



SPGP Expert Mission to Greece EU VET Initiative

20 - 21 December 2023

PAFF Committee, 23th January 2024



Terms of reference:

In response to SPGP epidemiological situation in Greece

Providing on-the-spot assistance

- most suitable SPGP control and eradication measures
- scientific, technical, managerial aspects

Experts: Luis Romero (ES) – team leader, Dr. Kris de Clerq (BE)

Places visited during the mission

Day 1. Arrival to Athens.

Day 2.

- *Meeting with the Local Authorities (Offices of Central Greece Region).*
- *Field visit to one unaffected sheep holding and two outbreak holdings (2023/2 and 2023/3).*

Day 3.

- *Meeting with Central Competent Authorities at Hellenic Ministry of Rural Development and Food (MRDF)*

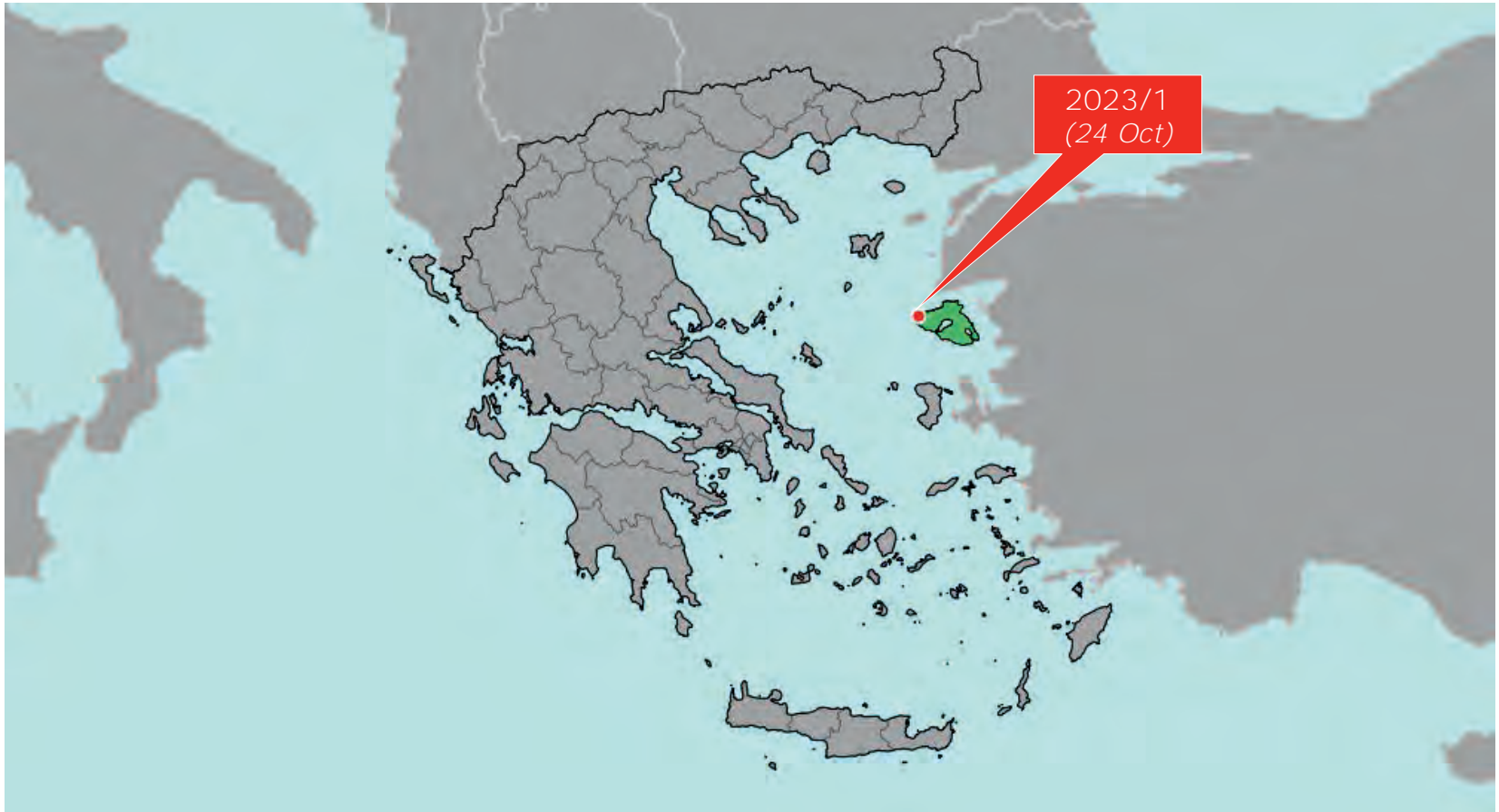


Epidemiological background and current situation

- The previous SPGP outbreak in Greece occurred in 2018
- Since 24th October 2023 SPGP has been detected in a total of 6 farms (2 of them during the mission and 1 after it)

