



Stakeholders' views regarding the key challenges in organic and low-input pig farming

PPILOW focus group discussions indicated several challenges which require specific attention in organic and low-input pig production.

Pig meat production

In pig meat production, the choice of design and location of site was identified as instrumental to the success of the organic or low-input production. Appropriate levels of access to water and feed stations must be provided, along with sufficient space to enable the animals to exhibit natural behaviors. Sufficient space needs to be given upon farrowing to protect the piglets and prevent crushing in both indoor and outdoor production systems.

Outdoor production

In outdoor production, other factors such as soil type, drainage, accessibility, shelter design and pasture management were regarded as important factors. Range areas need to be constantly monitored and re-assessed. Strict pasture management is required to maintain the ground conditions and accessibility.

Accessibility of the outdoor areas can be a particular problem, especially during winter months. It was perceived that access problems are alleviated if an outdoor area yard is provided rather than pasture, however, this would not enable the pigs' natural instinct to root.

Castration of male pigs

Castration of male pigs was regarded as an important factor irrespective of production system and further research is required to provide a reliable alternative to surgical castration. Some of the identified benefits achieved by castrating males are less aggressiveness, fighting and mounting of other pigs and it reducing the incidence of boar taint to the meat which can seriously affect the marketability. Surgical castration without an anaesthetic is not allowed in all countries, which leads to contrasting perceptions.



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