

Weaker currency boosts competitiveness of GB pig production

Great Britain was the only member country to record a decline in pig production costs in sterling terms last year, according to the latest pig production costs report from InterPIG.

GB production costs recorded a 5% decline year-on-year in 2016, averaging 126p/kg dw. Meanwhile, the cost of production in the EU climbed 8% in sterling over the same period, and actually averaged marginally higher than GB levels at 127p/kg.

This is the first time EU production costs averaged higher than GB levels since 2009. The decline in production costs meant GB production for the year returned to a positive net margin overall of 2p/kg. Higher pig prices in the EU also meant Denmark, Belgium and Spain recorded a net profit.

The improvement in the relative cost of British pig production was primarily due to the significant devaluation of the pound following the Brexit vote last June. The

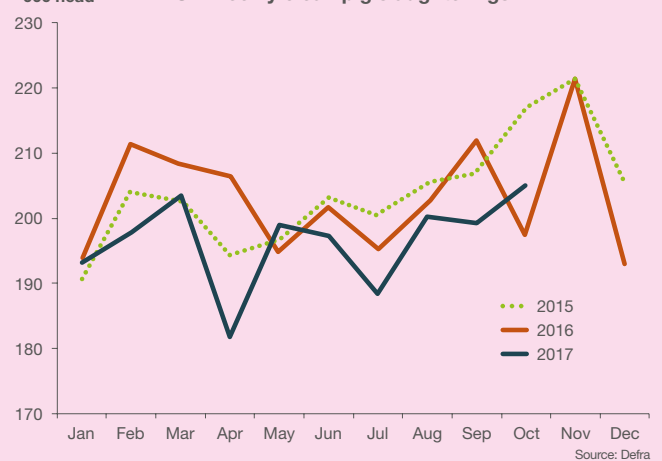
annual average value of sterling against the euro was 11% lower than year earlier levels, making production costs in EU countries comparatively higher. As such, GB fell from the second costliest producer in the InterPIG group in 2015, to sixth place in 2016. GB production costs remained the second highest if the currency effect is removed.

The full InterPIG report can be found on the AHDB pork website at: pork.ahdb.org.uk/prices-stats/published-reports

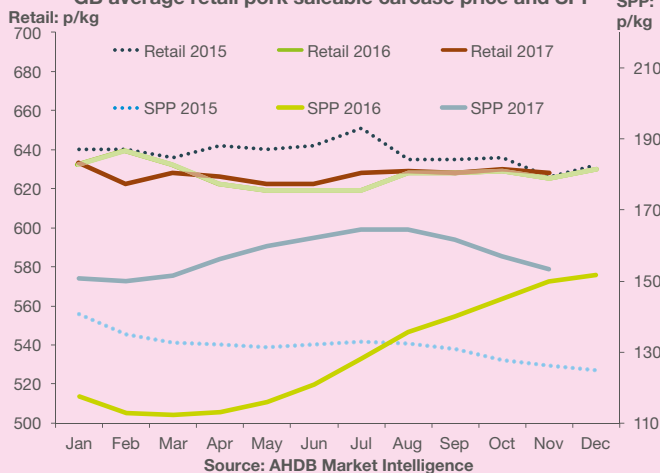
Sources of pig meat consumed in the UK



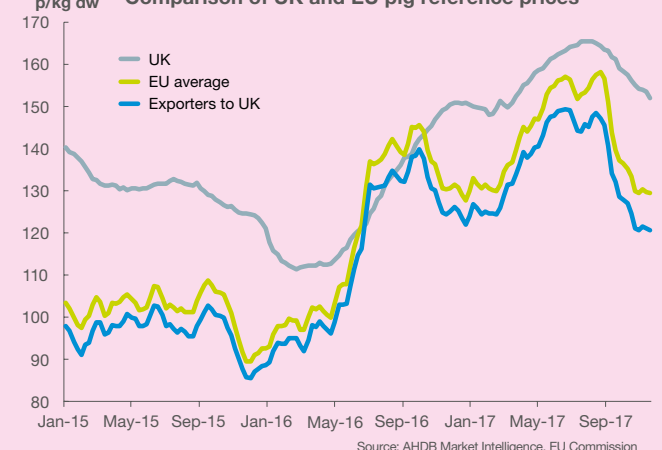
UK weekly clean pig slaughtering



GB average retail pork saleable carcass price and SPP



Comparison of UK and EU pig reference prices



Good quality water repays investment

Good quality, hygienic water is a key component of pig health, welfare and productivity. Sampling non-mains water at point of entry to determine bacterial contamination may also be a farm assurance scheme requirement (eg Red Tractor Assurance).

To help producers collect water samples correctly, we have published two Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which explain the process of collecting samples and submitting them to the lab. These can be downloaded from the website along with a range of other useful resources. The SOPs detail the steps that should be taken for basic microbiology testing, with the more advanced version providing additional steps for checking mineral content plus water flow rate and temperature at various points around the unit.