Outbreak ID	Regional Unit	Municipality	Production type	Census	Suspicion Date	N° clinically affected animals on the official visit	Confirmation date
2023/1	Lesvos	West Lesvos	Mixed sheep farm	52 ewes, 2 rams and 1 lamb	23.10.2023	1 ewe	24.10.2023
2023/2	Phthiotis	Locron	Breeder farm for production of milk	454 sheep	6.12.2023 (17.11.2023)	30 ewes 1 ewe death 5 ewes	8.12.2023
2023/3	Phthiotis	Locron	Mixed sheep farm	257 sheep	11.12.2023	7 ewes death	12.12.2023
2023/4	Phthiotis	Locron	Sheep farm	190 sheep	19.12.2023	10 cases	21.12.2023
2023/5	Phthiotis	Locron	Sheep farm	240 sheep	19.12.2023	12 cases 2 deaths	21.12.2023
2023/6	Phthiotis	Locron	Mixed sheep and goat farm	21 sheep and goats		2 cases 2 deaths	10.01.2024

Epidemiological evolution (24 October 2023)



Epidemiological evolution (7-12 December 2023)





Indicative map of restricted zones of draft Commission Implementing Decision amending Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/2725 concerning certain emergency measures relating to sheep pox and goat pox in certain Member States (SANTE/09SPGP/2023).



Epidemiological evolution (from 19 December 2023)





Measures taken by Greek Authorities in response to SPGP (I)

- Zoning: Protection Zone (PZ) with a radius of 5 Km and Surveillance Zone (SZ) with a radius of 15 Km for the first outbreak in mainland Greece, later extended to 10 Km (PZ) around the outbreaks and administrative units included in a radius of 20 Km (SZ - Lokroi and Orchomenos municipalities), respectively (map 2);*
- For each outbreak the PZ and SZ were complemented by a further restricted zone (FRZ) that comprises the rest of the territory of the regional units of Phthiotis and Boeotia, as well as the municipality of Chalcis in the Regional unit of Euboea. Lesvos Island remains as further restricted zone.*



Measures taken by Greek Authorities in response to SPGP (II)

- Total stamping out of all animals in the affected flocks;*
- Sanitary burial of carcasses;*
- Cleaning and disinfection of the affected farms;*
- Enforcement of biosecurity measures regarding farms, slaughterhouses and commercial activities;*
- Surveillance of all herds within the Surveillance and the Protection Zone.*



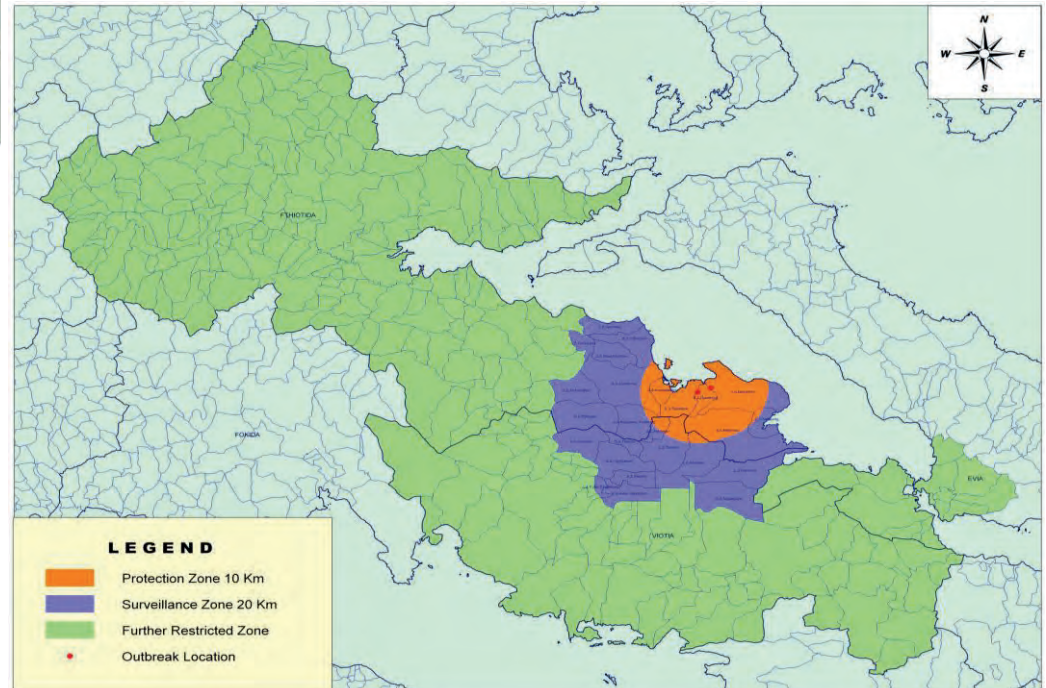
Measures taken by Greek Authorities in response to SPGP (III)

- Animal Movement Control within the zones;*
- Prohibition of the dispatch outside the Regional Unit, of live ovine and caprine animals as well as semen, ova, embryos, ovine and caprine animal by-products, hides and skins;*
- Exit of small ruminants from FRZ only for immediate slaughter within the same MS (sealed vehicles, animals of the same status, cleaning and disinfection of vehicles + clinical inspection 24h before movement).*

Restricted zones until 19.12.23



FRZ corresponding to SPGP outbreak 2023/1 in Lesvos.



