GF-TADs
GLOBAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROGRESSIVE CONTROL OF TRANSBOUNDARY ANIMAL DISEASES

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Organisation for Animal Health
Founded as OIE

Standing Group of Experts on African swine fever in Europe

under the GF-TADs umbrella

Twenty fourth meeting (SGE ASF24) – 3-4 April 2025

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

FINAL REPORT

Executive Summary

The 24th meeting of the Standing Group of Experts on African Swine Fever (SGE ASF24) was held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 3–4 April 2025. The event was organized by the SGE ASF Secretariat and gathered participants from 28 member countries (including observers) from the European region, with 63 attendees. Due to unforeseen circumstances the representatives from Austria, Greece, Slovenia and Slovakia could not attend the meeting.

After a brief overview of Global and regional activities from WOAH, FAO and the European Commission, the member countries briefly presented their national epidemiological situation regarding ASF.

Experts from Germany, Belgium, Lithuania and Southeast Asia gave presentations on biosecurity with the focus on small non-commercial pig farms (so called “backyards”).

A representative from the WOAH Capacity Building Department demonstrated an online presentation on COACH training system and the eModules catalogue and specifically focused on ASF module.

A member of an EU twinning Project presented the Twinning project “EU support to capacity building and gradual Union acquis alignment in the veterinary sector of Bosnia and Herzegovina” with focus on ASF related capacity building activities.

The SGE ASF24 participants were shown a set of recommendations. Amongst these, it was highlighted that the SGE-ASF recommended stronger, but flexible biosecurity measures adaptable to all pig sectors, enhanced laboratory biosafety, farmer awareness campaigns, and clear “backyard” farm definitions. Emphasis was placed on collaboration, surveillance, and outbreak response. Sweden’s recent ASF eradication was acknowledged, and continued support to affected countries via GF-TAD missions and prior recommendations was strongly encouraged. The full set of recommendations can be found as Annex 2, and at regional web pages of GF-TADs.

Introduction and objectives of the meeting

After welcome words by Drs Bošković (CVO of BiH), Mr Gangi (FAO) and Mr Plavsic (WOAH), the President of the Regional Steering Committee of the GF TADs for Europe, Dr Van Goethem, as chair, underscored the importance of the SGE and the longstanding collaboration between Member countries and international organizations. He welcomed the hosting country Bosnia and Herzegovina and all attendees, introduced the meeting’s objectives, and presented the agenda for adoption. He

also noted that one of the key outcomes of the event would be a set of recommendations, to be jointly prepared by the participants and endorsed by the GF-TADs Presidency.

The 2-day agenda focused on three main topics:

- **First group:** Presentations from international organizations, including WOAH, FAO, the EU, ASF situation and experience on biosecurity in Southeast Asia, EU Twinning project and Regional ASF project funded by Italy.
- **Second group:** Countries' presentations on the epidemiological situation, divided into three blocks, starting with Bosnia and Herzegovina as the host country, followed by presentations from countries in the North and East.
- **Third group:** Expert presentations on biosecurity provided by FLI (Germany), Ghent University Professor (Belgium) and Lithuanian expert.

In addition to these presentations, Q&A sessions were conducted.

Updates from the Global ASF Working Group and regional activities.

Presentations were given by:

Dr. Gregorio Torres provided an overview on the global activities on ASF referring to the ASF situation report regularly produced by WOAH. He presented the progress in developing the new Terrestrial Animal Health Code Chapter 4.X on Biosecurity. He also outlined the next steps to update the current GF-TADS ASF global initiative.

Dr. Janice Garcia, WOAH National Focal Point for Communication on behalf of the WOAH Delegate and CVO, Philippines, presented by ZOOM the ASF situation in Southeast Asia and the Philippines, with focus on biosecurity particularly in small non-commercial (backyard) farms.

Dr. Andriy Rozstalnyy from FAO HQ demonstrated Progressive Management Pathway for Terrestrial Animal Biosecurity (PMP-TAB), the Toolkit, webinars implemented in countries.

