



## CONCERTED INTERNATIONAL EFFORT URGED ON AFRICAN SWINE FEVER (ASF)

### African pig disease spreading in Eurasia seen as global threat

Warning of a likely imminent upsurge of a deadly pig disease in the Caucasus region, FAO called on affected countries to step up precautionary measures and for a concerted international effort to prevent the infection spreading more widely across the Northern Hemisphere. African swine fever is fast becoming a global issue. It now poses an immediate threat to Europe and beyond. Countries need to be on the alert and to strengthen their preparedness and contingency plans.

Measures recommended for countries by FAO include risk analyses to evaluate the situation and assess potential consequences. Such analyses should pave the way for fully-fledged contingency plans and provide the rationale for selecting disease-control strategies. Importantly, there is currently no vaccine for the disease, which is very often lethal to pigs but is not harmful to humans.

Preventive strategies include quarantine, on-farm security and other measures aimed at minimizing the risk of ASF being introduced and becoming established. Early-warning contingency plans include epidemiological information-gathering, training and awareness campaigns. Outbreaks are distinctly seasonal, with the highest number of cases registered in the summer and autumn. But as the ASF wave travels northwards a separate phenomenon, long-distance "jumps", is also occurring. Currently, ASF is spreading northwards at the rate of roughly 350 km a year. ([Read more...](#))

### ASF in Georgia and FAO Intervention



African Swine Fever (ASF) was introduced into Georgia from southern Africa late in 2006, entering through the Black Sea port of Poti, where garbage from a ship was taken to a dump where pigs came to feed.

FAO Georgia intervened immediately with the goal to enhance monitoring and disease control surveillance system to ASF to stop the spread of the disease in non-affected areas of the country or neighboring regions. It procured and installed veterinary materials for sampling pigs (both dead and alive) and together with the government of Georgia put in place system to ship biological materials from suspected cases of ASF to central laboratory in Tbilisi. The Laboratory of the Ministry of Agriculture was provided with necessary reagents for testing of blood and tissue samples. FAO purchased and distributed Personal Protective Equipment, disinfectant, power sprayers, surgery equipment for sampling of animals. Fuel and

all necessary equipment was also provided to conduct sero-monitoring in 60 districts of Georgia.

In collaboration with the Veterinary Department over 300 state and private veterinarians from all districts of Georgia were trained on the use of the new equipment for sampling pigs and transportation of samples. They were also trained on bio-security and execution and managing quality control of initial and final cleansing and disinfection after depopulation. Model safe pig units were established in all districts. Together with Veterinary Supervision Department sero-monitoring was conducted and 1009 blood samples were sent to the central laboratory of the Ministry of Agriculture from 50 districts of Georgia.

A Task Force was established (two to three national veterinarians and epidemiologists) and trained with the

purpose of conducting investigations for tracing forwards and tracing backwards, to conduct a risk assessment based upon the epidemiological information gathered. The goal was also to oversee the work of district and community veterinarians.

FAO also conducted trainings for local farmers on basic notions for improving pig husbandry systems. It helped identify local resources to replace scavenging as an affordable source of food for pigs. Information leaflets provided veterinarians and farmers with information about recognition of ASF and 5 other trans-boundary diseases.

Together with practical emergency response activities FAO conducted number of investigations – serological and virological studies to explore the role of wild boar in the epidemiology of ASF in Georgia, and virological and entomological studies to identify the role of Ornithodoros ticks in the epidemiology of ASF in the country. For this FAO granted Georgian Agrarian University USD 19,700. FAO also translated various materials on ASF into Georgian to support education process of future veterinarians at the Veterinary faculty of the Georgian State Agrarian University and newly-established Veterinary Laboratory at the Faculty of Veterinary.

Since then, FAO in Georgia is continuing to enhance knowledge of the infection and disease through trainings and other technical interventions. It improved outbreak management, clinical and pathological examination, environmental and ecological knowledge of the infection, and veterinary service. Practitioners are involved in surveillance activities, disease communication strategies are developed, while biosecurity of swine production sector was also upgraded by informing pig producers and owners. It is now in the process of analyzing data obtained during collection of ticks and testing for ASF virus in the previous outbreak areas.

*“Effective control of ASF is very important for transit countries like Georgia,” – Says Misha Sokhadze, National Lead Consultant of FAO ASF project. “This will only be possible by having well-trained, educated, experienced and well-equipped state systems and strong private veterinary network.”*

In collaboration with the Government of Georgia FAO is planning to develop a control program, based on alternative strategy to stamping out method. The strategy will aim at reducing the spread of the infection and will be based on ASF virus containment. By the end of July the project plans to conduct 5 trainings on sampling of animals, transportation of samples and provision of basic information ASF in Guria, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti regions, with participation of private and state veterinarians. It is also working to increase capacity of veterinary associations supported by USDA in 5 regions of Georgia. FAO has already imported reagents for ASF and CSF (Classical Swine Fever) for laboratory of the veterinary faculty, where laboratory trainings will also be conducted for faculty and students. Veterinary department of the Ministry of Agriculture is supported to collect about 1000 samples around the country.

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