

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM (78) 410 final.

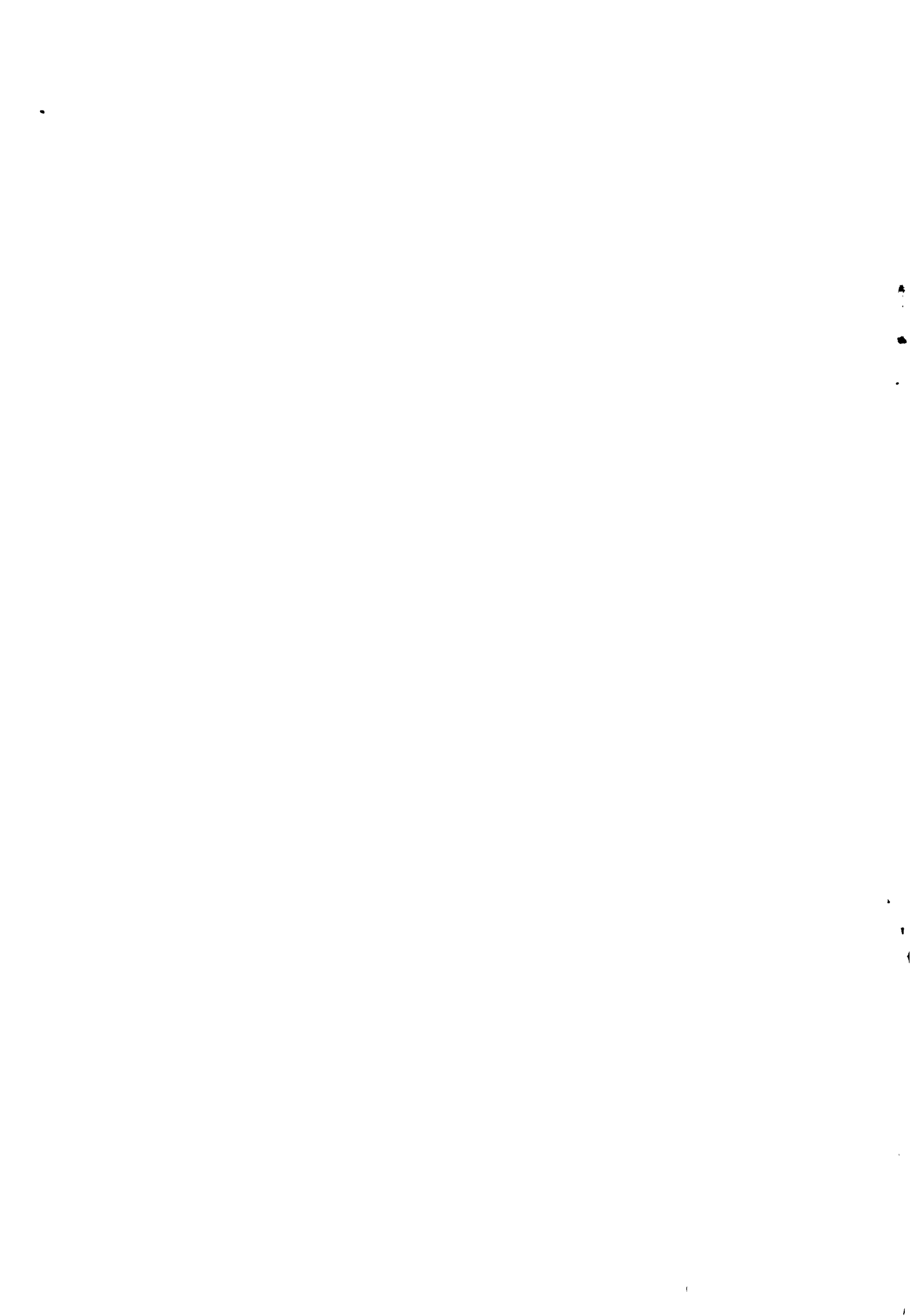
Brussels, 8 September 1978

Report by the Commission to the Council on the subject
of certain fresh meat of pigs

Proposal for a Council Directive amending Directive
64/433/EEC on health problems affecting intra-Community
trade in fresh-meat.