Dr. Mark Hovari, FAO Regional Office in Europe, presented the FAO activities in the Balkans with a focus on Community ASF Biosecurity Interventions under the project**:** Emergency Response to ASF outbreak in the Western Balkans. He described all trainings and simulation exercises on different topics in countries of the region.

Dr. Simona Forcella, DG SANTE, European Commission, presented an overview of the African swine fever (ASF) situation in the EU, including the main challenges in the region and the European Commission's ongoing activities. She also outlined the EU legal framework on biosecurity, with a particular focus on the Animal Health Law. Dr. Forcella encouraged participants to make use of the communication tools developed under the EFSA STOP ASF campaign to raise awareness about biosecurity on pig farms. These efforts are part of broader initiatives in the Balkans, including the ADEWB II Project.

Dr. Carmen Iscaro, Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale, Italy presented the best practices on Laboratory biosecurity: GLP in IZS Umbria and Marche with the focus on BSL-3 requirements.

Dr. Hanna Abdelsattar from the Capacity Building Department, WOAH demonstrated by ZOOM the COACH training system and the eModules catalogue and specifically focused on ASF module.

Dr. Dominique Suter, FSVO Switzerland presented the results of a simulation exercise on ASF in Switzerland involving different high-level stakeholders evaluating available resources over time.

Updates from the member countries of the SGE ASF

Dr Van Goethem then invited Members of the SGE ASF to give presentations on their epidemiological situations.

Dr. Aleksandar Nemet from Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrated that in the country during the last year there were 27 outbreaks leading to 1893 euthanized or dead pigs and 40 positive wild boars.

Dr. Dejan Laušević from Montenegro showed the number of found dead and hunted wild boars, suspicious outbreaks and none of them were confirmed.

Dr. Bafti Murati from Kosovo presented that last outbreak among wild boars was in 2023. In backyards 86 outbreaks were confirmed during the reporting period.

Dr. Živko Matijević from Serbia showed that positive cases are detected on 16 small scale family farms and in 284 backyards, no big commercial farms were affected. In 2024 ASF was confirmed in 282 wild boars in 24 hunting grounds on the territory of 17 municipalities in 11 administrative districts.

Dr. Martin JOSHESKI from N. Macedonia showed high percentage of PCR positive in wild boars found dead (up to 83.85%), confirmed outbreaks in domestic pigs both in commencial farms and backyards and all trainings in which the veterinarians participated (BTSF, FAO and EuropeAid projects).

Dr. Esta Papajani from Albania demonstrated 7 WB found dead 100% of them were PCR positive and the outbreak on 1 farm with 71 pigs.

Dr Tatyana KARACIĆ from Croatia showed that in 2025 there was only 1 outbreak (98 pigs) in restricted zone III in Vukovar Srijem County and 15 cases in WB.

Dr Daniel DENEV from Bulgaria showed that in the zones of the country already considered affected at the beginning of the period they found 44 dead WB and hunted 13455 animals with exact percentage of PCR and seropositive. For the period 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025 in Bulgaria there were not registered new outbreaks concerning ASF.

Dr. Mihaela Spiridon from Romania demonstrated that in the country there were 220 WB found dead and 31% of them were PCR positive and among domestic sector 17 outbreaks in commercial and 282 in backyards took place.

Dr. Francesco Feliziani from Italy showed 480 wild boars cases and 32 domestic pigs outbreaks during the reporting period, the applied strategy and maps.

Dr Petr SAFRAN from Czech Republic showed that the last case in WB was on 14.08.2024 and no outbreaks in domestic pigs during the reporting period.

Dr. Lajos BOGNAR from Hungary showed 486 WB found dead and no PCR or seropositive in the zones of the country considered free until at least the beginning of the period and 981 dead WB (45.46% PCR positive) in the zones of the country already considered affected at the beginning of the period. There were no outbreaks in domestic pigs.

