

PIG BREEDING IN ROMANIA: PIGS LIVESTOCK, CARCASS QUALITY AND PRICE

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Abstract

The paper analyzed the situation of pig breeding in Romania for the last 3 years (2022 - 2024) in order to see what were the effects of African swine fever (ASF) as well as the soil drought of 2020, 2023 and 2024 on pig herds. For a more relevant image, data were collected on the evolution of pig herds, the quality of the slaughtered pigs that were reported to the European Commission was analyzed, as well as the evolution of the average price of live weight and carcass. The data was provided by the National Institute of Statistics through the NIS Tempo Online application and by the Carcass Classification Commission. The data indicate a constant decrease in herds over the last 3 years, from a herd of 3,834,136 heads in 2022 to a herd of 3,619,581 heads in 2024, so a decrease of 5.6%. The number of pigs slaughtered is also decreasing, from 2,344,844 heads in 2022 to 2,122,331 heads in 2024. The average live weight at slaughter is slightly increasing being 109 kg in 2022 and 112.3 kg in the year 2024. The average weight of the carcasses is similar to the live weight, being 84 kg in the year 2022 and 86.6 kg in the year 2024. The quality of the carcass remained constant, approx. 60% of the slaughtered pigs being classified in the S class of quality and about 35% of herds in class E. Although the price of inputs is increasing, the average live price for pigs was 639.03 lei in 2022 and 545.03 lei in 2024. The average price per carcass warm was 828.88 lei in 2022 and 707.27 lei in 2024. In order to stimulate the growth of pig herds in Romania, the authorities must intervene with measures to stimulate herd growth and limit the expansion of ASF in Romania. The breeders and processors must comply with the strategy and measures imposed by the authorities.

Key words: pigs, breeding, livestock, carcass quality

INTRODUCTION

The breeding of pigs alongside the consumption of pork has a long tradition in Romania. Pork, along with poultry, are among the top preferences of Romanian consumers. The interest shown in raising pigs is due to the special qualities with which this species is endowed: meat with special taste qualities, fast growth rate, large number of piglets at farrowing, short gestation period, low feed consumption for depositing a kg of growth, increased yield at slaughter, high breeding capacity, selection and adaptation to different

environmental and growth conditions. Also, as a result of growing pigs, large amounts of manure result that can be used to fertilize agricultural land [1]. The pig population in the European Union has decreased slightly, according to the results of the 2025 census. According to Eurostat, the total number of pigs decreased by 0.5% compared to the previous year, while the number of sows registered a moderate increase for the first time in recent years. Despite the slight overall decrease, the dynamics in the main producing countries were heterogeneous - some of them increased their pig herds,

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The manuscript was received: 30.03.2026

Accepted for publication: 15.05.2026



while in other countries they continued to decline. In Germany, the pig population increased in 2025 by 0.9%, reaching 21.49 million heads, while Denmark recorded an even more significant increase, by 6% more, reaching 12.27 million. Positive dynamics were also recorded in Poland (+1.6%, to 9.23 million) and Italy (+0.6%, to 7.87 million), as well as in Portugal and Romania. The biggest drop occurred in Spain – by 2.7%, reaching 33.65 million heads, although it remains the largest producer of pork in the EU. Particular attention is paid to the dynamics of sow herds, which is an indicator of future production. In 2025, their number in the EU was 10.27 million, 0.6% more than a year earlier, signaling a gradual stabilization after previous cuts. Increases in the number of sows were recorded in Spain (+2.6%), Germany (+1.4%), Denmark (+2.7%), as well as in Poland, Romania, Hungary and Ireland. At the same time, the largest reductions in numbers are recorded in France and the Netherlands [9].

In Romania, at the level of 2018, meat consumption was 73.8 kg, of which pork consumption was 38.30 kg per head, followed by poultry meat consumption with 26.9 kg/head per inhabitant, beef with 5.2 kg/head and mutton and goat meat with 2.2 kg/head [4, 5]. Although pork is at the top of Romanian consumers' preferences, the annual consumption is lower than the general average of the European Union. Romania's annual pork consumption of 38.30 kg per capita, recorded in 2018, is below the European average of 41 kg per capita in the same year. According to the latest figures from 2018, the Spanish consumed the most pork in Europe at 54.9 kg per head, closely followed by the Polish at 54.1 kg per head and the Austrians at 51.8 kg per head [4]. According to the herds raised until 1990 as well as the tradition of pork consumption, Romania could be a major player in pork production. But thanks

to the transformations of the years 1990, pig numbers have had a fluctuating evolution, with large decreases in recent years.

Romania was banned from exporting live pigs in 2007, when the first classical swine fever (PSF) case was reported. Exports to the EU started again in October 2016, after being free from classical swine fever (CSF) for almost ten years. In May 2017, Romania received the status of classical swine fever-free country by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). After only two months, two cases of African swine fever (ASF) were reported in farms in northern Romania. This was not a surprise as the farms were located close to the border with Ukraine, where ASF is frequently reported.

Considering the entire period from the first outbreak to the present, statistics show that Romania lost 440,000 pigs and 46,000 sows due to ASF [3]. The aim of this paper is to analyse the situation of pig breeding in Romania for the last 3 years (2019 - 2021) in order to see what were the effects of African swine fever (ASF) as well as the soil drought of 2022 on pig herds.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

For a more relevant image, data were collected on the evolution of pig herds, the quality of the slaughtered pigs that were reported to the European Commission was analyzed, as well as the evolution of the average price of live weight and carcass. The data was provided by the National Institute of Statistics through the NIS Tempo Online application and by the Carcass Classification Commission.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The number of pigs in Romania was facing a continuous decline during from 1990 year till the last decade from 12 mil. heads in 1990 to 3,61 mil. heads in 2024, meaning a reduction by 69,9% in the analyzed interval (table 1).

