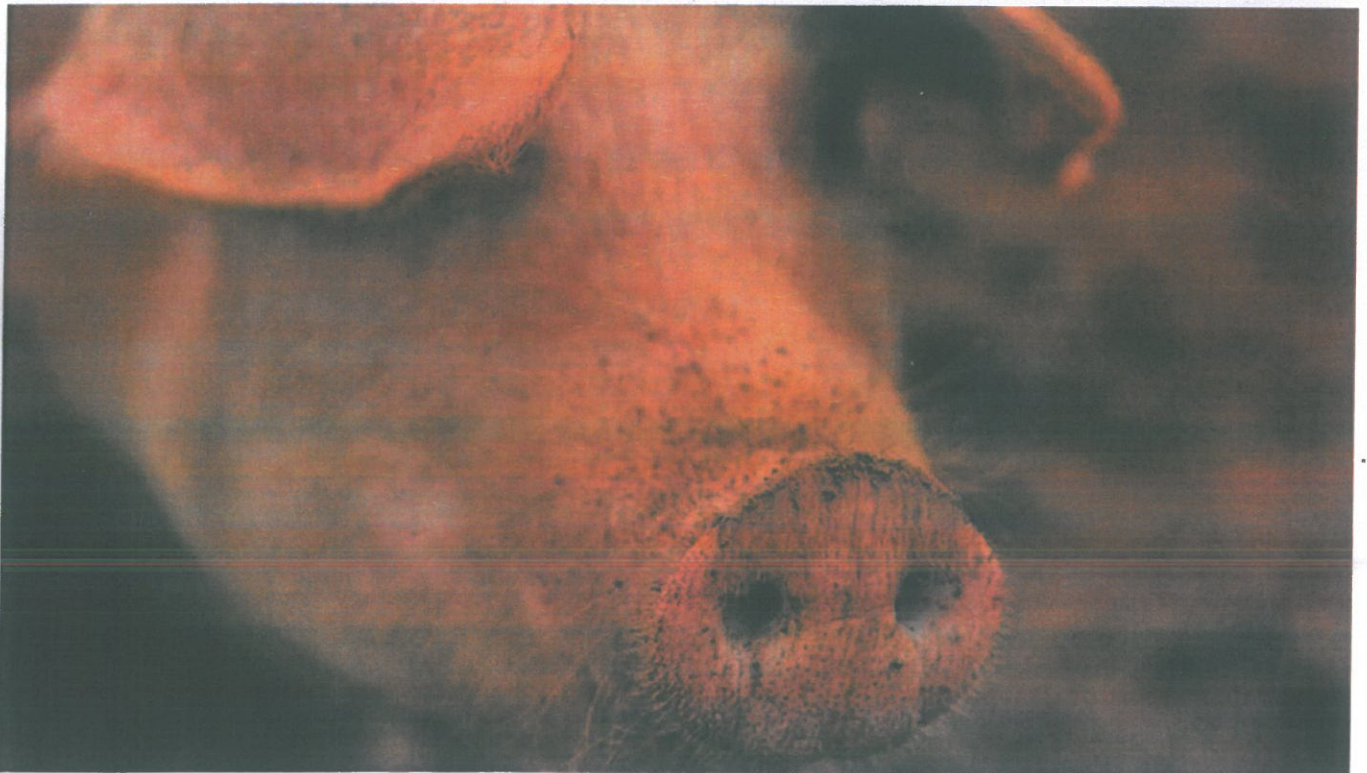


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# Pig industry facing 'biggest crisis' for 25 years, says Norfolk farmer

By Andrew Sinclair and Nic Rigby  
BBC Politics East



About 40,000 pigs have had to be culled and "thrown away" because of a lack of butchers to process them

