



# ASF mission of the EU Veterinary Emergency Team (EUVET) to North Macedonia

(01.02.2022-04.02.2022)



- ToR: The experts should

provide scientific, technical, managerial and practical assistance on the spot on the refinement of the most suitable control and eradication measures for African swine fever (ASF) under local conditions, especially as regards preparedness, surveillance and coordination efforts.

Experts: Vidmantas Paulauskas (team leader, Lithuania), Martin Chudy (Slovakia), Anna Zdravkova (Bulgaria)

- Mission took on the spot from 01.02.2022 to 04.02.2022



# Agenda of the EU VET MISSION

01 February 2022: Preliminary(first) meeting of the EUVET team and the representatives of the Food and Veterinary Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia;

02 February 2022: Meeting in the Food and Veterinary Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia with general presentation of the structure of the CA, epidemiological situation, structure of the pig production, requirements related to biosecurity, identification and registration, health status, measures imposed related to ASF (preventive and control), measures foreseen, general discussion on the wild boar management and surveillance, laboratory capacity and procedures;

03 February 2022: Field visits in commercial farm in Delcevo municipality, meeting with local hunting group of Vinica

04 February 2022: Meeting with representatives of the pig producers, technical discussions with the CA, closing meeting.

# Epidemiological situation

## North Macedonia – January 2022

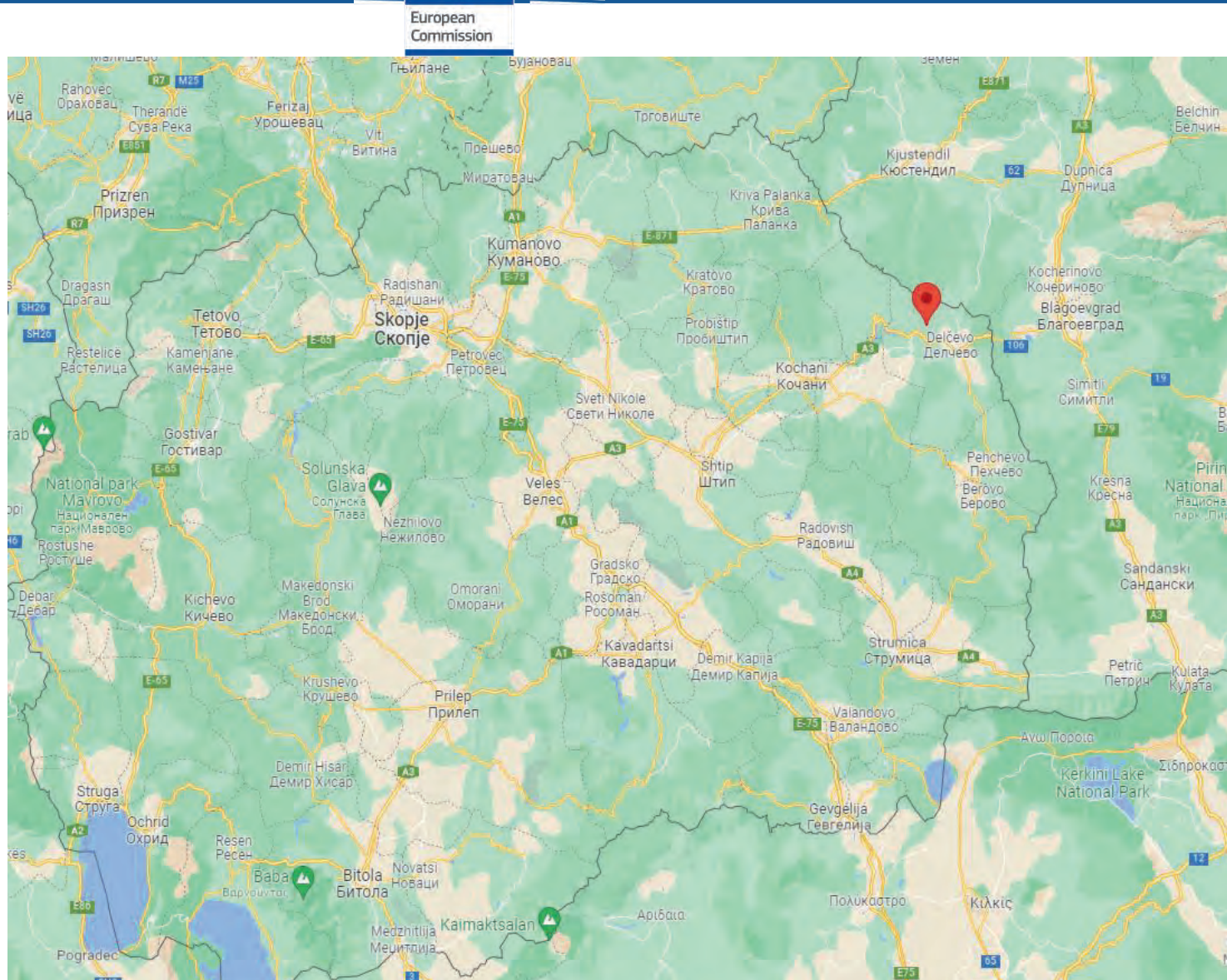
First confirmation of ASF in domestic pigs in the country

