

ONE MARKET DIFFERENT STANDARDS

Welfare, Labelling, and
Imported Pork in New Zealand

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A note on scope

The purpose of this analysis is to show visually the imports issue at the point of sale. To our knowledge, labels shown comply with the applicable regulations, and we do not suggest that any brand, company or retailer named in this analysis has breached the law or intended to mislead consumers. Nor do we aim to single out any brand. The products shown are examples of labelling formats the current rules permit. This analysis does not state or imply that any particular product was produced using sow stalls - the labels do not carry that information. Labels were photographed between January and August 2026, and packaging may have changed since. If any information about a product is inaccurate or out of date, contact info@animalpolicyinternational.org and it will be reviewed and corrected as necessary.

Introduction

For several years now there have been calls for New Zealand's animal welfare laws for farmed animals to also apply to imports due to concerns about the welfare of animals farmed overseas for the New Zealand market, the position of domestic producers, and New Zealand's reputation.

New Zealand has decided that certain production practices are unacceptable for pigs farmed here. But those requirements don't apply to pork entering the same market. That creates a regulatory and trade gap.

Animal Policy International, SPCA New Zealand and the New Zealand Animal Law Association examined the issue in the report *Closing the Welfare Gap* (2024)¹. A legislative response now exists - the Animal Products (Closing the Welfare Gap) Amendment Bill, a member's bill in the name of Green Party MP Steve Abel and currently in the members' ballot, would enable the Minister to set welfare standards for animal products sold in New Zealand, domestic and imported alike.² A second report looked at the legality of such a measure³, and a third, *Vision Into Action* (2025)⁴, examined the practicalities.

This issue matters because New Zealand's rules for pig farming have changed over time. New Zealand banned sow stalls in 2016, after a public outcry (although it still uses farrowing crates).⁵ New Zealand farmers cannot use sow stalls. But 63% of the pig meat consumed in New Zealand is imported,⁶ and around 96% of those imports come from countries that still permit sow stalls. A practice prohibited in New Zealand therefore remains permissible within production systems supplying the New Zealand market.

Shoppers cannot tell from the shelf whether the welfare requirements applied to the pigs were equivalent to those required in New Zealand. In July 2023, Parliament's Regulations Review Committee upheld a complaint from NZPork, finding that listing meat origin in fine print on the back of a pack, while the front prominently says "made in New Zealand", could be "materially confusing or misleading" to consumers. It recommended the Government consider amending the regulation.⁷ Three years on, the regulations have not been amended. On 7 September 2026 the Ministry for Regulation completed a separate Product Labelling Review, aimed at reducing compliance costs.⁸ Two days later, it was reported that Commerce and Consumer Affairs Minister Cameron Brewer had declined to strengthen the labelling rules, acknowledging imported meat could be "branded in a way that misleads consumers about the product's origin" but saying he was "not aware of evidence that this is occurring on a scale that would justify further regulatory change".⁹

The audit provides a practical picture of what this regulatory gap on imports looks like in the marketplace: what information is available to shoppers, what it does not tell them, and how pork produced under different regulatory systems can enter the same market. Between January and August 2026 we photographed the labels of 101 pork products from 26 brands, owned by 20 companies, across New World, Woolworths and PAK'nSAVE stores in Auckland and Wellington. We found New Zealand branding on imported pork, single products listing as many as 14 possible countries, and labels stating that the listed countries may not reflect where the animal was raised. All of it appears to comply with the current rules, and the rules exempt whole categories of products from origin labelling altogether.

Labelling, though, is not the underlying issue, imports are. The key question is this: when New Zealanders have decided that a particular farming practice is unacceptable, should products produced using that practice nevertheless be allowed into the New Zealand market? Over 80% of New Zealanders think not.¹⁰

Ahead of the general election on 7 November 2026, parties have a mandate and an opportunity to commit to closing this gap.

Executive Summary

Most of the pork New Zealanders eat is imported, much of it from countries that permit practices banned on New Zealand farms. The current rules do not require imported pork to meet the relevant New Zealand welfare requirements, and shoppers cannot establish those production conditions from the label.

