

WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH

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MEETING OF THE OIE *AD HOC* GROUP ON THE EVALUATION OF CLASSICAL SWINE FEVER STATUS OF MEMBERS¹

Paris, 22 - 23 November 2017

A meeting of the OIE *ad hoc* Group on the Evaluation of Classical Swine Fever (CSF) Status of Members (hereafter the Group) was held at the OIE Headquarters from 22 to 23 November 2017.

1. Opening

On behalf of Dr Monique Eloit, Director General of the OIE, Dr Matthew Stone, the OIE Deputy Director General for International Standards and Sciences, welcomed the experts of the Group. Dr Stone acknowledged the huge work and efforts required in reviewing the dossiers and thanked the experts of the Group for having submitted their individual assessments in preparation of the meeting.

Dr Stone indicated that the OIE worked on a strengthened procedure for the selection of members of the Specialist Commissions and on the updated Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for official recognition of disease status, which considers the procedure for the selection of the experts of the *ad hoc* groups.

Dr Stone highlighted the sensitivity and confidentiality of the dossiers received for official recognition and acknowledged that the experts had signed the forms for undertaking of confidentiality. He also mentioned that if any members of the Group had any conflict of interest in the evaluation of a dossier, the expert(s) should withdraw from the discussions and decision making of the particular application.

Dr Stone emphasised the importance of the quality of the public report to be scrutinised by Members before adopting the proposed list of countries free from CSF. He also encouraged the Group to continue providing detailed feedback to countries with a negative outcome to support them in identifying the main gaps and points for improvement, as well as providing informative recommendations to those countries with positive outcomes for further improvement in maintenance of their CSF free status.

The Group and the OIE welcomed Drs Mary-Louise Penrith and Young S. Lyoo as new members of the Group and thanked the two previous experts for their contribution to the Group.

Dr Min-Kyung Park, Chargée de mission of the Status Department, introduced Drs Anna-Maria Baka and Marija Popovic, who joined the Status Department to work on the activities related to official disease status recognition.

2. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of chairperson and rapporteur

The Group was chaired by Dr Mary-Louise Penrith. Dr Trevor Drew acted as rapporteur, with the support of the OIE Secretariat. The Group endorsed the proposed agenda.

Note: This *ad hoc* Group report reflects the views of its members and may not necessarily reflect the views of the OIE. This report should be read in conjunction with the February 2018 report of the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases because this report provides its considerations and comments. It is available at: http://www.oie.int/en/international-standard-setting/specialists-commissions-groups/scientific-commission-reports/meetings-reports/

The Terms of reference, agenda and list of participants are presented as Appendices I, II and III, respectively.

3. Evaluation of applications from Members for the official recognition of a CSF free status

3.1 Argentina

In September 2017, Argentina submitted a dossier for the official recognition of its CSF free status.

The Group requested additional information and received clarification from Argentina.

i. Animal disease reporting

The Group acknowledged that Argentina had a record of regular and prompt animal disease reporting and that CSF was a notifiable disease in the country *as per* legislation. The Group noted the arrangements in place for training of official veterinarians as well as the presence of the veterinary authority at sector congresses and workshops which were also attended by pig industry producers. The Group appreciated that a variety of printed and on-line communication tools, such as television, radio, newsletters, manuals and brochures, were used to raise awareness amongst all relevant stakeholders. However, considering the low numbers of the CSF suspect cases reported, the Group recommended that more active awareness campaigns should be conducted among pig producers and hunters, including on clinical signs and lesions of CSF to improve the sensitivity of the passive surveillance.

ii. Veterinary Services

The Group noted that primary pig production in Argentina comprised genetic producer establishments (reproducers and semen), commercial farms (full cycle or integrated sites for meat production) and medium and small pig producers (backyard) and appreciated the information on demographics and distribution of pig population presented in tables and maps by farm density and province. The Group acknowledged that, as well as regular meetings with major producers associations, Servicio Nacional de Sanidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria (SENASA) had established locally-based programmes to promote coordination with small producers and improve family farming. From the additional information provided, the Group noted that there were six wild boar breeding establishments in Argentina.

The Group noted that Argentina had received a PVS evaluation mission in 2014. The PVS report provided additional guarantee that the Veterinary Services were compliant with the requirements for a country having CSF free status.

From the information in the dossier, the Group acknowledged that wild pig populations in Argentina comprised European wild boar and feral hogs (*Sus scrofa*) distributed over national parks, reserves and other areas of the country. From the additional information provided, the Group also noted the presence of three species of peccaries in the country distributed in the central and northern zone of Argentina. Although maps with general distribution figures of these populations based on publications from 2003, 2008 and 2009 were provided, the Group agreed that there were some gaps in knowledge of wild pig populations present in the country. The Group appreciated that Argentina had identified and was continuing to work on those gaps in collaboration with research teams, which conducted studies on predictive models of wild boar population distribution. The Group took note that these studies were based on species observation as well as environmental and climatic data, and that the outcomes would be delivered in 2018. Overall, the Group considered that the Veterinary Services had knowledge and authority over domestic pig herds and current knowledge about the population and habitat of wild and feral pigs in the country.

iii. Situation of CSF in the past 12 months

The Group acknowledged that the last CSF outbreak in Argentina was recorded in 1999.

iv. Absence of vaccination in the past 12 months

The Group acknowledged that vaccination against CSF had ceased in Argentina in 2004 and was prohibited since then *as per* legislation.

v. Surveillance for CSF and CSFV infection in accordance with Articles 15.2.26. to 15.2.32.