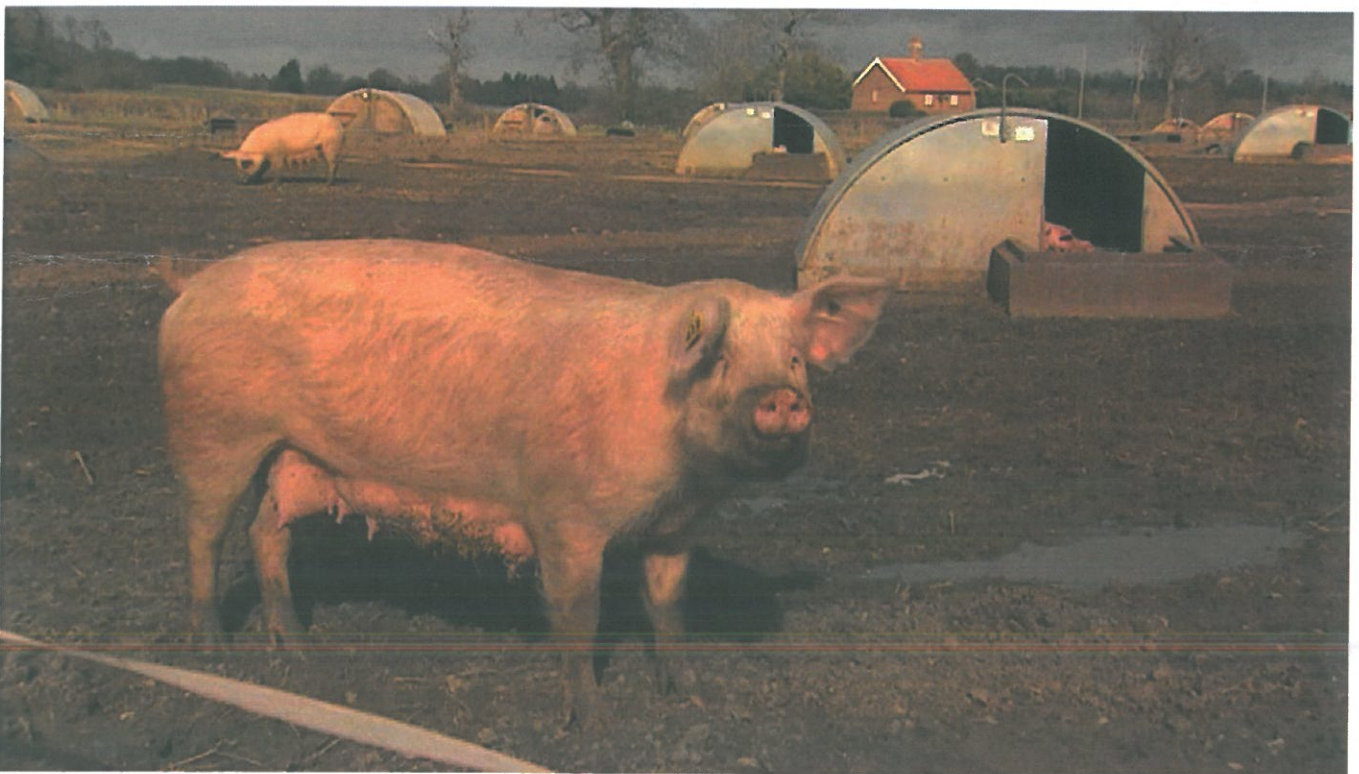
**The pig industry is facing its "biggest crisis" in at least 25 years, farmers have warned.**

The National Farmers' Union said 40,000 pigs have had to be culled and "thrown away" because of a lack of butchers to process them.

Rob Mutimer, chairman of the National Pig Association, said red tape stopping foreign butchers coming into the country was part of the problem.

The government said it recognised problems and had freed up extra visas.

The meat processing industry said there was a shortage of about 10,000 butchers.



Simon Watchorn, pig farmer at Earsham Park Farm in Earsham, near Bungay, said he was able to send two thirds of the normal number of sows to be slaughtered each week

Part of the problem has been caused by Covid, which led to markets for pork, particularly in the Chinese market, drying up.

Many butchers were laid off and those from abroad decided to go home.

But Brexit has also been a big factor because to get foreign workers back in time involves visas and lots of paperwork.

The government introduced a special visa scheme last autumn but it only brought in about 100 extra workers.

Mr Mutimer, who farms at Swannington, near Aylsham, Norfolk, said: "This is the biggest crisis I've seen in the 25 years I've been in the pig industry.

"There is no doubt there is a shortage of butchers in Europe.

"But other countries are managing a lot better than we are to get their pigs processed.

"The major reason is we've got so much bureaucracy in the scheme to get butchers into the country and it is costing too much."



| Rob Mutimer farms at Swannington, near Aylsham, Norfolk

Simon Watchorn, a pig farmer at Earsham Park Farm, in Earsham, Norfolk, said he was able to send 200 pigs to slaughter each week rather than the normal 300.

"These sows for example, they'll be eating about 10.5kg of food a day. Because we have had to hang on to them for another 14 days, they have eaten just over a quarter of a tonne of extra food and food at the moment is at an all-time high," he said.



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| Farmers in the UK have said there is a crisis in British pig production

Victoria Prentis, Minister of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, said: "We've definitely got a serious problem with the pig industry at the moment. The problem goes all along the supply chain.

"We've been able to bring on some extra visas - 800 additional visas. But we are also really encouraging processors to use the skilled workers route which has been available since last year."

*Politics East* airs on BBC One in the East on Sunday, 27 February at 10:00 GMT and can be viewed on the [BBC iPlayer](#) afterwards.

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