The gap: New Zealand's ban on sow stalls came into force in 2016. 63% of the pig meat consumed in New Zealand is imported, around 96% of it from countries that still permit sow stalls. Horizon Research polling (2024) found four in five New Zealanders did not know that imports do not have to meet New Zealand standards. When made aware, 81% agreed that imports should meet New Zealand's welfare standards.¹⁰

The audit: New Zealand applies different regulatory requirements to domestic and imported pork. To show what imported pork looks like in the marketplace, we photographed 101 pork products from 26 brands across New World, Woolworths and PAK'nSAVE between January and August 2026. The audit does not assess the welfare of individual products. Instead, it provides a practical picture of what the current rules mean in the real world: pork produced under different regulatory systems is sold in the same market, while the information available to shoppers does not tell them which welfare requirements applied to the animals. We found:

- 1. New Zealand branding on imported pork.** Products carrying "Product of New Zealand", family-ownership claims and heritage branding, with pork from overseas countries listed in the fine print.
- 2. Origins unclear from the label.** Single products listing up to 14 possible countries of origin, with no indication of which applies.
- 3. Labels that state their own limits.** On processed products like frozen meals, only "made from imported and local ingredients" or stating the listed countries "may not always reflect the country the animal has been raised in".

What it means: Every format shown complies with the current regulations. That is precisely the point: the rules permit pork produced under different regulatory requirements to enter the same market without requiring the imported product to meet the relevant welfare requirements that apply domestically.

Clearer labels on method of production would help shoppers at the margin. But even accurate labels would leave consumers needing to understand local and overseas welfare laws, would not cover restaurants and foodservice, and would still allow practices banned in New Zealand to be offshored. **Labelling is evidence of the problem; legislation is the solution. What would close the welfare gap is a single standard: requiring all pork sold in New Zealand, domestic and imported, to meet the same key requirements.**

Policy solution

The policy solution is legislation requiring imported pork to meet the relevant welfare requirements that apply to New Zealand production, including the prohibition on sow stalls. Support is broad: 81% of New Zealanders agree imported products should respect the same welfare standards applied in New Zealand. Support among farmers matches it: 79% agree imports should be required to meet New Zealand's standards, and 78% say political parties should commit to making it happen.



“ Although it might be possible for an imported meat product that complies with the regulations to be branded in a way that misleads consumers about the product's origin, I am not aware of evidence that this is occurring on a scale that would justify further regulatory change. ”

Cameron Brewer, Commerce and Consumer Affairs Minister, September 2026⁹

Corte Buona Pancetta Flat

Contents

- i Introduction
- ii Executive Summary
- 1 Contents
- 3 The Gap: Where New Zealand's Pork Comes From
 - 3 Pig welfare: sow stalls and farrowing crates
- 4 The Audit: What the imports policy gap looks like in practice
 - 4 What the law requires for imports
- 5 Findings: What the Label Won't Tell You
 - 5 Finding 1: New Zealand branding, imported pork
 - 7 Finding 2: up to 14 countries
 - 9 Finding 3: labels that state their own limits
- 11 Shoppers Assume The Law Already Protects Them
 - 12 Progress in the EU: How the EU has responded to its citizens
- 13 Closing the Welfare Gap: One Standard
- 14 Why Better Labelling Would Only Be A Partial Fix
- 15 Conclusion
- 17 References