Table 1 The dynamics of herds in Romania

Species	Macro development and counties regions, regions	Year			
		1990	2022	2023	2024
		Number	Number	Number	Number
Pigs	Total Romania	12003384	3834136	3784507	3619581
	Northwest Region	1430800	560871	547087	541799
	Center Region	1131000	372419	382534	357377
	North-East Region	1458600	381248	425284	428086
	South East Region	1759300	482007	468669	483508
	South-Muntenia Region	2574700	583808	515742	483125
	Bucharest Ilfov -Region	344800	10002	12144	5221
	South-West Oltenia Region	1184700	499081	483415	469426
	West Region	2119500	944700	949632	851039
Cattle	Total	5380780	1923283	1875169	1826845
Sheep	Total	14061864	10358699	10281473	10087439
Goats	Total	1004810	1594862	1611785	1492544
Poultry	Total	121378539	75364575	71183431	77148372
Bee colonies	Total	1091300	1843026	1879611	1903121

Source: (www.insse.ro) [6, 7]

Decreases in animal numbers are observed in all species. thus, cattle from 5,380,780 heads in 1990 reached 1,826,845 heads in 2024, sheep from 14,061,864 heads in 1990 reached 10,087,439 heads in 2024.

Researches in the field specifies that the decrease in pork production in Romania, starting from 1990, was determined by several factors, the most important of which are: - the application of outdated growing and fattening technologies; - the bankruptcy of over 200 pig breeding complexes; - the decapitalization of farms, respectively the existence of insufficient capital necessary for the development of the pig breeding sector; - a non-incentive national policy for raising and fattening animals; - lack of subsidies per product, similar to those in neighboring countries and the European union in general. In recent years, the main factor leading to the decimation of pig herds has been the emergence of African swine fever in commercial farms [2].

From the point of view of the body weight at slaughter as well as the weight of

the carcass, there is a tendency to increase these values (table 2).

From the data presented, we note that the live weight at slaughter increased from 109 kg in 2022 to 112.3 kg in 2023 and 2024. The same increase is also observed in the carcass weight, which increased from 84.0 kg in 2022 to 86.6 kg in 2024.

The increased demands of consumers for a greater proportion of lean meat in the carcass, have determined intense concerns worldwide to solve this desire. In this sense, the European Union has legislated through CEE council regulation no. 3220/13.11.1984, the SEUROP system, according to which pig carcasses will be classified after slaughter according to the percentage of muscle tissue (lean meat). There are in Romania companies of pig genetic improvement and they sell valuable biological material for the large, medium or small size pig farms. PIC, DanBred and Topigs are Top-3 genetics used in Romania [8]. The use of these hybrids leads to obtaining very good qualities of pig carcasses.

In the EUROP system, the classification of carcasses from pigs is done according to a classification grid, which takes into account the proportion of muscle tissue (meat). For this, 5 quality classes are used, differentiated from each other by 5 percent of muscle tissue, between the limits of 60% and 40%. Some states have introduced an

additional class (S) for carcasses with more than 60% meat content in the carcass. However, it must be mentioned that the exaggerated increase in the percentage of meat is accompanied by problems related to the quality of the meat, its taste and its technological properties in industrialization.

Table 2 - Evolution of live weight and carcasses weight

Year	Pigs (no.)	Average weight at slaughter (kg)	Average carcass weight (kg)
2022	3834136	109.0	84.0
2023	3784507	112.3	86.5
2024	3619581	112.3	86.6

Source: (<https://www.ccceurop.ro>) [2]

Table 3 - The evolution of the quality of carcasses

Year	Pigs (no.)	QUALITY CLASS (%)			
		S	E	U	ROP
2022	3834136	60.31	34.25	4.80	0.63
2023	3784507	59.78	34.75	4.80	0.67
2024	3619581	59.05	35.27	5.04	0.64

Source: (<https://www.ccceurop.ro>) [2]

Table 4 Evolution of live price and carcass price

Year	Pigs (no.)	Average live price (lei)	Average carcass price (lei)
2022	3834136	639.03	828.8
2023	3784507	606.21	786.69
2024	3619581	545.03	707.27

Source: (<https://www.ccceurop.ro>) [2]

From the data presented, we observe that the quality of pigs slaughtered in Romania is very good, about 60% of the slaughtered pigs being classified in class S and about 35% in class E. In the European Union, carcasses are classified according to the EUROP system, but due to the fact that the average percentage of meat in the carcass is 59%, the EUROP system has become almost irrelevant in differentiation. Currently, it is desired to move to more elaborate systems, in which the commercial classification is done according to the weight of the different valuable portions (chop, flesh, etc.) of the total carcass.

In the period 2022-2024, the average annual acquisition price per kg live weight at the farm gate was decreasing, from

639.03 lei in 2022 to a value of 545.03 lei in 2024.

The cost of the carcass had a similar evolution, falling from 828.8 lei in 2022 to 707.27 lei in 2024.

CONCLUSIONS

The Romanian pork sector is currently in a very difficult situation and the pork market crisis is expected to continue.

The main measure that could lessen the negative effects of this crisis, caused by African swine fever, is to restrict the rearing of pigs in individual households where biosecurity regulations are not fully respected.

In order to recover the Romanian pork market, both breeders and processors must

comply with the strategy and measures imposed by the authorities regarding the breeding, transport and slaughter of pigs.

To support the development of pig production, the authorities must initiate various forms of support (law no. 195/2018 on the approval of the program to support pig breeders for breeding activity) to increase the efficiency and competitiveness of the pig sector.

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