(submitted to the Council by the Commission)

COM(78) 410 final.



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INTRODUCTION

In 1976, when the draft directive on health problems affecting intra-Community trade in meat products was being discussed, the matter of admitting boar meat to intra-Community trade was raised. This led to the question whether the interdiction on bringing fresh meat from male pigs into that trade, as laid down in Article 3, fourth paragraph under "a", should be limited to pigs used for breeding.

Pursuant to the present language versions of the text in certain Member States, this interdiction covers also non-castrated pigs which are not used for breeding purposes. This was in conformity with the practice of castrating pigs destined for fattening soon after their birth. The meat of male pigs not used for breeding purposes has, in general, no sexual odour, however, and objections are presented to castration in view of modern trends.

Research in the Member States, viz. Belgium (Bekaert a.o., 1974), Denmark (Staun, 1971), Germany (Witt and Schröder, 1969), England (Pay and Davies, 1973; Prescott and Laming, 1964 and 1967; Rhodes and Patterson, 1971), France (Desmoulin, 1973; Perez and Desmoulin, 1975; Texier a.o., 1970), Ireland (Carroll a.o., 1963), Italy (Mordenti a.o., 1968), the Netherlands (Walstra, 1974), has shown that the feed conversion (i.e. the number of kilogrammes of feed necessary for one kilogramme growth) and the meat/fat ratio in case of male non-castrated slaughter pigs is considerably more favourable than in the case of castrated animals.

In addition, modern breeding techniques produce pigs which grow more rapidly and which are slaughtered before they reach a stage of development liable to result in persistent sexual odour. The only uncastrated animals normally retained beyond this stage of development by the farmer are those specifically kept for breeding purposes.

There have also been important changes in consumer preference, which is increasingly demanding less fat on meat and cuts and joints of meat of a smaller size, both of which are best supplied by the uncastrated pig produced by present modern techniques.

Research as to the presence of abnormal and sexual odour

The intensity of boar odour depends primarily on the quantity of certain steroids (in particular of 5 x - androst - 16 - en 3 - one) in fatty tissues. In the case of sensory perception the demonstration of its presence is dependent on the persons who carry out the tests.

It must also be taken into account that meat from female pigs may also show an abnormal odour.

Consumer panels

Experiments in Britain (Rhodes, 1971/1972) and in the Netherlands (Walstra and Maarse, 1970) with large consumer panels indicate that consumers in their family situation are not very sensitive to sexual odour in pig meat.

In the case of pork from pigs of 100 kg live weight, no complaints about boar pork were made. In the case of bacon less than 1% of the consumers proved to be accurate in differentiating odour from boars and females in cooking and the judgements "less than normal" for taste were up to 5.5% higher in cooked bacon from boars. The view of the British research workers, supported by a more recent marketing trial, in which 4 000 kg of boar pork was sold through a normal retail outlet over a period of 10 weeks without consumer complaint of any sort (Rhodes and Krylow, 1975), is that no evidence indicates that adverse consumer reaction is to be expected from the cessation of the castration of pork or bacon pigs reared for meat.

In the consumer trial reported by Walstra (1974), 720 families received meat from boar carcasses graded as having "strong" sexual odour, and meat from gilts. Cutlets and belly cuts from boars were considered to have a "less pleasant" odour in 15 and 29% of the cases respectively. In similar cuts from gilts a percentage of about 4 was found. (It is observed that there were consumers, both in England and the Netherlands, who preferred boar meat).

Male pigs used for breeding purposes

- a) It is generally accepted that within this category of pigs a high percentage possess sexual odour; however, few concrete data have been published on this matter. Experience from veterinary inspections shows that in the case of old boars the occurrence of sexual odour diminishes but the kidneys of such animals show a pronounced abnormal odour.

