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African swine fever: responding to the global threat



PERSPECTIVES

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At present, no vaccine or cure is available for African swine fever (ASF), despite continuing active research. However, thanks to the risk-based control measures taken by the European Commission since 2014, it has been possible to confine the disease to relatively limited areas in the European Union (EU) and to eradicate ASF from the territory of the Czech Republic, the first country in the world to do so in recent times.

Outside the EU, the ASF epizootic has escalated globally. From its first detection in the People's Republic of China, it has spread very quickly to all of China's provinces, as well as to other countries in Asia.

From the early stages of ASF outbreaks along EU borders, the European Commission has been actively addressing the risk of entry and spread of the disease into the EU, in close coordination with EU Member States.

Measures have been established in EU legislation that are applied wherever ASF is suspected or confirmed, either in holdings or in feral pigs, to prevent the spread of the disease and support its eradication.

The EU applies stringent restrictions on the movement of pigs and pig products in affected areas, in accordance with the 'regionalisation' approach. These risk-based restrictions are continuously being updated, in line with the geographical occurrence of the disease. This approach allows the EU to maintain trade in both the international and internal market and has been recognised by certain trading partners.

This EU legislation is fully in accord with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) international standards.

The comprehensive EU control measures also include:

- stamping-out of pig populations in affected holdings
- intervention from the experts of the EU Veterinary Emergency Team in affected countries
- scientific advice from the European Food Safety Authority
- efficient diagnostic capabilities and technical expertise driven by the EU Reference Laboratory for ASF
- research on candidate vaccines
- audits to verify the correct enforcement of EU legislation
- financial support (more than EUR 100 million have already been spent between 2013 and 2019 to prevent, control and eradicate ASF)
- public awareness campaigns
- official checks of personal consignments at borders
- international cooperation.

The European Commission is aware that, to combat ASF, a long-term global strategy and considerable resources – both human and financial – are required. Cooperation, commitment, transparent communication, shared experiences and the use of best practices for preparedness, prevention and control are needed by all parties to reduce the impact of ASF and contribute to the sustainability of pig farming and national and international trade, by limiting the global consequences of ASF.

The European Commission supports the establishment of a global initiative to control – and, it is hoped, eradicate – ASF, as agreed during the last General Session of the World Assembly of Delegates of the OIE (Paris, May 2019) [1].

[Portal of the European Commission on African swine fever](https://bulletin.woah.org/)

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PERSPECTIVES

► OPINIONS AND STRATEGIES

Prevention and control measures for ASF

SUMMARY

African swine fever can be transmitted via direct animal contact or through the dissemination of contaminated food or equipment. This disease has serious economic implications for the pig-meat and related sectors, including the indirect costs incurred by trade restrictions. There is no vaccine or cure despite active ongoing research.

KEYWORDS

#African swine fever (ASF), #disease control, #European Commission, #European Union, #international standard.

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1. World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) (2019). – [Resolution no. 33. Global control of African swine fever.](#)

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