



**EUROPEAN UNION PROPOSAL FOR A THEMATIC SESSION AT THE  
SPS COMMITTEE MEETING OF NOVEMBER 2020**

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND AFRICAN SWINE FEVER**

The following proposal, received on 28 February 2020, is being circulated at the request of the delegations of the European Union.

**1 INTRODUCTION**

1. The European Union has drawn on multiple occasions Members' attention to inconsistencies in the application international standards developed by the OIE to control and contain African swine fever (ASF).
2. African swine fever (ASF) is an infectious disease of pigs. No vaccine exists to combat this virus. It does not affect humans, nor does it affect other animal species than pigs and wild boars. It can be transmitted either via direct animal contact or via dissemination of contaminated food (e.g. sausages or uncooked meat).
3. In Eurasia, ASF spread to 16 European (Geographic Europe) and 11 Asian countries with a total population of around 2.2 billion people. Most of these countries are WTO Members and connected by intensive, long-standing trade relations, which include the trade in pork and pork products. Pork products provide an important part of the diet in many of these countries and it is central for the protein supply of the population.

**2 TRADE AND MANAGEMENT OF ASF**

4. Livestock diseases must be managed rigorously. This is often costly and may require restrictions in the movement of animals and animal products that may carry the infectious agent. It is in the best interest of importing and exporting countries to agree on trade conditions that protect their livestock whilst avoiding unnecessary restrictions. For this exact reason, the Members of the World Animal Health Organisation OIE have developed recommendations in the terrestrial code to help countries agree on safe trade conditions.
5. However, in reality, trade in pork and pork products is frequently hindered by the application of extremely strict and disproportionate measures, namely trade bans, that do not seem to be based on existing international standards or justified by the latest solid scientific knowledge. These measures render vain the substantial efforts applied by countries to try to contain the disease and to guarantee that pork and pork products are safe to export.
6. In many countries, pork is a major contributor to the protein supply of the general population that cannot easily be substituted. Disproportionate restrictions cause unnecessary economic damage without increasing the actual level of desired livestock health protection. In addition, rigid measures incommensurate with the risk at hand needlessly reduce the supply of part of people's accustomed diets, while resulting price increases may lead to inflation pressures and to detrimental effects on the wider economy.

7. In spite of the benefits of maintaining diverse supplies, it may be challenging for importing and exporting WTO Members to bilaterally agree on safe trade conditions and avoid unnecessary restrictions. For this precise reason, the relevant international standard setting bodies developed their specific recommendations for the risk assessment and management of infectious animal diseases. In the case of ASF, these recommendations were jointly developed by OIE Members, adopted by consensus by the OIE General Assembly, and they are revised over time when needed.

8. We are facing a situation where some WTO Members seem unable to use the recommendations they themselves have developed with the very aim of avoiding the disproportionate trade restrictions that they are now imposing.

9. It is essential to reaffirm the importance of existing international standards and build consensus among WTO Members about their application to allow safe trade conditions for pork and pork products.

### **3 PROPOSAL**

10. The European Union proposes a thematic session on ASF to allow for an in-depth exchange of views on the situation and possibly map out a way forward.

11. Ideally, this event would offer a snapshot of the epidemiological situation, of the measures taken by affected countries to manage the risk together with a review of available risk management options of the OIE standards to mitigate the economic impact of ASF.

12. The proposed thematic session would provide an opportunity for WTO Members to exchange views, share experiences, best practices and new developments, and allow relevant ISSBs to present existing standards, guidelines and recommendations.

13. The European Union invites WTO Members to consider this proposal. If acceptable to the Committee, interested Members are invited to join the European Union in developing a programme to make of this thematic session an interesting and useful investment for all participants.

---