Dr. Christina HAARMANN from Germany demonstrated ASF in wild boar and surveillance during the period Sept 2024 – March 2025, EU regionalisation, example of ASF measures in Brandenburg and other regions, ASF surveillance and results and examples of fencing.

Dr. Joanna Szwast from Poland showed high number (24 510) of WB hunted in 2025 and 2935 WB found dead in all zones, 41 ASF outbreaks in commercial farms and 3 in backyards.

Dr. Paulius BUSAUSKAS from Lithuania showed in the zones of the country already considered affected at the beginning of the period there was 999 WB found dead (93 %PCR positive) and 8 confirmed outbreaks in backyards.

Dr. Martins SERVANTS from Latvia showed many cases of WB found dead and hunted with high percentage of PCR positive, 2 outbreaks in commercial farms and 5 outbreaks in backyards.

Dr. Helen PROMMIK from Estonia demonstrated several dead and hunted WBs in some cases PCR positive and no outbreaks in domestic pigs.

Dr. Julianna DEMCHUK from Ukraine demonstrated positive cases in dead and hunted WB and 18 outbreaks in commercial farms and 58 in backyards.

Dr. Cristina SIRBU from Moldova presented dead and hunted WB with 100 % PCR positive results, 6 outbreaks in commercial farms and 41 in backyards.

Dr. Aleksey Igolkin from Russia showed the total WB investigation was 22 875 (-29% to earlier period) with positive cases and 5 outbreaks in domestic pigs in backyards. He also presented surveillance of transmission vectors in the country.

Projects related to ASF in Member countries

Dr. Francesco Feliziani, Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale, Italy together with Dr. Alessandro Cristalli presented the Regional WOAH ASF project funded by Italy, plans, activities and expected outcomes designated for Serbia, North Macedonia, Armenia, Georgia and Kazakhstan.

Dr Ivana Lohman from Croatian veterinary service and EU twinning Project team member presented the Twinning project “EU support to capacity building and gradual Union acquis alignment in the veterinary sector of Bosnia and Herzegovina”.

Biosecurity context by experts

Dr Van Goethem invited the experts FLI (Germany), Lithuania and Belgium to give presentations on biosecurity:

Dr. Klaus Depner, FLI, emphasized a specific philosophy or mindset around biosecurity, highlighting that effective risk reduction requires adopting a comprehensive set of attitudes and behaviours. This approach calls for a cultural shift, where biosecurity becomes an integral part of everyday practices across all activities.

Dr. Marius Masiulis, Associate professor from Kaunas University for Health Sciences highlighted the biosecurity challenges of backyard pig farming in relation to ASF. These small-scale, non-commercial farms often lack proper biosecurity, increasing the risk of outbreaks and unreported cases. The presentation underscored the need for targeted control measures, improved surveillance, and support for backyard farmers. Success stories from the Czech Republic, Belgium, and Sweden showed that strong identification, reporting, and biosecurity practices can effectively contain ASF, even in backyards.

Prof. Jeroen Dewulf from Ghent University, Belgium gave a presentation on the System Biocheck Ugent - the tool to measure and improve farm level biosecurity.

Discussion and adoption of the SGE ASF24 recommendations

Following the discussions, SGE-ASF-24 participants (Annex 1) considered and adopted preliminary recommendations after reviewing reports from SGE members on the current epidemiological situation and discussions following presentations by keynote speakers. These were further refined by e-mail correspondence between participants over the following two weeks. Final recommendations were adopted on 22 May and are included in this report as Annex 2.

Closing Remarks

The organizers of the SGE thanked all participants and stressed the importance of collaboration and coordination, including biosecurity context with focus on "backyard" farms in the struggle against ASF, all while following science and experience / best practice in the development of our strategies for the eradication of ASF.

We would like to sincerely thank Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Commission, FAO and WOAH for kindly supporting the organisation of the SGE ASF24 conference.

Report

Report, presentations and other materials are available on the website of the SGE on ASF of the regional GF-TADs for Europe.

