

Edited by Amy Quinn



Welcome to the April edition of our monthly newsletter. Producers are eagerly awaiting a rise in pig price as we currently lag considerably behind our European counterparts. It is hoped that a rise will be

given this week, but even at that, more is needed to close this gap and aid in the industry recovery.

This month also saw the launch of the TAMS 3 Pig and Poultry Investment Scheme (PPIS). Grant aid under this scheme will be paid to farmers at a rate of 40%, up to a maximum investment ceiling of €500,000. This ceiling includes the €90,000 investment ceiling available in the other seven TAMS 3 schemes but is in addition to the stand-alone ceilings for the Lower Emission Slurry Scheme (LESS) and the Solar Capital Investment Scheme (SCIS). More details on this scheme can be found later in this newsletter.

We are currently in the final stages of organising the Teagasc Pig Open Day 2023 and are very much looking forward to welcoming all pig farmers and industry stakeholders to this event over the two

days. It will take place at 10am on Tuesday May 9th in Teagasc, Moorepark, Fermoy, Co. Cork and 10am on Thursday May 11th in Ballyhaise Agricultural College, Ballyhaise, Co. Cavan. This is an ideal opportunity to see first-hand the results of the comprehensive research programme undertaken by Teagasc, and to meet our researchers, advisors and postgraduate students. On the day attendees will be brought around different stations which will cover a range of topics; managing the pig environment, improving pre- and post-weaning management and nutrition, managing disease, grower/finisher management and feeding, and sustainability. This event will include a viewing of the newest addition to the Teagasc Pig Research Facility, a finisher building tailored to conduct low emissions and high welfare research trials. We look forward to seeing you there! Don't forget to register (details at the end of this newsletter).

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- Changes to TBESS
- EFSA findings (Part 3)
- New welfare legislation in Spain

Changes to the Temporary Business Energy Support Scheme

Louise Clarke

Back in January, I wrote about the Temporary Business Energy Support Scheme (TBESS). This scheme was announced as part of Budget 2023. The scheme was designed to help businesses manage the higher electricity and natural gas bills. Through TBESS, the government was providing up to €10,000 – or €30,000 in some cases – per month to eligible businesses whose energy bills have increased by more than half when compared with the same period last year. The scheme was intended to operate in respect of energy costs relating to the period from 1 September 2022 to 28 February 2023.

Changes to the TBESS

However, in March the Minister of Finance announced a number of amendments to the TBESS. All these changes are published on the revenue.ie website and include:

- The extension of the scheme to 31 May 2023
- An increase in the monthly limit on payments for claim periods from 1 March 2023 onwards:
- The €10,000 monthly limit on payments under the scheme has been increased to €15,000 per qualifying business
- The €30,000 limit has been increased to €45,000 per qualifying business, in cases where the qualifying business operates across multiple locations.
- A reduction of the energy costs threshold from 50% to 30% with effect from 1 September 2022. The requirement to demonstrate a 50% increase in the average unit price in order to pass the energy costs threshold has been

reduced to 30%. This change applies from 1 September 2022 and means that businesses that did not meet the 50% threshold for some or all claim periods from 1 September 2022, may now be able to access the scheme if they meet the 30% threshold. For any business that have already submitted claims, Revenue will automatically reassess the claims based on the revised 30% threshold, therefore those business do not need to amend claims previously submitted. However, for businesses that did not make a claim because they did not meet the 50% threshold, but are now eligible under the revised 30% threshold, they must register for the scheme and submit their claims.

- An increase in the Temporary Business Energy Payment (TBEP) amount from 40% to 50% of a business' eligible costs from 1 March 2023
- An extension of the limit for all claims to 31 July 2023

A qualifying business can make claims for the September 2022 to April 2023 claim periods and the facility to make claims for the May 2023 claim period will open in due course. Revenue will automatically reassess claims using the new 30% energy costs threshold. A business will not need to amend claims previously submitted to take account of the revised threshold. Processing of claims using the revised threshold commenced 24 April 2023. A business will receive a notification in their Revenue Online Service (ROS) inbox if any additional payment is due.

