

Recent news report that the novel flu virus has apparently emerged from a Mexican industrial farm keeping one million of pigs. Does this not again prove that mass production is responsible for the emergence of such a virus?

The new influenza virus A/H1N1 responsible for the outbreak of the respiratory disease emerged in humans in Mexico contains genetic material of swine, avian and human origin. This virus has been named "swine flu" on the assumption that the reassortment of viruses that has generated the new virus has occurred in a pig. However, there is no definitive scientific evidence at present to support this. This reassortment might have also occurred in a bird or in a human being. In addition, it is not known if this virus is present in pig populations in Mexico or elsewhere and therefore it is not possible to form conclusions on the risk posed by pigs to humans. Conversely, sustained virus transmission from human to human has been proved. Further investigations will be necessary to possibly determine the source of the infection.

The news report that the concerned pig farm in Mexico is exporting (pig meat) to different EU Member States. Which measures will the Commission take to prevent the introduction of the disease by pigs and pig's products?

From Mexico no imports of live pigs or any other product originating from pigs are authorised. From the USA imports of pork meat and pig semen are authorised. From Canada imports of live pigs, pork meat and pig semen are authorised.

As regards pork meat, this Novel flu virus is not transmitted by food. In addition, all influenza viruses are very sensitive to heat and are destroyed at 70°C. Even the most prudent person can thus be reassured that eating properly handled and cooked (70°C) pork meat and pork products are absolutely safe.

There is no indication that the current influenza outbreak ongoing in Mexico and USA is linked with Canadian pigs, so there is no reason for the EU to change its attitude on imports from North America.