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QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SITUATION AND FUTURE AIMS BY ORGANIC PIG FARMERS

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The CORE Organic II project ProPIG aimed to assess animal health and welfare as well as environmental impact on organic pig farms across three husbandry systems in Europe (indoor, outdoor and partly outdoor) and to develop farm specific improvement strategies. 74 farms across the 8 project countries were visited three times within one year. In addition to assessing animal health and welfare indicators and environmental impact, semi-qualitative interviews were conducted on 63 farms during farm visits 1 and 3 to evaluate the farmer's satisfaction with the status quo, perception of future aims and ideas for improvement. Some questions were asked as open questions, while others used a five-point answer scale.

A descriptive classification of the responses to the open question regarding the goals for the immediate future revealed that most farmers were aiming to improve either health (19 responses), performance (13) or welfare (9) (two answers per farm were possible). Improving welfare was exclusively a topic for indoor or partly indoor farmers, whereas improving performance was proportionally more often mentioned by outdoor farmers. Similar results were found when asked to rate the satisfaction with pig health and welfare at visit 1: 9% (3) and 38% (13) of indoor farmers were very satisfied with the health and welfare situation, respectively (point 5 on the scale), whereas on outdoor farms 50% (6) were very satisfied and 50% (6) satisfied. Outdoor farmers were less satisfied with the production level (25% (3) very satisfied, 9% (1) satisfied and 66% (8) neutral). 63% (40) and 53% (33) of all farmers across the three systems stated that an improvement in terms of health or welfare, respectively, is needed and also possible to implement. Our results show that organic pig farmers, in general and especially when pigs are kept indoors, are aware of problems relating to animal health and welfare and are willing to improve.

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