Annex 1: Participants

List of Members[1] present:

Country (non-EU)	Country (EU)
Albania	Bulgaria
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Croatia
Kosovo[2]	Estonia
Moldova	Germany
Montenegro	Hungary
North Macedonia	Italy
Russia	Latvia
Serbia	Lithuania
Ukraine	Poland
	Romania
	Czech Republic

List of observer countries, GF-TADs organizations, and associated organizations:

Country or organization	Country or organization
Switzerland	Ireland
UK	DG SANTE
FAO Europe	WOAH Europe
WOAH HQ	WOAH Central Asia
Norway	Belgium
Armenia	Georgia

Annex 2: Recommendations

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Following the discussions, after reviewing the reports on the current epidemiological situation from the SGE Members[1], and after discussions on the importance of biosecurity for the control of African swine fever in particular in 'backyard' production systems,

the SGE ASF 24 recommends that:

1. Biosecurity is considered one of the key prevention tools at the disposal of countries to prevent the introduction and spread of ASF to, from and within the domestic pig population.
2. All countries should enhance and regularly monitor the application of biosecurity in commercial and small non-commercial, so called 'backyard pig' farms.
3. Biosecurity should be based on a public-private partnership involving livestock producers, veterinarians and official authorities. Good biosecurity requires the adoption of a set of attitudes and behaviours to reduce risk in all activities.
4. Investing in laboratory biosafety measures protects both laboratory personnel and public health. Beyond having adequate facilities, adopting the right mindset and safety culture is crucial for effective biosafety management.
5. Sweden should be withdrawn from the list of members of the SGE ASF, once its self-declaration of free status has been published on the WOAH website. However, Sweden is welcome to attend future meetings as observer and share its experience.
6. 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.
7. FAO and WOAH ASF reference laboratories are readily available to provide expert support to WOAH Members in the region.
8. All countries should implement previous SGE ASF recommendations to prevent, control and eradicate ASF.
9. The twenty-fifth meeting (SGE ASF25) 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 Belgrade, Serbia, in September 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

<u>Annex: B</u>iosecurity, particularly in small non-commercial ('backyard') farms for the prevention, control and eradication of African Swine Fever

1. A biosecurity plan describing the appropriate biosecurity measures (management measures and infrastructures) should be established in peace times, as preventive measures in the absence of ASF, in all pig establishments and along the value chain (production, movement and transport of domestic pig and their products).
2. Countries should implement those biosecurity measures in a sufficiently flexible way to suit the type of pig production considering local circumstances and technical developments.
3. Regular and objective on-farm biosecurity assessments should be conducted using a standardised protocol that supports the continuous improvement of biosecurity practices. These assessments should help the competent authority to categorise the domestic pig establishments based on their biosecurity level and guide appropriate risk management measures.
4. Countries should define small non-commercial 'backyard farms' within their context and implement targeted strategies to prevent ASF, including appropriate biosecurity requirements.
5. In case of ASF outbreaks, countries should reinforce the biosecurity measures to prevent ASF further spread to other pig establishments and the environment.
6. Laboratories handling ASF virus (ASFV) should implement biosafety procedures according to international standards (WOAH Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals, Chapter 11.4) and based on risk assessment to prevent contamination and ensure accurate results. Staff should be continuously trained to maintain high laboratory biosafety standards and respond to emerging threats.
7. Regular awareness campaigns should be organised to educate key stakeholders along the swine value chain on ASF prevention, emphasizing safe feeding practices, biosecurity, and early disease detection and reporting.
8. Studies to better understand the key aspects associated to biosecurity implementation, including the socio-cultural factors influencing biosecurity adoption and compliance, in particular in small non-commercial ('backyard') production systems should be performed.
9. Economic analysis should be conducted to measure the financial benefits, such as reduce losses from pig diseases and document successful case studies to demonstrate the return of investment of the biosecurity best practices.
10. Members and stakeholders should actively participate in the standard-setting process by providing comments on the Terrestrial Animal Health Code chapter on biosecurity that is currently circulated for Member comments with the intention to be adopted at the 93rd WOAH General Session in May 2026.