

ENGLISH PIG SURVEY RESULTS: DECEMBER 2008

Recently released December pig survey results suggest there may be grounds for some cautious optimism about the fortunes of the English pig industry, with an expansion in the breeding herd between June and December 2008.

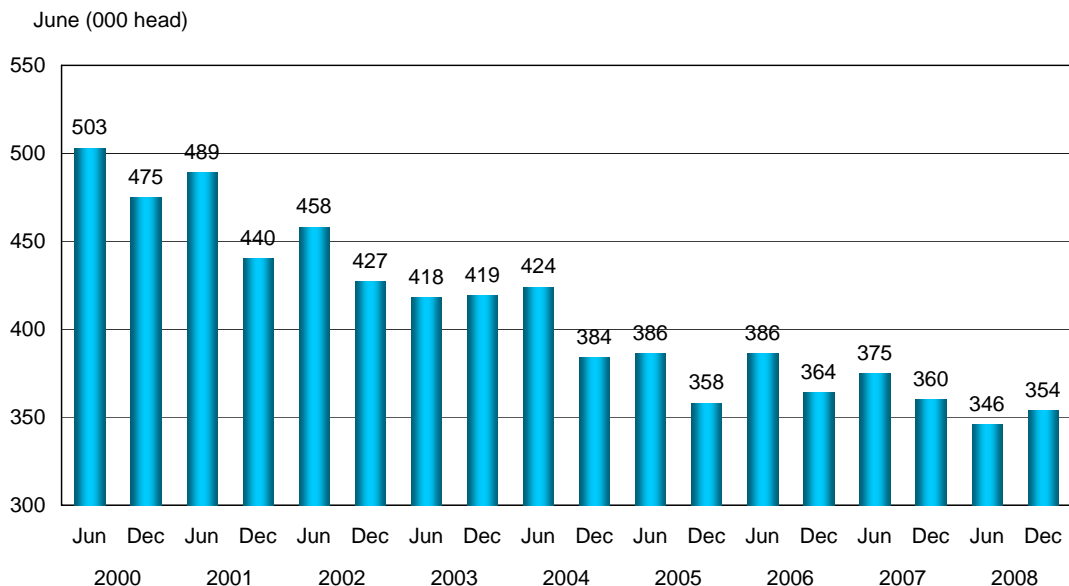
Increasing feed costs in the year to June 2008 had led to escalating losses in the sector. One result of this was the historically high sow culling rate, partly as a result of Foot and Mouth Disease, in the first four months of 2008. Consequently, English sow numbers declined by eight per cent in the year to June 2008.

Between the middle of 2008 and the end of the year, feed prices moved lower. As a result, estimated net margins moved from negative to positive (albeit a small positive) in the autumn. For the latest figures on margins, [click here](#). Producers have appeared to respond to the margin improvements more rapidly than expected. The English breeding herd in December was 8,000 head higher than in June, although still 6,000 (1.6%) lower than in December 2007. Since January 2009 feed prices have risen, as have producers' prices, with consequent negative effects on profitability. To see the latest on feed prices, [click here](#).

The total number of slaughter pigs in December, at 3.28 million, was two per cent lower than a year earlier. This reflects both the previous declines in the breeding herd and an element of backlog on farms in December 2007 arising from FMD movement restrictions. However, partly offsetting these factors, there was a further improvement in sow productivity in 2008. Within the slaughter categories the most marked decline was in the lightest category (up to 20kg liveweight), which fell by eight per cent.

In June 2008 English producers accounted for 86 per cent of UK breeding sows and 82 per cent of slaughter pigs, so the England results will clearly have a significant influence on the overall UK results. The UK results will be published by Defra on 12 March.

Trends in the English pig breeding herd



Links

December 2008 England survey results:

https://statistics.defra.gov.uk/esg/statnot/dec_eng.pdf

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26 February 2009