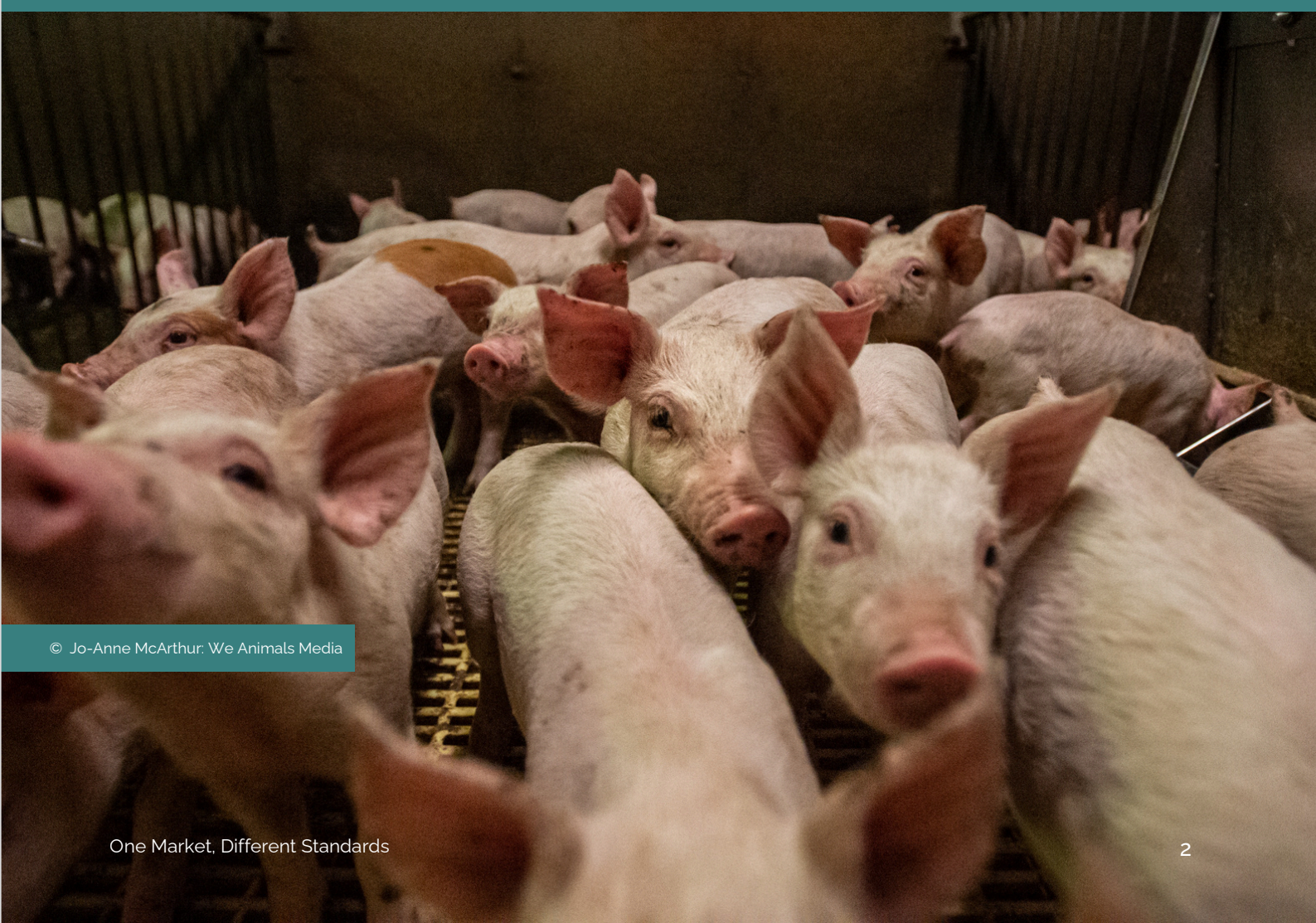


“ Around 60% of the pork New Zealanders eat is imported, and more than 85% of that goes into processed products. At a Pak'nSave Hornby last week, I couldn't find a single packet of bacon made from New Zealand-sourced pigs, yet the packaging was full of NZ imagery and language.

Consumers regularly tell us they thought they were buying NZ ham or bacon, only to discover otherwise in the small country-of-origin info.

