

PRACTICE ABSTRACT #7

PA7 - Conventional Pig Production with Innovative Flooring and Biodiversity Focus

The Krill Varan (Krill Pig) Practice Hub in the Netherlands showcases an innovative approach to conventional pig production, focusing on enhancing animal welfare and promoting biodiversity. This hub comprises around 15 farms engaged in piglet production, breeding, and fattening, all united by their commitment to sustainable and ethical practices.

The key innovation in this system is the use of a solid floor with a thick layer of bedding material, allowing pigs to root and engage in natural behaviours. Additionally, the farms maintain larger group sizes and provide more space per pig, enabling greater social interaction and improved animal welfare. The housing design also incorporates natural lighting through ample windows, further contributing to the pigs' well-being. While maintaining a conventional production model, the Krill Varan farms have implemented a short supply chain, selling their pigs directly to butchers, enabling them to capture a higher value for their products. However, they face challenges in marketing their pigs, particularly the uncastrated males, due to potential meat quality issues.

Another unique aspect of this Practice Hub is the focus on biodiversity. The solid manure produced by the pigs is of higher quality, benefiting soil health and soil life when applied to the land. The primary challenge for the Krill Varan hub is ensuring the long-term viability of this more sustainable and ethical approach to pig production. The higher costs associated with the system need to be addressed, and the hub is actively exploring new market opportunities, such as collaborating with butchers and developing innovative sales channels. Through this Practice Hub, the PATHWAYS project aims to demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of integrating animal welfare, biodiversity, and sustainable practices into conventional pig production, paving the way for a more holistic and environmentally conscious approach to the industry.



Image 7. Pigs in their new housing facility. Source: WUR

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