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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Outcome of the high-level conference on African swine fever (ASF)
(Prague, 8-9 November 2017)
- Information from the Czech delegation and the Commission

Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Czech delegation and the Commission on the above mentioned subject to be raised under "Any other business" at the session of the Council ("Agriculture and Fisheries") on 11 and 12 December 2017.

**EXPLANATORY DOCUMENT PROVIDED BY THE CZECH REPUBLIC
AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION RELATED TO THE MEETING
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (AGRICULTURE AND
FISHERIES) THAT WILL BE HELD ON 11 AND 12 DECEMBER 2017**

Outcome of the high-level conference on African swine fever (ASF) (Prague, 8-9 November 2017)

Information from the Czech delegation and from the European Commission

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1. AFRICAN SWINE FEVER

Information from the Czech delegation and from the European Commission

Background

On 9 November 2017 the fifth Ministerial meeting on African swine fever (ASF) was held in Prague, the Czech Republic (the third one with third countries participating). It was hosted by the Czech Republic and co-organised by the Commission, with the participation of Commissioner Andriukaitis.

Participating in the meeting were the Czech Republic, Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. Moreover, several neighbouring countries to the EU (Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine) also took part in the meeting. EFSA as a part of the Commission delegation was presented as well.

The conclusions of the meeting (see Annex 2.2.) focused on the need to further reinforce international cooperation (by using in particular the Global Framework for the progressive control of Trans boundary Animal Diseases (GFTADs) Standing Group of Experts), stimulate additional research on ASF (focussing on the epidemiology of the virus), learning from best practices and addressing the problem of the human factor (awareness campaigns, checks at entry points and review of ASF legislation).

Summary of the epidemiological situation in 2016 – 2017: in line with the seasonal pattern observed in past years, an increased diffusion of the virus was observed during the summer (June to September 2017) in affected EU Member States. This was anticipated by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), which linked it to the movements of wild boar and outbreaks in low biosecurity holdings (“backyards”). The Commission adopted several Commission Implementing Decisions to update the ASF regionalisation.

Similarly, an increased diffusion of the virus was also observed in the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Moldova notified the first occurrence of ASF at the end of September 2016. Belarus still denies the occurrence of ASF since 2013, despite the disease being present on its borders with their neighbouring countries.

In June 2017, the Czech Republic reported the first occurrence of the ASF virus in wild boar. No outbreaks in domestic pigs have been reported so far. The authorities in the Czech Republic have been able to contain the disease by implementing strong and decisive action and should pursue their efforts.

In July 2017, Romania reported the first occurrence of the disease in domestic pigs. No cases in wild boar have been reported so far. The disease is therefore considered to have been eradicated there.

However, the occurrence of ASF in Moldova and in Ukraine represents a serious and imminent risk for Romania in the near future. Likewise, the spread of ASF westwards in Ukraine represents a risk for Slovakia and Hungary.

Summary of initiatives by the Commission¹: since the very early stages of the crisis, the Commission has taken significant practical actions to fight the disease and to help the affected countries:

- the adoption and revision of specific sustainable legislation for setting up regionalisation (see regionalisation map in the Annex 2.1.) and ensuring safe trade;
- substantial EU financial support for surveillance, emergency measures and preventive measures implemented by the Member States;
- immediate deployment of the Community Veterinary Emergency Team (CVET) in hotspots for advising on disease management;
- coordination meetings chaired by the Commission with affected countries and countries at risk in the framework of the task force for monitoring disease eradication (subgroup ASF), in Ukraine, Slovakia and Romania;
- audits carried out by the Commission services on ASF in Poland and Lithuania (2014), Estonia (2015), Latvia and Estonia (2016), Poland and Romania (2017);
- audits on border control carried out by the Commission in 2016 and in 2017 in Finland, Estonia Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia;
- training to enhance the capability for combatting ASF in the EU and neighbouring countries (through the Better Training for Safer Food programme and the TAIEX instrument);
- strong and efficient cooperation at regional level, under the FAO/OIE Global Framework for the progressive control of Trans boundary Animal Diseases (GFTADs) Standing Group of Experts;
- specific updated scientific advice from the EFSA. An updated report was published in November 2017;
- EU initiative for maintaining the required EU diagnostic capability for ASF in all Member States through the EU Reference Laboratory;
- specific technical and material support to Moldova and Ukraine in terms of dispatch of experts and specific training of Moldovan experts coupled with dispatch of diagnostic tests for ASF (twice).

