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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: African swine fever: state of play
- *Information from the Czech delegation*

Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Czech delegation on the above mentioned subject.

African Swine Fever: state of play

- Information from the Czech Republic -

The Czech Republic (CZ) perceives the animal-health situation in connection with African swine fever (ASF) in Europe, both inside and outside of the European Union as serious, further deteriorating and representing a real danger for the whole agrarian sector in Europe. All European Union Member States (MSs) without exception are endangered by the ASF spread both in the wild boar population and in domestic pigs.

Especially alarming are two facts: the “jump of the infection over a considerably long distance” and the” penetration of the infection into commercial pig farms despite all bio-security measures adopted”. Without efficient and sustainable measures adopted, implemented and thoroughly controlled, MSs risk to witness a further ASF spread which might be seriously detrimental to the whole pig farming sector in Europe threatening the very existence of the EU pig sector.

ASF was first diagnosed in the CZ in June 2017 and the last positive finding dates from April 15, 2018. Based on elaborated, internationally consulted, strictly implemented and applied and costly measures in the CZ (till now total costs of over 12 million EURO) the infection remained and remains confined to a relatively small area and exclusively to a population of wild boar.

Here are the main reasons, measures and traits which enabled a so far successful fight against ASF in wild boar in CZ:

- Early ASF detection/timely finding of relatively fresh cadavers of fallen wild boar – thanks to thoroughly applied and implemented passive surveillance (passive surveillance based on wild boar cadavers finding to be permanently enforced in the whole country, each found dead wild boar to be reported to the local Veterinary Service/CA. Aim of passive surveillance is to allow for early detection of the disease; define precisely the borders of infected area; establish zones /high and low risk zone in the framework of infected zone in relation to wild boar hunting/ and follow the spread of the ASF and its evolution in space and time),

- Immediate diagnostic and confirmation of ASF from wild boar carcasses + observance of biosecurity rules concerning cadavers' handling since the episode very beginning,
- Fast adoption of 'extraordinary veterinary measures' followed by their evolution and adaption to situation evolving throughout time,
- Close and intensive cooperation with stakeholders, local authorities, national and local hunting organisations, private veterinarians, NRL, parties of the 'integrated rescue system' (army, fire-brigade, police),
- Working cooperation with the European Commission, EFSA, and international scientific and professional community.
- Main measures taken in the infected area after ASF confirmation:
 - immediate total ban of hunting in infected area (ban of hunting in the initial phase with the aim to keep the wild boar population quiet in its domicile location supplemented eventually by non-harvesting of chosen plots of cultures as additional shelter and feed supply for the wild boar population), followed later by permission of individual wild boar hunting in the low risk zone of infected area only by chosen thoroughly trained hunters strictly observing bio-security rules, trapping of wild boar in the high risk zone in infected area, finally individual hunting in the high risk zone in infected area + hunting in collaboration with police snipers (snipers don't care about 'hunters' ethics' and lay down also leading sows). Hunting and trapping with rendering - identification of wild boar, all hunted and found dead wild boar disposed in rendering plant, sampling at rendering plant, financial hunting incentives + compensation for loss of venison. Each hunting ground equipped with containers or other means of hunted wild boar temporary storage, in each storage-point means for cleaning and disinfection, hunters to avoid possible contamination of vehicles, hunting equipment, yard and houses.
 - increased passive surveillance in dead wild boar,
 - ban of feeding, only baiting,
 - ban of entrance for the general public into the infected area,
 - electric and smell fence installation around the high risk zone,
 - use of drones with thermo-vision for wild boar search in later stages when only individual animals remained in the infected zone.

Crucial for a successful fight against the ASF is, following our experience, to ensure flexible and strict reaction. In CZ, the complex of the adopted and strictly implemented measures, the MSs' representatives have on many occasions been familiarized with, were and are thoroughly controlled by the competent authority. After ASF finding in a wild boar population in the initial phase a thorough search for carcasses of fallen boars, their removal from the environment under strict bio-security measures and ASF testing are elementary to contain the spread of the disease in wild boar. Based on the result of the tests, a thorough delimitation of individual zones (core, protection, surveillance, intensive hunting) is then necessary.

Crucial for a successful fight against the ASF are the following measures and deeds:

- In the pre-epidemic phase a coordinated action to reduce wild boar population by hunting and feeding restriction/ban,
- Active search for and collection of fallen wild boar carcasses and their laboratory testing for ASF (so called passive monitoring),
- Close scrutiny of bio-security measures in both commercial and back-yard domestic pig farms and where necessary swift efficient upgrade of the bio-security measures and culling pigs in backyard domestic pig farms in areas with imminent risk of spread of the disease,
- Census of all back-yard farms,
- I&R of individual animals and awareness campaigns aimed to the complex issue of ASF for farmers, hunters and the whole not only rural population are to be cared for.

Based on a further deterioration of the animal-health situation with regard to ASF (especially in view of a 'jump of the infection over a considerably long distance' and also in view of new outbreaks and new cases in wild boar in several MSs), the SVA CZ ponders about the issuance of the EXTRAORDINARY VETERINARY MEASURES (EVM) regarding products derived from pigs originating in MSs with ASF occurrence, especially on farms.

The EVM would fall in the category of temporary, preventive and only internally/nationally applied measures (the EVM are aimed at operators, who in the place of destination receive the shipments of pork, minced meat with content of pork, meat preparations with pork content, mechanically separated pork meat, wild boar game, whole carcasses of wild boar and unprocessed animal by-products of pigs originating from domestic pigs or from wild boars not designed to be processed in a rendering plant from countries where ASF penetrated into commercial domestic pig farms).

The aim of these measures is, besides the protection of the animal health of domestic pigs and the population of wild boar in the CZ, also a deepening of scientific knowledge and insight into the epidemiology of ASF by rejecting or on the contrary by confirming the possibility of the spread by trade activities, e.g. by pork import. From the current degree of knowledge it is not fully clear what are exactly the ways of spread of ASF, especially on long distances and also how it penetrates into commercial domestic pig farms with high level of biosecurity measures.

In this connection it should be mentioned that in the framework of controls of shipments of products of animal origin in intra-community trade also shipments of pork, pork preparations and products are controlled in the CZ with repeatedly found deficiencies of namely administrative, documentary and traceability order. In some cases the requirements of traceability are not fulfilled while documents are either completely missing or are not filled-in. Based on these findings the CZ initiated, in the framework of the Commission WG on the hygiene package application, an amendment with the aim of efficient traceability, alas with negative result.

We do believe that one of the ways how to reduce the currently growing ASF spread would be the creation of a European control system of concerned animal products traded among EU MSs. Consequently, measures at both EU and MSs' levels should be adopted and the existing ones with proven efficiency and sustainability should be enforced vigorously, especially in MSs where ASF continues to spread in farms.