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Principles and criteria for geographically defining
ASF regionalisation

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Principles and criteria for geographically defining ASF regionalisation

The EU African swine fever (ASF) regionalisation laid down in Commission Implementing Decision 2014/709/EU¹ without prejudice to the provisions of Council Directive 2002/60/EC. Decision 2014/709/EU sets a series of additional animal health movement restrictions and control measures applicable to the dispatch of pigs, pig meat, certain pig products and wild boar meat and products thereof. The way these restrictions are applied is linked with the areas listed in that Implementing Decision under four sections: Part I, Part II, Part III and Part IV of the Annex thereto.

The different parts of the Annex to Decision 2014/709/EU were defined considering the epidemiological situation of ASF, including whether it concerns infection in both pigs holdings and the feral pig population (wild boar) (Part III), infection occurring only in the feral pig population (Part II) or when a certain level of risk exists due to proximity to the infection (Part I). Specific Part IV (e.g. Sardinia) was defined where i) epidemiological situation of ASF has been considered stabilised but ii) the disease control presents specific challenges due to the systemic and high level non-compliance by stakeholders (e.g. the farming sector) with the relevant EU requirements, in particular in relation to identification, registration and traceability of pigs, and iii) there are difficulties for the veterinary authorities to ensure the conformity with those requirements. The classification of Member States' territories or parts thereof as Parts I, II, III and IV are adapted regularly by taking into account additional risk factors related to the local epidemiological situation and its evolution. The definitions of territories to be listed in each Part of the Annex to Decision 2014/709/EU take into account the historic and recent presence of ASF in both wild boar and domestic pigs as shown through effective surveillance. While these two categories of animals behave differently and have clearly different biosecurity constrains and movement patterns, it is the wild boar component that has proven to be more difficult to control even though these are not migratory animals. The EU regionalisation approach takes into account both aspects related to domestic pigs and wild boar, however, it is the uncontrollable nature of the wild boar that heavily influences the definition of regionalisation. This impacts as well the definition of all four Parts of the Annex to Decision 2014/709/EU. The epidemiological unit of concern for the demarcation of those territories in the Annex to that Decision needs to take into consideration the size, the territorial and geographical continuity with adjacent territories, the typology of biotope present, the administrative divisions, the surveillance in place and the enforceability of the control measures.

Based on an analysis of the epidemiological data from 2014 to 2018 (up to November) from Member States affected by ASF virus genotype II, the 2018 EFSA report on ASF² puts forward the following findings relevant for regionalisation:

- the infection continued to spread slowly through the wild boar populations (the median speed of propagation of ASF infection in certain areas was estimated to be between 8 and 17 km/year);
- the spread of the disease in the wild boar populations seems to be not directly related with the density of the wild boar populations;
- ASF has been introduced into nine EU MS, through two distinct spread processes: continuous wild boar-mediated spread through wild boar populations and meta-populations, for which the

¹ Commission Implementing Decision 2014/709/EU of 9 October 2014 concerning animal health control measures relating to African swine fever in certain Member States and repealing Implementing Decision 2014/178/EU (OJ L 295, 11.10.2014, p. 63).

² <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/5494>

speed of propagation is notably slower than for some other infectious diseases in wild boar; and human-mediated translocations leading to the establishment of new ASF clusters distant from areas of previous ASF occurrence.

The areas listed in the Annex to Decision 2014/709/EU should be maintained under restrictions until the epidemiological situation meets the criteria to revert to freedom from infection in domestic pigs or wild boar, or in both domestic pigs and wild boar. The principles of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code, along with epidemiological considerations on the disease, provide some guidance on the timing and criteria to be met for recovering the free status of an area formerly restricted due to ASF occurrence.

