



## Pig Meat and Pork Products

*Product Specification*

*In accordance to L.N. 467 of 2014 for the purpose of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 2 December 2021 establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013.*



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## 1. Scope

The present product specification concerns the production of Pig Meat in adherence to the ‘Products of Quality’ National Scheme (PQNS), recognised by the Maltese Government in accordance with Subsidiary Legislation 427.90 for the purpose of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115. The present product specification shall apply to animal husbandry, slaughtering, processing and commercial marketing and sale of pig meat.

Emphasis is to be made on this quality mark that is to ensure a certification system whereby it is guaranteed that not only the meat quality is to conform with the actual meat quality parameters but also to carry with it the guarantee that such production of pork meat was carried out in conformity with husbandry standards that go well beyond the baseline requirement.

In this regard it is to be emphasised that this product specification encompasses a wholesome husbandry system whereby the consumer has the guarantee that many of the baseline parameters that concern the health and welfare of the animals have been surpassed.

In this context, the present product specification lays down additional requirements with respect to the directly applicable and binding rules regarded as pre-requisites.



## 2. Terms and definitions

For the purpose of the scheme;

*‘Applicant’ means an undertaking who wants to be participant in the “Products of quality”*

*National Scheme;*

*‘Competent Authority’ means the authority responsible for the implementation of the “Products of quality” National scheme in line with Subsidiary Legislation 427.90;*

*‘Competent person’ means a person who has the necessary knowledge, qualification and training;*

*‘Farrowing sow’ means a female pig between the perinatal period and the weaning of the piglets;*

*‘Holding’ means a production site belonging to a legal person or entity where the pigs are reared;*

*‘Operator’ means an undertaking or a group of undertaking which has a role in the production value chain of pig meat and pork products and may include producers, processors and transporter participating in the value market chain;*

*‘Pig’ means an animal of the domestic porcine species, of any age, kept for breeding or fattening;*

*‘Pig meat’ means whole carcasses, wholesale cuts and retail cut;*

*‘Piglet’ means a pig from birth to weaning;*

*‘Pork Products’ must include at least 80% pork meat or offal; originating from animals bred according to the standard;*

*‘Slaughter generation pigs’ means pigs born with the purpose for slaughter and thus eligible for the scheme.*

*‘Sow’ means a female pig after the first farrowing;*

*‘Weaner’ means a pig from weaning to the age of ten weeks.*



## 3. Requirements

### 3.1 Pig Meat Production

#### 3.1.1 Distance travelled throughout the Animal’s lifetime

To ensure the minimisation of stress during transport applicants are to ensure that live slaughter generation pigs on any production units participating in the scheme shall not exceed the maximum travelling journey time of 3 hours followed by a minimum of 24 hour resting period when moved from farm to farm.

The applicant shall keep and update the records related to the transportation of the animals in a journey log ensuring the criteria are met.

The applicant shall keep the records of the journey log of the past 4 years.

#### 3.1.2 Weaning

For animals belonging to operators participating in the scheme, weaning should take place only after 28 days irrespective of housing structures into which piglets are weaned. Exceptions can be made in the case of medical situations substantiated by a veterinarian.

#### 3.1.3 Vaccination of Breeding Stock Introduced into Farms

All breeding stock brought onto the farm participating in the scheme shall be previously vaccinated at least for following diseases: Enzootic Pneumonia, Circovirus, Porcine Respiratory and Reproductive Syndrome and Atrophic Rhinitis, unless the farm from which the breeding stock is sourced is certified as being free from these diseases by the affiliated Veterinary Authority.

#### 3.1.4 Nutrition

Successful feeding of pigs requires accurate mixing and delivery of rations so that the diet fed meets the nutritional requirements of the pigs at various life stages that will contribute to enhancing the following aspects:



- Animal Welfare
- Meat Quality
- Food Safety
- Environmental Safeguard

For this reason, all pork producers shall manage their feeding practices under the guidance of a qualified animal nutritionist or any other competent person in animal nutrition, as approved by the applicant to the PQNS and by the relevant competent body managing the PQNS.

Feeding practice that promote healthy growth is to be provided, whereby different feed types pertaining to different stages of the pigs reared must be indicated.

### 3.1.5 Authorized Farms

Participants in the scheme must ensure that the pig meat subject to this scheme must originate from pigs reared on farms that are registered and authorised by their respective Veterinary Authority established within EU Member States in line with Regulation (EU) 2017/625 and any subsequent applicable regulations.

The applicant is to inform the Competent Authority under which Veterinary Authority these are registered and which slaughterhouse and processing plant, including approval number by their respective Veterinary Authority established within EU Member States in line with Regulation (EU) 2017/625 and any subsequent applicable regulations, these are being engaged with through certification.

