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Expansion of African Swine Fever in Poland and Baltic Countries.

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Report Highlights:

African Swine Fever (ASF) has been present in Poland and the Baltic countries since 2014. For almost two years the disease has been confined along the borders of Poland and the Baltic countries with Belarus and Russia. However, in 2016 there was a number of new outbreaks of ASF in the swine and wild boar populations that spread westward. In October 2016, Poland organized a meeting of Chief Veterinary Officers (CVO), high level Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs officials, and representatives of the European Commission from 11 countries affected or endangered by the outbreak of ASF. The main goal of the meeting was to discuss the current status of the ASF outbreaks and enhance cooperation in the region of Central and Eastern Europe in fighting the disease.

General Information:

Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are at the forefront of the EU's struggle to stop the expansion of African Swine Fever (ASF) westward from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. The first case of ASF in the region of Poland and the Baltics occurred in Lithuania in January 2014. In February 2014 two cases of ASF were detected in the wild boar population in Poland, followed by outbreaks in Latvia (domestic and wild boars) in June 2014 and Estonia in September 2014. Sequencing tests of fragments of DNA of virus isolates from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland confirmed that there is a full homology with the virus strains that circulated in Belarus and Russia. To limit the spread of the ASF virus **all restrictions** required by EU legislation were introduced by the Veterinary Service of all four countries. These restrictions included intensified surveillance of wild boars and pigs, sending samples to the EU Reference Laboratory in Spain, and keeping pigs isolated in their holding (movement restrictions) unless authorized otherwise by the relevant Veterinary Service.

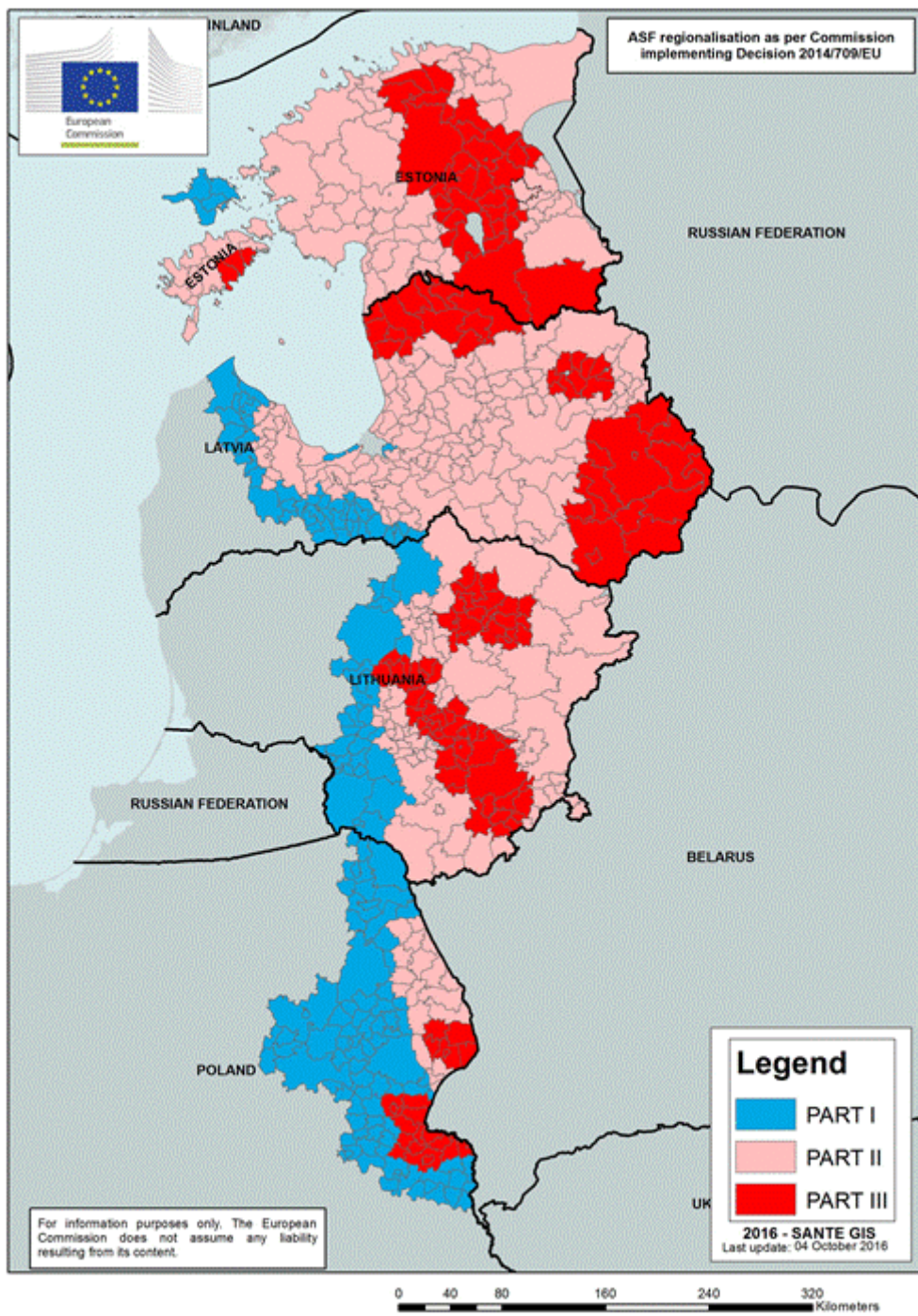
Number of ASF outbreaks in Poland and Baltic Countries.

