Question for written answer E-001663/2020
to the Commission
Rule 138
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Subject: Docking of pigs' tails – the Commission's response to enforcement issues

Although the routine docking of pigs' tails has been banned in the EU since 2003, NGO investigations have found that the EU pig industry is ignoring the EU's Pigs Directive by continuing to perform this painful and unnecessary practice, which is very frequently coupled with tooth clipping and castration, on a widespread basis.

The biting of tails is one of pigs' natural responses to the inadequate environmental and stress-inducing conditions in which they are kept before being killed. The Pigs Directive stipulates that this practice should not be carried out routinely and requires, therefore, that farmers take measures to prevent tail-biting and other vices, such as providing an adequate and enriching environment for pigs. In Portugal alone, according to the final report of the audit carried out by the Commission's services in Portugal (DG(SANTE) 2019-6750), the Portuguese authorities estimate that 65 % of pigs in annual pig production still routinely have their tails docked.

As clear guidance on enforcement is lacking and the sanctions are not dissuasive, leading to a situation in which farmers have little incentive to improve their practices:

What does the Commission intend to do to ensure strict compliance with the Pigs Directive and, more specifically, to end routine tail-docking of pigs?