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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Outcome of the Ministerial Conference on African swine fever (ASF)
(Warsaw, 28 October 2016)
- Information from the Polish delegation

Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Polish delegation on the above mentioned subject to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the meeting of the Council ("Agriculture and Fisheries") on 14-15 November 2016.

**Outcome of the Ministerial Conference on African swine fever (ASF)
held on 28 October 2016 in Warsaw**

On 28 October 2016, the Ministerial Conference on ASF was held in Warsaw.

The Conference was organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development with participation of the Ministers of Agriculture and the Chief Veterinary Officers of Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, Russian Federation, Moldova and Ukraine and the EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Mr. Vytenis Andriukaitis with his services.

ASF is a serious problem for the EU agri-food sector, in particular in Poland and other Member States affected by the disease, as well as a threat for the entire European Union. Existing experience suggests that the fight against ASF may be long-lasting and require multidisciplinary activities and significant financial resources.

The objective of the Conference was to exchange views on the measures taken to control and eradicate ASF as well as to assess the situation in the individual European countries and harmonization of the implemented actions.

The Conference of the representatives from eleven countries with Commissioner Andriukaitis resulted in adoption of 12 joint conclusions. Consequently, Poland is of an opinion that the Council should be informed about that outcome.

*Conclusions from the Ministerial Conference on African swine fever Warsaw, Poland,
28 October 2016*

In the context of the difficult situation in relation to the persistence and spread of African swine fever (ASF) the delegations of Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, and Ukraine agreed on the following:

1. African swine fever (ASF) is clearly a regional problem involving several countries that requires high engagement at technical and political levels. ASF is best tackled with closer international coordination, coupled with transparency and regular exchanges of epidemiological information between countries and more integrated and coherent crossborder efforts supported by international initiatives (GF-TADs).
2. The main risks for ASF transmission in the region are associated with the persistence of the virus in wild boar and their environment and its entry in low biosecurity pig holdings.
3. ASF occurrence is not dependent only on the wild boar density and one of the main problems is the persistence of the virus in contaminated carcasses in the forest. The objective should be reducing the viral load in the environment. For that, understanding, involvement and engagement of all actors such as wild life specialists, ecologist, hunters, forest guards and forest workers ,environmentalists, farmers, police, etc. is needed.

4. Wild boar management is a sophisticated strategic activity that has to be adapted to local conditions and practices. Massive hunting in the ASF affected and neighbouring areas is counterproductive as it leads to increased movements of wild boar and is not the most effective measure to reduce the spread of ASF. However, increasing hunting pressure can be applied in the free area of the country to decrease the susceptible wild animals population. Wild boar population control, specially through targeted careful hunting of in particular adult and sub-adult females and adequate bans on sustained wild boar feeding (except baiting for hunting purposes) , together with carcasses removal and safe disposal are the most efficient and necessary disease management measures. However, more information is still needed on the most efficient means for controlling the wild boar population as well as better tools to estimate the population size.
5. Biosecurity is of crucial importance to prevent the entry and spread of ASF in pig holdings, both in the commercial and non-commercial pig sectors. Minimum biosecurity measures should be implemented in risk areas even by smallholder pig owners. The Veterinary Services are due to provide basic information to pig holders to increase awareness and to support the strengthening of biosecurity. Also pig transporters, feed and equipment providers, any workers and other professionals visiting or working temporarily at pig farms need to be trained for biosecurity measures.
6. Hunters and other travellers pose a risk for ASF virus introduction in disease free areas as they may be in contact with infected material and negligently or deliberately bring the virus within their personal luggage. Specific awareness and other targeted actions should be implemented to tackle this risk.
7. Early warning enabling enhanced ASF preparedness and response is of critical importance. The main tool to achieve this is an efficient ASF surveillance system based on both passive and active surveillance.

8. Positive stimulus for holdings complying with biosecurity requirements, such as certain safe derogations from some restrictions, together with proportionate deterrent negative stimulus, such as sanctions, for persistent low compliant holdings are suitable ways to enhance biosecurity measures, that should be applied taking into account the different levels of risks of each type of holding, area and epidemiological situation.
9. The delegations take into consideration the EFSA's and other scientific advice on ASF and recommend that more science based on the ecological and geographical circumstances in the infected countries is made available to better understand the epidemiology of ASF in the region, in particular as regards its seasonality and the level of the risk that indirect routes of transmission may pose (including the role of other species of wild life like, insects, birds and other possible vectors). Research on novel ASF control tools, such as finding a suitable candidate vaccine etc., should be further encouraged.
10. The current disease situation with vast areas affected by ASF suggests that we are still far from the total eradication of the disease from Europe and we have to be ready for an intense and long fight against this disease. All delegations agree on working together to develop mid and long term, sustainable strategies to manage its direct and indirect impact at all levels (trade, farming sector, hunters, environment authorities, veterinary services, etc.).
11. All participating countries and the European Commission agree to continue to support regional coordination, data sharing and scientific cooperation through active participation and promotion of international meetings, especially those organised under the umbrella of GF-TADs (OIE/FAO). A regional plan describing a long term strategy should be developed, for pig sector and wild boar management in particular in the context of the GF- TADs meetings.
12. All countries and the European Commission should work together to secure additional financial support and other technical resources needed for ASF combat with emphasis on cross-border coordinated actions. The EU will continue to complement, when needed and proportionate to its own capacity, the national resources as regards the most adequate eligible disease control measures.