



Standing Group of Experts on African swine fever in Europe under the GF-TADs umbrella

Thirteenth meeting (SGE ASF13) **Paris, France, 29 May 2019**

REPORT

Summary

The Thirteenth meeting of the standing group of experts on African Swine Fever in Europe (SGE ASF13) took place in Paris on 29 May 2019, as a side event of the 87th General Session of the OIE. The affected countries in Europe and many observers from around the world attended this meeting.

The 13 countries affected by ASF in Europe since 2014 reported on the latest situation and measures. The OIE regional representation in Asia presented the ASF situation in Asia and the steps taken recently to create a Standing Group of Experts on ASF in Asia, and the CVO and delegate of Canada similarly reported on the latest initiatives in the Americas to increase the prevention and preparedness. The SGE ASF14 will take place in Sofia, Bulgaria, on 10 and 11 September 2019.

Minutes

A very large number of participants – estimated over 100 – attended the meeting of the SGE ASF13, including representatives of the 13 members of the SGE ASF in Europe and many observers from all continents and a diversity of institutions.

Opening remarks

The President welcomed the participants, stressing that their growing number was the result of progressive better understanding by many countries of the risks posed by ASF and because of an increasing need to discuss and coordinate actions at international level.

He reminded the participants about the fast approaching summer season in Europe, which consistently appeared over the past years to be the period with the highest risk in terms of spreading of ASF.

A document with a selection of recommendations from past meetings of the SGE ASF was distributed and the countries strongly encouraged to implement these recommendations in order to be better prepared for the upcoming summer season.

Updates from the member countries of the SGE ASF

Belarus

The implementation of prophylactic measures ongoing in accordance with the national regulation. This includes the reduction of the wild boar population, which is estimated today to be approx. 1000 animals only throughout the country (hunters receive a premium of 60 € for each wild boar killed).

Active monitoring in backyards and commercial farms is carried out. Each consignment is tested against ASF. Old commercial farms built 30 or 40 years ago have been shut down to be replaced by modern facilities up to standards.

Belgium

All positive cases in wild boar have been found in the current Part II. Disease appears to be now endemic throughout the infected zone except in the North West part of the zone which was extended last March. Significant efforts have been made to help control the disease: a network of fences has been built and is still to be completed; dozens of additional veterinarians and other employees have been hired; a lot of trapping and night shooting of wild boar in the infected zone is going on and the next hunting season is being carefully prepared.

There has been no outbreak of ASF in the Belgium pig sector, as demonstrated by the self-declaration of ASF country freedom in the domestic pig sector, recently published by OIE¹.

A very active and fruitful coordination is being implemented with neighbouring France and Luxembourg.

Bulgaria

There has been no outbreak in domestic pigs in 2019, but cases in wild boar have been confirmed in 2 different locations. The improvement of biosecurity in commercial farms and backyards is ongoing. Regular meetings are organized with hunters to ensure their participation to the control effort, including searching the countryside and woods for dead wild boar and sampling all carcasses (hunted or found dead) for subsequent ASF testing (together with trichinella). A mobile application used by the hunters has been developed to facilitate the process. Awareness campaigns are ongoing in the villages, on the main roads and resting areas, etc.

Czech Republic

No outbreak and no case of ASF to be reported. Indeed, the country has eradicated ASF and has been recognised free of the disease by the European Union last March. As self-declaration confirming ASF country freedom in domestic pig and wild boar has recently been submitted and published by the OIE².

Estonia

The prevalence of ASF in wild boar is decreasing. It fell from 83% of dead wild boar in 2016 to 12% only since the beginning of 2019.

The last outbreak in domestic pig was confirmed in 2017. Dead pigs are regularly tested for the presence of the virus, each farm is controlled 2 to 4 times a year.

A plan is being developed to improve hunting ground facilities.

Hungary

There's been more than 1300 cases in wild boar so far. Increased shooting has been ordered in the country. Every carcass of wild boar is submitted to ASF testing. No outbreak has been detected in the domestic pig sector.

