

## SPS COMMITTEE THEMATIC SESSION ON AFRICAN SWINE FEVER

23 MARCH 2021

### CHAIRPERSON'S SUMMARY

1. A thematic session on African swine fever (ASF) was held on 23 March 2021. The programme was circulated in document [G/SPS/GEN/1874/Rev.2](#), based on the proposal submitted by the European Union in document [G/SPS/W/322](#).
2. The main objective of the thematic session was to provide WTO Members with an opportunity to increase their awareness of regionalization principles, and to learn from each other by sharing experiences about the challenges, as well as the benefits, of defining safe trade conditions for pigs, pork and pork products. This, in turn, should contribute to building confidence among trading partners.
3. In Session 1, the WTO Secretariat presented the main principles of the SPS Agreement relevant to the topic and the work of the SPS Committee, highlighting the importance of adaptation to regional conditions, including disease free areas and areas of low disease prevalence, as established in Article 6. The Secretariat recalled the key elements of the Guidelines to further the practical implementation of Article 6 of the SPS Agreement, adopted by the Committee in May 2008 and contained in document [G/SPS/48](#). The Secretariat also reported on notifications on ASF submitted by Members and on discussions held in the Committee.
4. In Session 2, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) presented an overview of the international standards relevant to the disease and the epidemiological situation worldwide, highlighting the global threat posed by the continuous spread of ASF, and the OIE science-based recommendations for ensuring safe international trade, even from infected zones. Representatives from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and GIRA provided data on the economic impact of ASF on global meat and feed markets and global pigmeat supply, highlighting the significant economic losses experienced by farmers. The impact of the disease on global markets had caused fluctuations in supply, demand and prices for substitute goods.
5. Members shared their national experiences in Session 3. Representatives from Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas, ranging from Members where the disease is endemic in wildlife to others where it is absent, shared their trade strategies. China described the epidemic situation of ASF and its normalized prevention and control in the country, detailing the control policies in place such as sampling and testing in high-risk areas, daily report systems in slaughterhouses and the establishment of compartments free from ASF.
6. Representatives from the European Commission, Belgium and Germany presented on EU regionalization and special ASF control measures adopted to ensure safe trade. Preparedness, research, regionalization measures based on science and in line with international standards, public awareness, international cooperation, and the availability of transparent information to trading partners were underlined as vital to ensure safe trade. The successful eradication of ASF in Belgium was presented as an example of the effective implementation of the strategy in place. Germany provided the perspective of trade in pork from a Member where ASF is present in wildlife, explaining the steps taken to secure trading based on OIE specifications and emphasizing the importance of biosecurity measures to sustain compartmentalization efforts.
7. Canada, where the disease has never been detected, explained its preparation to prevent the introduction of ASF, including zoning as a key component of the strategy, and insisted on the need for the global community to work together. South Africa, where the disease is endemic in wildlife, shared its strategy for trade in pork, recalling its national legislation and the relevance of zoning to maintain market access. Mexico presented its epidemiological surveillance programme applied in Manzanillo port, highlighting the implementation of measures such as epidemiological surveillance in properties near seaports, field research and farm visits, sampling, technical assistance to producers, and tracing.

8. Session 4 dealt with international and regional initiatives in the context of ASF. FAO presented the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs), a joint OIE-FAO global initiative that contributes to the development and support of ASF control strategies at the global and regional levels. Part of its objective is to improve the capacity of veterinary services to control ASF using OIE standards and best practices, and to establish an effective coordination and cooperation framework for the global control of ASF. Under the GF-TADs umbrella, the Standing Group of Experts on African swine fever in Europe works to build up closer cooperation among countries affected by ASF and thereby address the disease in a more collaborative and harmonised manner. The regular exchange of information on the ASF situation and the regular review of national control strategies are essential to fulfil this role. The United States shared USDA's involvement in international collaboration around ASF, emphasizing that a global response to ASF can be ensured by the exchange and cooperation with other regions and by the involvement of Members in international collaboration on ASF. Finally, a representative from the Global African Swine Fever Research Alliance (GARA) spoke about existing global research partnerships that are crucial to generate scientific knowledge, and the tools to contribute to the prevention, control and eradication of ASF.

9. The European Union highlighted the role of regionalization in providing guarantees for safe trade and the importance of regional cooperation and exchanges to ensure a global response to ASF.

10. In concluding, I remarked that the thematic session had proven to be informative and interesting, and trusted it would help increase Members' understanding on the topic.

11. Presentations from all sessions of the thematic session will be made available on the [SPS Gateway](#).

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