The Group acknowledged that active surveillance was in place in Argentina based on serological surveillance which included all types of domestic pig holdings: genetic, commercial farms and backyards. The Group noted that supplementary virological surveillance was conducted targeting populations at risk, such as pigs from fattening centres or from holdings where stamping out was applied for other reasons, and animals slaughtered during trichinosis outbreaks. The dossier provided information on the distribution of samples collected during the past two years in a map. In response to a question raised on surveillance at the borders with countries not recognised free from CSF, Argentina informed the Group that a work protocol had been recently signed in order to implement intensive surveillance actions targeting pig diseases at the border with a neighbouring country not recognised free from CSF. The Group recommended that Argentina put this plan into effect as soon as possible.

Whilst blocking ELISA and RT-PCR used for CSF diagnosis were not formally accredited to ISO 17025, the Group noted from the additional information that a quality management system was implemented by the General Directorate of Laboratories and Technical Control (DILAB), which performed annual audits of the laboratories according to the guidelines of ISO 19011. The Group also took note that the official accreditation of these techniques to ISO 17025 was planned. Argentina provided information on its participation in two ring trials with satisfactory results organised by the European Union Reference Laboratory (EURL) for CSF in Hannover in 2008 and 2011. The Group recommended that Argentina participates more frequently in such inter-laboratory proficiency testing for diagnosis of CSF.

vi. Regulatory measures for the early detection, prevention and control of CSF

The Group noted that pigs were identified on the basis of the holding by ear notch patterns. All pig movements had to be authorised by SENASA and accompanied by the Electronic Transit Document (DT-e), which is a health certificate issued via the Integrated Animal Health Management System. Control of appropriate pig identification and documentation of their movements were conducted at the various fixed and mobile control posts, in conjunction with several law enforcement bodies such as provincial police, gendarmerie, prefecture, etc. under official agreement.

The Group noted that three real-time field simulation exercises were conducted in 2006, 2009 and 2010, covering activities such as field research, planning of containment measures and eradication of CSF. Noting that the last simulation exercise was performed in 2010, the Group recommended that Argentina conducts such activities more frequently.

From the information provided in the dossier, the Group noted that feeding pigs with waste from airports, ports and health care centres was forbidden. Notwithstanding, the Group had some concerns about the legislation referenced by Argentina regulating the treatment of swill. In response to a question on this subject, Argentina provided an assurance that this was covered by legislation 555/2006, which stipulated a treatment regime of 80°C throughout the muscle mass. However, the Group noted that this regime was in reference to Article 11 of the aforementioned legislation, in the context of pig meat not tested for *Trichinella*. While Article 13 prescribed a requirement for treatment of waste food for feeding to pigs to ensure its safety, no treatment parameters were specified. The Group strongly recommended that relevant legislation be formulated to specify the requirements for treatment of swill in accordance with Article 15.2.22. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

vii. Consideration of wild and feral pigs, if present, in the surveillance programme and biosecurity measure of domestic and captive wild herds

The Group noted that CSF had never been reported in wild and feral pigs in Argentina.

The Group acknowledged that serological surveillance was conducted since 2001 on samples collected by hunters, owners or managers of hunting grounds, reserves and wildlife researchers. The Group also took note that Argentina had started working on strengthening the epidemiological surveillance on wild populations through cooperation with national parks and the Technical Sub-Committee of Invading Exotic Species of the Argentine Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, with a view to implementing a countrywide wild boar control plan.

The Group noted that all pig premises were subject to containment installations *as per* legislation and apply appropriate biosecurity measures to avoid contact with wild animals.

The Group considered that a sufficient level of separation was in place to prevent domestic pigs from coming in contact with the wild and feral pig population.

viii. Compliance with the questionnaire in Article 1.6.10.

The Group noted that Argentina had used the updated format of the questionnaire, which was circulated for Members' comments in March 2017. Whilst the submitted format was not yet adopted by the World Assembly, the Group was of the opinion that the information presented was comprehensive with a logical flow and appreciated the well-structured dossier.

Conclusion

Considering the information submitted in the dossier and the answers from Argentina to the questions raised, the Group considered that the application was compliant with the requirements of Chapter 15.2. and with the questionnaire in Article 1.6.10. of the *Terrestrial Code*. The Group therefore recommended that Argentina be recognised as a CSF free country.