”

Brent Kleiss, Chief Executive at NZ Pork, commenting publicly on the Product Labelling Review, September 2026¹²

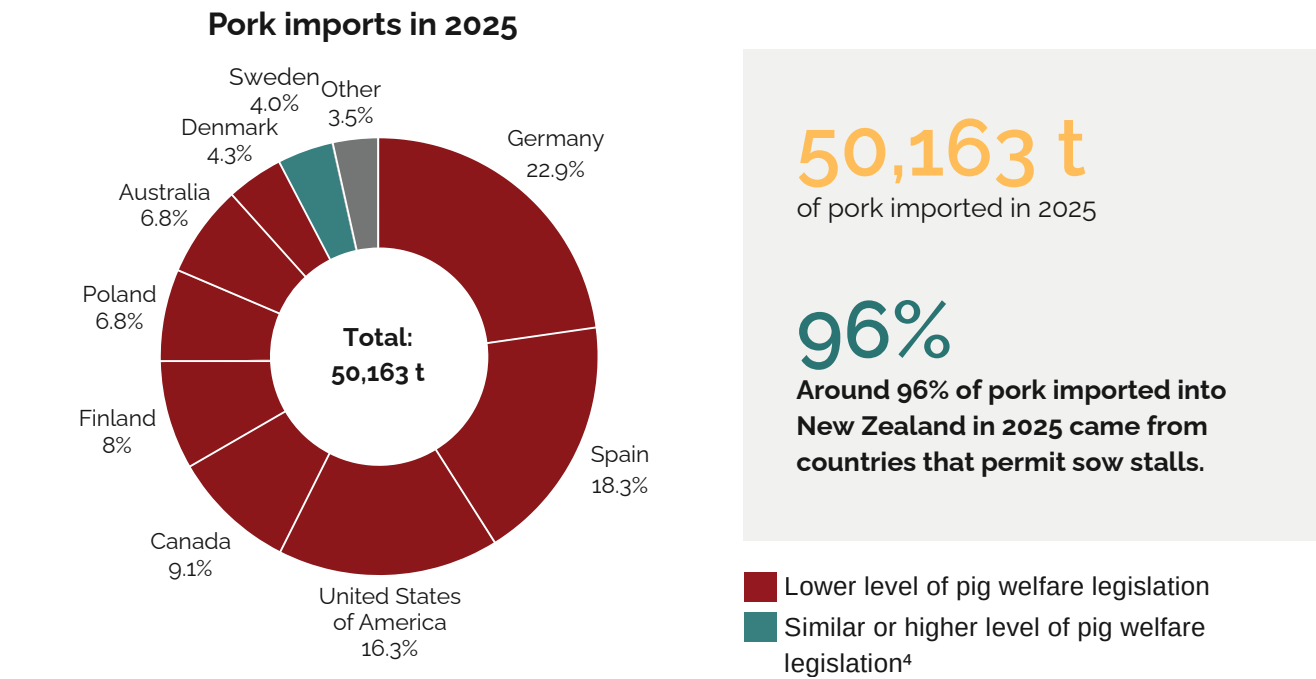


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The Gap: Where New Zealand's Pork Comes From

New Zealand's ban on sow stalls came into force in 2016.⁵ But most of the pork New Zealanders eat was never raised in New Zealand.

In 2025 New Zealand imported 50,163 tonnes of pork. The largest sources were **Germany (22.9%), Spain (18.3%), the United States (16.3%) and Canada (9.1%), followed by Finland, Poland, Australia, Denmark and Sweden.**¹³



What products contain imported pork? Fresh pork is overwhelmingly New Zealand-raised; imports are used primarily in bacon, ham, smallgoods and processed products, and as ingredients within them.

Pig welfare: sow stalls and farrowing crates

The two main pig welfare issues are the use of sow stalls and farrowing crates. New Zealand banned sow stalls following a public outcry. These metal-barred cages confine pregnant pigs (sows) for the duration of pregnancy, preventing them from turning around or expressing natural behaviours. They can only lie down, sit and stand, and their use is associated with higher incidences of aggressive behaviour.¹⁴



Sows in sow stalls in Canada (2022). © Jo-Anne McArthur / We Animals Media

New Zealand's ban on sow stalls means it effectively has some higher welfare standards relative to countries where they remain permitted. However, farrowing crates are still legal, and there are calls for their use to end. A farrowing crate is a small metal cage in which a sow is confined around farrowing, with her piglets kept alongside her. Sows can spend weeks per pregnancy in crates, two to three times a year, with similar negative effects on welfare as sow stalls.¹⁴ In December 2025, the Government passed legislation under urgency allowing current farrowing crate use to continue until December 2035.¹⁶ From then, confinement will be limited to seven days per cycle rather than ended. This followed a 2020 High Court ruling that farrowing crates were unlawful under the Animal Welfare Act.¹⁵

No pork label, whether New Zealand or imported, currently discloses whether either system was used.