	Date of first outbreak	Number of cases as of October 4, 2016	
		Wild boars	Swine
Poland	February 2014	113	23
Lithuania	January 2014	355	36
Latvia	June 2014	789	44
Estonia	September 2014	834	162

The Veterinary Services from all four countries notify OIE, EU and third countries about the outbreaks and implemented measures to combat the disease and to prevent its further spread in accordance with EU regulatory procedures. The EU introduced security zones along borders with Belarus, Ukraine and Russian Federation in order to regionalize the outbreak.

The graph below summarizes the status of ASF regionalization in Poland and Baltic countries as of October 4, 2016.

Regionalization of ASF within the EU as of October 4, 2016.



Source: DG Sante

Part I: Higher risk area with no cases, nor outbreaks, of ASF and where higher surveillance is applied.

Part II: Occurrence of ASF in wild boar population.

Part III: Occurrence of ASF in both domestic pigs and wild boar. The situation is not yet endemic.

Poland

As of November 1, 2016 there were 23 outbreaks of ASF in swine population in Poland, out of which 20 were detected in 2016. Until November 1, 2016, there were also 113 cases of ASF detected in wild boars. Initially the outbreaks were mostly in the wild boar population but since the beginning of August 2016 the Polish Veterinary Services every few days informs about new outbreaks of ASF in swine population. Since August 2016 outbreaks started to occur in farms located in 4 more districts in Podlaskie province, west of the initially affected districts. The newly affected districts were Wysokie Mazowieckie, Siemiatyckie, Zambrowskie and Bielskie. In addition, the disease has also been confirmed in Lubelskie Province next to Belarus. Three outbreaks were recorded in Lublin Province, one in the Mazowieckie Province and the rest in Podlaskie Province. The majority of outbreaks occurred in the provinces bordering with Belarus, Ukraine and Lithuania.

In connection with the new outbreaks of ASF in swine the European Commission has increased Poland's protected zone. The zone has already emerged beyond Podlaskie (where the majority of counties are already within the ASF protected zone) and extended also to part of the provinces of Lublin and Mazowieckie.

On October 28, 2016, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development held a meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture and the Chief Veterinary Officers (CVO) of Estonia, the Russian Federation, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine and Hungary with Vytenis Andriukaitis, EU Commissioner of Health and Food Safety. The meeting was organized to discuss and coordinate actions taken in the fight against the virus of ASF (see policy section for details).

From November 3 to November 10, 2016, in the forests of the six counties of Podlasie Province (North-Eastern Poland) there will be a search for dead wild boars. The main purpose of this action is to prevent the further spread of ASF virus. Dead wild boars, which are a potential source of spread of the disease, will be secured after sampling until results of tests confirm whether they were sick. All action will be held under the supervision of the district veterinarian. The search in Podlasie Province for dead wild boar carcasses will be done by 90 soldiers, foresters and representatives of the Polish Hunting Association and veterinary services.

Lithuania

In 2016 there were 17 outbreaks of ASF confirmed in swine population in 4 municipalities: Anykščių, Kaišiadorių, Elektrėnų, Jonavos and Kėdainių. There were also 199 ASF outbreak sites among wild boars. ASF was confirmed in 313 wild boars out of which 44 were hunted and 269 were found dead. Due to the number of ASF outbreaks in 4 different municipalities, the State Food and Veterinary Service started total depopulation (early slaughter) in non-commercial swine farms. The following measures were performed on these farms:

- Holdings have been inspected;
- All keepers of non-commercial farms had to early slaughter all pigs kept for own consumption;
- Samples were taken by official veterinarian after inspection of slaughtered pigs;
- If results of tests were negative for ASF it was allowed to use meat from slaughtered pigs for own consumption only.