How do I apply for the scheme?

TBESS is being administered by Revenue on behalf of the Government. The easiest way to apply is through the Revenue Online Service (ROS). This is a two-step process. Step one is registration and step two is to make a claim. Both of these are accessible through revenues on line system, ROS. You must register via ROS before claims can be submitted. When registering for the scheme you will need to include details of the business and

information on the relevant electricity and gas connections.

For more information on the TBESS, revenue has published guidelines on the operation of the scheme, with examples of the energy cost threshold, the eligible costs, and the amount that can be claimed. You can access this information using the below link:

<https://www.revenue.ie/en/starting-a-business/documents/tbess-guidelines.pdf>

Improving Pig Welfare

EFSA findings on the welfare of weaner and grower pigs

Laura Boyle

As discussed in previous newsletters, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) published the new Scientific Opinion on the Welfare of Pigs on Farm in August 2022 (<https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2022.7421>)

In previous articles I outlined some of the implications of the findings for the welfare of gilts and sows;

- EFSA findings and potential implications on stall housing of pregnant sows and gilts (September 2022)
- EFSA findings on temporary crating and penning of farrowing sows and gilts (November 2022)

The subject of this month's article is the welfare of weaners and rearing pigs.

General recommendations in the report for pigs prior to weaning relate to their need for adequate

space and enrichment and not to have their teeth clipped or their tails docked. Also to the importance of applying preventative measures to avoid the need for these procedures in the first place. Thereafter if the procedures are deemed necessary following comprehensive assessments of the risks the report recommends that effective and practical methods of pain relief are employed.

This brings us to weaning. An extensive literature search was carried out to identify scientific evidence reporting welfare implications of weaning age and associated welfare indicators. The results focused on vocalisations (representing acute separation stress due to removal from the mother), enteric diseases/mortality, and belly-nosing. In general the data on weaning ages greater than 28 days were lacking (belly-nosing) and/or highly variable (enteric disease/mortality). The relationship between separation stress and weaning age was such that over the range from 7

to 35 days, every 12 days of delayed weaning halved the acute stress experienced by piglets. The data on mortality was complicated by the fact that later weaning ages are associated with a greater probability that a pig might die before weaning. Nevertheless, the available data suggested that there is little benefit in increasing weaning age above 4 weeks. Very early-weaned pigs perform belly-nosing after weaning but it was not possible to determine at what age belly nosing is reduced to a prevalence no greater than that seen in pigs under conditions of natural weaning. Hence the EFSA report does not recommend that the current minimum weaning age of 28 days be increased and also indicates the need for more research in this area. However, there was evidence that the welfare benefits of increasing weaning age over the range between 21 and 28 days are meaningful as a result of the increasing maturity of behavioural, digestive and immunological systems during this period. Indeed the reality on commercial farms is that pigs are often weaned during this period, i.e. younger than 28 days of age. This is allowed due to the exception in the current legislation allowing earlier weaning in specific circumstances. The EFSA report therefore recommends that this special exception be reconsidered.

The scientific opinion also outlines several detrimental effects of artificial rearing on very early weaned piglets and recommends that it should only be used as a last resort and not as a routine management practice. It suggests that other measures should be prioritised, such as selection against extreme prolificacy to reduce numbers of surplus piglets, or the use of nurse sows.

Space allowance

The literature supports that if pigs do not have enough space they cannot perform highly motivated behaviours, including exploratory/foraging, social, resting and thermoregulatory behaviours, and they cannot maintain separate dunging and lying areas. Furthermore, reduced space allowance promotes aggression and tail biting, and compromises growth. The impact on pig welfare of insufficient space to perform thermoregulatory behaviour is greater at high ambient temperatures where no other cooling mechanisms are in place. The space required to maintain hygiene is lower in fully slatted compared to other floor types and is greater at higher ambient temperatures. The report gives the following examples of how different space allowances influence tail biting and growth rates under different environmental conditions:

