



**European Committee
of the Regions**

NAT-VI/042

136th plenary session, 7-9 October 2019

OPINION

African swine fever and the European pork market

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- observes that African swine fever (ASF) is a threat and a challenge at the local, regional, national and European level;
- believes that the grant referred to in Article 5(3)(a) of Regulation 652/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council should always amount to 100% in the event that a case of ASF is confirmed because ASF is a threat that has a major impact on public health and disruptive effects on the economy;
- welcomes the work of the European Parliament and the European Commission in combating ASF undertaken within the current financial perspective, but believes that it is necessary to plan for additional resources in the next multiannual financial framework, including significant spending on scientific research that aims to develop an effective vaccine against this virus;
- calls for a special, dedicated cross-border grant to be allocated to combat ASF as part of projects that are conducted jointly by at least two countries;
- encourages local and regional authorities to disseminate information on the application of due diligence to prevent the spread of the disease, and to continue to cooperate on promoting biosecurity, particularly in small farms, and to take further joint measures in the event of an outbreak in border areas.

Rapporteur

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Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – African swine fever and the European pork market

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Political context

1. observes that African swine fever (ASF) is a threat and a challenge at the local, regional, national and European level and that it is therefore necessary for the European Committee of the Regions to respond to this problem as the institution that is the voice of local and regional communities in the European Union and to participate in the mobilisation of all stakeholders to fight this very dangerous virus;
2. stresses that the ASF epidemic is a threat to the environment, the economy and, most importantly, to people living in rural areas and who are involved in pig production mainly in Central and Eastern Europe;
3. considers that the fight against ASF combines policy objectives in the common agricultural policy and the environment and in other policy and funding programme fields that address such issues as societal challenges and regional development, thereby ensuring a coherent approach across various sectors; within the 2020 budget provisions for agriculture support measures against African swine fever, supports the proposal for 50 million for emergency measures and 28 million for development of a vaccine/drug against the ASF;
4. recognises that African swine fever is an international challenge. European regions should show solidarity on the threat posed by ASF to rural areas, the rural economy and agricultural processing. The speed at which the virus has spread to its current level could lead to the collapse of the European pork market and deprive hundreds of thousands of farmers of their source of income. This is a problem that is no longer local or regional, but has become a pan-European threat. The disease is currently present in several European countries:
 - Poland (1 492 cases and 1 outbreak)
 - Lithuania (728 cases of the disease in wild boars),
 - Latvia (286 cases),
 - Estonia (150 cases),
 - Ukraine (26 cases, 22 outbreaks in pigs),
 - Czechia (25 cases),
 - Italy (24 cases, 2 outbreaks),
 - Romania (3 outbreaks)– data from 01/01-15/04/2018;
5. believes that the grant referred to in Article 5(3)(a) of Regulation 652/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council should always amount to 100% in the event that a case of ASF is confirmed because ASF is a threat that has a major impact on public health and disruptive effects on the economy;

6. draws particular attention to the need for cross-border cooperation on a par with that adopted in the event of natural disasters; points out that the problem also concerns the EU's external borders, but believes that strengthening cross-border cooperation is essential and necessary. The Committee points out that there is a further and ongoing need to act together across borders to stabilise the situation in the EU's neighbouring countries (the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova);
7. recognises a number of economic and social risks that a crisis brought on by ASF could trigger. In addition to the public health preoccupation and the impact on the EU pork market and associated major structural changes in pigmeat production, other branches of the economy could be affected, such as tourism, forestry, meat processing and trade. ASF also affects the image of individual countries, but also the EU as a whole;

Proposed measures

8. welcomes the work of the European Parliament and the European Commission in combating ASF undertaken within the current financial perspective, but believes that it is necessary to plan for additional resources in the next multiannual financial framework, including significant spending on scientific research that aims to develop an effective vaccine against this virus;
9. calls for a special, dedicated cross-border grant to be allocated to combat ASF as part of projects that are conducted jointly by at least two countries;
10. believes that at the Member State level and at the level of the European Commission, intensive discussions should be held with the above-mentioned third countries on joint, coherent action in the fight against ASF and that the possibility of supporting these actions through cross-border programmes on food safety should be considered. CORLEAP could be an appropriate forum to discuss such cross-border actions;
11. calls on and encourages all stakeholders:
 - a) local and regional authorities,
 - b) hunters and farmers,
 - c) veterinary services,
 - d) national authorities of individual Member States,
 - e) the media

to play an active and dynamic role in the process of combating ASF in Europe under the leadership of the European Commission and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA);

