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**HOW ARE POG PRODUCERS IN SMALL AND MEDIUM FARMS PERFORMING  
CURRENTLY? – CASE STUDIES**

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**Introduction:** Taking into account the current problems on the pig market, including the occurrence of African swine fever (ASF) in the country, the decreasing number of fatteners in Poland, or inflation, producers, especially small ones, are looking for various ways to be able to maintain in this sector. There are many requirements for livestock production, and today much attention is focused on food safety, environmental protection and animal welfare. The above-mentioned factors have become a motivation for scientists to look for new solutions in the production of high-quality pork and to improve animal welfare throughout the production process. Due to the large diversity of farms specializing in fattening pigs in Poland, this report presents their current economic situation and assesses the well-being of fatteners, as well as collects observations on herd management seen through the eyes of a Polish farmer.

**Materials and methods:** As part of the EU project carried out at the University of Life Sciences in Poznań with the acronym "mEATquality", in 2022 data was collected from Polish family and commercial farms producing fatteners in various farming systems. A total of 20 interviews were conducted and nearly 2,000 pigs weighing from about 50 to 90 kg were observed. The observed animals belonged to noble, hybrid and local breeds. The conducted surveys concerned economic, environmental and animal welfare conditions.

**Results:** The collected data shows that the farmers do not keep accurate records of their production activities. The unstable situation on the feed market in 2021-2022 forced farmers to modify the composition of the mixtures, consisting in reducing the content of protein and minerals in the feed. The limited market for the sale of piglets and weaners has forced most Polish farms to reduce production or suddenly switch the pig production system to a closed cycle. The consequence of this situation is the maintenance of excess amounts of fattening pigs in adapted farm facilities. Animals in overcrowded pens with an incorrectly balanced feed mixture showed aggressive behaviour, and often cannibalism. In addition, the increase in prices forced farmers to make savings in veterinary services. Lack of vaccination in some herds has increased the number of weak and stunted individuals.

**Summary:** Based on the visits, it can be concluded that the producers have knowledge of animal welfare and the basic principles of biosecurity on the farm, but own observations indicate that the acquired knowledge is not applied in practice. The situation in Poland related to the spreading ASF virus discourages farmers running family farms from investing and expanding their business. Despite the unstable situation on the pig market, farmers are willing to broaden their knowledge of new solutions to improve the production and quality of pork.

**Funding:** This study was supported by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under Grant Agreement No 101000344- "Linking extensive husbandry practices to the intrinsic quality of pork and broiler meat", acronym: mEATquality.

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