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Thematic portfolio

African swine fever: responding to the global threat

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Although the Americas are free from African swine fever (ASF) at present, some countries experienced incursions and eradicated ASF in the 1970s and 1980s. With more than 177 million pigs in the region today, and a more globalised world, the threat is immense and the impact of an incursion on economies, food security and animal welfare would be far-reaching. Continued collaboration at the regional level is our best defence to prevent the disease and mitigate its impact.

In September 2019, the Regional Steering Committee of GF-TADs[1] for the Americas met in Panama and agreed to create a Standing Group of Experts (SGE) on ASF. Enhancing regional cooperation was a key recommendation of the ASF Forum (Ottawa, Canada, April 2019) [1] and the subject of Resolution No. 33, adopted at the 87th General Session of the World Assembly of Delegates of the OIE (May 2019) [2, 3].

The America's SGE-ASF is chaired by Canada and includes Regional Representatives of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Cuba, Jamaica, the United States of America, the Latin American Pig Producers' Organisation (Organización Iberoamericana de Porcicultura – OIPORC), and relevant international partner organisations. External experts are invited to discuss priority topics [4].

To prepare for this meeting, the Executive Board of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas decided to survey the region's countries to assist in prioritising areas for strengthening preparedness for ASF, and opportunities for exchange. Two questionnaires were sent to all countries in the Americas – both OIE Members and non-OIE Members – to assess the risk of ASF entry and the region's state of preparedness. The questionnaires were originally developed by FAO and had previously been successfully used in Asia and Africa. The survey was conducted by the OIE Regional Representation for the Americas and the analysis was performed by Canada. The results of the survey highlighted both the legal and illegal importation of pork products from infected countries as the major risk pathway for ASF. This drives home the point that border control is of primary importance. The main gaps in capacity relate to preparedness planning.

The first meeting of the Standing Group of Experts focused on border control

Given its importance, border control was the focus of the first meeting of the SGE-ASF, held in Bogotá, Colombia, in December 2019. Representatives of the Veterinary and Border Control Services and other experts attended, emphasising the need for strong collaboration between these sectors. The meeting resulted in several recommendations to ensure strict border controls, which were disseminated to countries [5].

The second meeting of the Standing Group of Experts focused on risk factors

The 2nd meeting of the SGE-ASF for the Americas was held on 15 June 2020. The general objective of the meeting was to develop recommendations that would make it possible to evaluate the risk factors present in the Americas' region for the introduction of the ASF virus [6].

Future topics include emergency preparedness, business continuity, and the role of wild and feral pigs.

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(1) The Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) is a joint initiative of the OIE and FAO that endeavours to empower global and regional alliances in the fight against transboundary animal diseases (TADs), to provide for capacity building and to assist in establishing programmes for the specific control of certain TADs based on global and regional priorities.

OIE portal on African swine fever

PERSPECTIVES

JOINT ACTIONS

Standing Group of Experts on ASF for the Americas

KEYWORDS

#African swine fever (ASF), #Americas, #Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs), #Standing Group of Experts (SGE).

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