



Standing Group of Experts on African swine fever in Europe under the GF-TADs umbrella

Twenty third meeting (SGE ASF23) – 18/19 September 2024

Following the discussions, after reviewing the reports on the current epidemiological situation from the SGE Members¹, and after discussions on cross border cooperation,

The SGE ASF 23 recommends that:

1. Cross-border² cooperation (see Annex) is essential for preventing, controlling, and eradicating transboundary animal diseases such as African Swine Fever (ASF). All countries should enhance cross-border **interdisciplinary** cooperation and coordination on all administrative levels for effective management of ASF by sharing resources, aligning policies, and communicating in a transparent way. Their effectiveness improves, if well established in advance of occurrence of transboundary diseases.
2. All countries should collaborate on strategies to monitor and manage wild boar populations including cross-border coordinated hunting and culling, habitat management, and strategic fencing in selected at risk border areas.
3. Field missions by GF-TADs experts should continue in recently affected or at-risk countries to rapidly provide support and science-based expert advice to the veterinary authorities. Interested countries should contact the SGE ASF secretariat.
4. **Genetic characterisation** of ASF viruses is key to identify the origin and cross-border spread of ASF viruses. Sequencing services (such as Sanger), providing high-quality genotyping results, could be useful for sequence analysis and typing of ASF viruses.
5. All countries should implement previous SGE ASF recommendations to prevent, control and eradicate ASF.
6. The twenty-fourth meeting (SGE ASF24) of the Standing Group of Experts on African Swine Fever in Europe under the GF-TADs umbrella should be held in face-to-face format in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in April 2025.

¹ Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo*, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden, Ukraine

² This also includes internal administrative borders within a country, such as between Federal States, Regions or Provinces

* This designation is without prejudice to position on status, and is in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

Annex – Cross-border cooperation for ASF prevention in free areas and management in affected areas

1. The drafting of joint contingency planning between bordering countries should be encouraged in **peace time**. Countries should develop and update transboundary disease preparedness and response plans, including clear roles and responsibilities for national and local authorities, and identifying liaison officers. A political framework should also be set to grant **political and financial support** and engagement in time of crisis.
2. Cross-border simulation exercises should be organised and implemented.
3. Regular **meetings** should be organised, in peace time and in crisis time, between the competent authorities. **Technical** knowledge, data and information should be shared to keep **communication open, transparent** and to build mutual trust between bordering countries and neighbouring administrations
4. Countries should establish cross-border public awareness campaigns targeting farmers, transporters, hunters and the general-public on biosecurity practices, early disease reporting, and control measures. Awareness material should be provided in multiple languages to reach diverse populations, particularly in areas with significant cross-border movement.
5. The identification of border areas at higher risk based on wild boar ecology, behaviour, and natural habitat, should be promoted to prioritise the allocation of resources and limit the spread of ASF through the cross-border movement of wild boar.
6. As many detected ASF virus strains as possible should be sequenced by all affected countries. The results of genetic characterisation of ASF viruses should be shared between National Reference Laboratories of neighbouring countries, other countries in the region and relevant regional or global reference laboratories, as well as the EU Reference Laboratory for ASF, to facilitate tracking of ASF virus evolution, transmission routes, outbreak origins and coordinated transboundary efforts For support in isolation and sequencing of ASF viruses, members are encouraged to contact relevant national, regional or global reference laboratories

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