

Climate change series Focus on pigs

Climate change presents new challenges and opportunities for pig farmers. Farmers need to consider the productivity impacts of climate change on businesses and the welfare issues for animals.

Key pig farmer concerns:

- Pig health and performance (e.g. fertility implications)
- Security of feed supplies
- Energy affordability and security
- Ability of buildings to cope with extreme and fluctuating weather

CLIMATE CHANGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PIG FARMERS

Savings

- Reduced feed costs from utilising by-products from food and bio-ethanol production
- Plan pig feed rations to enhance performance, reduce wastage and emissions
- Increased opportunities for outdoor finishing will reduce building, fixed equipment and energy costs
- More opportunities to utilise renewable energy



CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGES FOR PIG FARMERS

Productivity

- Heat stress could result in reduced productivity (including fertility problems)
- Possible reduced water availability from suppliers or on-farm sources in some regions
- Reduced feed intake in hot weather negatively affects performance and productivity
- Potential for increased/different diseases and increased veterinary and medicine costs
- Reduced grass cover and persistence (in outdoor systems)

Costs

- Possibly increased capital, maintenance and energy costs for ventilation/cooling/heating/odour and emission control
- Requirement for improved housing management during extreme weather events
- Increased unpredictability of extreme weather events
- Global feed prices may be affected by climatic changes or other market mechanisms and products

ADAPTATION SUGGESTIONS FOR PIG FARMERS

- Improve insulation of buildings to control internal temperatures more effectively and reduce energy wastage
- Design ventilation control systems to manage changing climatic conditions

- Use enclosed creep boxes in farrowing houses to better regulate the environment for piglets and sows
- Select grass or cover crop varieties that can cope with changes in the climate to prevent soil erosion
- Improve design and management of wallows and shaded areas
- Invest in water storage facilities e.g. on farm reservoirs
- Use less intensive rearing techniques e.g. outdoor (but recognise this impacts on water pollution and soil erosion and take preventative steps to manage these)

Useful links:

[Carbon Trust](#) advice on energy efficiency

[NFU Energy Service](#) for NFU members

MITIGATIONS MEASURES FOR PIG FARMERS

Please refer to fact sheet 4 for mitigation measures.

Although some of the impacts might happen to a greater or lesser extent in the short, medium or longer term, it's important to think ahead for the future, especially in relation to issues such as building design and breeding patterns.



For news, events, and links to stories about how other farmers are managing climate change on their farms, please visit: www.farmingfutures.org.uk

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