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On-farm animal welfare assessment in slaughter pigs across different production systems in four European countries

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In the mEATquality project (European Union grant no. 101000344), on-farm interviews and direct animal and system data collection was conducted to document aspects of animal welfare.

Animal welfare assessments were performed on 80 herds across four countries: Denmark, Italy, Poland, and Spain (n=20 per country) and five production systems: Intensive, indoor, conventional (IIC, n=31); Intensive, outdoor run, conventional (IORC, n=4); Intensive, outdoor run, organic (IORO, n=11); Extensive, conventional (EC, n=24); Extensive, organic (EO, n=10).

The herds were selected to reflect the variety of herds found in the respective countries with more intensive herds in Denmark and Poland, and more extensive herds in Italy and Spain.

One major difference between the production systems was the amount and type of outdoor space with IIC herds by definition having no outdoor space, IORC and IORO herds mainly having access to concrete runs with a maximum outdoor space allowance of 1.33 m²/pig in Denmark and 193 m²/pig in Italy, and the EC and EO herds mainly having access to paddocks or pasture with a maximum outdoor space allowance of 53 m²/pig in Poland, 200 m²/pig in Denmark, 2,174 m²/pig in Italy and 84,000 m²/pig in Spain.

Cooling systems also clearly varied with degree of extensification with intensive herds providing the pigs with sprinklers or showers, and extensive herds providing more natural cooling sources such as wallowing, river, ponds, pools, and shadow huts. Although the majority of herds provided no cooling facilities at all.

Multiple other differences arising with extensification of the production will be presented at the conference, including differences between the production systems in resource and management indicators

