

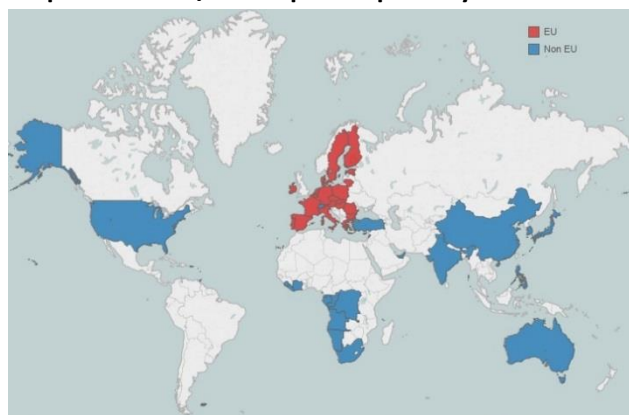
New publications full of valuable data

Two new publications from AHDB Pork, both out this month, provide a valuable source of information about the pig industry. The [Pig & Poultry Pocketbook](#) also allows comparisons with one of the sector's major competitors, while the [AHDB Pork Yearbook](#) includes lots of performance data which will be of use to producers.

The 2016 Pig and Poultry Pocketbook, the fourth edition of this popular publication, was launched at the recent Pig and Poultry Fair. As in previous years, the Pocketbook, which is genuinely small enough to fit in most pockets, pulls together the key facts and figures about the pig and poultry industries in one place. The aim of the publication is to provide quick reference statistics on the two industries, with particular focus on a review of 2015.

The Pocketbook covers the whole supply chain, from farm to fork, including statistics on the structure of the industry, prices, production levels, carcass classification and retail sales and consumption. One section which has been enhanced this year looks at imports and exports. Among the new information is a map showing all the countries which the UK exported pork to last year. Other than EU Member States, there are over 30 countries involved, ranging from China, which took over 27,000 tonnes of UK pork, to several Caribbean countries taking less than 10 tonnes each.

Map of UK fresh/frozen pork exports by destination



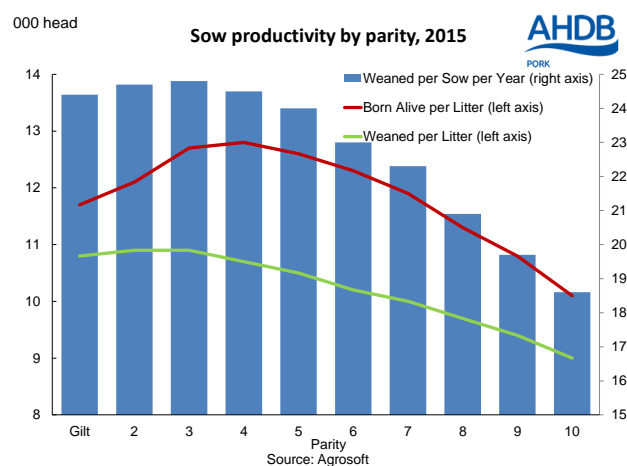
Source: HMRC, GTIS

Despite the exchange rate disadvantage, the UK still exported more pig meat last year. At 284,400 tonnes, shipments were at their highest level since 1998, when the UK sow herd was roughly twice the size and pig meat production was almost 30% higher. Despite this, the strong pound and competitive global market meant that the value of exports fell to £321 million. This was the first year-on-year fall since 2009 but is likely to be only a blip as the value of exports in the first quarter of 2016 was up 22% on a year earlier. If that growth rate is sustained throughout the year, 2016 exports could be worth close to £400 million.

The Pocketbook also shows how the strong pound affected the poultry sector. Export volumes were the lowest since 2012, with outbreaks of Avian Flu also having an impact, but lower prices meant that the value of exports reached an eight-year low. At the same time, imports increased during the year, meaning more poultry meat was available on the UK market. The led to falling retail prices during the course of the year. Unlike pork, this translated into higher purchases, helping to keep wholesale prices relatively stable.

As well as providing information about AHDB Pork's knowledge transfer, research and development activity, the new AHDB Pork Yearbook contains lots of data which will be of use to producers. This includes a summary of many of the key industry statistics for the last year and international comparisons of production costs. There is also a section looking at how changes in key performance indicators can affect overall production costs. For example, it shows that moving finishing feed conversion from the average ratio of 2.69 to the top third figure (2.42) would cut production costs by nearly 5p/kg. That alone would represent a saving of over £40,000 for a herd producing 10,000 finished pigs per year.

The Yearbook also includes a wide range of technical performance data for breeding (split between indoor and outdoor), rearing and finishing herds, provided by Agrosoft. This includes comparisons between average and high performing herds and time series showing developments over the last ten years. Among the tables are some showing the performance of sows by parity. This confirms that productivity peaks at around the 3rd or 4th parity and falls away rapidly after parity 5. Around 85% of sows were at parity 5 or below, with only around 1% beyond parity 8.



Information like this can help producers to improve their returns, vital in tough times like those at the moment. Understanding the current state of the industry (and its competitors) can also help producers to make the best possible business decisions. Publications like these can, therefore, make an important contribution to supporting the industry through this challenging period.