- A minimum space allowance equal to $k = 0.036$ (representing 0.84 m^2 for a 110 kg pig) was previously recommended by EFSA (2005) for thermoneutral conditions. At this space allowance, growth rate is less compromised (estimated as 57%) and tail biting is reduced (estimated as 48% relative to a $k = 0.028$ (which approximates the current legal minimum space allowance)).
- A minimum space allowance equivalent to a k -value of 0.047 (representing 1.10 m^2 for a 110 kg pig), was recommended by EFSA (2005) for temperatures above 25°C or for pigs above 110 kg. At this space allowance, growth rate is even less compromised (estimated as 26%) and tail biting is further reduced (estimated as 17%) relative to a $k = 0.028$ (which approximates the current legal minimum space allowance).

EFSA conclude that the minimum space allowance should be increased relative to the current legal requirement to improve pig welfare, reduce tail biting behaviour and increase growth rate. They did not indicate a specific space allowance which is understandable given how the optimal space allowance changes under different environmental conditions and importantly for different floor types.

In light of moves by several European countries to either phase out or abolish fully slatted floors for pigs, there is discussion on the appropriate level of solid flooring to provide in part-slatted systems. It is clear that pigs are more comfortable lying on solid flooring and the risk of tail biting is reduced with increasing proportion of solid flooring. Maintenance of hygiene on the solid portion of the floor is important but very challenging. This is influenced by the proportion of solid to slatted flooring, the pen layout, the nature of the airflow patterns and the ambient temperature. Because of these complications, EFSA were unable to define an area or percentage of solid floor in a partly slatted system, which reconciles the possibly conflicting requirements of pig behaviour and hygiene. Hence the recommendations are:

- Pigs should have a solid floor area equivalent to a k-value of 0.033 (equal to 0.77 m² for a 110-kg pig) to accommodate lying behaviour (under thermoneutral conditions), with additional space for activity, feeding/drinking and elimination.
- Further research should be carried out to: a) Validate strategies for maintaining hygiene in partly slatted pens; b) Determine the effect of different degrees of perforation of the solid floor on pig comfort; and pen hygiene.

Environmental enrichment

As we know, current EU legislation already requires that pigs must have 'permanent access to a sufficient quantity of material to enable proper investigation and manipulation activities' (Directive 2008/120/EC). For the 2022 Scientific Opinion, the EFSA panel experts ranked different enrichment materials in terms of attractiveness and likely efficacy in reducing tail damage based on the scientific literature and their experience with pigs in the field. The ranking was as follows:

1. organic materials (e.g. mushroom compost, peat, green forages and silages) or straw mixed with maize silage, stimulate more investigation and manipulation activities than
2. long-cut straw offered as bedding,
3. chopped straw offered as bedding,
4. straw provided in a rack,
5. straw pressed into a block from a dispenser that requires extensive manipulation to obtain the substrate,
6. destructible point-source materials provided loose on the floor or fixed on the pen walls (e.g. fresh wood, hessian sacks, jute ropes, floor toys made from natural rubber) were considered to be less attractive, as these materials become soiled and thus less interesting over time if they are not renewed regularly, and
7. inedible point-source enrichment-objects made of plastic or metal (i.e. hanging toys, plastic hoses and chains)

Hence the expert panel considered loose organic substrates, more effective in reducing tail biting than (a) enrichment materials which are suspended from a ceiling or fixed to a wall, and (b) pressed straw blocks and dispensers that require

prolonged manipulation to obtain the substrate. Wood and rubber toys are not effective unless replaced regularly to maintain novelty. Other conclusions were that a reduction in tail biting can be achieved in undocked pigs if they are offered 20 g per day of straw or similar substrate. However, quantities that are larger (e.g. up to 400 g/pig per

day) are more effective. Ultimately recommendations in the report are that pigs are provided with such enrichment to reduce the risk of tail biting. Other recommendations center on the need to maintain high herd health status, good ventilation, adequate feeding space and well formulated diets.

