



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate G - Veterinary and International Affairs  
Unit G5 Food chain and animal health expenditure

SANCO/2013/11408

**REPORT ON THE  
5<sup>th</sup> TASK FORCE MEETING  
OF THE  
“CLASSICAL SWINE FEVER”  
SUB-GROUP  
BUCHAREST, ROMANIA  
16-17 April 2013**

**PARTICIPANTS:****Task force sub-group members:**

Dr. Volker Moening (chair)  
Dr. Sandra Blome (DE)  
Dr. Vilmos Palfi (HU)  
Dr. Miroslav Mojzis (SK)  
Dr. Jedert Maurer-Wernig (SI)  
Dr. Pencho Kamenov (BU)  
Dr. Tsviatko Alexandrov (BU)

**Romania:**

Dr. Nicolae Lazar  
Dr. Iulia Cohen  
Dr. Maximilian Dragan  
Dr. Grigoriu Marius  
Dr. Cristian Siposean  
Dr. Nicolae Stefan  
Dr. Daniel Donescu  
Dr Maximilian Dragan  
Dr Marian Pintur

**Private Experts:**

Dr. Klaus Depner

**Commission:**

Dr. Silvia Bellini (G2)  
Dr. Ana Blass Rico (G5)

**Location of the meeting:**

Veterinary Faculty, Bucharest

**16<sup>th</sup> April:****Objectives of the EU Task Force subgroup CSF in Romania**

The meeting was opened by the Romanian authorities. Thereafter the representatives of the Commission explained the objectives of the meeting: to get detailed information on all aspects related to the eradication, monitoring and control programme in the whole territory of Romania and in particular in the areas not included in the Channel System (CS) (audited by the FVO in September 2012) and to provide Romania with the advice from the experts on how to improve the programme so that its implementation produce robust and reliable results to prove that the CSF virus is not circulating in Romania (Annex I).

The chairman introduced the CSF Subgroup of the Task Force (Annex II) and presented a brief summary of the CSF situation in the EU.

**Presentations by Romania on all relevant information to CSF**

The Romanian participants of the meeting presented comprehensive information on

- the structure of the Romanian Veterinary Services, NSVFSA and SVFSD (Annex III)

- the present status of the structure of Romanian pig production. Types and definitions of production holdings were explained and visualized on a map. In addition rules of movement control were shown (Annex IV). It is noteworthy that there are no distance restrictions for the movement of meat from backyard pigs, however, the numbers of these movements are small and still decreasing. All pigs are registered (individually) in the national database. The registration seems to work well, and veterinarians are paid for registering pigs.
- the past and present CSF situation in the country and measures taken to control CSF (2001-2013). This included a detailed description of the CS as well as the data obtained through the programme of active and passive surveillance (Annexes V and VI). The surveillance programmes include wild boar. At present about 50 farms in four counties (that are registered with the Central Veterinary Administration) are taking part in the CS. The system is open for new registrations. The only additional requirements for taking part in the CS compared to the nationwide control programme are the quarterly testing for surveillance on domestic pigs (twice a year for the rest of the country) and PCR “clearance” testing for all pigs prior sending to the slaughterhouse. At present about 600.000 pigs are marketed annually through the system.
- In Annex VII the implementation of the programme for monitoring, control and eradication of CSF in the Romanian wild boar population was presented. History and presence of oral vaccination was explained. From 2010-2011 an oral vaccination programme along the Northern and Northeastern borders of the country was in place. Vaccination was performed in a corridor, since these borders are considered as a risk for the reintroduction of CSF.

The Romanian representatives made very clear that their measures to control CSF include the whole national domestic and wild pig population and the entire territory of the country. The Romanian working hypothesis was: the CSF virus is still present and circulating and any animal holding in any locality might be infected. The design of the control programme was accordingly and the surveillance was intended to detect a 5-10% prevalence with a 95% confidence. Such a hypothesis is an appropriate approach to address the issue of controlling and designing a CSF programme for Romania. However, during the meeting additional data were requested in particular geographical presentations including surveillance data and location and size of the non-professional holdings in order to improve the demonstration of the favorable epidemiological situation.

Otherwise, the figures presented were well acknowledged by the participants of the meeting and significant progress was attested to the Romanian side. Sampling was done in each locality within one or maximal two days; sampling of the whole country was completed within 2 months.

It was noted that after the end of vaccination by the end of 2009 no new outbreaks were registered, neither in domestic nor in wild pigs. With respect to passive surveillance the group recommended to concentrate more on backyard holdings and to make more use of exclusion diagnosis, i.e. when laboratory samples are taken in cases of suspicion for other febrile infectious diseases of swine, e.g. PRRS or porcine circovirus 2, CSF should be excluded in the laboratory. Serological investigation of diseased pigs was considered of little use, since CSF-specific antibodies are unlikely to be present, and the Subgroup recommended to discontinue that practice.

In general the data presented were considered not to be sufficiently clear in terms of geographical distribution of the sampling, i.e. county/locality to fully assess the programme and the present favourable epidemiological situation in domestic pigs and wild boar.

