



Brussels, 17th June 2026
UECBV Ref: MV - 33362

Animal Husbandry Labelling – Situation in Germany

Context

The Animal Husbandry Labelling Act was promulgated in Germany on 23 August 2023 and came into force the following day. The key content is a **mandatory labelling for certain foods of animal origin to indicate the housing system** of the animals from which the meat was obtained. The initial scope is limited to **fresh pork from fattening pigs produced in Germany**. Imported products can be labelled on a voluntary basis.

Although the Act entered into force in August 2023, a transitional period was provided before the labelling of fresh pork becomes mandatory. This transitional period has been extended until 1 January 2027. Until then, use of the state animal husbandry label remains voluntary.

A [draft of a Third Act](#) amending the Animal Husbandry Labelling Act was recently published, aimed at reducing administrative burdens for businesses and authorities.

Simplifications

German pig farmers using only the “barn” husbandry method (Category 1) are exempt from notification requirements, as compliance with German minimum standards is presumed.

Introduction of the possibility of “downgrading” labels, allowing pork to be labelled under a lower husbandry category than the one used during fattening. Food businesses may choose the category displayed, providing greater flexibility in responding to market conditions while still informing consumers of the minimum husbandry standard.

Extensions

Animal husbandry labelling will be **extended to ready-to-eat food** prepared for human consumption, including products sold in restaurants, canteens, snack bars and food stands.

Expansion of the scope to **cover sows and piglets**. For the categories 2-4 “barn and space”, “fresh air” and “outdoor/pasture”, compliance with minimum German animal welfare requirements will be mandatory, including the prohibition of piglet castration without anaesthesia and restrictions on the use of gestation crates for sows. Pork from animals whose sow or piglet phase did not meet these standards will be labelled with the lowest animal husbandry category, regardless of conditions during the fattening phase.



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Foreign market participants

Pork intended to be offered on the German market must be labelled in accordance with the Animal Husbandry Labelling Act, regardless of where it was produced.

This replaces the previous voluntary participation for imported products.

Foreign market participants must therefore comply with the animal husbandry labelling system if they wish to place their products on the German market.

Timeline

- Final date for comments: [3 August 2026 \(WTO\)](#) / [12 August 2026 \(TRIS\)](#)
- Proposed date of adoption: November 2026
- Proposed date of entry into force: 1 January 2027

General concerns

Forced application of German rules for access to higher welfare categories

- Producers from other EU Member States will need to comply with German-specific animal welfare requirements to access the higher animal welfare categories in the German market.
- Introduction of animal welfare rules should be voluntarily based and not mandatory.

Limited recognition of animal welfare standards used in other Member States

- Exports from other Member States may not qualify for the higher German categories, despite complying with other animal welfare measures.
- As a result, suppliers may receive a lower German animal welfare classification even where they perform better on welfare criteria that are not included in the German scheme.

Disruption of the internal market

- This scheme may create obstacles to the free movement of goods within the EU.
- There are concerns that it could encourage other Member States to introduce their own mandatory national animal welfare classification systems, leading to a fragmented EU internal market and increased barriers to trade.

Economic costs

- The additional costs for non-German producers remain unclear.
- At this stage, no estimate is available of the economic impact that this measure may have on EU exporters of pigs and pigmeat to the German market.