### 3.1.6 Medication and use of Hormones

The use and recording of medication and hormones must be according to EU and national legislations. Hormones can only be used for controlling and improving reproductive quality (castration and oestrous control).

Medication shall be prescribed by a warranted veterinarian who is licensed to practice within the EU who shall visit the farm at least every 6 months.

The use of medications such as antibiotics should be given in line with current legislation and their use should be limited through preventative measures such as increased animal welfare



standards as laid out within this scheme. The use of antibiotics should be recorded and made available to the Maltese Competent Authority in charge of the scheme.

### 3.1.7 Holding Requirements

In order to improve the welfare of the animals, all holdings should go beyond the minimum legal requirements set out in Directive 2008/120/EC and where the sows are kept must have a total unobstructed floor area available per sow of at least 2.73m<sup>2</sup>.

## 3.2 Slaughtering

### 3.2.1 Transport to slaughter

Vehicles involved in the transport of pigs for slaughter must be suitable for the transportation of live animals and personnel must be knowledgeable on the transportation of live animals taking into consideration stress, handling stress, heat stress, injuries, motion stress, restriction of movement, and sensory overstimulation. Other factors such as risks related to prolonged hunger, prolonged thirst, resting problems are tackled by the limitation of journey time to three hours. This must be certified by a competent person.

- Operators involved in the transport of animals (including farmers, stockpersons, drivers, haulers, inspectors, and veterinarians) should be well-educated and trained in minimizing and identifying the aforementioned considerations.
- All transport should be carried out during the night and not later than 10 in the morning.
- Given that transport exacerbates many negative welfare indicators prior to transport animals should be assessed for fatigue and negative affective states such as fear and distress, group stress, skin lesions, pain and/or discomfort from health conditions or signs of illness. The animals should then be assessed again at the slaughterhouse.

## 3.3 Processing

Pigs shall be slaughtered, and the resultant carcasses are processed in establishments approved in line with Regulation 853/2004, and distributed, and sold according to Regulation 852/2004. The applicant shall provide the permit number of the plants and details of the respective body which is approving such plants.



## 4 Traceability

The ‘Products of Quality’ National Scheme provides for the adoption of a mandatory traceability system, which covers pig meat from farm to final production.

Pig meat must derive from the farms which are either part of the scheme or have a legal agreement to abide by the terms of the scheme.

All operators must adopt a traceability system in order to guarantee the information traceability and their compliance with the terms of the scheme.

The traceability system shall allow for keeping an auditable trail of at least the following set of information:

- The pig farmer responsible for the production of pigs for slaughter, and the delivery of such pigs for slaughter.
- The establishment where the pig is located coupled with a list of fulfilled requirements and documentation related to veterinary visits, use of medication and transportation.
- The slaughtering process and the link between carcasses /other pig meat products and pigs brought for slaughter.
- The link between each carcass /other pig meat products and final product produced.



## 5 Auto-Control

The applicant must have a management plan which caters for amongst others, a self-auditing mechanism which covers all undertaking and all processes forming part of the value chain subject to the application.

The management auto control plan shall be compliant with the present product specification and for the implementation of the contents of the control plan approved by the Maltese Government.

The management auto control plan shall include periodical inspections of all operators subject to the application, reporting of such inspections, a list of findings and remedial action plans in case of non-compliance.

Inspections shall include both documentary checks and physical checks.



## 6 Controls

There shall be one or more independent control bodies approved by the Competent Authority of the scheme.

The Competent Authority shall receive in writing requests from private or public entities to offer the service of a control body. The Competent Authority shall assess the request and decide on the inclusion of the control body in the list of approved control bodies to conduct third party controls on the adhering bodies.

Such independent control bodies shall submit for approval a specific Control Action Plan with respect to one or more value chain applicable to the scheme.

The Control Action Plan shall include periodical inspections of all operators subject to the application, reporting of such inspections, a list of findings and remedial action plans in case of non-compliance.

Inspections shall include both documentary checks and physical checks.

The Competent Authority shall publish a list of approved control bodies under the PQNS.

Nothing shall preclude the Competent Authority from carrying out checks and or inspections on the Independent Control Body, the applicant and any undertaking participatory of the scheme throughout the value chain.



## 7 Product Labelling

The product compliant with the present specification shall bear the logo identified under the PQNS regulations and shall include the authorisation code issued by the Government of Malta on the label/packaging in addition to any other required information set forth by the current regulations.

The label will have the indication “Quality Guaranteed by the Government of Malta”.