

Support package for Scottish Pig producers

In January 2021, the Quality Pork Limited Plant in Brechin experienced an outbreak of Covid-19 amongst its staff forcing the plant to close for 3 weeks. As a result of the outbreak, they were forced to surrender their license to export product to China indefinitely.

Unfortunately, at the time Brechin was not the only the plant struggling under the impact of the Covid virus. Plants across the country were struggling to maintain throughputs, creating a backlog of pigs everywhere and limited spare capacity for diverting pigs to alternative plants.

The pig sector in Scotland was left facing the impacts of:

- Significant penalties for pigs missing specification due to processing delays.
- Additional feed and board costs for pigs, at a time when feed prices were exceptionally high.
- Reduced prices for animals when processing was up and running again, because of the loss of the China market.

It is estimated that pig farmers across Scotland faced reduced payments for pigs in the region of £1.3 million pounds as a direct result of Covid-19 at the plant. This figure did not include the additional on farm costs born by producers in providing additional board and feed for pigs awaiting processing. NFUS wrote to the Rural Economy Secretary Fergus Ewing, highlighting the plight of Scottish pig producers, many of whom were facing coming out of the industry without much needed support. The Cabinet Secretary was also invited to attend an NFUS Board meeting to discuss the issue.

As a result of NFUS lobbying the Scottish Government agreed to set up a £715,000 support package to provide funding to pig farmers who have lost out through no fault of their own.

NFUS is continuing to lobby Scottish Government to prioritise negotiations to reinstate the Chinese export license to return value to the pig sector.