

Output, Workshop 4, Promoting sustainability and pig welfare: Is it possible?

Purpose of the workshop

Sustainability and animal welfare are two 'intrinsic good qualities', which is expected in future farm animal production. Depending on definitions, however, there might be conflict of interests between actions promoting these qualities. The workshop will investigate whether actions for improving animal welfare in pig production will reduce possibilities for promoting sustainability.

Output

To set the scene for the discussions two presentations were presented. Karsten Klint Jensen spoke about sustainability and animal welfare in an ethical context. Sustainability can be viewed as a human welfare indicator which probably is the root to most of the conflicts arising when promoting both sustainability and animal welfare. Anne Grete Kongsted spoke about improved sustainability in organic pig production where agroforestry and prolonged weaning could be solutions to benefit both sustainability and animal welfare in the pig production. The discussion started with discussing whether the action plan is sustainable or could have possible negative impacts on sustainability for each of 9 actions that is planned to improve animal welfare for pigs. The following issues were raised in the debate:

- High mortality affects productivity
- Loose sows take up more space
- Ending castration of pigs can be problematic if sustainable solutions are not found
- Reducing the number of tail docked pigs calls for more resource-heavy system

It was obvious throughout the debate that the conflicts of interests and the dilemmas when promoting animal welfare and sustainability as two independent qualities are many. It was concluded that sustainable welfare is possible, but that many choices call for political decisions and prioritization to focus on either sustainability or animal welfare and acceptance of eventual side effects on the quality not in focus.

There is a need for international solutions, clarification of definitions and acceptance of a balance between sustainability and animal welfare when the qualities cannot be successfully promoted simultaneously. Even more important is honest communication of the chosen solutions to the consumers so that they can understand and make a well informed choice when shopping.