

## FINLAND

### Agri-food chain integration & quality

#### Location

Vihti

#### Programming period

2014 – 2020

#### Priority

P3 - Food chain  
& risk Management

#### Measure

M14 – Animal  
Welfare

#### Funding (EUR)

RDP support 7 EUR /  
livestock unit / year

#### Project duration

2018 – 2018

#### Project promoter

Ollikkala farm

#### Contact

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#### Website

<http://olkipossu.fi/>

A pig farm used Rural Development Programme (RDP) funding to improve the animals' living conditions and the branding of their products.

### Summary

The Ollikkala pig farm in Vihti, mainly produces ethically reared piglets and aims to be a pioneer in improving Finnish pigs' welfare. Having met the Rural Development Programme's (RDP) animal welfare commitment criteria, Ollikkala farm wants to use the image of being an animal welfare champion, for branding the farm products.



**Ollikkalan**  
— Olkipossu —

The commitments the pig farm has taken on in terms of animal welfare cover water, feed and animal care in accordance with the natural needs of animal husbandry. The housing conditions were improved with increased space allowances, better flooring surfaces, more enrichment materials (toys) and natural light. The conditions apply to all pigs on the farm, excluding un-weaned piglets.

### Results

Free farrowing speeds up and improves the farrowing process in terms of piglet survival – in Ollikkala the mortality rate is almost zero.

As well as the very important improved animal welfare aspects, the farm has also managed to increase its profitability through direct sales to consumers. Additionally, by selling its products to those in the processing industry who understand the value of ethically produced meat, the farm has achieved higher producer prices.

### Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Ollikkala farmers highlighted that farm advisory services play an essential role when developing the animal welfare models. While the RDP animal welfare conditions are good, there is still room for improvement. For example, all boars (male pigs) are surgically castrated when they are less than one week old. Modern piggeries could offer alternatives to this technique.

## Context

In the Finnish Mainland RDP, animal welfare commitments can be undertaken for pigs, bovines, sheep, goats and poultry (laying hens, broilers and turkeys, but not mother hens). The commitment period is one year. The feeding and care conditions apply to all animals of the relevant species on the farm. Other conditions are more targeted animal welfare actions, applicable to various animal groups. Farmers may select the ones that are practicable on their specific farm. Each condition specifies both the groups of animal species to which the requirement applies and the payment basis. These conditions concern the environment in which animals are kept and cared for, grazing and outdoor access and enrichment. The annual payments are paid in EUR per livestock unit.

The Ollikkala pig farm in Vihti, aims to be a pioneer in improving Finnish pigs' welfare. The main product of the farm is ethically reared piglets. On the Ollikkala farm, like the whole of Finland, pigs may have long pigtails and behave in a way that is typical for the species. The change in practices also results in lower levels of antibiotics being used. Ollikkala farm uses straw in the pigs' growing environment. It is the first farm in Finland that has a free group farrowing unit, so it meets the RDP animal welfare commitment criteria easily and sets the example for other pig farms in Finland.

## Objectives

The general objective of animal welfare payments in the Finnish Mainland RDP is to improve animal welfare. Other objectives are promoting care in accordance with the natural needs of animal husbandry and increasing farmers' awareness of the factors that affect animal welfare. Promoting the welfare of animals and their good treatment contributes to meeting consumer expectations. Grazing has positive impacts not only on the welfare of grazing animals but also on landscape management. Advisory services are another key measure for achieving the objectives.

In addition to meeting the RDP animal welfare commitment criteria, Ollikkala farm wants to be the pioneering farm in improving pigs' welfare in Finland and to use this image of being an animal welfare champion, when branding the farm products.

## Activities

The animal welfare payments for the pig farm cover

water, feed and animal care in accordance with the natural needs of animal husbandry. Farms must offer good housing conditions, such as increased space allowances, flooring surfaces, enrichment materials and natural light to be eligible. The conditions apply to all pigs on the farm, excluding un-weaned piglets. Written feeding plans for each animal group, based on calculations and taking into consideration the growth, yield and production phase of the animals, must be prepared. The purpose of the feeding plan is to ensure that the animals are fed according to their nutritional needs in the relevant production phase. Adequate amounts of good quality water must be continuously available for all animals.

Farrowing houses must have a written production plan that contain insemination schedules, weaning schedules and production process planning. The idea is that planning and foresight will improve the rotation of the pigs on the farm, prevent the overstocking of animals and ensure optimal conditions and stocking rates for animals in various production phases.

Pig farms must have a written, up-to-date contingency plan for any disruptions. The plan should cover the measures to be taken in case of a cut in the power or water supply. The plan must also include a description of measures, for each place where animals are kept, that will be taken during the failure of a feeding, drinking mechanism, or any other system affecting the welfare of the animals.

To prepare for power cuts, the farm must have a backup power system, for example a generator to produce electricity to run mechanical ventilation and, if necessary, operate drinking, feeding and manure removal.

In addition to the RDP conditions, Ollikkala farm uses straw as an enrichment for the pigs in their growing environment. It is also the first farm in Finland that has a free group farrowing unit.

## Main results

Free farrowing speeds up and improves the farrowing process in terms of piglet survival – in Ollikkala the mortality rate is almost zero.

As well as the very important improved animal welfare aspects, the farm has also managed to increase its profitability through direct sales to consumers (both on-farm and through its online e-shop). It also achieved a higher producer price by selling to those in the processing industry that understand the value of ethically produced meat (e.g. Vapaa Possu – Free Piglet brand).

### Key lessons

Ollikkala farmers, highlighted that farm advisory services played an essential role when the farm was developing its animal welfare model. For example, the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Helsinki University has been one of the farm's key partners since the early 2000's. Contact with the University also helped the farmers use, as a benchmark, the free group farrowing unit concept from the Netherlands.

The beneficiaries stress that in the beginning farmers must believe in their idea and follow it through even if others wouldn't. Twenty years ago, nobody was prepared to pay more for the well-being of piglets. Active use of social media has helped to increase the demand for the product. The farm has a Facebook page followed by some 5 000 people where the farmers discuss and post pictures on animal welfare issues.

The farmers also believe that teaching by example is best: they have been actively lecturing about the topic all around Finland and are often interviewed in the media. Gradually the subject of animal welfare is seen in a new light by both consumers and producers.

The Ollikkala farmers think that the RDP animal welfare conditions are good but there is still room for improvement. For example, all boars (male pigs) are surgically castrated when they are less than one week old. Modern piggeries could offer alternatives for that method.

*"In the beginning I didn't think continuing my dad's farm business would become my full-time work", says the daughter Veera Ollikkala, who is trained as an agrologist. "but when I saw the new free farrowing concept I just couldn't leave", she laughs.*



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### Additional sources of information

<https://youtu.be/2xCiYTmE4B4>

[www.facebook.com/ollikkalanolkipossu](http://www.facebook.com/ollikkalanolkipossu)