

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Voluntary - Public

Date: 8/13/2019

GAIN Report Number: RO1915

Romania

Post: Bucharest

African Swine Fever Keeps Romania's Pork Industry Vigilant

Report Categories:

Livestock and Products

Pest/Disease Occurrences

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Report Highlights:

Romania's pork industry continues to struggle with African swine fever (ASF). According to Romania's National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority (NSVFSA), there are currently about 600 active cases in backyard farms, four outbreaks in commercial holdings, and about 1,800 cases in wild boars. Since it first appeared in 2017, Romania has confirmed over 1,500 ASF detections. As the virus has spread, the pork industry continues to struggle with movement prohibitions, trade restrictions, and higher input costs.

ASF Impact on Romania's Swine Industry

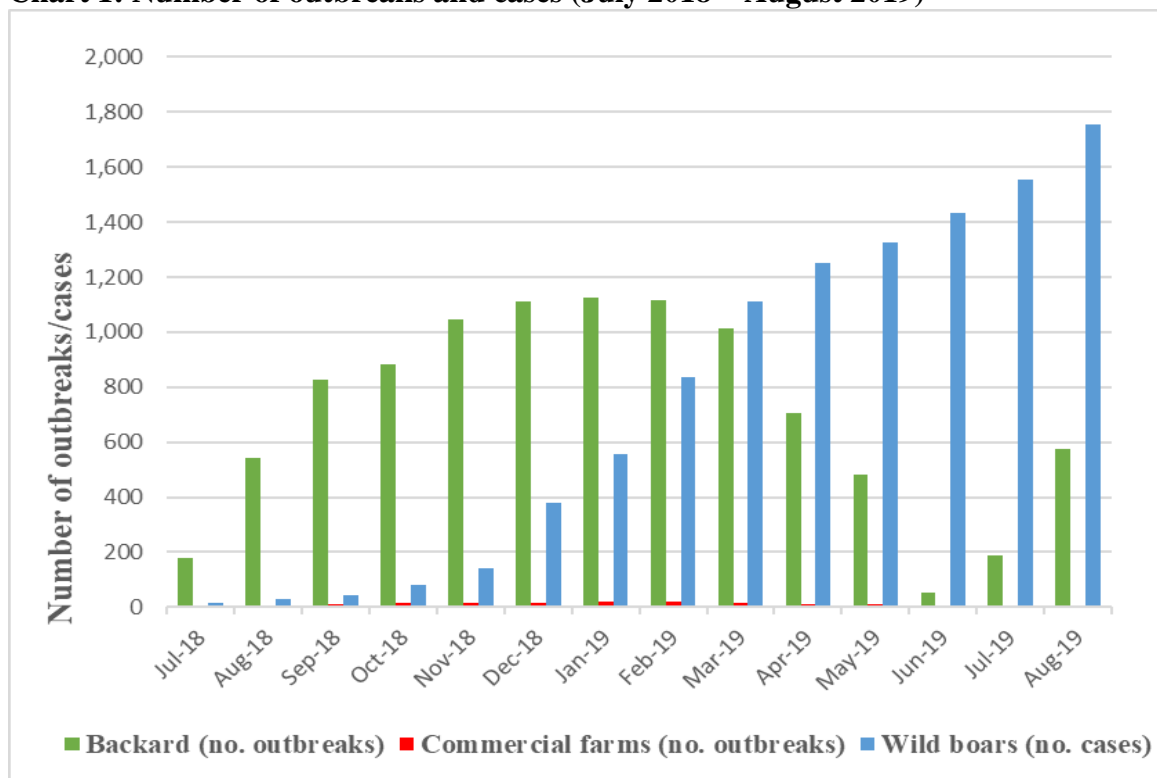
December 2018 swine inventory data reflect the large-scale culling and movement restrictions followed the summer 2018 ASF outbreaks. Swine inventories declined by 11 percent in 2018. In nominal terms, Romania's swine herd declined from 4.4 million head in December 2017 to 3.9 million one year later. During the same timeframe, the number of breeding sows dropped by 12 percent, from 350,000 head to 309,000, as per data published by the Romanian National Institute of Statistics.

As of early August 2019, there are 581 active ASF cases in domestic pigs, four ongoing commercial outbreaks, and 1,757 cases in wild boars. The number of cases in domestic pigs declined over spring 2019, but rebounded during the summer months (see Chart 1). Most ASF-infected wild boars are concentrated along the Danube River, which is also Romania's southern border with Bulgaria.

To date, Romanian authorities have culled almost 380,000 pigs under its ASF eradication program. The Government of Romania (GOR) has disbursed \$63 million from the national budget to compensate 8,792 pig owners for their losses. Most of the cullings (over 300,000 pigs) occurred during the fall of 2018 at commercial operations. Since then, no ASF outbreaks have been confirmed in large commercial farms and the monthly number of culled pigs has ranged widely, from several dozen to a several thousand. As the summer concludes, industry stakeholders report being on high alert for a seasonal spike in ASF cases.