Backyards holdings

Date of confirmation :  
06.01.2022

Contact holdings

Localisation: in close proximity to the border with Bulgaria, which is affected by ASF in both – domestic pigs and WB. ( see map)



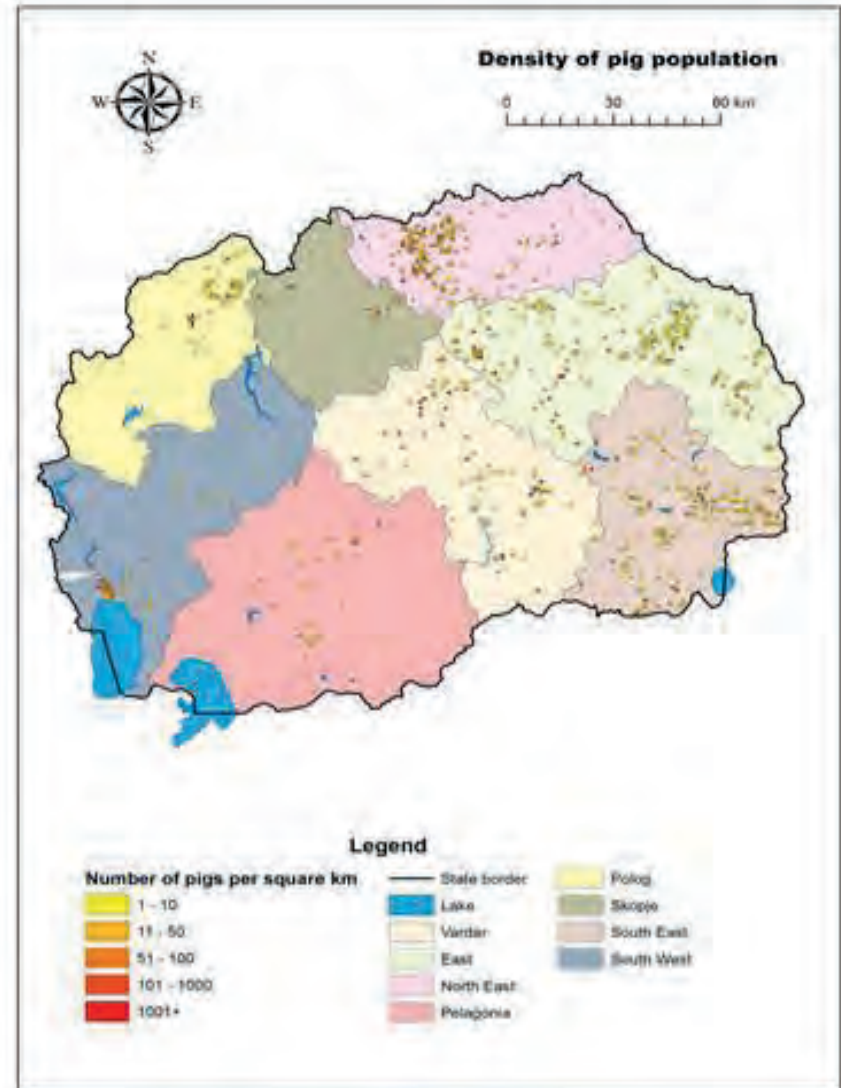
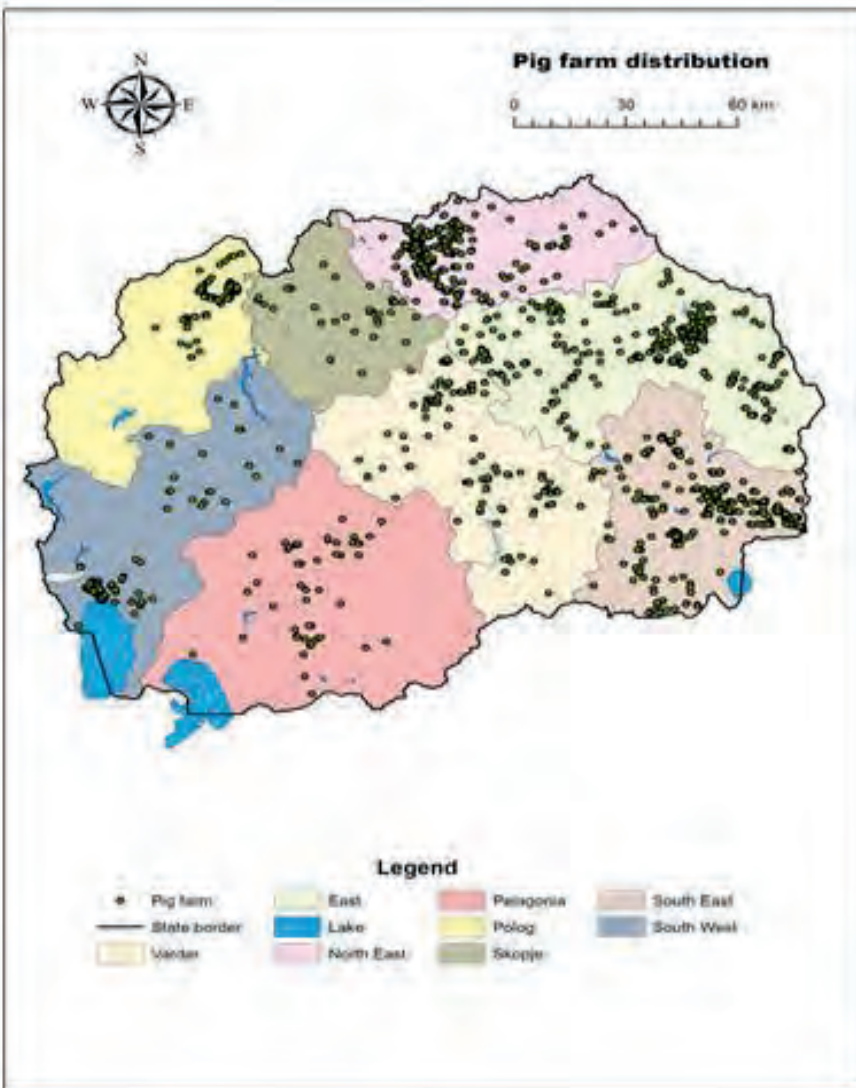
# Pig population