¹ Full list of initiatives supported by the Commission available here:
https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/animals/docs/ad-control_measures-asf-chronology_en.pdf

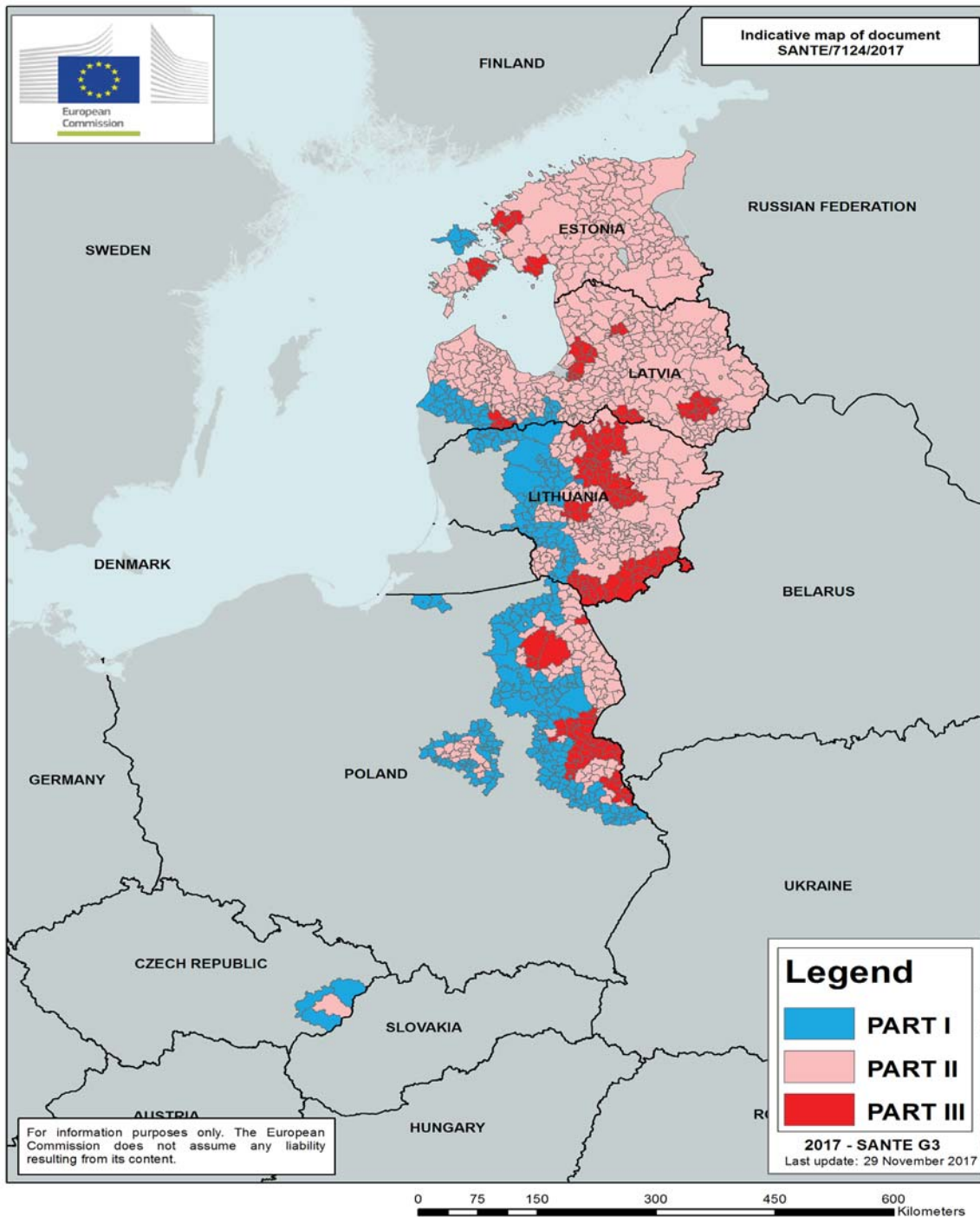
In the pipeline:

- The 6th ASF ministerial meeting to take place in Minsk in 2018 (to be confirmed).
- The 9th GFTADs technical meeting on ASF to take place in Ukraine in 2018 (to be confirmed).
- The Wildlife Conference organised by the Bulgarian Presidency and TAIEX to take place in March 2018.
- The 10th GFTAD's field visit on ASF by international experts in Romania (11-15 December 2017).
- A further BTSF workshop in Serbia on “ASF surveillance and wildlife management” in February 2018 (to be confirmed).
- Ongoing adaptation of the measures to the epidemiological situation.
- Deep review of EU implementing legislation on ASF regionalisation and of ASF Strategy for the Eastern Part EU (early 2018).
- New EFSA mandate to be issued on ASF epidemiological analysis.