The wild boar sector gave some reason for discussion and concern: Since 2008 no CSF cases in wild boar were reported. However, the somewhat static national wild boar population of 70.000 is in disagreement with a relatively small hunting bag of 12.000 animals per year, which also has been constant over the years. These data are in disagreement with trends in the rest of Europe. Furthermore no figures on local wild boar densities were presented. These figures are important for the risk assessment in case of a CSF outbreak. In low density situations CSF in wild boar is most likely to be self-limiting, whereas in high density situations oral vaccination would be the method of choice to control the infection. In addition, since wild boar are always potential host animals for CSF virus, more efforts should be put into gathering information about the actual status and dynamics of the national wild boar population. Although serological surveillance of wild boar is included in the programme, no serological data were presented; this also applies for areas in which oral vaccination was performed. Serological data and their geographical distribution are essential for the assessment of the epidemiological situation the wild boar population. In case of serological testing of wild boar samples, the results should be correlated to the age of the animals in order to allow a better evaluation of the data.

Laboratory capacities and diagnostic methods used in the National Reference Laboratory and the county laboratories were presented. The Romanian laboratory network has an impressive capacity and the methods used are up-to-date and suitable for an efficient diagnosis of CSF. All laboratories have implemented a quality management system according to ISO 17025/2005. The range of diagnostic methods covered by individual

laboratories varies. Most of them use ELISA and 12 laboratories have the capacity to perform PCR. However, there was some discussion concerning a definite lack of information between laboratories and in particular a weakness in the procurement of reagents and test kits. At present all purchases are made decentralized, i.e. on county level. The members of the task force suggested to explore the possibility of central purchase of test kits, in addition mutual information on the availability of test kits and reagents in county laboratories is essential for an effective usage of the national laboratory capacity. (Annex VIII).

### **17<sup>th</sup> April:**

The Subgroup of the Task Force discussed the presentations given by the Romanian authorities the day before. It was acknowledged that very significant progress in the control of CSF had been made compared to the previous meeting of the Subgroup in Romania late 2009. The country is on a good way towards the eradication of the infection. However, for the full assessment of the situation some details are still missing, e.g. the geographical distribution of the surveillance data and the location and size distribution of the non-professional holdings (backyard) both in the CS area and outside it. This also applies for the wild boar section of the pig population. The information is considered essential for a final conclusion on the fitness of the programme to eventually confirm the absence of virus circulation in the country.

With respect to the epidemiological situation in neighboring countries in the region the current status of the EU IPA project on the eradication of rabies and CSF was presented (Annex IX). Thereafter, the epidemiological CSF situations in Hungary, Bulgaria and Slovakia were shown in detail and measures taken were explained (Annexes X-XII). In all three countries no new outbreaks of CSF have been notified in recent years.

After a final discussion among members of Subgroup and the representatives of the Commission the conclusions and recommendations were drafted.

### **Conclusions**

- The CSF Subgroup of the Task Force acknowledged the large progress compared to the first subgroup meeting that took place in 2009 in Bucharest.
- The CSF Subgroup concluded that the active and passive surveillance programmes presented by Romania would ensure rapid detection of and reaction to new outbreaks.

- The detailed data provided by Romania on domestic pigs covering the entire territory of the country strengthen the notion that the hypothesis that CSF-virus is still circulating in the country is not valid.
- Convincing evidence was presented on the effectiveness of the channelling system. The system is quite labour-intensive and Romania undertakes considerable efforts to operate the system. The assessment of the CSF Subgroup is backed up by recent FVO audits.
- The end of vaccination by 31st December 2009 did not lead to new CSF outbreaks in domestic pigs, i.e. the exit strategy was effective.
- The system of registering individual animals in backyard holdings seems quite sophisticated and laborious.
- The (still) high number of non-commercial (backyard) holdings poses a constant risk for the re-introduction of CSF.
- It was stated that – except for 2011 - the Romanian wild boar population has been stable for years despite the general European trend of increasing wild boar densities. The national hunting bag has also been stable for years.
- Vaccination of wild boar in northern and eastern border areas stopped in 2011. However, detailed serological data of wild boar were not provided.
- The country has a well-organized laboratory network with good capacity. Figures on the capacity were presented. In the beginning of 2013 the LIMS system has been introduced in the NRL and all county laboratories.

## **Recommendations**

- The surveillance data on domestic pigs presented to the CSF Subgroup should include more information on location, size and census of non-professional holdings (splitted between CS area and outside CS system area) in order to improve the demonstration of the favorable epidemiological situation.
- The CSF Subgroup recommends seeking ways to simplify the control system in pig holdings, e.g. for the purpose of CSF control, reference to the holding instead of the individual animal might be sufficient for tracing back animals in case of swine fever outbreaks.
- The serological investigation of sick animals should be stopped, since CSF-specific antibodies are unlikely to occur in these animals.
- Passive surveillance in backyard operations should be carried out systematically to be able to detect an eventual re-introduction of CSF as early as possible.
- Since wild boar are always potential host animals for CSF virus, more efforts should be put into gathering information about the actual status and dynamics including their geographical distribution of the national wild boar population.

- Age-related serology of wild boar samples should be introduced in order to allow better evaluation of the data.
- The system of individual labs to procure reagents and test kits should be reconsidered and improved. Mutual information on the availability of tests in county laboratories is essential for an effective usage of the national laboratory capacity.

## **Annexes**

### Agenda

Annex I: SANCO CSF Task Force Romania April 2013

Annex II: CSF Task Force introduction

Annex III: DGSV Romania

Annex IV: Pig growing systems in Romania

Annex V: CSF surveillance and control

Annex VI: Clinical serological and virological programme

Annex VII: Wild boars

Annex VIII: Laboratory capacities

Annex IX: CSF situation in the Western Balkan-IPA regional project.

Annex XI: CSF Hungary

Annex XII: CSF Bulgaria

Annex XIII: CSF Slovakia