Dear petitioner,

Subject: Your e-mail titled "Enforce the law – protect the pigs"

Thank you for your email of 28 January in which you are concerned about the welfare of pigs. Commissioner Andriukaitis has asked me to reply on his behalf.

It is essential that EU animal welfare rules are respected by the Member States and properly enforced because the rules have been introduced to protect animals as sentient beings.

I would like to remind you that Member States have the primary responsibility for implementing EU legislation. Competent authorities in the Member States are required to perform official controls to verify compliance and when instances of non-compliance are discovered, they have tools at their disposal, notably under Regulation (EC) No 882/2004, to take all the necessary enforcement measures and/or impose sanctions to correct the situation. Although enforcement of existing animal welfare legislation is important for the Commission, the latter can only intervene when there is sufficient evidence that a Member State systematically fails to enforce such legislation.

Since lack of enforcement of existing legislation as regards group housing of sows was identified, the Commission launched infringement proceedings against 11 Member States. All Member States still not fully compliant are on a regular basis requested to provide updates on the situation in their country. The Commission is thus monitoring the progress and will not hesitate to take further steps if the progress made towards compliance is not satisfactory.

Concerning the requirement to provide pigs with enrichment material, the Commission, in close collaboration with Member States and stakeholders prepares guidelines with the objective of preventing routine tail-docking.

It should be also pointed out that the Commission provides national officials with training programmes to build a common understanding of the legislative requirements that will increase knowledge on this subject and also be of help to the competent authorities in their work directed at ensuring that farmers adjust their practices.
The Commission will continue to monitor the progress made by Member States to achieve full compliance with the requirements of the Directive on the protection of pigs.

Please note that the Commission is not able to reply to all individual e-mails. Therefore, I would be very grateful if Compassion in World Farming could publish the content of this letter on its website with a view to sharing this reply with all petitioners.

Yours sincerely,

Xavier Prats Monné