

# Media Release



NPA press release

September 27, 2021

## **NPA calls for butchery visas to avert British pig industry meltdown**

The NPA has called for the Government to extend its offer of short-term visas to butchery workers to help avert the collapse of the British pig sector.

On Sunday, Defra announced that up to 5,500 poultry workers will be able to work in the UK ahead of Christmas 2021, delivered through the Temporary Workers route. This followed the Department for Transport's announcement that up to 5,000 drivers will be able to come to the UK to transport food and fuel in the run up to Christmas.

But there were no measures for the pig sector, despite repeated requests from processors and the pig industry for short-term visas, as a welfare cull on farms looms ever larger due to a chronic shortage of butchers in pork processing plants.

The backlog is now well over 100,000 pigs with some farmers having run out of space and many more at or close to the limit. While some processors are working with the industry to reduce the backlog, preparations are being made for a welfare cull, which is now more likely to have to happen on farms.

NPA chief executive Zoe Davies said: "We were extremely disappointed that the Government has ignored repeated requests for temporary visas for butchers, despite the overwhelming evidence of the impact this is having across the supply chain.

"We desperately need those visas, even for a short period of time to help us get rid of the backlog. This is not just about saving Christmas, which seems to be the Government's sole focus, but about protecting pig welfare and averting an environmental disaster.

"If we don't get the help we need, it is true that consumers will be denied their Christmas favourites, like pigs in blankets. But we are also facing the long-term decline of British pig production and we need the Government to wake up to this now."

With British pig producers facing financial crisis, due to record costs of production, the NPA is warning of a significant contraction of UK pork production, thereby increasing our reliance on EU imports. A number of pig farmers have left the industry in recent months, with many more reducing their herd size.

The NPA is also asking retailers to play their part in reducing the backlog by prioritising British product over imported.

"There is a lot the retailers can do to help ease the backlog, and we believe that they have a responsibility to do so given their commitments to British pork," Dr Davies added. "We urge them to prioritise British produce in processing plants rather than relying increasingly on imports, as this will get more pigs moving through the chain. We believe our loyal British customers would be supportive of this.

"In particular, we are concerned that some imports are coming into the UK, being butchered here and taking up valuable labour resource, which is not helping move more of our pigs

through the supply chain.

“We welcome efforts being made by some processors to move pigs more quickly - but we would like them to ensure the financial burden is shared equally across the supply chain.”

Notes to editors

- 1) You can read regular updates on the pig industry situation in our crisis blog [HERE](#)
- 2) The NPA’s Pig Industry Group discussed the crisis at its latest meeting. You can read more [HERE](#)
- 3) The NPA is one of a number of food and farming industry bodies calling on the Government to introduce a 12-month COVID Recovery Visa. You can read more [HERE](#)

More information

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