Largest Pork Processor to Phase Out Crates

**Small Cages**

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Smithfield Foods, the world's largest U.S. pork supplier, Virginia-based Smithfield Foods, said yesterday that it will require its producers to phase out the use of the gestation cages.

Activists hailed the decision as perhaps the most significant victory in the years-long crusade to end the use of the gestation crates. The crates, used by the pork industry to keep sows from moving for most of the time during their pregnancies, have been banned in some European countries and in California, Florida and Arizona in recent years.

Smithfield's decision means that the company will be the first U.S. pork producer to ban the crates, which have been a subject of increasing concern and scrutiny by animal rights groups and consumers in recent years.

The decision follows years of pressure by animal rights groups and consumers to end the use of the crates, which have been a source of controversy in the pork industry for decades.

The company said it will require its producers to phase out the crates by 2022 and that it will also work with the pork industry to develop alternative housing systems.

The decision comes as the pork industry has faced increasing criticism over its use of the crates. Animal rights groups have repeatedly called for a ban on the crates, and consumers have shown growing concern over the treatment of animals in the industry.

The decision is likely to be seen as a major victory for animal rights groups and consumers, who have long argued that the crates are inhumane and that they should be phased out.

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