12. calls for increased funding for educational and informational activities among stakeholders with the aim of raising public awareness of the illness, how to prevent and combat it, as African swine fever poses an enormous threat to rural development, the local and regional economy, the environment, farming and, as a result, to humans and public health in particular;

13. encourages local and regional authorities to disseminate information on the application of due diligence to prevent the spread of the disease, and to continue to cooperate on promoting biosecurity, particularly in small farms, and to take further joint measures in the event of an outbreak in border areas. This information should be provided to anyone who owns pigs and anyone else who comes into contact with wild boars;
14. calls on hunters to step up epidemiological surveillance of wild fauna in the infected area and to increase hunting where there is an excessive amount of wild boars. The Committee recognises that, despite not being affected by the disease, people – particularly hunters – can cause the disease to spread through:
 - any contact with infected animals, alive or dead (corpses),
 - contact with anything contaminated by the virus (e.g. clothing, vehicles, other equipment),
 - feeding animals meat or meat products from infected animals (e.g. sausages or uncooked meat) or waste containing contaminated meat (e.g. kitchen waste, swill feed, including offal);
15. believes that the effectiveness of the fight against the disease depends primarily on the size of the wild boar population. Action should therefore be taken to reduce the wild boar population in the concerned regions to regionally appropriate numbers. Cooperation programmes between the agricultural and environmental sectors (management of hunting, ban on additional feeding except where necessary for hunting (use of bait), farming practices) adapted to the specific situations of Member States should be promoted;
16. appreciates the work done so far by the European Commission to combat ASF and at the same time suggests that the EC plan further grants, including in the new Horizon Europe programme, for action in this area, as all calls for proposals concerning ASF within the Horizon 2020 programme are currently closed;
17. believes that farms affected by ASF should receive specific support from the EU which should be in the form of:
 - a) reimbursement of the equivalent value of herds that were disposed of, without the imposition of additional conditions,
 - b) application of a historical subsidy mechanism for a period of five years after the cessation of production caused by depopulation of the herd,
 - c) financial assistance to re-orient farms towards another area of production,
 - d) assistance in implementing full biosecurity for farms that continue pig production and pig-fattening, and also in the event of crisis-associated financial burdens due to measures taken (e.g. inspections, transport provisions),
 - e) assistance for pig producers and pig keepers in the case of lost income resulting from a destabilised pork market,
 - f) assistance for farms that want to increase pig production using biosecurity on their farms.
 - g) support for farms affected by restrictions on plant production due to ASF;
 - h) assistance for farms that have carried out on-farm slaughter and produced on a small scale,
 - i) disposal of all dead wild boars at the expense of the state;

18. is concerned by the further spread of the ASF virus and calls on the European Commission to continue its efforts, to monitor and to evaluate actions to combat ASF at EU level with the participation of local and regional authorities.

Brussels, 9 October 2019

The President
of the European Committee of the Regions

Karl-Heinz Lambertz

The Secretary-General ad interim
of the European Committee of the Regions

Pedro Cervilla

I. PROCEDURE

Title	African swine fever and the European pork market
Reference documents	
Legal basis	Article 307(4) TFEU
Procedural basis	Article 41(B)(ii) of the Rules of Procedure
Date of Council/EP referral/ Date of Commission letter	
Date of Bureau/President's decision	5 February 2019
Commission responsible	Commission for Natural Resources
Rapporteur	Sławomir SOSNOWSKI (PL/EPP)
Analysis	22 March 2019
Discussed in commission	17 June 2019
Date adopted by commission	17 June 2019
Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity)	Majority
Date adopted in plenary	9 October 2019
Previous Committee opinions	None
Date of subsidiarity monitoring consultation	No subsidiarity or proportionality issues – own initiative opinion