The Audit: What the imports policy gap looks like in practice

New Zealanders and farmers have been asking for parity when it comes to welfare requirements and imports for some time - over 80% and 79% respectively in polling.¹¹

We wanted to show what the difference between domestic and imported requirements looks like in the marketplace, using the information available to a shopper at the point of sale.

Between January and August 2026 we visited New World, Woolworths and PAK'nSAVE stores where we photographed the labels of 101 pork products from 26 brands, owned by 20 companies. This covered primarily bacon, ham and prosciutto, together with salami, chorizo, sausages and other products where pork is a main ingredient. This report contains example findings.



Note: This audit documents the imports problem and the labelling formats the current rules allow; it does not measure how frequently each format occurs. The products shown are examples.

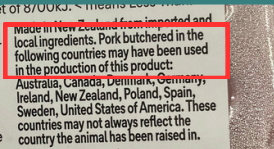
What the law requires for imports

Country of origin labelling for pork is set by the Consumer Information Standards (Origin of Food) Regulations 2021, made under the Fair Trading Act 1986 and enforced by the Commerce Commission.¹⁷ The regulations cover cured pork, which is defined as products described as bacon or ham containing at least 30% pork flesh or products containing at least 66% pork flesh preserved with salt, such as prosciutto.¹⁷

The required origin information is the country where the animal was raised, for example: *"Made in New Zealand from Canadian pork"*.



When origin changes often, the regulations allow an alternative: a list that combines the countries where the pigs were slaughtered, accompanied by a note stating that the pigs may not have been raised in that country. For example: *"Pork butchered in the following countries may have been used in the production of this product:..."*



Sausages, salami, luncheon, marinated pork, pizza toppings and ready meals fall outside the regulations. For those, *"Made in New Zealand from imported and local ingredients"* is a sufficient label under the current regulations.¹⁸



Findings: What the Label Won't Tell You

Finding 1: New Zealand branding, imported pork

Many products we photographed carry Kiwi branding or local family-ownership and heritage branding, with pork from overseas countries often listed in the fine print next to the barcode.

Primary Select pork belly is fronted "Primary Select is 100% owned by Kiwis"; the same face of the pack reads "Product of Spain". The Corte Buona pancetta pack is headed "Product of New Zealand" with a New Zealand flag, but at the end of the ingredients line it reads "Meat Origin: NZ & EU", which covers New Zealand and 27 other countries. Farmland brands its range "New Zealand Family Owned, Since 1964"; Grandpa's uses "New Zealand Family Owned Since 1980"; Hellers styles itself "NZ's Butcher"; Premier Beehive's range is branded "NZ's Most Delicious". Behind each of these, the fine print lists pork from up to fourteen possible overseas countries.

These examples illustrate two separate questions: where the pork came from, and under what production requirements it was produced. Current labels may provide incomplete answers to the first, and generally do not answer the second.



Corte Buona
"Product of New Zealand"



Farmland "New Zealand Family Owned"



Grandpa's "New Zealand Family Owned Since 1980"



Country Pride
"Family Owned Bulls, NZ"



Hellers
"NZ's Butcher"



Primary Select
"100% owned by Kiwis"



Henderson's
"New Zealand's Original"



Verkerks "Our family has been making salami for New Zealanders for 3 generations", no info on pork origin



Beak & Sons "Made in New Zealand"



Verkerks "Marlborough Black Garlic Salami",
no info on pork origin
One Market, Different Standards



Pams
"Made in New Zealand"

Finding 2: up to 14 countries

Some labels make the picture even harder to resolve.

- Premier Beehive's bacon lists pork "from pigs raised in one or more of" fourteen countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, UK, USA.
- Farmland's Champagne Ham lists nine potential source countries in addition to New Zealand: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the United States of America.
- Pams products list between six and ten.
- Hellers, Hutton's and Woolworths' own brands run similar lists.

