

African swine fever policy event for East and Southeast Asian countries

(Beijing, P. R. China, 17 November 2014)

The workshop recognizes that:

1. The situation of African swine fever (ASF), a deadly disease of pigs, has considerably worsened over the past years. In the traditionally endemic sub-Saharan Africa, the disease continues to spread into newly affected areas as the pig production and global movements in the region increase. There is now a new open front in the Caucasus and Eastern Europe;
2. The global ASF virus circulation, at its historical peak, has led to the highest risk ever for the disease to enter into Asia, particularly China;
3. East and Southeast Asia are home to 65% of the world's pig population (with almost half of them in China). An ASF epidemic in the region would have most catastrophic effects in the pork supply and protein availability worldwide;
4. There are very strong connections between China and ASF-infected countries, i.e. China is the biggest importer of pork and over the past few years has developed very strong links with African countries through large investment and development projects, which translate into growing amounts of people and goods moving between Africa and China. Moreover, China shares border with the ASF-endemic Russian Federation;
5. Given the historical freedom of ASF in the region, awareness on the risk of introduction is low and countries are not always prepared against an eventual incursion of the disease, both in terms of policy (ASF-specific contingency plans, as well as other animal health plans, e.g. surveillance, awareness, control, etc.) and capacity (clinical recognition, laboratory diagnosis, prevention and control tools);
6. The large proportion of pigs in the low biosecurity backyard sector in many countries in the region would represent a major challenge in terms of early detection and control of ASF, given the sector's lack of awareness and low compliance with animal health regulations, as well as the poor information on numbers, distribution and market chains;
7. The presence of wild boar in the region would further complicate the detection and control of ASF in these populations, since numbers and distribution are mostly unknown and wild boar health management is generally lacking in the region;
8. The region's porous borders would make it difficult to prevent ASF from spreading from one country to another in the event of an incursion;

9. Early diagnosis of ASF in a region would be complicated by the fact that many swine diseases with similar clinical presentation are endemic in the region, e.g. classical swine fever (CSF)
10. The largely unknown status of *Ornithodoros* tick species in terms of species present, distribution and ability to transmit the virus.

The workshop recommends to:

1. Strengthen **communications among countries** in the region (as well to OIE) using existing platforms/fora to timely notify, and discuss/exchange information, experiences, personnel and plan/coordinate cross-border joint actions;
2. Strengthen **cooperation on research** (ecological, epidemiological and socioeconomic studies and evaluations of diagnostic techniques) by participating in the existing networking platforms (e.g. the Global Platform for ASF, the Global ASF Research Alliance (GARA), LinkTADs, etc.) and access the existing expertise of OIE/FAO reference and collaborative centres, e.g. consultations and twinning programmes;
3. **Raise awareness** on disease prevention, recognition and reporting of all stakeholders (i.e. farmers, border control agents and veterinarians, hunters, travelling populations, policy makers, etc.);
4. Conduct **periodic systematic risk assessments**: to estimate hotspots, spreading trends and most likely pathway(s) of ASFV entry into the region;
5. Ensure the training and **preparedness of field personnel** and their coordination with laboratories to ensure a systematic outbreak investigation and a timely and effective flow of samples;
6. Participate in **proficiency ring tests and field simulation exercises** to ensure all countries can react appropriately to ASF;
7. All countries to **evaluate current preparedness and develop ASF-specific policy** (clear SOPs/protocols, and surveillance, early detection/response, and contingency plans). These have to be dynamic documents that get re-assessed and refined regularly for different scenarios;
8. When appropriate, **coordinate with (and build on) efforts done for other swine disease** surveillance, prevention and control strategies, policies and regulations in order to synergize efforts and avoid duplications (such as classical swine fever);
9. Specifically **address the issues of backyard/low biosecurity pig production** and how to conduct suitable, cost-effective and sustainable surveillance, prevention and control

activities in these populations. For such purpose it is key to gather some basic information on the populations, dynamics and distributions;

10. Specifically **address the issues of wild boar** and how to conduct suitable, cost-effective and sustainable surveillance, prevention and control activities in these populations. For such purpose it is key to gather some basic information on the populations, dynamics and distributions;
11. **Ensure and establish wide collaborations** with forestry authorities, hunters' associations and other institutional and non-governmental partners that will play an official role in the surveillance, prevention and control;
12. Explore **further funding for technical assistance** to assess the status of ASF policy in the different countries in the region and fill identified gaps.