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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Outcome of the Ministerial Conference on "Eradication of African swine fever in the EU and the long-term management of wild boar populations" (Brussels, 19 December 2018)
- Information from the Commission

Delegations will find in Annex an information note from the Commission services on the above mentioned subject to be raised under "Any other business" at the session of the Council ("Agriculture and Fisheries") on 28 January 2018.

Outcome of the Ministerial Conference on “Eradication of African swine fever in the EU and the long-term management of wild boar populations”

The European Commission organised a Ministerial Conference on the “Eradication of African swine fever (ASF) in the EU and the long-term management of wild boar populations”. The event took place in the margins of the December meeting of the **Agriculture and Fisheries Council** on 19 December 2018.

Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, and Commissioner Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, welcomed Ministers of Agriculture and Environment, and representatives from EU and national institutions, civil society organizations and associations to discuss and reflect upon the control and eradication of African swine fever.

African swine fever represents a serious risk to EU agriculture. It is a deadly disease for both domestic and wild pigs and its control and possible eradication are a high priority for the Commission. It is important to highlight that the pig sector accounts for approximately 8.5% of the total output of the EU's agricultural industry, the highest of the different meat sectors, and 50% of total EU meat production. Pork exports account for 62% of total EU meat exports.

The control and eradication of African swine fever remains a clear priority for the Commission. Approximately EUR 100 million was earmarked on this between 2013-2018, supporting not only affected Member States but also third countries bordering the EU from where the disease is constantly re-introduced.

The Ministerial Conference offered an opportunity to reflect on the issue from an agricultural and environmental perspective and aimed at more effective preparedness, in particular in parts of the EU that are currently African swine fever free.

To control African swine fever it is important for Member States to work together. This is a transboundary animal disease. Its spread to the Czech Republic and Belgium last year has shown that the disease can make unexpected long distance jumps, most probably via human intervention. We therefore rely on dialogue and cooperation between Member States and the Commission to create an environment of mutual trust.

It is particularly important that Member States avoid taking unilateral measures on veterinary matters that are harmonised at EU level as they could create a barrier to intra-EU trade. Apart from the negative impact this has on the EU internal market, it also jeopardises our combined efforts to convince non-EU trade partners to accept our regionalisation policy.

It is equally important that all Member States remain vigilant and well-prepared for the disease. This includes:

- putting forward an efficient and detailed surveillance system for African swine fever;
- focussing on strong biosecurity measures at farm level (in particular in backyard farms);
- ensuring sufficient capacities for stamping-out campaigns;
- mobilisation of other bodies (such as forestry management bodies and hunter communities);
- surveillance of dead wild boar and carcass removal (passive surveillance) is the most efficient tool to enhance disease preparedness for the early detection in case of introduction or re-introduction of African swine fever.

Further spread can be avoided if the strategy on African swine fever is properly applied, especially monitoring and control of the so-called ‘human factor’.

The lessons learned in recent years clearly show that one of the most important risk factors is an unmanaged wild boar population. Continuous feeding and certain hunting practices have caused their numbers to grow out of control. They also affect the environment. This has created an increased and permanent risk to the European farming sector and seriously impacts on the environment and European eco-system.

In a scientific opinion published by EFSA in July, experts highlighted measures to reduce the risk of outbreaks in African swine fever free areas. These measures include intensive hunting and not feeding wild boar. Additionally, the latest meeting of the joint OIE/FAO Global Framework for the progressive control of Transboundary Animal Diseases in September focused on disease epidemiology in wild boar. The recommendations focused on the long-term management of wild boar population since it is clear that the existing situation in certain areas where the number of wild boar is high creates the precondition for the disease spreading further.

The Ministerial Conference therefore emphasised potential long-term management solutions for wild boar populations, including appropriate reduction through better cooperation and coordination between veterinary services, farmers, forestry management bodies, and hunters.

Ministers can find the Statement from the conference in the annex to this note.

Annex – Statement from the Ministerial conference on “Eradication of African swine fever in the EU and the long-term management of wild boar populations”

Brussels, 19 December 2018

Considering that:

- The prevention, control and eradication of African swine fever (ASF), is a matter of high priority for the EU as it represents a serious risk for an important sector of farming, the wild boar population and the environment;
- The disease is highly contagious and deadly both for the domestic and the wild pigs;
- The wild boar population in several regions of Europe developed in uncontrolled manner and plays an important role in the spreading and maintaining the disease;
- High level of preparedness on ASF including farm biosecurity and proper wild boar management in areas that are not yet affected by the disease is of paramount importance and it demands the development of a common strategy at national level;
- Hunting practices are relevant to the epidemiological evolution of the disease due to their effects on the wild boar populations.
- Certain third countries react quickly with a total ban of imports of pigs, pig meat and pig products as soon as ASF is detected in a country even if the disease only affects wild boar.

The following recommendations are proposed:

All Member States, where appropriate, should put their efforts to ensure:

- **Enhanced coordination and cooperation** (including awareness raising) between agricultural and environmental side (veterinary services, farmers, forestry management bodies, hunters and etc.) to regulate wild boar populations with the objective of both to efficiently control and prevent the spreading of ASF;

- **A long-term EU management strategy of wild boar** population, including its appropriate reduction. This should be determined after an impact assessment, specific objectives, measures and joint programmes of cooperation between the agriculture and environmental sector (hunting management, ban of supplementary feeding, agricultural practises) tailored to the particular situation of the Member States;
- Particular attention should be paid to the management of the wild boar populations minimising wild boar dispersal in the affected territories with ASF or in the zones at risk of spread;
- Proper communication guidance and awareness campaigns towards all stakeholders (professionals, travellers, hunters, consumers) and general public should be deployed on main transport routes and borders to prevent introduction and dissemination of ASF through the human factor;
- The Commission will continue to advocate for the proper implementation of the ASF OIE standards, in particular the principle of regionalization, differentiation of the disease situation in wild boar and domestic pigs.

The measures taken in the framework of strategy mentioned above will have to be **compatible with EU environmental and veterinary legislation**, including nature protection requirements and properly **assessed in terms of scientific basis, impact and effectiveness**.