Some products list where the pig was *raised*. Others list where the pig was *slaughtered* or *processing* took place - adding further complexity for shoppers.

Beehive streaky bacon: "NZ's most delicious" and 14-country list

Country Analysis

Australia	Belgium	Canada	Denmark	Finland	France	Germany
Ireland	Netherlands	Poland	Spain	Sweden	UK	USA

☒ Lower level of pig welfare legislation
☐ Similar or higher level of pig welfare legislation

Note: Country classifications reflect each country's legislation.



Farmland Champagne Ham: "New Zealand Family Owned" and 10-country list



De Gustibus: 10-country list



Hobson's: 11-country list



Woolworths: 10-country list



Medallion: 12-country list



Pams: 6-country list



Premier: 14-country list



Hutton's: 6-country list



Hellers: 6-country list



Hellers: 6-country list

Finding 3: labels that state their own limits

Farmland's champagne ham carries this sentence: "These countries may not always reflect the country the animal has been raised in." The same sentence appears on Woolworths' own-brand hams and across the Farmland range, from leg ham to bacon bones.

A sow can be confined in a stall in one country while her piglets are processed in another; the label records the second country and states it may not reflect the first.

And many processed products don't state country of origin at all, stating simply: "Made in New Zealand from imported and local ingredients". This is the case for example for Wattie's Sweet & Sour Pork, Country Pride's and Hutton's luncheon, Hellers Classic Brats, and Primo's chorizo.

Mike & Anna's Roast Pork & Veggies states "locally sourced potato, pumpkin and kūmara... prepared with care in our Tauranga kitchen". The locally sourced vegetables carry an origin statement; the pork does not.

"These countries may not always reflect the country the animal has been raised in."



Beehive: imported and local



Leader: imported and local



Country Pride: imported and local



Hellers: imported and local



Hawke's Bay Sausage Company: imported and local



Hutton's: imported and local



Pams: imported and local



Pieter's: no info of pork origin



Primo: imported and local



Mike & Anna's: no info of pork origin



Verkerks: no info of pork origin

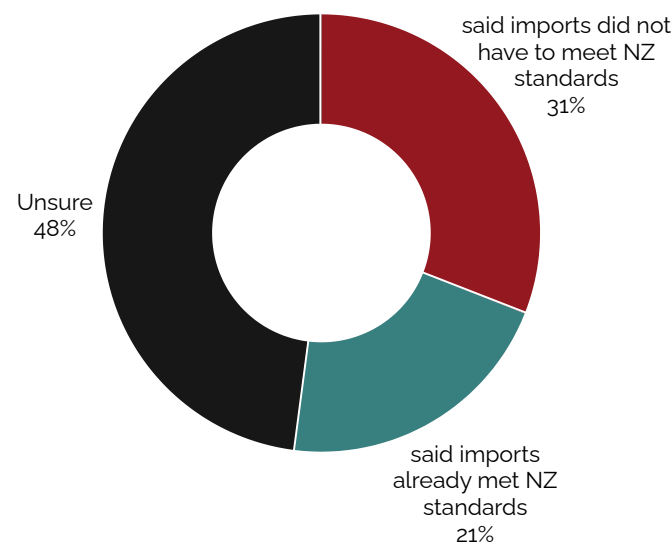


Wattie's: imported and local

Kiwis Assume The Law Already Protects Them

The supermarket audit shows that shoppers cannot establish from the shelf which welfare requirements applied to imported pork. Polling shows most believe they don't need to. A 2024 Horizon Research **poll found nearly 80% either thought imports already must meet New Zealand standards, or were unsure.**

- **31%** believed incorrectly that imports must meet the same standards as local products.
- **48%** were unsure.
- **21%** correctly answered that imported animal products do not have to meet New Zealand's welfare standards.¹⁰



Four in five New Zealanders, in other words, either assume the welfare gap has already been closed or don't know it exists. **When respondents learned the actual position:**

- **73% were concerned** about the impact on the **welfare of animals farmed overseas** for New Zealand consumption,
- **68% were concerned** about the impact on **domestic producers**, and
- **63% were concerned** about the impact on **New Zealand's reputation** for animal welfare.