Latvia

Up to this day 170 infected wild boar have been detected in 2019, all within the ASF infected area, which was last enlarged in December 2018. In addition to the usual control measures, the biosecurity inspection of hunting grounds is being carried out since February this year by Food and Veterinary Service inspectors.

There's been no outbreak so far this year in the domestic pig sector. The main control measure is the implementation of biosecurity in all types of pig farms.

Permanent awareness is maintained in all sectors concerned.

¹ http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Animal_Health_in_the_World/docs/pdf/Self-declarations/2019_04_Belgium_ASF_ANG.pdf

² http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Animal_Health_in_the_World/docs/pdf/Self-declarations/2019_05_CzechRep_ASF_ANG.pdf

Lithuania

The situation is stable. There's been four times less positive wild boars in the last 10 months. The Western part of the country is free of ASF. The EU strategy is systematically implemented. Many meetings are organised with hunters to make sure that biosecurity measures for the safe disposal of hunted wild boar are applied while reducing the population. In the domestic pig sector, each farm is to be inspected before summer to check on biosecurity rules. Awareness campaigns are deployed along the roads, etc.

Moldova

2 outbreaks in domestic pigs have been confirmed in 2019, 1 in a backyard and 1 in a commercial farm. The national eradication plan has been approved. It includes provisions for the surveillance and sampling of farms, and support to farmers and hunters.

Poland

1136 cases in wild boar and 2 outbreaks in domestic pigs have been confirmed so far in 2019. As regards the latest outbreak detected on 17 May in a farm of 1700 pigs in the Warmińsko – Mazurskie region, the preliminary findings point at human activity to explain the introduction of the virus, or at agricultural machinery used in surrounding fields.

Pig farms are controlled all over the country to check application of biosecurity measures, resulting in some administrative decisions of temporary prohibition to keep pigs.

Romania

The first ASF outbreak in Romania was confirmed in July 2017. In 2018, 1164 outbreaks in domestic pigs (incl. 1145 in backyards) and 601 cases in wild boar were confirmed. So far in 2019, Romania notified 94 outbreaks in backyard, 1 in a commercial farm, and 755 cases in wild boar.

The measures implemented in the domestic pig sector include the control of illegal movements of live animals and animal products, awareness campaigns (including via TV spots), the possibility to order preventive culling, and reinforced passive surveillance in backyards and commercial farms.

As regards the wild boar, passive surveillance applies throughout the country and active surveillance in the areas at risk (e.g. border with Ukraine). Hunters are financially incentivized to strengthen passive surveillance and to reduce the population of wild boar.

Russian Federation

The epizootic situation of ASF in Russia remains rather complicated.

There is a decrease in the number of ASF outbreaks in domestic pigs by 60-70% in comparison with previous periods. This is associated with a reduced incidence of illegal movement of pigs in connection with the introduction of electronic veterinary certification in 2018.

But the number of cases in wild boar tends to increase. ASF is still present in wild boar in the Kaliningrad region along the border with Poland. One dead wild boar was found positive in the South of Russia at the border with Georgia (identical to the Georgia 2007 strain).

The overall pig population is increasing in Russia, while the share of backyard farms is constantly decreasing. Regionalization and compartmentalization are implemented, as well as an electronic certification system for moving live animals and products.

Increased controls at the borders in the far East have enabled to repeatedly identify ASF positive pig products entering Russia from Mongolia and China. All such products have been destroyed.

Ukraine

ASF is endemic in the country. However, the situation appears to have significantly improved in 2019 compared to 2018. 100% of dead wild boars are tested. Awareness campaigns are being deployed aiming at farms and backyards particularly.

Overall picture of ASF in Europe

Dr Simona Forcella, European Commission, presented an overview of the situation in Europe and Asia since 2014 (video available [here](#)), which shows that the disease has been well contained in the Eastern part of the EU compared to its rapid and vast extension elsewhere. The maps show the cases registered in Europe since 2017, and in 2019 only. The regionalisation (zoning) applied in the EU affected countries, which is regularly updated on the basis of the evolution of the disease, was also outlined. The implementation of regionalisation in the EU allow safe trade of live pigs and pork products from all EU areas not affected by the disease.