Main criteria for demarcating Parts I, II, III and IV of the Annex to Implementing Decision 2014/709/EU

- 1) Part IV: occurrence of ASF in both domestic pigs and wild boar. The disease control presents specific challenges due to the systemic and high level non-compliance by stakeholders (e.g. the farming sector) with the relevant EU requirements, in particular in relation to identification, registration and traceability of pigs and there are certain difficulties for the veterinary authorities to ensure the conformity with those requirements.
- 2) Part III: occurrence of ASF in both domestic pigs and wild boar (or in domestic pigs only provided the lack of surveillance data to justify the absence of ASF infection in wild boar).
- 3) Part II: occurrence of ASF only in wild boar.
- 4) Part I: higher risk area with no cases, nor outbreaks, of ASF and where higher surveillance (in particular passive) is applied adjacent to a Part II, III or IV.
- 5) The definition of the size and shape of any area should take into account at least the following factors:
 - a) geographical aspects linked to the location of the outbreaks/wild boar cases;
 - b) ecological factors (e.g. water ways, forests) and the existence of natural and artificial barriers;
 - c) presence and distribution of wild boar;
 - d) epidemiology of the disease;
 - e) results of specific epidemiological studies;
 - f) historical experience gained on ASF spread;
 - g) administrative divisions, territorial continuity and enforceability of the control measures;
 - h) distribution of pig farms (non-commercial farms, commercial farms and outdoor farms) and the existence of protection and surveillance zones (if any);
 - i) hunting practices and other wildlife management considerations.

Main criteria for lifting the restrictions in areas in Parts I, II, III and IV of the Annex to Implementing Decision 2014/709/EU

In order to prevent ASF spread and to protect the EU single market and international trade, a cautious and science-based approach is to be followed for lifting the restrictions. Taking as a baseline the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code and the best knowledge available today, a set of criteria is provided below. Lifting of Part I and Part II should not take place during the seasonal peaks of higher disease spread periods described by EFSA (e.g. June-August and December-February), unless positive overall epidemiological situation of ASF of the country and justifications provided by relevant veterinary authority. A suitable surveillance plan with favourable results should have been in place for enough time before lifting any restriction.

For the spatial considerations when defining the extent of the area, the criterial referred to above apply.

- 1) lifting Part III regionalisation and reverting to Part II or Part I are to be based on the following:
 - a) there have been no ASF outbreak in domestic pigs during the past 12 months or,
 - b) in case of total depopulation of all non-commercial farms with low biosecurity conditions, the period without any outbreaks can be reduced to 3 months or,
 - c) in case of outbreak (in an area with no ASF outbreaks in domestic pigs for the past 12 months) – 3 months after the disinfection of infected holding (in accordance with Article 10.4 (a) of Directive 2002/60/EC) and provided that measures referred in Article 10.4 (b) (clinical and laboratory examinations) or in Article 10.5 (intensive sampling and testing programme) of Directive 2002/60/EC are implemented,
 - d) in the event of limited outbreaks clustered in space and in time (during a period of 30 days from the first outbreak) of ASF in non-commercial³ pig holdings in a sufficiently large and previously free area⁴ – 3 months after the disinfection of last infected holding (in accordance with Article 10.4 (a) of Directive 2002/60/EC) and provided that measures referred in Article 10.4 (b) (clinical and laboratory examinations) or in Article 10.5 (intensive sampling and testing programme) of Directive 2002/60/EC have been implemented. In addition, an overall epidemiological situation of ASF of the country and justifications provided by relevant veterinary authority should be taken into account.
- 2) lifting Part II regionalisation and reverting to Part I are to be based on the following:
 - a) there have been no ASF cases in wild boar during the past 12 months. Specific situations⁵ in relation to the reduction of the 12 months period without any ASF case might be taken into account based on an overall epidemiological situation of ASF of the country and justifications provided by relevant veterinary authority.
- 3) lifting Part I regionalization is to be based on full consideration of the risks based on the whole set of epidemiological data in a wider geographical and temporal context.

Lifting of all restrictions of regionalisation is to be based on more extensive considerations and discussions should be undertaken in a later stage of the epidemic. Lifting of Part IV follows similar considerations.

³ As defined in the Strategic approach to ASF management for the EU.

⁴ An area with no ASF outbreaks for the past 12 months.

⁵ For example, the last ASF case confirmed is attributed to a decomposed carcass or bones of wild boar indicating death of the wild boar months before the date of confirmation.