Latvia

African swine fever (ASF) continues to spread in Latvia. As of October 5, 2016, there were 44 cases of ASF in the swine population, out of which two cases were detected in 2016. At the beginning of August, 2016, the disease has been verified in three wild boars in Slampe, in the Tukums municipality, and is quickly approaching the western Latvian region of Kurzeme. This raises the total number of wild boars infected with ASF to 789, located in 182 districts in 58 municipalities, as well as in the Eastern Latvian towns of Plavinas and Rezekne. ASF has also been verified on a farm in Varkava. Out of 789 wild boars infected with ASF 383 were hunted and 406 were found dead.

Estonia

On August 24, 2014, the Estonian Veterinary and Food Board diagnosed ASF on Estonia's Saaremaa Island. The presence of ASF in swine was confirmed on a farm with 2,700 pigs. Saaremaa and Hiiumaa counties were so far the only Estonian counties where the European Commission had not established any zones of control of the spread of ASF, but in the light of the recent outbreak at the Saaremaa Island necessary restrictions were implemented.

Impact of ASF on exports of pork and products from Poland and Baltic Countries.

After the outbreak of ASF several countries banned imports of pork from Poland and the Baltics and farmers had to cope with the sudden drop in farm-gate prices for swine.

In order to estimate the economic impact of ASF in Poland and the Baltic countries on exports of pork and pork products, the 2013 value of exports was taken as a reference period and the decrease of value of exports in 2014 and 2015 below the 2013 level were attributed to the impact of ASF.

Impact of ASF outbreak on the value of exports of pork and pork products from Poland and Baltic Countries (U.S. \$ million)

	Total value of exports in 2013	Total value of exports In 2014	Total value of exports in 2015	Estimated decrease of value of exports related to ASF			
				In 2014 as compared to 2013	In 2015 as compared to 2013	In 2014 and 2015	In 2014 and 2015 as a percent of total exports in 2013 (%)
Poland	1,644	1,343	1,112	301	532	833	25
Lithuania	65	33	32	32	33	65	50
Latvia	25	19	9	6	16	22	44
Estonia	49	31	26	18	23	41	42

Source: GTA and FAS Warsaw estimates

It is estimated that as a result of outbreak of ASF in 2014 and 2015 in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia the value of exports of pork and pork products was reduced 833, 65, 22 and 41 U.S. \$ million, respectively. The value of Lithuanian exports of pork and pork products in 2014 and 2015 dropped by 50 percent followed by a 44 percent reduction in Latvia and a 42 percent reduction in Estonia. Although the percentage of decrease of exports related to ASF in Poland amounts to 25 percent, the absolute value of the decrease is the largest among all four affected countries and is estimated at U.S. \$833 million in both 2014 and 2015.

In order to mitigate the adverse effect of ASF outbreak the European Union allocated financial aid to the affected member states. In 2014 Lithuania received 28 million Euro from the EU.

Policy

On October 28, 2016, the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development hosted in Warsaw a meeting of representatives of eleven countries from the region of Central and Eastern Europe with Vytenis Andriukaitis, EU Commissioner of Health and Food Safety. The meeting was organized to discuss and coordinate actions taken in the fight against the virus of ASF. During the meeting Commissioner Andriukaitis said that Poland is doing very well in fighting the ASF disease. He added that works on regionalization of the disease and communication between countries affected by ASF help to control the spread of ASF. The representative of the Russian Federation evaluated the meeting as a new step in fighting the ASF virus. Commissioner Andriukaitis stressed the importance of strict compliance with bio-security rules and expressed the belief that the joint action will bring success in the fight against the virus. He also mentioned that at the next meeting, planned for spring of 2017, there will be a chance to assess the actions taken and the effectiveness of prevention of spread of the disease. The national delegations participating in the meeting were headed by: Poland – Krzysztof Jurgiel, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development; Estonia - Urmas Kruuse, Minister of Rural Affairs; Russian Federation, Nikita Lebedev, Director of the Department of Cooperation with WTO and other International Organizations; Federal Veterinary and Phyto-sanitary Inspection, Finland - Taina Aaltonen, Deputy CVO; Lithuania - Virginija Baltraitienė, Minister of Agriculture; Latvia - Dace Lucaua, Secretary of State in the Ministry of Agriculture; Moldova - Vasile Luca, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food Economy; Romania - Radu Roatis Chetan, Secretary of State, Head of the National Office for Food Safety; Slovakia - Jozef Bíreš, CVO; Ukraine - Volodymyr Lapa, Head of the National Office for Food Safety and Consumer Protection; Hungary - Lajos Bognár, CVO.

The meeting of representatives of the eleven countries with Commissioner Andriukaitis ended with the adoption of twelve conclusions. Please see below Ag Warsaw unofficial translation of the conclusions from the meeting published by the Polish Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The conclusions of the Ministerial Conference on African Swine Fever Warsaw, Poland, October 28, 2016.