Similarly, experience from veterinary inspections shows that hermaphrodite and cryptorchide pigs also have pronounced odours.

It is therefore advisable to exclude the meat of such animals from intra-Community trade.

- b) However, it is well established that, if boars which have been used for breeding are subsequently castrated 6 weeks or more before slaughter, sexual odour is no longer detected. In consequence, it is not necessary to exclude the meat of such animals from intra-Community trade.

Meat Products

As indicated under the heading "Consumer panels" a study of the literature (Moermans and Walstra 1977) demonstrated that boar meat may be suitable for use in certain meat products. The meat of animals used for breeding may only be used in these meat products, however, when they are strongly spiced to the extent that the odour is hidden. This fact introduces particular limitations in the use of this meat. To incorporate this type of meat into free trade would produce problems of control to determine its use, which would impede the general principle of free trade at present incorporated in the directive. In addition, the quantity of product likely to be involved is very limited, particularly when the possibility of introducing into trade meat of animals castrated at least 6 weeks before slaughter is considered. In consequence, it would not be justified to include special provisions related to meat products in the present text.

Conclusion

As the meat of a large proportion of male pigs used for breeding and of hermaphrodite and cryptorchid pigs has strong sexual odour, intra-Community trade of such meat should continue to be prohibited. However, meat of pigs used for breeding which are castrated at least 6 weeks before slaughter may be allowed into intra-Community trade.

Taking into account the provisions of Article 3(2)d of the directive, the normal activity of inspection will continue to protect the consumer and ensure for all types of fresh meat that meat with abnormal odours does not enter intra-Community trade.

The Commission therefore proposes modification to the Council directive of 26 June 1964 on health problems affecting intra-Community trade in fresh meat (64/433/EEC), in accordance with the annexed document.

Proposal for a

ANNEX

Council Directive

of

amending Directive 64/433/EEC on health problems affecting
intra-Community trade in fresh meat

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, and in particular Articles 43 and 100 thereof;

Having regard to the proposal from the Commission;

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament;

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee;

Whereas, pursuant to the present language versions in some Member States of the Council Directive 64/433/EEC of 26 June 1964 on health problems affecting intra-Community trade in fresh meat¹, as last amended by Directive 75/379/EEC², the prohibition on intra-Community trade of boar meat includes non-castrated pigs which are not used for breeding;

Whereas the meat of male pigs used for breeding, and of cryptorchid and hermaphrodite pigs, is shown by inspection experience to have a pronounced unpleasant odour, which puts particular limitations on the use of such meat; whereas to incorporate this type of meat into intra-Community trade at the present time would produce problems of control to determine its use, which would impede the general principle of free trade at present incorporated in the Directive; whereas in consequence intra-Community trade in fresh meat from these animals should continue to be limited;

Whereas, however, it is established that, when boars which are used for breeding are castrated at least six weeks before slaughter, the unpleasant odour is no longer detected; whereas in consequence it is not necessary to exclude the meat of such animals from intra-Community trade;

Whereas modern breeding techniques produce pigs which grow more rapidly and which are slaughtered before they reach a stage of development liable to result in persistent odour; whereas in consequence it is not necessary to limit intra-Community trade in fresh meat from these male animals which have not been used for breeding;

Whereas the provisions of the Directive ensure that the normal activity of inspection will continue to protect the consumer and ensure, for all types of fresh meat, that meat with abnormal odour does not enter intra-Community trade;

¹OJ 121, 29.7.64, p.2012

HAS ADOPTED THIS DIRECTIVE:

Article 1

Article 3(a) of Directive 64/433/EEC is amended to read as follows:

- "a) - fresh meat from cryptorchid and hermaphrodite pigs
- fresh meat of male pigs which have been used for breeding, with the exception of fresh meat from these animals when they have been castrated at least six weeks prior to slaughter."

Article 2

This Directive is addressed to the Member States.