Reportedly, some in the Romanian pork industry are critical of the overall measures taken by the NSVFSA as insufficient and ineffective at combatting the virus. In the fall of 2018, local media reported about efforts by Romania's hog production sector to push the GOR for clear definitions vis-à-vis the types of hog operations that can legally be established. In March 2019, the GOR passed legislation in response to reports that many smallholders operated in a legal gray area, with pigs unregistered with veterinary service and without biosecurity measures in place. The formal hog production industry considers these informal producers to pose a higher threat of spreading ASF to neighboring operations. Although the March 2019 order passed by the Ministry of Agriculture intended to categorize hog producers and enforce veterinary obligations, it was repealed a few weeks later.

Chart 1: Number of outbreaks and cases (July 2018 – August 2019)



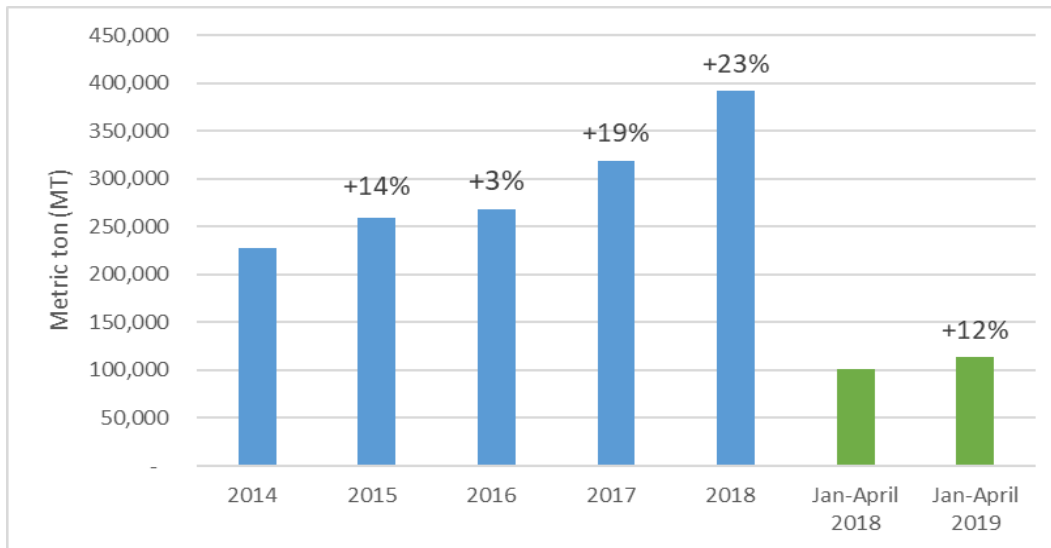
Source: NSVFSA; Backyard: Number of monthly active outbreaks

Trade Impact

In Romania, most fattening farms that raise piglets for commercial slaughter rely heavily on piglet imports from other EU member states, which makes them more vulnerable to any changes in the live-piglet trade. The trade data show that live-piglet imports declined in the first four months of 2019 by 20 percent from the corresponding timeframe in 2018. That development may be driven by the significant increase in live-piglet price at EU level, as well as the uncertainty posed by ASF.

At the same time, pork-meat imports continue to grow. Recent trade data (see Chart 2) shows that 2018 pork imports increased by 23 percent over 2017, and by 12 percent during the first four months of 2019 (major suppliers listed in Table 1). Pork meat exports fell by 35 percent in 2018 and 44 percent in the first four months of 2019 versus the same timeframe in 2018. The EU market remains the main destination for Romanian pork, following China’s ASF ban.

Chart 2: Pork Meat Imports



Source: Global Trade Atlas

Table 1: Romania's Pork Meat Imports

Commodity: PORK							
Annual Series: 2016 - 2018, Year To Date: 04/2018 & 04/2019							
Quantity							
Partner Country	Unit	Calendar Year			Year To Date		
		2016	2017	2018	04/2018	04/2019	%Change
World, of which:	CWT	268,473	319,097	391,563	101,313	113,827	12.35
Germany	CWT	70,289	89,600	95,315	28,641	22,273	-22.24
Spain	CWT	56,398	63,332	88,146	23,147	26,024	12.43
Hungary	CWT	42,427	47,968	81,066	14,156	24,960	76.33
Netherlands	CWT	26,700	32,516	35,837	8,464	9,089	7.39
Poland	CWT	19,169	28,699	30,680	9,646	11,875	23.12
Denmark	CWT	8,391	12,896	13,507	4,242	2,183	-48.54
Belgium	CWT	7,780	9,573	11,362	2,767	3,040	9.87
Austria	CWT	9,842	8,580	8,973	2,793	3,060	9.55
Italy	CWT	11,637	9,761	7,858	3,084	4,694	52.21
France	CWT	5,861	5,093	6,874	1,377	2,361	71.41

Source: Global Trade Atlas; CWT- carcass weight