

# AFRICAN SWINE FEVER: Where are we now?



*Prevention, control and eradication of African swine fever (ASF) is a matter of high priority for the EU as it represents a serious risk for pig farming, the European eco-system and environment as a whole.*

## WHAT IS AFRICAN SWINE FEVER?

ASF is a devastating viral and infectious disease, which in Europe affects both **domestic pigs** and **European wild boar**. Once the virus infects them, the pigs and wild boar become sick and die within a few days.

The disease is currently present in ten EU Member States: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and Belgium. In Italy, ASF has been present in Sardinia since 1978, but the epidemiological situation is specific and not related to the other Member States.



**The disease does not affect humans or other animal species.**

## IS IT SAFE TO EAT PORK AND ARE THERE ANY IMPORT RESTRICTIONS?



Whilst it is **safe for humans to eat** pork, the meat (fresh, frozen, salted, smoked) and other pork products (i.e. sausage) derived by infected animals remain infectious for pigs over a long period.

## HOW IS ASF TRANSMITTED?

ASF can be transmitted through:

- ▶ **direct animal contact** between sick and healthy animals
- ▶ **infected material** (vehicles, clothes, boots etc.)
- ▶ **contaminated food** (e.g. sausages or uncooked meat)

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO FIGHT ASF?

The persistence of ASF in the wild boar population, which has developed in uncontrolled manner, together with its spread to EU Member States presents challenges for **animal welfare** and a **serious economic threat**.

The pig sector represents 8.5% of the total output of the agricultural industry in EU-28, the highest when compared to other meat sectors.



Measures to fight the disease in wildlife are compatible with **EU environmental legislation**, including nature protection requirements, impact and effectiveness.

In 2017, the slaughter of **255 million pigs** led to **23.3 million tonnes** of carcass weight

**35%** of the total EU meat output of animal production is from the pig sector

**47%** of the total meat consumption in the EU is from pork meat, this represents **50% of total meat production**

**16%** of the total pork production is exported representing **58% of total meat exports** and **3.8 million tonnes carcass weight** (processed products and offals included) with a value of **7.7 billion €**

## HOW CAN DOMESTIC PIGS BE PROTECTED?

Very stringent **veterinary measures** exist within the EU to prevent the spread of the virus from wild boars to domestic pigs and to contain any outbreaks in domestic pigs. The “human factor” is closely related to long distance “jumps” of the disease.



**Vaccination is not possible but research is ongoing.**

## WHAT HAPPENS IF AN OUTBREAK OCCURS?

If a farmer suspects ASF or if someone finds a dead wild boar in a forest, the **competent veterinary authority** shall be immediately notified. Virological and serological tests can diagnose ASF in a laboratory.

Once a Member State confirms the presence of ASF, it reports it to the European Commission. If the Member State was previously ASF-free, **a European Union Veterinary Emergency Team can be deployed** within a few days to provide advice on how to deal with the outbreak.

## WHAT IS THE EU DOING TO FIGHT ASF?

In addition to legislation the EU has developed a **harmonised strategy** to tackle the disease in affected countries and to prevent the occurrence in disease-free territories in the EU. The wide range of initiatives already promoted and undertaken by the Commission has allowed for preparedness and for containment of ASF in relatively limited areas.

## AT PRESENT, THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION:

- ▶ **coordinates the actions of Member States** to prevent the occurrence of ASF or to control the disease the Member States concerned;
- ▶ is constantly **developing and updating legislation** to take into account the evolution of the disease;
- ▶ organises regular meetings of **experts from the Member States** to review ongoing ASF situation;
- ▶ **encourages Member States to scale up national efforts on awareness campaigns** amongst hunters, veterinarians, farmers and the general public and **organises ad hoc trainings for Member States and third countries?**
- ▶ **maintains the EU diagnostic capability** for ASF in all 28 Member States thanks to the support of the ASF EU Reference Laboratory
- ▶ **works closely with the European Food Safety Authority** to provide updated scientific opinions



Since 2013, the EU has allocated a total of **€95 million** for the prevention and eradication of the disease, which includes **€48 million** for eradication programmes and **€47 million** for emergency measures.

## WHY IS A LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT OF WILD BOAR POPULATIONS IMPORTANT TO FIGHT ASF?

Appropriate management of wild boar, through measures such as intensive hunting and not feeding wild boar, is essential to **reduce the risks of outbreaks in free areas**. A long-term management strategy for the wild boar population should be built on **specific measures and joint programmes of cooperation between the agriculture and environmental sector** (hunting management, ban of supplementary feeding, agricultural practises) tailored to the particular situation of each Member State.

### For more information:

[https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/animal-diseases/control-measures/asf\\_en#description](https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/animal-diseases/control-measures/asf_en#description).

### More about ASF:

<http://asf-referencelab.info/asf/en/the-disease>

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