In the context of the difficult situation of the persistence and spread of African swine fever (ASF) delegations of Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Polish, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia and Ukraine have agreed as follows:

1. African Swine Fever (ASF) is undoubtedly a regional problem, affecting several countries and requiring a high level of commitment at the level of technical and political. The best way to combat ASF is closer international cooperation, combined with transparency and regular exchange of epidemiological information between countries, and a more integrated and coherent cross-border actions, supported by international initiatives (Global framework for the progressive eradication of transboundary animal diseases (GF-TADS)).
2. The main risks associated with the relocation of ASF in the region stem from the persistence of the virus in feral pigs and their environment and its penetration into the pig holdings with a low level of bio-security.
3. The occurrence of ASF is not only dependent on the density of the feral pig population, and one of the main problems is the persistence of the virus in the infected carcass in the woods. It would aim at reducing the virus in the environment. This requires knowledge, participation and involvement of all stakeholders, such as specialists in the field of wildlife, environmentalists, hunters, forest guards and forest workers, employees, the environment, farmers, police, etc.
4. Managing the population of wild boars is a modern strategic action that should be adapted to local conditions and practices. Massive hunts in areas infected with ASF and the surrounding area, are counterproductive, because they cause greater movement of wild boar and are not the most effective way to reduce the spread of ASF. However, the intensification of the hunt can be used in the free areas of the country in order to reduce populations of sensitive wildlife. Control of population size of wild boars, notably through focused, thoughtful hunting in particular mature and almost-mature females and the corresponding non-continuous feeding (beyond the lure to perform hunting), including the removal and safe disposal of carcasses, are the most effective and necessary measures to combat of the disease. However, there is still a need for information on the most effective measures to control the population of wild boars, as well as better tools to assess the size of their population.
5. Biosecurity is crucial for preventing penetration of ASF to farms breeding pigs and spread of the virus, both in the commercial sector as well as in the so-called backyard farms. Even the small scale pig breeders must implement the minimum measures of biosecurity in the areas at risk. Veterinary services are required to provide pig farmers basic information in order to raise their awareness and contribute to the strengthening biosecurity. Also the entities involved in the transport of pigs, feed and equipment suppliers, workers and other professionals visiting or working temporarily on pig farms should be trained in the field of biosecurity.
6. Hunters and other travelers cause the risk of introduction of the ASF virus in areas free of the disease, because they can come into contact with contaminated material and as a result of negligence or deliberately bring the virus in his personal luggage. To prevent this danger, action should be taken raising awareness and other targeted efforts.
7. Early warning is essential, because it allows raising the level of preparedness and response to the occurrence of ASF. The main tool for achieving this goal is an effective supervision system of ASF, based on both passive and active surveillance measures.
8. Positive stimuli addressed to farms that meet the requirements of biosecurity, such as certain secure derogations from certain restrictions, including proportionate, dissuasive negative stimuli,

such as penalties, directed to farms with a permanently low biosecurity, are the appropriate ways of strengthening of biosecurity to be used, taking into account the different levels of risk associated with any type of farm area and the epidemiological situation.

9. Delegations take account of scientific advice in the field of ASF provided by EFSA and scientific opinions from other sources, and recommend making further scientific data based on ecological and geographical conditions in countries affected by the ASF, which will enable a better understanding of the epidemiology of ASF in the region, in particular as regards the seasonality of the disease and the level of risk they may pose indirect way of delivery (including the role of other species, eg. birds, insects or other possible vectors). It should continue to encourage research on innovative tools for limiting the ASF, such as finding a suitable vaccine.
10. The current disease situation in the vast areas affected by ASF indicates that it is far from being eradicated in Europe, and we must be ready to carry out intensive and long struggle with the disease. All delegations agree that they will work together to develop medium- and long-term, sustainable strategy for reducing its direct and indirect effects on all levels (trade, agriculture, hunting, environmental authorities, veterinary services etc.).
11. All participating countries and the European Commission agree that they will continue to support regional coordination, exchange of data and scientific cooperation through active participation in international meetings and promote them, in particular during the meetings organized within the framework of GF-TADS (OIE / FAO). A regional plan, setting out long-term strategy for the management of the sector of production of pigs and boars, in particular in the context of the meetings of the GF-TADS should be developed.
12. All countries and the European Commission should cooperate in order to secure additional financial support and other technical resources needed to combat ASF, with an emphasis on coordinated cross-border activities. The EU will continue to supplement, if necessary and in accordance with their capabilities, national measures to the most appropriate, eligible actions to combat the disease.

End of report.