Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

20 November 2026

Stephen Morgan MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Defra
[by email]

Dear Stephen,

On 10 November, the EFRA Committee convened a roundtable discussion with representatives from across the pig supply chain, including producers, processors, retailers and farming organisations, to discuss the challenges currently facing the pig sector. Participants described a sector under severe pressure and expressed concerns about the risk of significant producer attrition if action is not taken in the near term.

The Committee heard that the UK pig market has been declining since autumn 2025, due to an oversupply of pigs and stagnant demand for pork and bacon. There is also severe pressure in the EU pig market, with weaker demand than anticipated and the presence of African Swine Fever in Spain which has resulted in export restrictions and oversupply causing a fall in EU prices. At the same time, the cost of production is increasing. Feed is the largest cost component, and soy prices have increased significantly. Furthermore, workforce shortages are also an issue, with skilled worker vacancies at processing organisations resulting in a lack of processing capacity.

These factors have resulted in a backlog of pigs on-farm, which in turn caused the pig price to fall. Taken together, the pig sector is facing a profitability crisis, with the Standard Pig Price falling dramatically, from 208p/kg in August 2025 to around 178p/kg at present. The National Pig Association believes producers are losing between £20 and £50 per pig.

The backlog of pigs on-farm is also an animal welfare issue. Attendees explained that the ten month pig production period means that producers cannot react quickly to oversupply, and the lack of a market for pigs means the animals may remain on-farm for longer than they should, growing beyond optimal weights. Although some processors have increased the rate of slaughter as much as possible, a lack of capacity means this has limits.

Attendees highlighted independent producers as being particularly vulnerable to the profitability issue. We heard that producers are facing contract reductions or terminations, which is making businesses unviable. Some producers have already reduced production levels, or exited the sector entirely. It is clear this will have impacts on the wider rural economy, including on feed suppliers, abattoirs, and processors. This will, in turn, impact domestic food production and therefore food security.

A number of potential solutions were identified, including campaigns to promote domestic pork consumption. Better country-of-origin labelling was a priority for attendees, so that consumers can easily make informed purchasing decisions. The example of mandatory shell egg labelling was given as a successful way of communicating with consumers. This would work particularly well if retailers strengthened their commitments to British pork, although many attendees highlighted the out-of-home food consumption market as a major opportunity for increasing the proportion of British pork sold.

Some of the attendees called on processors to offer longer-term contracts to producers, to give the producers certainty, which would improve business planning and more investment confidence. It was noted that some contracts are between processors and marketing boards, so there was a role for stakeholders across the supply chain.

Other support mechanisms identified by participants could be implemented by Defra or wider government. These include greater public sector procurement of locally produced food, in line with the Labour manifesto commitment.

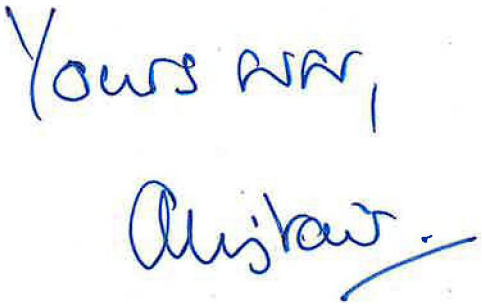
There was discussion around a price top up scheme similar to the Scottish Pig Producers Support Scheme, which pays eligible independent pig producers the difference between the price received for the pigs and 85% of the Standard Pig Price. Attendees discussed the need for a scheme which bridges the gap between the spot-market price received and the AHDB cost of production figure.

Going forwards, greater marketing monitoring, as recommended by Baroness Batters in the Farming Profitability Review, was seen as a key route to preventing future market issues like the current situation.

When you gave evidence to the Committee in October, you told us you intended to hold a summit with industry stakeholders (Q57). We intend that this letter will help to inform that summit. By reply to this letter, can you tell us:

(i) when the summit will be held;
(ii) which stakeholders will be invited;
(iii) what steps you will take to support the pig sector?

The Committee would be grateful for a response by 2 December.



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