Check what is required with your assurance scheme and/or consult your veterinary surgeon/adviser before sampling to ensure the most effective and efficient approach is taken.

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During spring, Nigel Penlington, Head of Environment & Buildings, will be running meetings around the country to help producers assess the design and layout of their farm water systems and consider whether their current infrastructures are fit-for-purpose.

He'll be assisting attendees as they consider the important issues when renovating and installing new water supply systems on farm, including the design

of distribution and drinking systems (with standard values and calculations), to ensure that water is distributed safely around the farm at flow rates and pressures that deliver volumes that satisfy the demand from livestock.

It's worth noting that water is associated with 4 to 11% of net running costs; good water quality will repay investment, but the water system needs maintenance.

If these meetings are of interest producers should look out for details over the next few weeks, or get in touch with their Knowledge Exchange Manager.



Gilt Watch gets going

Producers are getting together for the first Gilt Watch meeting later this month, kicking off the new initiative to monitor gilt performance and help find ways to retain more gilts in the herd.

Too many young sows are not making it past their first or second parity which is wasting the high investment cost of rearing gilts and bringing down overall herd performance.

At the first meeting, producers taking part in Gilt Watch will hear from guest speaker Lisbeth Shooter of SEGES in Denmark, who has done similar work on gilt management over there and is sure to provide lots of insight to get discussions going.

Producers will then be picking up ideas from fellow producers and a number of industry experts, throughout the two-year period Gilt Watch runs for. Activities include:

- **Monitoring individual performance from cohorts of gilts**
 - **Reasons for culling**
 - **Empty days**
 - **Litter size at first and second parities**
- **Implementing changes to improve performance**
- **Meeting twice a year to review progress, over two-year period**
- **Sharing experience with the wider industry and benefiting from other producers' ideas.**

For more details on Gilt Watch visit: pork.ahdb.org.uk/pig-production/gilt-watch/ and for practical information on gilt management, go to: pork.ahdb.org.uk/events/gilt-management-for-lifetime-performance/

Gilt Watch is an AHDB Farm Excellence initiative which uses technical events and farmer-to-farmer learning to accelerate the uptake of knowledge, and provides a framework for farmers to explore the potential impact that adopting best practice can have on their business.



Midweek Meal Campaign – initial sales results are in!

A high-profile campaign to position pork medallions as a perfect midweek meal has got off to a strong start with new figures showing a rise in pork sales since its launch.

AHDB Pork returned to TV screens in September with its new advertising campaign to promote pork as quick, easy and convenient, as well as being a lean and healthy option for meal times.

And, according to initial figures from Kantar Worldpanel, sales of pork loin medallions, fillet medallions, whole fillet and loin steaks were up 8% in September and October, compared to the same period last year.

Sales of total fresh pork also rose by 3% with research showing that shoppers have switched from chicken to pork for the first time in three years.

Also, the number of British households buying pork cuts has risen by 4% and the

hero line, pork loin medallions, increased by 27% compared to the same period last year.

AHDB Pork's Head of Marketing Kirsty Walker said: "These initial figures are very encouraging, with research showing more new shoppers than ever are adding pork to their baskets for the first time.

"The campaign combines TV advertising, online and print advertising, in-store activity, public relations and social media to demonstrate the versatility, ease of cooking and great taste of pork medallions when used as the basis of a midweek meal.

"This was just the first phase of our campaign and there's more to come in the New Year. There will be a strong push of our online activity where we will be targeting millions of people with healthy, quick and delicious recipes."

AHDB Pork has begun work with Weight Watchers and Slimming World magazines to educate shoppers about the health benefits of eating pork through recipes and health facts.

And, to reinforce its messaging, there will be targeted social media activity on all Love Pork channels over the next six weeks as well as search engine advertising – meaning it's more likely that anyone looking for new recipe ideas on the web will receive AHDB's suggestions first.

Kirsty added: "Based on the sales data over the first phase of the campaign, we are very excited to see what the next six weeks brings."

AHDB Pork's campaign will return to the TV screens from 8 January – 25 February, in time to capitalise on the New Year's seasonal healthy eating attitudes.



Getting Tail Biting Under Control

Research funded jointly by AHDB Pork and by the RSPCA identified a set of the most important risk factors associated with tail biting which enabled an evidence-based "WebHAT" (Web-based Husbandry Advisory Tool) to be developed. This is an interactive resource providing specific information about the key risks for tail biting in pigs and can also be used to generate a report of prioritised, key tail-biting risks found on a farm, leading to practical suggestions to help address and reduce the specific risks identified.

Access the WebHAT via: <https://webhat.ahdb.org.uk/>

What IS Environmental Enrichment?

The legislation surrounding provision of environmental enrichment to pigs does not stipulate what does and doesn't constitute appropriate enrichment. What is most important is that it is provided in a sufficient quantity to enable proper investigation and manipulation activities, as well as being safe for both pigs and stockpeople.

Readers who are looking for different options for environmental enrichment can request a free copy of our practical guide by emailing: comms@ahdb.org.uk, or download it online.