



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

22-25 April 2024

Expert team: Edvīns Oļševskis (Latvia) - Team Leader, Mārtiņš Seržants (Latvia), Denise Dubois (WOAH), Mark Hovari (FAO)

Ohrid, North Macedonia
18-19/09/2024

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 WOAHP International Standards and the Recommendations formulated by the GF-TADs SGE on ASF

Background – domestic pigs

There are **73 439 pigs** in **28 831 farms** (March 2024).

99% of pig farms are small backyard farms keeping in average 2-3 pigs for own consumption
– usually slaughtered in November - December.

Only 51 farms keep more than 50 pigs.

Only two pig farms are larger than 1000 pigs.

Surveillance:

ASF surveillance program in Albania was established in 2023, however the implementation of passive surveillance is weak and should be improved.

Enhanced passive surveillance (weekly testing of at least the first two dead pigs older than 60 days) in commercial pig farms is not implemented.

Biosecurity - Minimum biosecurity requirements are set but not implemented.

Background – wild boar

Estimated wild boar population – **4339** individuals.

Hunting of all species is forbidden since 2015.

Ban has been prolonged several times, and it is in force till 2025.

Surveillance:

ASF surveillance program in Albania was established in 2023.

There were no dead wild boar samples tested in 2023.

In February 2024, first two samples from dead wild boars found in the region of Kukes were taken and sent to the laboratory where both were PCR positive.

At the time of the mission these were the only samples tested in Albania in 2024.

Recommendations (CP & preparedness)

- The measures implemented by the competent authority to deal with ASF suspected case in wild boar were adequate and well organized.
- As wild animals are involved in ASF outbreak, the principles currently used for determination of the size of infected area should be supplemented by additional criteria e.g., wild boar ecology, behaviour, movement and natural habitat, to limit the possible spread of ASF to other areas. Therefore, it is recommended to involve wildlife biologist in ASF expert group to have an assistance and advice on dealing with ASF outbreaks in wild boar.
- Due to the risk of ASF outbreaks in domestic pig farms, preparedness needs to be increased by procurement of equipment required for killing of pigs and training on the use of such devices. Furthermore, veterinarians primarily in the regions at risk should be trained on the national procedures in case of an outbreak of ASF

Recommendations (I&R, biosecurity)

- Due to the recent ASF detection in wild boar in the country, inspections on the pig registration and identification, and pig movement controls shall be intensified in whole country. These controls shall include also the control on implementation of biosecurity requirements in all type of pig farms.
- Biosecurity requirements shall be implemented in pig farms in the whole country and included as a part of official veterinary control as soon as possible.
- As a priority, regular biosecurity inspections shall be started in pig farms located close to areas where ASF is present in the wild boar population and high-risk areas. Inspections can be further extended based on a risk assessment carried out by the competent authority.

Recommendations (surveillance)

- Considering the ASF confirmation in wild boar in Albania, passive surveillance system in domestic pig sector shall be implemented urgently. The enhanced passive surveillance (weekly testing of at least 2 dead pigs over 60 days of age using PCR test) shall be implemented in commercial pig farms. From backyard pig farms each dead pig should undergo the testing for ASF virus.
- Training and education of pig farmers and veterinarians employed by such farms should be foreseen to improve passive surveillance (weekly testing of 2 dead pigs older than 60 days). These trainings should include at least information on the disease and its transmission ways, clinical signs, ASF prevention, and highlight the importance of biosecurity measures as well as passive surveillance for early detection of ASF at farm.

Recommendations (wild boar)

- Passive surveillance of wild boar is initiated but still insufficient and it should be reinforced for the whole territory of the country (establishing financial incentives for reporting). So far, the number of samples tested from found dead wild boar demonstrates a very weak activity and it might not allow to monitor the evolution of the disease in the current infected area and early detection of ASF in the wild boar population. The number of tested found dead wild boar need to be significantly increased in whole country to ensure ASF early detection.
- Training of hunters on biosecurity measures to be taken when dealing with dead wild boar – sampling, disposal, disinfection etc. shall be ensured to avoid potential ASF spread.

Recommendations (awareness)

- Awareness campaign shall be foreseen to pig keepers (both non-commercial and commercial farms) to explain the biosecurity requirements and ensure proper implementation of biosecurity requirements at the pig farms.
- Continuous awareness campaigns focused on the pig farmers (incl., non-commercial farms) shall be foreseen to ensure the reporting on dead and sick pigs to improve passive surveillance and ASF early detection.
- Continuous awareness campaigns for hunters, forest managers and rangers shall be foreseen.

Recommendations (collaboration & communication)

- Cross-border collaboration and regular information exchange with neighboring countries on ASF epidemiological situation and disease control measures applied should be further improved and strengthened.

Thank you for your attention!

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

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

