



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Animal Welfare: Commission steps up pressure on Member States to implement ban on individual sow stalls

Brussels, 26 April 2012 – The Commission has today stepped up calls on Member States to ensure that the ban on individual sow stalls is fully applied from 1 January 2013. Council Directive 2008/120/EC on the protection of pigs requires that sows and gilts (immature female pigs) are kept in groups during approximately 2 months and a half of their pregnancy in all pig holdings keeping 10 sows or more from 1 January 2013. As a result, pigs will be moved from individual narrow stalls to more welfare friendly systems.

Member States are at the front line for the implementation of Council Directive 2008/120/EC and have had since 2001 to ensure that the rules are applied by the farming industry. Three Member States (UK, Sweden and Luxembourg) have so far indicated that they already comply with the impending ban, while data provided by the member States to the Commission shows that 16 of them should have complied by the time it comes into force.

Health and Consumer Policy Commissioner, John Dalli said *"European consumers have high expectations for quality food and farmers have high demands for a competitive, level playing field. Balancing these issues against the economic challenges facing our farming industry is a tough challenge. The Member States have had twelve years to implement the provisions of this Directive and the Commission will use the legal powers at its disposal and take action against those Member States that fail to comply with the housing rules on sows."*

Background - the need for change:

The ban on individual sow stalls is a response to calls from, in particular EU consumers, to improve food quality and animal health in the EU. It represents an important milestone for animal welfare and was decided jointly by the Member States, the Commission and the Parliament on the basis of strong scientific evidence that the welfare of sows is severely compromised when they are confined in single sow stalls. Added benefits of the new farming system are that it clearly increases the survival rate of newborn piglets as well as increasing the productivity of sows.

The ban not only ensures that food produced in the EU is of high quality benefiting consumer's health but also achieves higher animal welfare standards. The ban on sow stalls was made providing plenty of time for industry to adjust its practices and to spread the investment costs over time.

The Commission has made repeated calls over the last year to flag the imminent deadline when it became clear that many Member States were still not compliant.

Next steps:

The Commission will continue to highlight to Member States the importance of urgently taking all the necessary measures to ensure compliance with Council Directive 2008/120/EC and continue to provide transparent and harmonised data on the implementation of group housing of sows.

For more information:

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