PZ, SZ and FRZ corresponding to SPGP outbreaks 2023/2 and 2023/3. 12

Two circulars were sent out:

- Circular1323/386404/15.12.2023: «Measures to Prevent Transmission and Spread of the Sheep pox- Milk Handling».
- Circular 1750/388758/18.12.2023: «Restricted Zones due to confirmation of outbreaks of Sheep pox and goat pox in Greece - Movements of sheep, goats, raw milk, animal by-products and animal feed in and out of restricted zones».

Awareness campaigns were launched at the Regional Level (Central Macedonia, Thessaly) and by activation of the local disease control centers. Press Releases, posters and leaflets were sent out.





Outbreak 2023/2 in FPhthiotis (8th December 2023)



Outbreak 2023/2 in FPhthiotis (8th December 2023)

Epidemiological considerations

The following hypotheses can be considered as the most probable route of introduction in Greek Central Region:

- Animal movements for immediate slaughtering from Lesvos Island. 4 animal movements with 128 lambs were carried out on November 2023 from Lesvos Island with destination to a slaughterhouse located in Styra, on the island of Euboea (Styra), in Greece Central Region, but far away from SPGP notified outbreaks in Phthiotis region. In addition, throughout December 2023, until 21 December, 25 movements with 2644 lambs were performed to a slaughterhouse located in Lamia, in Greece Central Region, at 60 km from outbreak 2023/2.
- SGP was introduced mechanically (personal, fomites or dirty trucks) from other affected country in the region.

Critical points identified

- *During the weeks before Christmas, there is a significant increase in the number of sheep and goat movements to slaughterhouses.*
- *At present, grazing in pastures in PZ and SZ is not allowed, but the competent authorities expressed concerns about the long-term sustainability of this measure.*
- *They are not increasing the number of suspicious notifications of clinical signs and lesions compatible with the presence of SPGP.*
- *Although the Official Veterinary Service has been reinforced with 3 veterinarians coming from other regional units and 1 from de Army, the number of official veterinarians in the region, available for the implementation of the disease control measures, is small*



Recommendations on the strategy for eradication of SPGP in Greece

- 1. Stamping out of infected herds, combined with standstill and strict movement control should remain the basic method for control and eradication of SPGP*
- 2. Clinical surveillance and passive reporting by farmers and private veterinarians is of the greatest importance for recognition of the disease and should be enforced on the whole territory of Greece.*
 - Active and passive clinical surveillance should be implemented in a uniform way across the entire protection and surveillance zones.
 - Surveillance should be maintained in Lesvos too.
- 3. Very high disease awareness among the farmers, veterinarians and all other workers involved should be in place all over the country.*



4. The establishment of restriction zones should be based on risk assessment to guarantee the containment of the infection within the zone(s) defined. Zones may be further expanded (in space and time) and measures may become stricter in case of:

- Increased number of outbreaks*
- Persistent uncertainty on the epidemiological situation.*

5. Ensure the availability of enough number of official veterinarians to carry out the tasks required for the control and eradication of SPGP.

6. Exchange of information and the coordination of the control measures are to be strengthened across the different authorities: local and national veterinary services, police, etc. Regular evaluation with proposals for corrective actions, if needed, is recommended.



- 7. Regular meetings to be performed at central and regional levels between the competent veterinary authorities and the sheep and goat industry, associations and other relevant stakeholders.*
- 8. All measures implemented should be strictly documented and records kept.*
- 9. It is important to keep records of all shipments of small ruminants from the FRZ for immediate slaughter to the rest of the country.*
- 10. The coordination and cooperation with EURL should continue.*
- 11. In the restricted zones, movement restrictions must remain in place for as long as needed ensuring that there are no direct or indirect contacts between the different flocks. Sharing grazing sites must be prevented in areas of risk.*
- 12. The competent veterinary authorities should make every possible effort to reduce the time needed to confirm or rule out suspicions and implement quickly stamping out and cleaning and disinfection in case of disease confirmation.*



13. Detailed epidemiological surveys should be finalized, as soon as possible, to investigate the source of infection and modes of transmission. Sample analysis at the EURL from Lesvos and mainland could help in clarifying the possible origin of the virus.

14. Enforced biosecurity measures should be implemented at all levels: farms, slaughterhouses, transports.

15. Milk collection: all vehicles entering or leaving farms should be properly disinfected to avoid spreading of the disease.

16. Ante-mortem clinical examination in slaughterhouses should be enforced, to ensure disease detection.

17. Disease-specific biosecurity measures must be documented and provided in writing to the stakeholders involved.



18. Vaccination. Implementation of a vaccination campaign should at least be envisioned as an additional measure if needed.

- ✓ anticipative work is done to prepare a potential vaccination campaign (possible vaccination scheme, availability and choice of vaccine etc.), including administrative procedures for purchase of a vaccine and road maps on implementation of a vaccination campaign.*



The EU-VET team would like to thank all colleagues from Greece for their great support and help!

The working atmosphere during the mission was excellent. The colleagues from the Greece gave all their support and assistance to facilitate a fruitful mission. Thank you so much!!!