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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB item for the meeting of the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council of 9 and 10 December 2024: Animal diseases (African Swine Fever and Bluetongue disease) – <i>Information from Germany and Italy, supported by Czechia and France</i>

Regulation (EU) 2016/429 on transmissible animal diseases provides a robust, coherent and up-to-date framework for prevention, control and eradication of diseases. In this context, Germany and Italy see room for improving response strategies, in particular to African Swine Fever and Bluetongue, and mitigating the impact of restrictive measures on the affected territories and production sectors.

African Swine Fever

African Swine Fever is a contagious viral disease in domestic pigs and wild boar. It can have serious effects on the affected animal population as well as the profitability of agriculture. Germany and Italy are aware that the control measures required by the relevant EU animal health legislation and also necessary from a technical point of view represent a particular burden, especially for pig holdings that are located in restricted zones without being directly affected by African Swine Fever themselves. In cases in which the movement of pigs can be authorised in compliance with the respective requirements, corresponding animal health obligations are causing costs that cannot be covered.

Especially in the case of an individual outbreak in a formerly disease-free region, Germany and Italy consider the current period of at least three months for measures to be taken in accordance with applicable EU legislation to be disproportionate, and see a possible approach to improved marketing of meat of pigs from holdings located in restricted zones as follows:

- a) Biosecurity is a key element of prevention to mitigate the risk of introduction of ASF in free zones and is equally important for establishments located in areas subject to restrictions. Germany and Italy consider that the guarantees offered by the certified achievement of the standards of biosecurity should be better integrated into the regionalization approach.
- b) Delegated Regulation 2020/687 lists in Annex VII the risk reduction treatments for products of animal origin from restricted areas. This list currently covers only a limited range of traditional pork products and processes. Preliminary results for some innovative methods appear encouraging. It is therefore essential to consolidate the scientific evidence and promote research activities to expand the list of treatments inactivating the ASF virus and, consequently, the list of safe products for trade.

Against this background, Germany and Italy invite the European Commission to keep promoting the system of health guarantees, within the framework of the European Union's trade partnerships with Third Countries, in order to maintain smooth trade and prevent unjustified bans of pork products.

Bluetongue disease

This year, the spread of the Bluetongue virus (BTV) of serotype 3, caused by mosquitoes, has developed a particular dynamic in many Member States of the European Union. Authorised vaccines for serotype 3 continue to be unavailable in the EU. In affected Member States, it is possible to use currently non-authorised vaccines on the basis of national permissions. However, since these vaccines were only available from the beginning of the vector season, it was no longer possible to prevent the spread in previously disease-free areas. This caused major economic losses, in particular for the sheep sector.

Since the revision of EU animal health legislation, the eradication of BTV across the entire European Union is no longer envisioned. As a result, an infection with BTV is no longer classified as an animal disease to be controlled by all Member States. It is therefore all the more important to promote voluntary preventive vaccinations in all affected Member States and to make pharmaceutical manufacturers responsible for intensifying their efforts regarding the EU-wide approval of their vaccines. The European Commission is invited to provide support in this regard.