

# U.S. PORK

## GLOBAL LEADER IN SUSTAINABILITY & ANIMAL WELFARE

### In Brief

America's pig farmers take a holistic approach to sustainability and their role in providing a nutritious, quality, and affordable protein supply to consumers around the world. Over the past six decades, industry-wide efforts to conduct research and adopt new technologies and practices in all aspects of pig farming have improved animal well-being, food safety and environmental impact, while benefiting farmers, consumers, and communities.

For more than 15 years, the We Care® Ethical Principles have guided the U.S. pork industry's collective commitment to food safety, animal well-being, its people, public health, environment, and communities. In 2021, the pork industry announced industry-wide sustainability goals and metrics to document progress to-date and set milestones for future improvement.

The way pig farmers view and approach sustainability is in line with the United Nations' sustainability definition: "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." As a result, the pork industry's sustainability goals, and metrics address 15 of the 17 UN SDGs.

The U.S. accounts for nearly 26% of the world's pork exports and produces 12% of the world's pork. (Source - USDA-FAS) with a 2022 export value of nearly \$7.7 billion comprised of 2.5 mmt.

### About the Sector

The U.S. pork industry has approximately 66,000 producers and has 614,000 jobs.\* for a total value of the U.S. pork industry of \$28 billion in gross cash receipts.\*\*

### Sustainability Principles

The U.S. pork industry has had a 100 percent legislative Checkoff program since 1986. Congress created the Pork Checkoff as part of The Pork Promotion, Research and Consumer Information Act of 1985. Pork producers had requested the legislation so they could take advantage of having all producers and importers participate in a Checkoff program designed to strengthen the position of pork in the marketplace with the objectives to:

- Develop emerging markets and differentiate U.S. Pork
- Establish U.S. Pork as a global leader in sustainability
- Keep foreign animal diseases, like African swine fever, out and prepare for a potential outbreak
- Measuring trust impact against five research-developed barriers to consumption
- Protecting pork's place on the plate

\*Source - National Pork Producers Council, New Report Highlights U.S. Pork Industry, Contributions to American Jobs and the Economy, July 2022

\*\* Gross cash receipts, source - National Pork Producers Council



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## Comparative Standards

The U.S. pork industry is taking an action-based and scientific approach to set benchmarks for its performance today that enable it to create goals that support continual improvement in the future. Progress will be measured on the farm and across the industry using tools that will allow us all to make better, data-driven decisions. Visit [porkcares.org](http://porkcares.org) to view our producer-developed industry goals and metrics based on the ethical principles.

Today's customer is more interested than ever in not only knowing where their food comes from, but also in understanding how it was raised. This helps to ensure that the practices used by our industry contribute positively to society, the economy, and the environment. We've made a lot of progress in that regard, and we recognize the importance of transparency, measurement, and reporting. In addition, we're also committed to setting ambitious targets and the continuous improvement it will take to be a recognized leader in sustainability.

## Key Areas of Focus

### Environmental Stewardship: A commitment to continuous improvement

- Between 1960 and 2015, pig farmers reduced their land, water, and energy use by 75%, 25% and 7% respectively, resulting in a nearly 8% smaller environmental footprint. The pork industry life cycle assessment (LCA) is being updated and will be available in 2024.  
Data released by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in April 2021 attributes only 10% of U.S. greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to agriculture, and pork contributes to less than half of one percent.
- Our Industry's goal to show commitment of continuous improvement: By 2030, reduce GHG emissions by 40% from a 2015 baseline using the metric: Tons of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) equivalent per pound of pork.
- About 50 to 60% of pork's environmental footprint is attributable to crops raised for feed<sup>1</sup>. Cover crops, minimum and no-tillage and other conservation management practices are already in place on millions of acres, according to the 2017 USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) Census of Agriculture. This includes 104.5 million no till acres, 97.8 million reduced tillage acres and 15.3 million acres of cover crops<sup>2</sup>. The U.S. produces the feed grains used in the rearing of pigs, and pig farmers often have their own cropland and apply manure to their fields. Sustainability improvements also increase productivity with fewer resources required, shorter production cycles and local feed grain production means less freight.
- The pork industry is actively working through partnerships and collaboration to increase these climate smart practices, including working with partners throughout the food supply chain on various Climate-Smart Commodity Grants through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.<sup>3</sup>
- Farmers are developing several strategies to protect and improve water quality. Evidence suggests improvements in animal and manure management can reduce the nutrient content in lagoons, as well as the amount of ammonia released into the atmosphere.
  - o Goal: Contribute to improving the quality of surrounding water bodies through agriculture practices, including reducing nutrient run-off, implementing nutrient management plans, managing manure, and protecting riparian areas located on farms.
  - o Metric: Percentage of pigs reported produced at locations where nutrient application plans are being implemented.
- Farmers manage air quality and control odors from production facilities to minimize the impact on neighbors and the community. An example may include planting trees around farms, which helps the aesthetics, provides habitat for wildlife, and reduces odor.

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Inventory of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990-2019, "Fast Facts." <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-04/documents/fastfacts-1990-2019.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>University of Arkansas. 2018. A Retrospective Assessment of US Pork Production: 1960 to 2015, page 2. <https://porkcheckoff.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/16-214-THOMA-final-rpt.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Pork Checkoff. 2023. Advancing U.S. Pork Sustainability and Market Value <https://www.porkcheckoff.org/news/grant-advancing-u-s-pork-sustainability-and-market-value/>



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## Social Responsibility: A commitment to our people

- Pork Quality Assurance® Plus (PQA Plus) is a certification program designed to help pig farmers and their employees continually improve production practices. It addresses food safety, animal well-being, environmental stewardship, worker safety, public health, and community. About 71,000 farmers are PQA Plus certified, representing roughly 85% of U.S. pork production. \*\*\*
- More than 31,000 industry handlers and pig transporters have completed the Transport Quality Assurance (TQA) certification program that provides training to handle, move and transport pigs. It includes training on the potential impacts transporting can have on pig well-being and pork quality. \*\*\*
- The industry is committed to driving sustainable, equitable development and prosperity in communities by meeting needs, generating desirable jobs, and growing rural economies.
  - A commitment to expanding the industry’s national giving program by 100% by 2030, from a 2019, baseline has been set. In addition, the industry supports rural leaders of tomorrow with scholarships and supports volunteerism in rural communities.

\*\*\*(Source - National Pork Board).

### Additional resources

2022 Industry Stakeholder Report <https://porkcheckoff.org/about/financials-reports/2022-stakeholder-report/>

2021 U.S. Pork Industry Sustainability Report

The United States Pork Industry 2021: Current Structure and Economic Importance

Visit their website: [www.usmef.org](http://www.usmef.org) / [www.porkcheckoff.org](http://www.porkcheckoff.org)



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