



# Bringing HOMIE the Bacon

Pork accounts for more than 10 per cent of fresh meat purchased by Australians each year, and Australian Pork Limited (APL) is the peak industry body for pork producers in the country.

Images courtesy of Australian Pork Limited

**M**any people don't realise that the most consumed meat in the world isn't beef or chicken, but is in fact pork. In Australia alone, each person consumes, on average, 25 kilograms of pork per year, and the industry is worth more than \$1 billion at the farm gate and around three times that at a wholesale level. APL is the national industry representative body for Australian pig producers, performing marketing activities to improve the demand for Australian pork, research and development to make the industry more competitive, and industry representation ensuring government and regulators have all the necessary information for successful policy outcomes.

CEO Andrew Spencer explains that the aim of the corporation, which is funded by levies from pig farmers and the government, is to do the best by the pork industry at all times. "We are a unique farm

services company. The pork industry is just one of many sectors of agriculture, which includes grain, beef, lamb, wool, and horticulture. All of the various sectors of agriculture have research and development corporations; those corporations are mandated to perform on behalf of their part of the industry to improve productivity, efficiency, and innovation.

"Australian Pork Limited is not only the research and development corporation for the pork industry. We have more responsibilities than that: we're also the marketing arm on behalf of the pig farmers of Australia. Campaigns like 'Get some pork on your fork'—that's all ours. We're also the lobby group, the peak industry body for the pig farmers, so we talk to government about policy, regulations, particular areas like animal welfare, environmental management, trade, labour, food-safety policy. They're our three key roles: marketing, research and development, and industry advocacy."

Andrew has worked and been closely involved in agriculture for his entire career. After graduating with a Bachelor of Agricultural Science from Melbourne University, he worked for 20 years in the private sector for a multinational agribusiness organisation that was a supplier to farms worldwide. He spent 10 years in Australia before his role took him to Germany, South Africa, and France before returning to Australia and taking up his current role in 2005. One thing Andrew stresses is that he takes his role within APL very seriously, and says the entire organisation does too. "We're a meat industry, and an animal needs to die to produce meat. That's a very serious responsibility, and our industry has to ensure that it happens ethically.

"That's a very short statement to make, but there's an enormous amount of work that goes into making sure it happens. Animal welfare is core, and the animals themselves are a very important stakeholder in our industry. The >

"We've spent enormous amounts of money over the years improving animal welfare."

- Andrew Spencer



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# FOR ANIMALS FOR HEALTH FOR YOU



Zoetis appreciates the hard work of Andrew Spencer and his team at Australian Pork Limited to promote and progress the industry. Zoetis is also dedicated to moving the industry in the right direction. We've been supplying medicines, vaccines and services for over 75 years, previously as CSL Animal Health and Pfizer Animal Health. Our experience and heritage is backed by a committed Australian Research and Development program, which helps us deliver forward-thinking solutions. With ongoing collaboration with Australian Pork Limited, Zoetis will continue to help producers and veterinarians build a healthier pork industry.



Australian pork industry has a fantastic reputation around the world in the research and development that we conduct in finding the best ways to manage our animals for their welfare. Treating animals with good welfare is, of course, the right thing to do; that's the first reason that we do it. But we also do it because our consumers expect it of us, and we do it because a productive farm and a well-treated animal are completely compatible. You have to have well-treated animals if they're going to be productive and your farm is going to be successful."

Australian Pork has taken huge steps to not only state its support for animal welfare but to invest in ensuring its pork producers are treating their animals in the best possible way. In 2010, APL industry delegates made a world-first decision to voluntarily phase out the use of sow stalls, a practice that kept pregnant female pigs confined in individual stalls, often for the full length of the pregnancy. The phase-out is aiming to be complete across all pig farms by 2017. "We've spent enormous amounts of money over the years improving animal welfare. Back in 2010, our industry took a very important decision: We decided as an industry that we would voluntarily phase out the use of a particular type of farming practice called sow stalls. We made that commitment at the end of 2010, and today around 70 per cent of our industry production is

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operating without using this form of pregnant sow housing. That initiative has also been picked up by major retailers, Coles and Woolworths, where they have that standard now for their pork supply. That's just one example of how as an industry we can show the leadership and unity to make these big decisions and bring our industry into the twenty-first century."

This was important for the industry and for Australian consumers, who Andrew says are becoming more aware of how their food is produced and know what they want from farmers. "Everything we do is really focused on the offering that we're going to put in front of the consumer and the interactions we have with the community. The twenty-first-century consumer in Australia is a much fussier beast than in the past.

"The internet is giving them access to information, which means they demand new and more knowledge about the products they buy. It's not only about how much it costs, how much they like it; it's also about how healthy is it, was it produced with sustainability and with a minimal footprint on the environment, was it produced without cruelty to animals, was it produced in a way that managed people ethically? Lots of other demands of consumers mean that if you want to be a successful food business in the twenty-first century, you've got to keep abreast of changing consumer perceptions and you have to be prepared to move with them. That really drives a lot of what APL is doing."

Some of the education that the organisation provides in its marketing arm is making these consumers aware of what they are doing for animal welfare, and how that differs from pork imported from other countries. "A lot of people don't realise that about two-thirds of all of the ham and bacon consumed in Australia is made from pork that is imported, and it comes from countries where they still use sow stalls in many cases. Most people, of course, don't realise that, so it's one of our jobs

to improve education, improve the understanding of what Australian pork means, and why it's different."

Andrew sees the Australian pork industry growing even more into the future. With a growing population and international demand, especially from economies like China, he believes that the challenge will be to continue to listen to consumer demands and attempt to meet those. "If you look at what's happening to the world, it is becoming hungrier, the population continues to increase, and people have to eat. But also large parts of the world are becoming wealthier, and with wealth comes more demand for higher-protein foodstuffs such as meat.

"With wealth and with information, the world becomes fussier, so they not only worry about the tangible attributes of their food like taste, convenience, and price, but they also worry about the non-tangible aspects like ethics, environment, and welfare. While we improve the way that we produce it, we have to bring the community along and make sure that they're comfortable with those changes and that they understand them and support them. They're the big changes going on in a macro sense; that's the environment that we operate in. Again, the way we manage that is to work thoroughly on the relationship we have with consumers, understand their desires and needs, as well as the community."

A lot of the marketing APL does is not only myth busting on misconceptions about the pork industry and pigs as animals, but showing Australians the delicious ways to consume pork. For Andrew, he has a particular recipe that is his favourite. "My favourite is pork tenderloin. If you slice it really thinly and then crumb it and lightly fry it, it's absolutely delicious with some apple sauce. It's a very simple meal, but it's one of my favourites because my grandma used to cook it for me way before I had anything to do with the pork industry." •