

Media Release



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ASDA pledge will help pig farmers ride out lowest prices for 16 years

A promise by ASDA that it will increase its fresh pork to 80 percent British by next year has been welcomed by British pig farmers, who face losses of around £150m in 2016, as a result of low prices caused by Europe's frozen-pork mountain.

ASDA, which accounts for over 16 percent of the nation's food and drink sales, also plans to move all its own-brand sausages to British pork by July, in order to improve quality.

"We'll be discussing milestones over the weeks ahead," said NPA chief executive Dr. Zoe Davies. "But if ASDA moves ahead at a brisk pace, it will help keep the British pig sector relatively intact at a time when real-term prices are at their lowest for 16 years."

According to the industry's bimonthly PorkWatch survey, ASDA has already started its move to replace imported pork with fresh British pork. The survey shows British fresh pork shelf-facings increased 3 percent in January compared with November, from 56 percent to 59 percent.

"We are sure by promoting the quality of British pork, ASDA will grow pork sales across all its stores, particularly as a mid-week convenience food," said NPA chairman Richard Lister. "Tangible support like this will encourage our members to stay in production until the price we receive once again covers our costs of production."

Currently pig prices are at their lowest since 2008, and in real-terms at their lowest since 2000. The slump, which is now in its second year, is caused by two Russian trade embargoes causing a build-up of European Union pork in cold stores, and the strength of sterling against the euro, making continental imports difficult for some high street retailers to resist.

Uniquely, 40 percent of the British pig herd is outdoor-reared, which is a major factor of differentiation when compared with European Union pig production methods. Other animal welfare standards in Britain are higher than in most other countries. For example, the use of sow stalls is banned outright in Britain, whilst sows in most other European Union countries are still kept in stalls for up to four weeks at a time.

Only around 40 percent of pork and pork products consumed in Britain come from British pigs. The most popular cuts (back bacon, chops and steaks, gammon and ham) are under-produced domestically, whilst the less popular cuts (shoulder, belly and offal) are over-produced.

Around a quarter of home-produced pork is exported, mainly cuts that are less popular with British consumers.

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