What do the general public and farmers want?

81%

of **New Zealanders** agree imported products should respect the same animal welfare standards as those applied in New Zealand, with majorities across every party's voter base. (Horizon Research, 2024)¹⁰

79%

of **farmers** agree imported animal products should be required to meet New Zealand's welfare standards, and 78% say political parties should commit to ensuring it happens. (Curia Market Research, 2026)¹¹

Progress in the EU:

How the EU has responded to its citizens

The EU has responded to calls from citizens for stronger animal welfare standards - and to apply them to imports - reaffirmed in July 2026.

In 2019, the European Citizens' Initiative End the Cage Age was submitted after gathering more than 1.4 million statements of support.¹⁹ It called for an end to the use of cages in farming, prompting the European Commission to commit to proposing legislation to phase out cages for hens, sows, calves, rabbits, ducks, geese and other farmed animals, and to address the welfare standards applying to imported products.

In February 2025, the EU published its Vision for Agriculture and Food, reaffirming its commitment to revise EU animal welfare legislation, including its plan to phase out cages. The Commission also stated that future legislative proposals would apply the same standards to products produced in the EU and products imported from third countries.²⁰

This commitment has since been strengthened. In July 2026, the European Commission adopted its EU Livestock Strategy, which states that reciprocal animal welfare requirements should apply to certain imported animal products. Legislative proposals covering laying hens and broiler chickens are expected by the end of 2026, with a proposal covering pigs expected in the second quarter of 2027.²¹

The EU's direction is therefore increasingly clear when it comes to considering how equivalent requirements can apply to products entering the EU market. As the Commission develops these proposals, the EU is moving towards making welfare-based import requirements an established part of its trade policy.

Closing the Welfare Gap: One Standard

The solution is not simply better information, it is a common market requirement. The policy answer is to apply, via legislation, the relevant welfare requirements to all pork sold in New Zealand, whether produced domestically or imported.

For the issue examined here, that includes the prohibition on sow stalls. The measure would be applied to all countries in a non-discriminatory manner, keeping market access open to all producers that meet the required standards.

A legislative vehicle already exists. The Animal Products (Closing the Welfare Gap) Amendment Bill, currently in the members' ballot, would enable the Minister to set welfare standards for animal products sold in New Zealand, domestic and imported alike.

Independent legal analysis has found that well-designed import welfare requirements can be justified under World Trade Organization (WTO) rules through the public morals exception, and identified nothing in New Zealand's free trade agreements that would prevent them.³ Comparable measures, including the EU's Slaughter Regulation²² and California's Proposition 12,²³ have never been the subject of WTO dispute proceedings. The European Commission adopted its Livestock Strategy on 7 July 2026, committing to WTO-compatible reciprocity conditions for imports.²¹

25c

The cost to consumers is small: requiring imported pork to be sow-stall-free would cost the average consumer an estimated 25 cents per week⁴

