

Key component on the path towards future-proof animal husbandry

The Federal Government aims to make livestock husbandry in Germany future-proof. Future-proof livestock husbandry must focus more strongly on aspects of animal welfare and climate change mitigation, create transparency for consumers and offer farms long-term economic prospects.

The Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) envisages the overall project of future-proof animal husbandry as comprising four key elements: binding animal husbandry labelling; a strategy for funding the conversion of livestock buildings, including long-term prospects for farms; better regulation in animal welfare law; and adjustments in regulatory approval and building law.

As a first step, the BMEL presents key elements of mandatory, state animal husbandry labelling in this brochure.

Making husbandry conditions visible

Society takes a great interest in agriculture and specifically in livestock husbandry. When German consumers buy meat, milk, cheese, butter or yoghurt in shops or supermarkets, they want to know what kind of life the pigs, cattle or chicken used to manufacture the products had. They therefore expect binding labelling of foodstuffs which provides reliable information about how the animals were kept. At the same time, many farmers are very keen for people to know how they keep their animals.

By introducing mandatory animal husbandry labelling, we are now creating long-overdue transparency in this area. While there are currently a number of private animal welfare labels in place in Germany, there is no statutory labelling requirement that provides uniform and reliable information on the types of husbandry. The introduction of mandatory state animal welfare labelling will enable consumers to make informed purchasing decisions and to make a conscious choice between different types of husbandry. Farmers will be able to rely on the fact that their efforts to ensure more animal welfare will be seen. We are leading the way within the European internal market by introducing binding animal husbandry labelling at national level. The draft act must be notified by the European Commission. Products from other EU countries must not be discriminated against.

Key points of the Act on Animal Husbandry Labelling

The Act on Animal Husbandry Labelling creates the legal obligation to label foods of animal origin, indicating how the animals used to produce the food were kept. The Act also regulates the duties of the relevant market operators at the various levels, i.e. farmers or those who place the food on the market.

All food of animal origin subject to the mandatory labelling requirement will have to bear a label indicating the type of animal husbandry used. The labelling will provide information on the conditions under which the animals were kept.

In general:

- Food will be subject to mandatory labelling if the animals were kept in Germany and the food is sold to end consumers in Germany.
- The labelling requirement will cover all forms of sale of foods of animal origin to consumers, including retailing, service counters, online trade and weekly markets.
- The labelling will be based on the conditions under which animals are kept during the productive periods of life; in the case of meat, this is the fattening period.

The label will distinguish between the following five husbandry systems:

- Indoor housing
- Indoor+space
- Indoor with fresh air
- Outdoor runs/free-range
- Organic

Design of the label

- The label indicating the husbandry system is to be affixed to the foodstuffs so that it is clearly visible and easily legible. The draft act lays down the design specifications for the label.
- In the case of non-prepackaged foods, the label indicating the husbandry system is to be affixed in close proximity to the food in such a way that consumers can take note of it prior to buying the food.
- In distance selling, e.g. online trade, the indication of the type of husbandry must be available prior to the conclusion of the sales contract.

Implementation of the labelling system

- The information on the type of husbandry must be traceable and passed on truthfully within the food chain.
- Farmers in Germany will notify the husbandry systems used for keeping animals on their farms to the authority.
- The same farm may have several husbandry facilities with different types of husbandry.
- The competent authority must be notified without delay of any changes to the husbandry systems.
- Farms must keep records of the notified husbandry systems and the animals kept in them.

Checks by the authorities

- The authorities will assign an identification number, which indicates the husbandry system, to each notified husbandry facility and inform the farm of the number.
- The competent authorities will keep registers of the farms' husbandry facilities.
- Violations of the rules laid down in the Act on Animal Husbandry Labelling are liable to fines as regulatory offences.

First step: Animal husbandry labelling for pigmeat

- Mandatory animal husbandry labelling will be phased in, starting with fresh pigmeat, whether it is chilled, frozen, packaged or unpackaged, and will apply to food retailing, butcher's shops, online trade and other points of sale.
- Other marketing channels, specifically the restaurant and catering sector and away-from-home catering or processed produce, are to be included in animal husbandry labelling in the course of the legislative term, once the concept of mandatory husbandry labelling has, in principle, been notified by the European Commission as part of a first step.
- The same applies to other animal species, such as cattle, dairy cattle or poultry. They, too, will progressively be incorporated into mandatory state animal husbandry labelling. The BMEL will present a timetable to this effect at the start of legislative deliberations.

Characteristics of types of pig husbandry

- **Indoor:** during fattening, livestock are kept in line with legal minimum standards.
- **Indoor+space:** pigs have at least 20 percent more space compared with the legal minimum standards. Pens are structured by means of various measures, for example partition walls, different levels, areas with different temperatures or lighting conditions.
- **Indoor with fresh air:** within their housing, pigs are able to be in permanent contact with the outdoor climate. This is achieved by leaving at least one side of the housing open so that animals can feel impressions of the immediate surroundings such as sunlight, wind and rainfall. Pigs also have at least 46 percent more space compared with the legal minimum standards.
- **Outdoor runs/free-range:** pigs must be provided with an outdoor run or kept outdoors with no permanent housing all day or for a minimum period of eight hours per day. Pigs also have at least 86 percent more space compared with the legal minimum standards.
- **Organic:** The foods were produced in line with the requirements of the EU Organic Farming Regulation (EU) 2018/848. This means an even larger outdoor run and even more space in the livestock building compared with other types of husbandry.

Way forward

The draft act on mandatory state animal husbandry labelling for fresh pigmeat will now be agreed upon within the Federal Government and then forwarded to the federal states (*Länder*) and associations to give them an opportunity to comment. Afterwards, the draft act adopted by the Federal Cabinet will be presented to the EU for notification. In autumn, the draft act will initially be discussed in the Bundesrat, with the first reading in the Bundestag being scheduled for the end of the year.