New welfare legislation in Spain (RD 159/2023) & the future EU welfare regulations

Edgar Garcia Manzanilla

In mid-April, 333 (<https://www.pig333.com/>) organised a webinar in Spain about the new Spanish legislation on animal welfare (to be implemented in March 2025) and what is expected from proposed new EU regulations on animal welfare. The debate included members of the Spanish government (Pilar León, Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación), the scientific community (Antonio Velarde, IRTA-EFSA) and the pig producer organisation (Miguel Ángel Higuera, ANPROGAPOR). The recording in Spanish is here: <https://www.3tres3.com/eventos/webinar-rd1592023>.

In the webinar, representatives of the government and scientific community reviewed the requirements included in the new Spanish legislation and the recommendations provided by EFSA for the commission to develop the future EU regulation.

Teagasc reviewed the requirements proposed by EFSA in a 3 part article series in September and November 2022 and the final instalment in this newsletter. These proposed new requirements

are currently under discussion at the commission and the conclusions should be available as a draft after summer 2023. The expected pieces of legislation include:

- EU Regulation on the welfare of animals kept for commercial purposes.
- EU Regulation on the protection of animals during transport.
- EU Regulation on the protection of animals at the time of killing.
- EU Regulation on animal welfare labelling.

Spain decided to amend their national regulation, before the EU regulation becomes available. This is in response to a letter received from the EU Commission (2021) about Spain's inaction on tail biting and the need to stop tail docking.

The new Spanish legislation is a modification of their existing legislation (RD 1135/2002) and includes several new requirements on CO² and NH³ levels, temperature control, feeding and drinking points, number and requirements for hospital pens, space allowance and enrichment materials, specific requirements for piglets

weaned before 28 d, and a series of specifications on how to carry out tail docking. In particular, tail docking will need to be justified by the nominated veterinarian in official forms, and the existence of tail lesions and the measures used to prevent it will have to be detailed in farm records. The description of who, how and when tail docking is performed and in how many animals will also need to be recorded. This new legislation must be applied in all new farms built in Spain from March 2023 and it will be mandatory for existing farms from March 2025.

During his presentation, Miguel Ángel Higuera, representative of the Spanish pig producers and chairman of the health and welfare group in COPA-COGECA, discussed farmer concerns about these new regulations and discussed the potential extra associated costs. The 4 issues highlighted by Mr. Higuera were:

- The changes in space allowance for weaners and fatteners.
- The possible elimination of all cages from weaning to confirmation of pregnancy and for farrowing.
- The economic impact of these changes at a farmer and sector level.
- The often forgotten wellbeing of the farmer. This last point refers to the fact that without a cage, the farmer will have to face a 300kg animal in a space of 7-8 m² with the consequent work safety risk.

Some of the main changes in the Spanish and proposed EU legislation are summarised in table 1.

In the case of the Spanish legislation, the expected impact is that production will go from 17,500,000

places to 15,760,000 places for finisher pigs. This means reducing the census by around 160,000 sows (more than the current sow census in Ireland) and reducing production by around 4 million pigs per year. This represents a loss of around 600 million euro. A finisher farm with 2000 pigs becomes 1750-1800 with €8,750/year of losses.

At an EU level, the commission is preparing a report on the expected costs with an external consulting company but COPA-COGECA produced some estimations of the expected losses and 5 countries (France, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Denmark) did more detailed calculations. These costs are based on current national figures and different options for the proposed requirements.

Table 2 shows the extra cost per piglet due to extra space in farrowing crates if the legislation was enforced today. Whether the legislation goes for a slight change like 6 square meters or a severe change to 7.8 square meters the economic impact is significant and needs to be considered in the discussion.

Table 3 shows the impact of the changes proposed for weaner and finisher pigs on the sector and per pig. One of the most worrying consequences is the fact that in some scenarios the EU may no longer be self-sufficient in pigmeat and this would necessitate imports from countries with lower welfare standards into the EU.

This is how things are at the moment with the negotiations ongoing in Brussels. This could be seen as an opportunity for pig farmers to renew their license to produce. However, many areas are

still unclear with the main question being - who will pay for the extra costs derived from the new regulations?

