



GF-TAD`s Expert mission on African swine fever to Montenegro

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Terms of Reference of (ToR) the SGE Expert Mission to Montenegro



1. The experts should work with the Veterinary Services in order to **determine the following aspects:**

- a. if ASF occurring in domestic pigs and extent of the areas of occurrence.
- b. if ASF occurring in wild boar and extent of the geographical distribution.
- c. formulate hypothesis on the drivers of ASF occurrence.

2. Propose **measures intended for the control and eradication of ASF under local conditions**, in line with the WOA International Standards and the Recommendations formulated by the GF-TADs SGE on ASF

Background – domestic pigs

In 2023, there were approximately **34 000** pigs before pig slaughter season (November-December). The Veterinary Information System (VIS) is not working yet, and CA has difficulties with migrating data from the old database.

There are no definitions available for non-commercial (backyard) and commercial pig farms.

Surveillance:

The passive surveillance in domestic pigs is slightly improved in comparison to 2022 when 24 pigs were tested for ASF. In 2023, a total of 52 samples originating from dead domestic pigs tested by PCR. All samples tested negative so far.

Enhanced passive surveillance (weekly testing of at least the first two dead pigs older than 60 days) in commercial pig farms still needs to be improved.

Biosecurity - legal requirements for the biosecurity measures for all types of pig farms are under development.

Background – wild boar

Estimated wild boar population – **4973** individuals. 35 hunting grounds.
1312 WB hunted during last hunting season.

Surveillance:

Passive surveillance – weak despite of sampling procedure and incentives in place.

Active surveillance in place – 786 hunted WB tested in 2023 by PCR and ELISA – all negative.

Recent awareness campaign (EU program 2023) facilitated passive surveillance and **ASF detection in 2 dead wild boars on 12th January 2024 near the border with BIH.**



Typical terrain in the North of Montenegro

Biosecurity in hunting grounds – no legal requirements, just recommendations.

Recommendations (ASF control in WB)

- Continue efforts to search for dead wild boars in infected areas, focusing on water sources and wild boar resting/feeding places to monitor ASF evolution.
- Develop, approve, and implement minimum biosecurity measures for ASF-infected and high-risk areas, with timely expansion to cover the entire country, preferably before the next wild boar hunting season in October 2024 (in line with EU, FAO, WOAHP guidelines).
- Suspend wild boar hunting activities in infected areas until minimum biosecurity requirements are established, then proceed cautiously with hunting activities following estimation of ASF evolution and implementation of strong biosecurity measures.
- Implement targeted reduction strategies for wild boar populations, focusing on females to achieve long-term wild boar population control goals, with incentives for hunters to target female wild boars.
- Reinforce passive surveillance of wild boars throughout the country, including increased testing of found dead animals, while maintaining or increasing financial incentives to encourage the participation of the hunters, forest managers or forest rangers.



Recommendations (resources)

- Allocate additional human resources to the AFSVPA for animal disease control and epidemiology at both the central and regional levels to ensure early detection, rapid response, and effective outbreak eradication in accordance with the ASF Contingency plan.
- Invest in the development and implementation of robust animal disease surveillance and control systems, including real-time monitoring, geographic information systems, and diagnostic tools, to enable early detection of ASF outbreaks.
- Establish Rapid Response Teams with trained personnel and with necessary equipment such as personal protective equipment, decontamination, transportation and containment equipment, detection equipment, communication devices, vehicles, and other equipment. It is a significant capacity of CA, to be used for any other transboundary animal diseases.



Recommendations (collaboration & communication)

- Promote collaboration and information sharing among national veterinary authorities, wildlife management agencies, research institutions, and international organizations to strengthen ASF prevention and control efforts.
- National Focal Point on Communication should use WOA/FAO/EC and other communication tools to improve communication on ASF (including e-repository of communication tools under Regional GF-TADs SGE on ASF).
- Encourage active participation and cooperation from farmers, hunters, the meat industry, traders, and the tourism industry in ASF prevention and control efforts, emphasizing the shared responsibility
- Establish ongoing communication and coordination mechanisms between the public and private sectors to ensure a united approach in addressing ASF challenges.

Recommendations (I & R)

- Prioritize the re-establishment of the animal identification system in accordance with EU requirements and WOAHA standards
- Efforts should focus on restoring electronic access to pig registration data to enhance the AFSVPA capacity to monitor and trace pig movements accurately.
- Capacity-building initiatives and training programs should be implemented to ensure that relevant stakeholders are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively utilize the animal identification system.
- Regular audits and assessments should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the re-established system and identify any areas for improvement to enhance pig traceability and disease control measures.



Recommendations (movement control)

- Increase controls on pig movement, particularly during the April-November period, to prevent illegal pig movement from neighboring ASF-infected countries.
- Ensure strict enforcement of the pig movement ban from ASF-infected and high-risk areas to other territories of Montenegro, with penalties for non-compliance to deter illegal transport.
- Enhance public awareness campaigns to educate backyard farmers and the general public, but also other stakeholders (e.g. customs services at borders, local authorities, and their services) about the risks associated with illegal pig movement and the importance of complying with control measures to prevent ASF spread.
- Collaborate closely with neighboring countries to share information and coordinate efforts in disease control and surveillance to collectively mitigate the risk of ASF transmission across borders.

Recommendations (biosecurity)

- Establish and enforce minimum biosecurity requirements for all type of pig farms.
- Develop and implement training and education programs on biosecurity for pig farmers, farm managers, and employed veterinarians to emphasize the critical importance of biosecurity measures and passive surveillance for early ASF detection.
- Ensure regular biosecurity inspections in active pig farms located within areas where ASF is present in wild boar populations and high-risk areas, neighboring the infected areas. Extend inspections to other territories based on risk assessments conducted by the Competent Authority.
- Provide support and guidance to pig farmers in implementing and maintaining effective biosecurity measures, including assistance in acquiring necessary resources.
- Foster collaboration between relevant stakeholders, including governmental agencies, industry associations, and veterinary professionals, to ensure coordinated efforts in enforcing biosecurity measures and preventing ASF outbreaks.

Recommendations (surveillance)

- Develop and implement a comprehensive ASF surveillance program covering the entire territory of Montenegro, with a focus on early detection. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the ASF surveillance program regularly.
- Enhance passive surveillance efforts in i) commercial pig farms by implementing weekly PCR testing of at least first 2 dead pigs over 60 days of age, as well as ii) testing of all dead pigs in backyard farms.
- Collaboration between field veterinary services, laboratory, inspection, farmers, hunters, and other stakeholders to raise awareness about the importance of passive surveillance and encourage compliance with testing protocols, is of crucial importance.

Recommendations (awareness)

- Continue and expand ASF awareness campaigns in collaboration with domestic and international partners, targeting a wide range of stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive understanding of ASF risks and mitigation measures.
- Continuous awareness campaigns focused on pig farmers (including non-commercial farms), pig traders, butchers, slaughterhouses, hunters, and the public shall be foreseen to ensure ongoing education and engagement in ASF prevention and control efforts:
 - ✓ Utilize resources provided by organizations like WOA, EC, and FAO, such as risk communication and community engagement toolkits translated into multiple languages, to enhance outreach efforts along the entire pig value chain, including farmers, authorities, transporters, and market sellers.
 - ✓ Learn from successful community intervention pilots, such as the one promoted on regional GF-TADs webpages, to co-create biosecurity interventions and provide training on good biosecurity practices for non-commercial and commercial pig farms.

Thank you for your attention!

The experts team wish to thank all colleagues from Montenegro for their support and help given to facilitate the mission.

The working atmosphere during the mission was open and very positive.

