use of antibiotics. Danish vets are not allowed to sell medicine, only to prescribe it, thus maintaining focus on disease prevention and sound veterinary practice and ensuring responsible use of antibiotics by producers.

Compared to other major pig producing countries, use of veterinary medicine in Denmark is among the world’s lowest (less than 0.045g per kg of pig meat produced) and initiatives are in place to reduce usage still further.

The Danish veterinary system is open and transparent.

Reports on the use of medicine by the Danish livestock industry can be downloaded from www.danmap.org.
Welfare on the farm

The production of healthy, thriving animals must be linked to good welfare practice. Adequate space and light, dry resting areas and access to rooting materials (such as straw, hay, wood blocks or other natural material) are all important to meet the pigs’ behavioural needs. Farmers’ ability to observe his pigs and understand their behaviour is also the key to delivering good animal welfare.

Improving pig welfare continues to be given a high priority. Currently around €33m is invested in pig industry research and development, with a significant proportion allocated to pig welfare projects.

The Danish pig industry will continue in its quest to improve animal welfare.

- All pregnant sows are now kept in groups from no later than four weeks after service to one week before farrowing.
- All pigs have permanent access to natural materials to meet their needs for rooting behaviour. Use of plastics and other synthetic materials is not permitted.
- Pain relief is administered prior to the castration of male piglets soon after birth.
- There are specific Danish requirements for solid or drained floors in units for piglets or finishing pigs to provide them with a comfortable resting area and fully slatted flooring will be banned from July 2015.
- There are specific Danish requirements for the use and design of hospital pens for sick or injured pigs, in order to provide them with the best possible care. Early intervention and treatment of individual pigs also helps to reduce the need for medicine.
- Showering must be provided for all pigs over 20 kg to enable them to manage their body temperature during warmer weather.

The pig industry has set out important new welfare objectives:

- At least 10% of farrowing sows must be in loose systems from 2020.
- All sows in the service area in new units must be in loose systems from 2021.
Welfare during transport and at the slaughterhouse

All Danish pigs are transported directly to the slaughterhouse in specially equipped vehicles. The Danish authorities must approve all vehicles and the pig industry itself has issued specific requirements for their design. All drivers must receive formal training and be approved by the authorities for transport of live animals.

- Wherever possible, Danish pigs are kept in small and stable groups, during transport and lairage at the abattoir prior to slaughter, thus minimising any unnecessary stress and are now stunned in groups.
- Danish pigs have a short journey to slaughter, in no cases longer than three hours.
- All vehicles must be equipped with GPS, mechanical ventilation and drinking facilities.
- The use of electric goads during the loading and offloading of the pigs is banned.
- Mortality of pigs during transport is among the lowest in the world: just 0.006% of pigs transported during 2012.

Feed

Denmark has strict legislation for the production of feed, closely supervised by the Danish authorities. There is ongoing monitoring of all feed from Danish suppliers as well as inspection of imported feed materials to ensure that only healthy and safe feed is produced and fed to pigs.

- Feed for Danish pigs is based on natural raw materials, such as barley, wheat or soya bean and no use of growth promoters or hormones.
- Grain for use in feed is mainly grown by Danish farmers and often by the pig producers themselves.
- Most Danish feed mills are owned by the farmers themselves.
- All results from official monitoring of feed mills are available in the public domain at www.pdir.dk.
Environment

Danish pig producers have been recognised for their achievements in reducing the environmental impact of their production. In just ten years, the emission of greenhouse gases has been reduced by 20% and the industry has a target to secure a further 6% reduction before 2015.

The amount of feed consumed by pigs is the single most important factor contributing to the emission of greenhouse gases. Higher feed efficiency and increasing production of biogas from animal slurries have been identified as the key to reducing emissions still further. If all the slurry from Denmark’s pig production was treated in biogas facilities, emissions would fall by a further 20%.

Over the past 25 years, pig meat production in Denmark has increased while, at the same time, there has been a significant reduction in the impact on the environment. The Danish pig industry wishes to work in a transparent and targeted manner to minimise the environmental impact of its production:

- Resource optimisation and use of new technologies will underpin future strategies to limit the environmental impact of pig production.
- Today Denmark produces two pigs with the same environmental impact of just one pig in 1985.
- Over the past 25 years, total production of pig meat in Denmark has increased by 68%, while nitrogen discharge has been reduced by 11%.
- Emissions of ammonia per kg of pig meat produced fell by 61% between 1990 and 2007.
- It is expected that through new technologies, such as acidification or cooling of slurry and improved air purification, the industry can reduce the loss of ammonia by a further 40% by 2020.
- Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) analysis has shown that the distance travelled by meat (or ‘food miles’) has a minimal effect on its overall environmental impact.