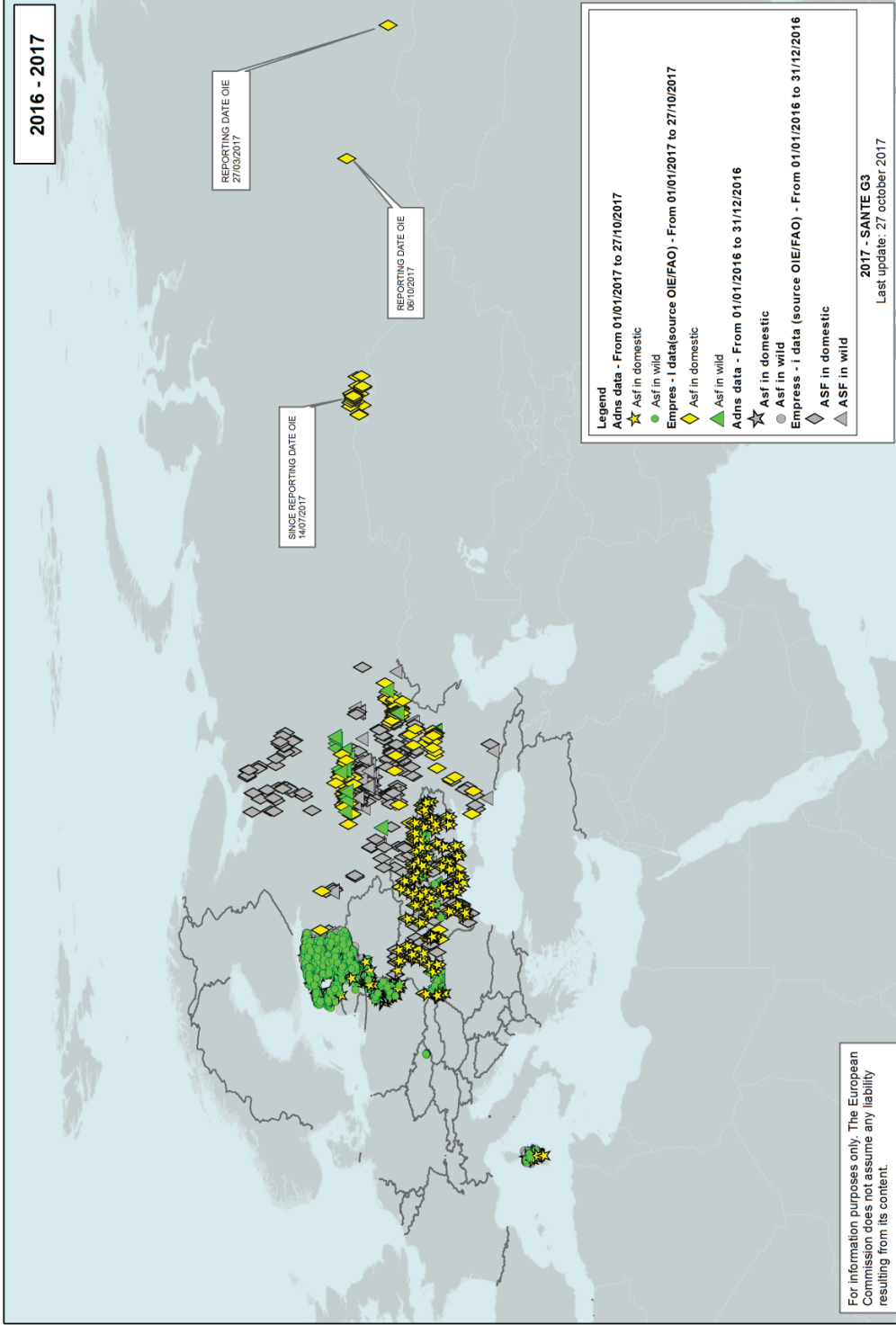
2. ANNEX

2.1. MAPS

ASF regionalisation as per Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2014/709 (11 October 2017)



2016-2017 outbreaks (in yellow) and cases in wild boar (in green) in the EU (ADNS data) and in third countries (OIE/FAO data).



2.2. CONCLUSION FROM THE CONFERENCE ON ASF

1. Due to the nature of African swine fever (ASF), international cooperation at the highest political level is needed in order to address the transboundary nature of this disease of pig and wild boar.
2. Cooperation with neighbouring countries in the framework of the Global Framework for the progressive control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) should continue on technical aspects.
3. Bilateral efforts to combat the disease and prevent spread of the disease, such as the scientific and technical advice including the financial support through the EU Pilot Projects should be further explored and continued provided the level of implementation meets predefined goals.
4. New research is needed in the epidemiology of ASF addressing specifically the persistence of the virus in the environment and the transmission patterns from the wild boar.
5. The scientific assessment should review the latest relevant science and best practices in order to single out elements which contribute to minimize the movement and optimize the management of population of wild boar and therefore stop the spread of the disease, including the ethology of the wild boar and epidemiology of the disease.
6. Financial support should target the scientific evaluation of the measures applicable for ASF surveillance, control and eradication.
7. The human factor plays a key role in long distance transmission of the disease causing significant economic damages. To address it, all entry points should significantly reinforce the checks on personal goods in order to minimize their illegal movement and apply sanctions in case of noncompliance. Fight against the smuggling should be enhanced including bilateral cooperation.
8. Efforts must be increased on awareness campaigns targeting specific risk groups in order to address the risks represented by them (e.g. workers, commuters, travellers coming from countries with infected areas)
9. Legislation for ASF should be regularly reviewed based on the science and experience gained as well as the OIE chapters.