

Experts meet in early December to prevent African swine fever

The Americas is still a region free of African swine fever (ASF). However, the risk of introduction of the disease in the region is high and, in the absence of a vaccine, prevention becomes key to keep this free situation. High-level officials of the national Veterinary Services coming from eight countries of the Americas Region meet on December 3 and 4 in Bogota, Colombia, to discuss how they can work in a coordinated manner and reinforce border control measures to avoid the entry of this disease into the region.

The event will mark the first meeting of the Standing Group of Experts on ASF (SGE-ASF) in the Americas Region, under the sponsorship of the Colombian Agricultural Institute ([ICA](#)) and the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases ([GF-TADs](#)), a joint initiative of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Considering that the virus has continued to spread in Europe, Asia and Africa, the ASF global situation poses a threat to current free countries. A situational analysis conducted in the Americas showed that, in 28% of the countries, it is common for people (tourists, ethnic groups, foreign workers, refugees, etc.) returning from currently infected countries to carry pork products in their luggage. Knowing that the virus can survive in pig products and in the environment for a long time, this practice becomes a risk for the disease introduction. Commitment and greater awareness of all stakeholders is needed to avoid it. This requires a rigorous approach to border controls at points of entry by air, sea and land, as well as passenger awareness of risk that could be achieved through clear and targeted communication.

A great diversity of production and trade systems, as well as complex value chains coexist in the Americas Region, with consequently unique additional challenges when it comes to facing this disease. In this regard, zoning and compartmentalization, as described in the OIE international Standards are key tools for minimizing trade disruptions. Their implementation depends on a strong alliance between industry and Veterinary Services, ideally agreed in peacetime. Countries from the region are called to consider the benefits of these tools for ensuring a safe trade of pig and pork products.

It is urgent to take proactive, concrete and coordinated measures to prevent the introduction of ASF in the Americas. The SGE-ASF plays a crucial role in developing recommendations and in forging a closer cooperation among countries to address disease prevention, preparedness and response in a collaborative and harmonised manner in the Americas Region. FAO and OIE invite countries in the region to implement the recommendations that will be issued following this important meeting.

More information:

- [OIE awareness campaign 'ASF kills pigs'](#)
- [OIE web page on ASF](#)
- Launch of the SGE-ASF for the Americas