

# FREE-RANGE ORGANIC BREEDING SYSTEM

## CASE STUDY FARM\_IT\_02

### History farm

The farm\_IT\_02 is situated in southern Tuscany, an area characterized by a Mediterranean climate with relatively cold/moderate winters and hot summers.

Since the 1992 farm\_IT\_02 has operated as an organic farm, managed by the daughter and employing seasonal workers. Covering an area of 430 hectares, all owned, the farm raises various a variety of animals:

- o 20 Maremmana cows;
- o 10 heifers;
- o 20 calves;
- o 4 sows and a boar with few piglets (Cinta Senese);
- o a group of wild boars and a lot of chickens.

In addition, the farm grows cereals and hay for animals and humans consumption, and also cultivates several vegetable gardens specifically for the restaurant (50ha).



## Pig rearing

In 1989, the farm began raising Cinta Senese pigs with the interest of producing fresh meat and traditional cured meats such as salami, sausage, capocollo and prosciutto, for their restaurant. However, they realized that this required significant knowledge and infrastructure. Consequently, they focusing on producing fresh meat for the restaurant, and they buy the cured meats/products from other farms.

Initially, they used to raise pigs for up to two years old to have heavy animals for slaughter. Now they only rear them for a few months. So, they reduced the number of pens and the work dedicate to pigs.

The farm introduced reared wild boars, to diversify the offering of meat.

### Sows

Sows are free with the boar in a big, fenced area in the forest, they farrow and lactating in the same area, all the pigs are free to move and the piglets also to exit from the paddock. This isn't the best way to breed animals, but it is the easier for us.

### Piglets

Piglets have a natural weaning and approx. at 30 kg the are taken and slaughtered. They aren't moved to different pastures and/or buildings during their growing and finishing cycle. Pigs are slaughtered more or less at 30 kg live weight.

The pigs are reared in a large paddock in the forest. The young pigs can exit and go around in the forest and clearings. Pigs are free in a large space, protected by trees, fences are difficult and expensive to build but they are the only infrastructure. For us this approach is easy to manage. Pigs are always healthy. The shelters used are wooden huts.





### Pasture menage

The large, forested paddock is divided in two, we can move the animals every 6 months or more from one part to the other to rest the forest. Pigs are breed in the forest because trees protect them against cold, wind and heat. The sloping ground avoids water stagnation. The forest doesn't feed the pig (only few acorns in autumn) we use cereals like barley and maize and waste vegetables from the vegetable gardens.

### Environmental aspects

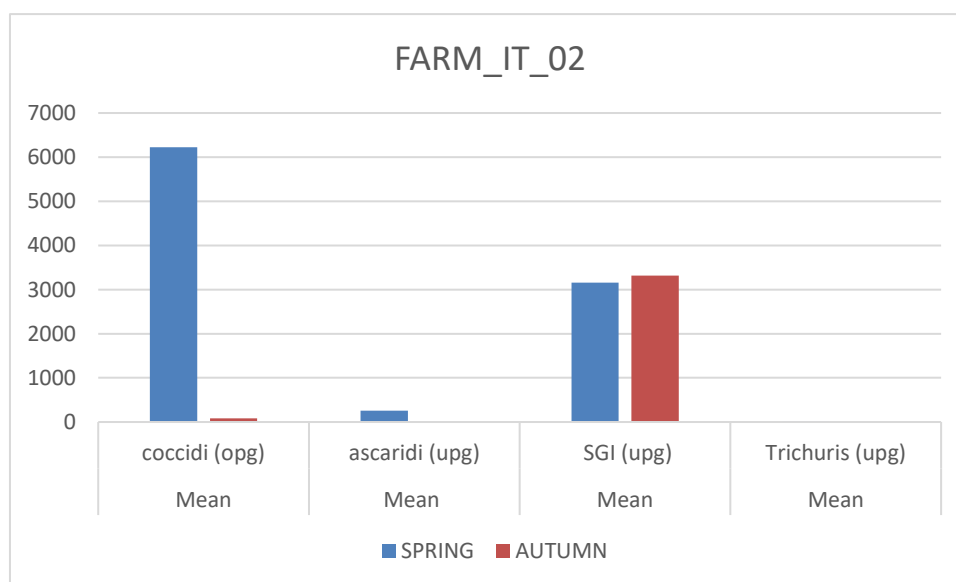
High level of animal health and welfare, large spaces for the animals, pigs and cows clean the forest. Pigs are often too problematic; they dig and compact the soil; we should build new paddock to protect the forest.

Trees can protect soil from erosion, so the link with pigs works well.

### Economic aspects

Keep free-range pigs in a mixed system is an uneconomic breeding, only direct sales can offset the costs, in this case the restaurant is ideal, everything is in the supply chain. The conversion rate is too high and the productivity is low. The main market for their pig products is direct market of processed meat (also cooked like ragù) and restaurant. Rearing free-range pigs increased the market appeal of products; it is better to say complete, we sell vegetal and animal products, fresh and processed.

### Parasities



Faecal samples collected in 2022/2023 indicate that the parasite level of the animals is under control. We observe seasonal fluctuations in the presence of intestinal parasites, in particular Coccidi and Strongyles. The first are present only in spring, while the second are present in both seasons, with a little fluctuation.

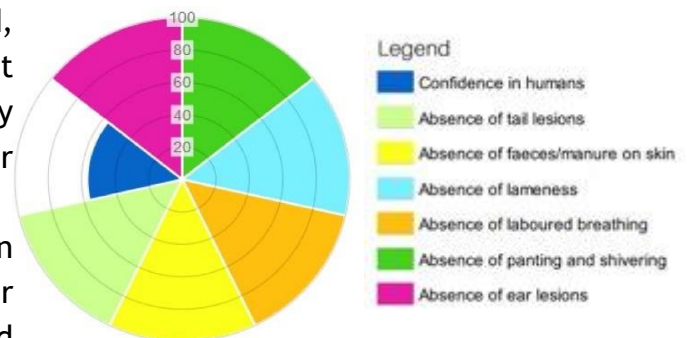
## PIG LOW and welfare

The health status of herd of pigs is very good, they never had sanitary problems. To prevent or treat diseases they use compulsory vaccines. We never used drugs or deworming.

The main welfare benefits the farmer sees in his pigs are the freedom to express their natural behavior. Pig welfare is monitored regularly, including seasonal fecal sampling for parasite analysis. The PIGLOW application is utilized for assessing animal welfare, with parameters generally showing high scores except for trust towards humans, which improves over time as pigs become more familiar with human presence.

The graph illustrates the different parameters used to evaluate animal welfare in pig farming. High scores are evident for most of the parameters, except for one: trust towards humans. The pig, which is very inquisitive by nature, requires a certain amount of time to get close to humans. However, in this particular case, the animals did not seem frightened. After

a few minutes of studying the situation, they showed increasing interest in humans, approaching them with curiosity.



Overall, the farm's approach combines sustainable practices with a focus on animal welfare and product quality, while having to confront challenges such as soil erosion and feed management.

### TABLE FARM\_IT\_02

Free-range production system - FARM_IT_02	
<b>Farm category</b>	Organic since 1992
<b>Number of sows</b>	4 sows
<b>Breed</b>	Cinta Senese
<b>Food</b>	Pasture and integration with cereal
<b>Average farrowings per sow</b>	
<b>Farrowings per year</b>	
<b>% live born piglet mortality</b>	
<b>Mutilations</b>	None
<b>General health</b>	The animals are in excellent health.
<b>Weaning</b>	At 30 kg they are taken and slaughtered
<b>Weight when sold on or slaughtered</b>	30 kg