Total domestic pig population of approximately 150 000 pigs

- The majority of the domestic pig population is concentrated in 7 big commercial farms ( more than 80 %!)

Total number of holdings	5135
Registered, but not populated	909
1 pig	790
1-10 pigs	2718
11-100 pigs	625 (approx. 16000 pigs)
101-1000	78 (24 643 pigs)
> 1001	15 (92636 pigs)

The numbers from the census from 2021 form the following structure of the pig sector:





# CONCLUSIONS

## General and legislation

The general rules set out for disease outbreak eradication and controls are covered either in national legislation or in orders of FVA. An aspect which at the moment is not entirely elaborated in the legislation is the compensations further to disease outbreaks/preventive culling.

The inconsistencies were identified in the provisions related to the WB management. That may lead to controversial measures imposed by the CA involved (FVA and MAFWE – for example hunting possibilities/ordering . )

Risk assessment based on scientific evidence, but also considering the particular national aspects and the knowledge and observations of different stakeholders seems to be lacking at the moment.



# CONCLUSIONS

## Biosecurity and veterinary supervision in domestic holdings

Although there is national legislative framework (Law on Veterinary Health, IDR Law), certain aspects of the requirements or measures are currently not covered by the primary legislation, although provisions are set out in annual orders of the FVA (e.g. biosecurity requirement for pig holdings), thus leading to potential impossibility violations to be penalized.

Given the high risks related to ASF at the moment the aspects of veterinary checks for biosecurity must be further strengthened.





# CONCLUSIONS

## Pig holding registration, backyard system, movements

Legal requirements are in place for IDR and settings for annual census in a non-administratively burdensome way for the owners of the pig holdings are in place.

Provisions for additional census, if necessary, are already covered by the national law.

Electronic systems are in place for IDR and for holding categorization according to the risks based on automatic analysis of field findings of the private vets.

However, given the fact that the backyard keeping is traditional for the country and also, in certain cases, a seasonal keeping of pigs, **the risks for having considerable number of unregistered holdings in the country are high.**

**The current system of pre-movement certification of consignments creates the difficulties in the timely traceability of the animals.**



# CONCLUSIONS

## Surveillance in domestic pigs

The existence of risk for significant underreporting of pigs found dead and lack of submitted samples from them, which **could not guarantee the early detection of the disease.** ( especially the testing of dead pigs)

The general concept for covering the epi-unit level, as described in the EU requirements is not applied.

