

Smithfield Asks Producers to Phase Out Gestation Crates

SMITHFIELD, Va. (AP) — Smithfield Foods is recommending that its contract growers phase out the practice of keeping female hogs in small metal crates while pregnant.

The world's largest pork producer said Tuesday that it is asking the growers to move pregnant sows from gestation crates to group housing by 2022.

Smithfield has been criticized for continuing to breed sows in the crates that severely restrict the animals' movement.

The company previously announced that it was phasing out the practice at its U.S. facilities by 2017. It has transitioned 54 percent of its pregnant sows to group housing so far.

Smithfield's international hog production operations also remain on track to complete its conversion away from gestation crates by 2022.

In September, the Virginia-based company completed its sale to China's Shuanghui International Holdings Ltd.

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