Table 1. Changes in the Spanish legislation and proposed changes in the EFSA report

	<i>Spain</i>	<i>EFSA or EU</i>
Space allowance for pigs 85 to 110 kg	0.74 m ²	0.84-1.10 m ²
Area of solid floor		0.77
Ammonia concentrations	<20ppm	<10-15ppm
CO2 Concentrations	<3,000ppm	
Hospital pens	At least 2.5%	At least 3%
Feeder	Specified	
Drinkers	Specified	
Sows weaning to confirmation		In groups
Farrowing crate space for sows		4.3-6.3 m ²
Farrowing crate total space		7.8 m ²
Born alive recommended		12 to 14

Table 2. Additional production costs per piglet (in euros) with loose farrowing systems with no transition period allowed calculated for both new and existing buildings.

Area per farrowing pen	6.0 m ²	6.5 m ²	7.0 m ²	7.8 m ²
Loose farrowing in new building	€2.39	€2.58	€2.77	€3.06
Loose farrowing in existing building	€8.22	€8.54	€8.93	€9.51

Table 3. Impact of additional space for fattening pigs in the EU pig sector

Additional area per fattening pig	0.1 m ²	0.2 m ²	0.3 m ²	0.4 m ²
Total additional costs (million euros/year)	339	677	1,016	1,355
Decrease in EU 2021 level of pig production	-13%	-22%	-30%	-36%
Impact on EU self-sufficiency pork (126 in 2021)	110%	98%	88%	80%
Additional production cost per slaughtered pig	€1.36	€2.71	€4.07	€5.43

Teagasc Pig Open Day 2023

The Teagasc Pig Open Day 2023 takes place at **10am Tuesday May 9th in Teagasc Moorepark, Fermoy, Co. Cork** and **at 10am Thursday May 11th in Ballyhaise Agricultural College, Ballyhaise, Co. Cavan**. On the day attendees will be brought around different stations which will cover the following topics; managing the pig environment, Improving pre- and post-weaning management and nutrition, managing disease, grower/finisher management and feeding and sustainability. This event will include a viewing of the newest addition to the Teagasc Pig Research Facility, a finisher building tailored to conduct low emissions and high welfare research trials. On the latest episode of The Pig Edge, Host, Amy Quinn, is joined by Ciarán Carroll, to highlight what exactly attendees can expect from the event. To listen to this episode visit;

<https://share.transistor.fm/s/21ff9132> .

Please register for this event in advance [here](#) or by contacting Niamh Allen at 025 42457 or niamh.allen@teagasc.ie

IPHS Symposium 2023

The Irish Pig Health Society (IPHS) annual Symposium took place on April 18th. The PDD



were busy fielding questions from both producers and industry on the day. It was great to see such a big turnout on the day! Teagasc' Barry Caslin was one of the invited speakers at the event, providing an excellent overview on the much enquired about topic of alternative energy sources, fielding many questions from producers, particularly on the area solar panels.

TAMS 3

The TAMS 3 Pig and Poultry Investment Scheme (PPIS) was launched this month, the third scheme of ten to be launched under TAMS 3. Grant aid under this scheme will be paid to farmers at a rate of 40%, up to a maximum investment ceiling of €500,000. This ceiling includes the €90,000 investment ceiling available in the other seven TAMS 3 schemes but is in addition to the stand-alone ceilings for the Lower Emission Slurry Scheme (LESS) and the Solar Capital Investment Scheme (SCIS).

- The full details of the PPIS scheme can be found here; <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/989d0-pig-and-poultry-investment-scheme/>
- The full details of the SCIS can be found here; <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/6ab0f-solar-capital-investment-scheme/>

EPP Congress 2023

The European Pig Producers (EPP) Congress 2023 'Resilience of the European Pig Industry' will take place from May 17th to 19th in Seville, Spain. There are a number of EPP Ireland Branch members travelling to the congress this year. If you would like more information on how to join, please contact EPP Ireland Chairperson Hugh McReynolds at: mcreynolds.hugh@gmail.com.



For more information:

Please visit our webpage at:
<https://www.teagasc.ie/animals/pigs/>

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