

Abstract

ASF in Europe: political experiences from the EU Commission perspective

Andrea Gavinelli: Head of Unit Official Controls and eradication of diseases in animals – Directorate General for Health and Food Safety – EU Commission

African swine fever is a large-scale problem in the Eastern neighbourhood of the EU, from where it was introduced in 2014. As of August 2018, African swine fever spread to vast regions of China and other Asian countries (Mongolia, Vietnam, Cambodia) in an uncontrolled pattern. African swine fever occurs in many regions of Africa as well.

Contrary to the situation in third countries, since 2014 African swine fever remains confined to limited areas in the EU, and mostly only in wild boar. Nine Member States are currently affected: in Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania - wild boar and farmed pigs, in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Belgium - wild boar only, Italy (Sardinia only – unrelated epidemic situation). The Czech Republic recently eradicated this disease from its territory. The EU policies have fostered this success and they help other Member States in their actions to prevent and control where necessary the disease.

Since the early stages of African swine fever at the eastern EU borders, the Commission took a number of initiatives, in close coordination with Member States, to prevent the entry of the disease into the EU, and at a later stage, to contain it. These include not only legislation but also a “Strategic approach for the management of African swine fever in the EU” and other guidance documents, urgent assistance by the EU Veterinary Emergency Team, scientific advice by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), research support and coordination under Horizon 2020, audits, financial support, public awareness campaigns, international cooperation, identification and promotion of minimum biosecurity requirements, etc.

Health control measures and trade restrictions within the EU are continuously updated thanks to a rigorous and transparent regionalisation policy. The EU regionalisation policy (allowing trade from the disease free zones) on African swine fever maintained trade of pigs and pig meat within the internal market and with certain international trade partners. It was recognised internationally following a dispute settlement case against the Russian Federation at World Trade Organisation level. However, the occurrence of the disease remains a reason for certain third countries to put in place trade-restrictive measures, with an important impact for the EU, jeopardising the pig meat exports.