Active surveillance in domestic pigs is established by the FVA as a primary tool upon their assessment (zone of origin of the holding, risk categorization, etc.) i.e. for providing additional pre-movement health guarantees.



# CONCLUSIONS

## Emergency response and outbreak control

prerequisites for adequate emergency response to outbreaks are in place (CP, NDCC, simulation exercises) some aspects related to resources and coordination, especially in larger scale outbreaks, should be strengthened in order to provide timely disease containment (e.g. disposal of ABPs, cooperation amongst ( local) authorities).

Dedicated epi-investigation form is in place and such was also used further to the outbreak in Dramche. Certain parts of the epi-investigation form **may be further improved** (staff, biosecurity, technology of keeping and infrastructure, tracing of products, etc.) and additional parts may be included in order to obtain report concluding the potential source of infection and the high risk period.



# CONCLUSIONS

## Wild boar management and surveillance

There is a clear organization of the hunt in the country,

There are many aspects identified as weak in terms of the WB management in relation to the hunt.

The current system of concession, hunting permits and estimation methods lead to underreporting of shot animals and unreliable data on the estimated WB population and its dynamics in the country.

That may seriously hamper the ASF surveillance and control in WB.



# CONCLUSIONS

## Awareness

Information on ASF was being communicated to all stakeholders through different awareness campaigns and in trainings.

Some aspects related to the practical implementation of the measures (i.e. biosecurity, surveillance) should be further promoted.



# RECOMMENDATIONS – I.

- Consistency of the requirements of the different CA involved in WB management should be ensured.
- The compensation system for outbreak eradication and preventive culling should be set out in the legislation and resources should be ensured
- Scientific group for external assessment and risk assessment of the situation should be established.
- Biosecurity requirements should be set out in the national legislation (in line with CIR (EU) 2021/605, Annex II)
- Controls should be carried out at least once per year for backyards and at least twice per year for commercial farms
- Census of farms in the country should be carried out on a regular basis (with increased frequency).
- The control system of pig movements should be strengthen through electronic means
- Surveillance in domestic pigs should be focused on ASF early detection and thus considering sick/dead animals avoiding planning in advance the number of animals to be tested.
- Passive surveillance should be the main tool for detection of ASF detection.
- Each holding should report dead pigs and they should be tested.
- Laboratory results should be made available to all relevant parties.
- Active surveillance should be established as a supplementary system.
- Continuous awareness campaigns for all stakeholders should be ensured (leaflets, calendars, videos, TV spots, etc.).
- Practical trainings for pigs keepers, veterinarians and hunters should be organized.



# RECOMMENDATIONS – II.

- Sufficient resources should be ensured for the timely outbreak eradication
- Zoning system in line with EU strategic approach is advisable to implement (restriction zones I, II, III)
- Concise and timely epi-investigations for the outbreaks occurred should be carried out with the aim to identify the source of infection, high-risk period and possible spread
- Sustained feeding of wild boar should be prohibited.
- Baiting should be allowed only for attracting wild boar for trapping and/or culling
- Targeted hunting/culling should be encouraged in order to target adult and sub-adult females.
- The minimum biosecurity requirements for hunters should be applied.
- Census should be improved by using modern techniques (e.g. drones, thermal cameras, etc.).
- Surveillance:
  - ✓ Principle of sampling should be based on enhanced passive surveillance: found carcasses, including road killed wild boar where relevant and sick wild boar have to be tested for ASF using PCR ;
  - ✓ The samples should be delivered as soon as possible in the laboratory.
  - ✓ Hunting should be aimed to obtain reduction of wild boar density throughout the year. Night hunting with night vision scopes could be considered.
  - ✓ Hunting including trapping should be addressed.

On the basis of points above,

- ✓ testing for ASF of hunted animals is encouraged, carcass for personal consumption if results are negative.
- ✓ active searching for WB carcasses should be organized in order to remove the potential source of virus from the environment.
- ✓ Control procedure for hunting grounds should be established (e.g. biosecurity checklist).



# Thank you for your attention!

*The working atmosphere during the mission was very good. All participants from the Republic of North Macedonia gave all their support and assistance to facilitate a fruitful mission.*

*The EUET team thanked all colleagues from the Republic of North Macedonia, the other participating stakeholders for their cooperation and openness.*

*All requested information and explanations were promptly received by the EUET team.*