176x

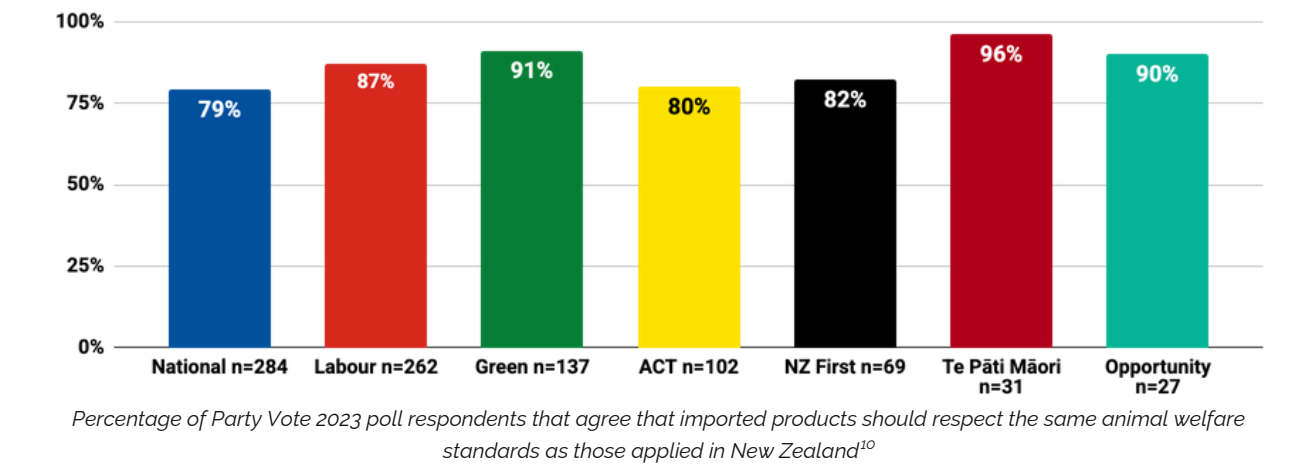
The United States already produces around 176 times more stall-free pork than it exports to New Zealand⁴

<2%

no major pork exporter sends more than 2% of its production to New Zealand⁴

Overwhelming support across voters of all parties

Parties heading into the November election can commit to one standard with the numbers behind them: support is consistent across the public, farmers, and voters of every party.



Why Better Labelling Would Only Be A Partial Fix

Better labelling could improve transparency and give consumers more information about the products they are buying. It can help shoppers understand where pork comes from and if method-of-production information is used, how the animals were kept. These are worthwhile improvements.

However, labelling and an import requirement address different parts of the problem. Labelling provides information about products; an import requirement sets the welfare requirements that products must meet to access the market - an import requirement is the key solution.

1 Country of origin labelling
Country of origin labelling, even if made accurate and specific, tells shoppers where pork came from, not how the pig was raised. The burden stays with the consumer to find out the minimum welfare standards in each listed country. A country name also cannot capture differences between producers, nor would it reveal whether New Zealand pork came from a farm using farrowing crates. Improved country-of-origin labelling would therefore increase transparency, but would not by itself establish clarity on welfare.

2 Method of production labelling
Mandatory method of production labelling could go further by telling shoppers how animals were kept and which production practices were used. This could provide much clearer information about welfare. However, labelling would still inform consumer choice rather than set a common requirement for products sold in New Zealand. Most such schemes would also not extend to foodservice, leaving part of the market outside the system.



The France's Étiquette Bien-Être Animal label provides a tiered A-E score as well as the method of production.²⁴

Labelling and an import requirement are complementary rather than competing approaches. Better labelling can give consumers useful information and improve transparency, but a market-wide import requirement works differently by establishing the welfare requirements that apply to the product itself, regardless of where it was produced - therefore closing the welfare gap.

Importantly, the WTO Dispute Settlement Body has stated on several occasions that Members of the WTO have the right to determine the level of protection that they consider appropriate to achieve a given policy aim.³

The solution to truly close the welfare gap is to require all pork sold in New Zealand to meet the relevant welfare requirements, whether produced domestically or imported.

Conclusion

New Zealand has made a regulatory decision that sow stalls should not be used in domestic pig production. Yet pork produced in markets where sow stalls remain permitted can still enter the New Zealand market.

The supermarket audit provides a practical picture of what this means for consumers under the current rules. We found New Zealand branding on imported pork, origin lists running to 14 countries, labels stating that listed countries may not reflect where the animal was raised, and processed products where the origin of the pork is not disclosed.

Better labelling could improve transparency and help consumers make more informed choices. But the underlying policy question remains: should pork sold in New Zealand be subject to the same relevant welfare requirements, regardless of where it was produced?

What would close the gap is a single standard, in legislation: requiring all pork sold in New Zealand to meet the key welfare requirements. If a practice is not acceptable on a New Zealand farm, it should not be acceptable on a New Zealand shelf.

A policy on imports is practical, legal and common sense. With an election on 7 November 2026, political parties have an opportunity to commit to closing this gap.



Pig in a sow stall in Canada (2022)
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