ASF in Asia: situation and new standing group of experts under the umbrella of the GF-TADs for Asia

Dr Caitlin Holley, OIE regional representation in Asia, described the situation of ASF in the region:

- The first reported cases of African Swine Fever in the Asia region occurred in P.R China on 3rd August 2018. Since then the virus has spread to Mongolia, Vietnam and Cambodia.
- In **China**, since the first occurrence in the country, 134 outbreaks have been reported in 31 provinces and this month Hong Kong SAR also reported one case (detected in a slaughterhouse). Of the outbreaks in P.R China 126 have now been resolved.
Investigations were carried out after the first 119 outbreaks to trace the source on infection. The study showed that approximately 15% of outbreaks were due to movement of live pigs and pig products, 44% were associated with swill feeding practices and 41% were attributed to vehicles or personnel contaminated with the virus.
- No ASF events are currently reported in **Mongolia**. The last event was resolved in March. In total, 11 outbreaks in 6 provinces were notified since the disease was first reported in the country (January 9, 2019).
- The first occurrence of ASF was reported in Northern **Vietnam** on 1st February 2019. The virus has now spread to 29 provinces, with 2444 outbreaks reported. None of these outbreaks have been reported as resolved.
- **Cambodia's** 1st occurrence of ASF was reported on 22nd March 2019. To date 5 outbreaks have been reported in Cambodia. All outbreaks have been reported as resolved and currently there are no outbreaks reported.

To understand the epidemiological picture in Asia and the apparent rapid spread of the virus, an understanding of the swine industry in Asia is key. There are many factors at play: the extraordinarily high density of domestic pigs, the high demand for pig meat as well as the long-established farming and trading practices that are engrained in the culture. Innovative solutions based on veterinary science as well as an understanding of social and cultural aspects are necessary.

The idea of creating a Standing Group of Experts similar to the successful initiative in Europe eventually became a reality last April with a first meeting in Beijing, China, where topics such as 'surveillance for early detection', 'outbreak response' and 'how the scientific knowledge that exists already on ASF surveillance can be applied to the diversity of local situations that occur in Asia' were addressed. 'Biosecurity on-farm' and 'border control' will be discussed at the second meeting, to be held at the end of July in Tokyo, Japan.

All presentations and documents are shared on the ASF dedicated [page](#) of the regional website.

Main outcomes of the ASF Forum in Ottawa

The CVO and OIE delegate of Canada, Dr Jaspinder Komal, explained that Canada, the United States and Mexico analysed the ASF world situation last July and came to the conclusion that it was probably a matter of 'when' the virus would reach the Americas rather than 'if'. It was therefore necessary to work on the prevention of its introduction as well as on the preparedness to deal with a possible introduction. Based on the lessons learnt from other countries confronted with ASF, the following current gaps were particularly identified: 1/ at the border with travellers and illegal consignments (very

high penalties are now applied and widely advertised in case of non-declaration of import of pig products); 2/ biosecurity at the farm level.

The ASF Forum was organized in Ottawa on 30 April and 1 May by the United States and Canada with input from Mexico and participation of other American countries and international experts, including from Europe. Its main outcomes are a “revised framework” and a “forward agenda”, both available [here](#).

The revised framework outlines 4 priority areas: preparedness planning, enhanced biosecurity, ensure business continuity, coordinated risk communications.

The GF-TADs will be used as an avenue to structure the coordination with all the countries in the Americas. A meeting in September will look at how to manage ASF and maybe other diseases, to enhance capacity throughout the region and make sure the countries are prepared.

Canada considers that ASF is now a global issue, not only an animal health issue but also a food security issue. A reinforced coordination is necessary, and research should be massively supported, particularly to come up with a vaccine as soon as possible.

Next SGE ASF meeting

The fourteenth meeting of the SGE ASF will be kindly hosted by Bulgaria in Sofia, on 10 and 11 September. The meeting should focus on “outbreak investigation and related data collection”.