The Group recommended that information on the following be submitted to the OIE when Argentina reconfirms its CSF status (also detailed in the relevant sections above):

- More active awareness campaigns among pig producers and hunters, including on clinical signs and lesions of CSF to improve passive surveillance;
- Outcome of the ongoing studies on wild pig population distribution;
- Implementation of intensive surveillance activities at the border with a country without a recognised CSF status;
- More frequent participation in inter-laboratory proficiency testing for diagnosis of CSF;
- Conducting another simulation exercise soon, specifically for CSF, and every 3-5 years thereafter;
- Establishing official regulations and procedures which specify treatment (temperature and time) for inactivation of CSFV in swill in accordance with Article 15.2.22. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

3.2 Costa Rica

In September 2017, Costa Rica submitted a dossier for the official recognition of its CSF free status.

The Group requested additional information and received clarification from Costa Rica.

i. Animal disease reporting

The Group considered that Costa Rica had a record of regular and prompt animal disease reporting and acknowledged that CSF was a notifiable disease in the country *as per* legislation since 1994.

The Group also noted that an on-going awareness programme was in place for veterinarians, farm workers, students and people in the pig industry with a particular focus on producers to encourage reporting of all cases suggestive of CSF. The Group acknowledged that this programme appeared to be both comprehensive and broad in scope, covering all relevant sectors. There was participation of various institutions, such as public universities, commercial establishments and associations, using a range of materials including lectures, conferences, epidemiological bulletins, news, videos, manuals, informational visits and simulation exercises.

ii. Veterinary Services

The Group appreciated that information was provided on the demographics of the domestic pig population classified by province and farm size. The Group acknowledged that an official system was in place for the registration of holdings and their activities, under the authority and control of Costa Rica's Veterinary Services. This system was subject to periodic reviews by the National Traceability Program to ensure its maintenance up-to-date. However, the Group noted that there were pig establishments not yet registered in this system, which were, nevertheless, included in the active surveillance conducted in 2017. The Group commended Costa Rica's efforts in including subsistence farms in the farm registration system of Farming Establishments Registration System (SIREA), and encouraged Costa Rica to continue its efforts in this regard.

The Group acknowledged that detailed information on population and geographical distribution of captive wild pigs was provided. The Group further noted that Sus scrofa and peccaries were present in protected areas of Costa Rica, with the former located only in an isolated island. The Group acknowledged the description of the geographical distribution of wild and feral pigs supported by relevant maps.

The Group was informed that Costa Rica had received a PVS evaluation mission in 2015 and a PVS laboratory mission carried out in 2017, and both reports were provided to the Group by the country. The PVS reports provided additional guarantee that the Veterinary Services were compliant with the requirements for a country having CSF free status.

Overall, the Group considered that the Veterinary Services had knowledge and authority over domestic pig herds and current knowledge about the population and habitat of wild and feral pigs in the country.

iii. Situation of CSF in the past 12 months

The Group acknowledged that the last CSF outbreak in Costa Rica was recorded in 1997.

iv. Absence of vaccination in the past 12 months

The Group acknowledged that vaccination against CSF was prohibited by law and had never been conducted in Costa Rica.

v. Surveillance for CSF and CSFV infection in accordance with Articles 15.2.26. to 15.2.32.

The Group took note of a risk-based serological surveillance performed in farms and slaughterhouses, and acknowledged the recent surveys demonstrating absence of CSF, which also included backyard farms. The Group also noted the follow-up testing conducted on CSF suspicions and commended Costa Rica for implementing a system to monitor the effectiveness and efficacy of the surveillance. However, the Group expressed its concerns with regard to the design of the conducted serosurveys, in particular the high level of the assumed prevalence, especially in areas where the risk was considered higher. While noting that the sampling frame applied was designed to detect a within-herd prevalence of 30% with 95% confidence and a between herd prevalence of 5%, the Group strongly recommended that the design prevalence be reconsidered, as the current design may not be effective in contributing to early detection of CSF.

Upon receipt of additional information, the Group noted that Costa Rica considered the scenario of a seropositive animal with absence of apparent clinical signs, and where virus was not detectable either in the animal or in the herd as a "non-definitive case". Whilst the Group acknowledged that such a situation may be rare, the Group highlighted that Costa Rica's definition of a "non-definitive case" does not comprehensively take into account the potential epidemiological links. The Group therefore strongly recommended that in such circumstances, follow-up inspection in the herd of origin, epidemiological investigation and increased awareness should be carried out to reach a definitive conclusion.

From the information provided in the dossier and the answers from Costa Rica to the question raised, the Group noted that some case investigations involved serology only whereas others involved PCR, and that both tests were only performed simultaneously to investigate highly suspicious cases (e.g. clinically compatible with CSF or events of high morbidity and mortality). The Group recommended that both serology and PCR be routinely used for the investigation of all suspicious cases.

The Group was generally satisfied with the corrective actions taken in response to inter-laboratory proficiency testing results from 2015. However, the Group was concerned about the use of gel-based PCR instead of real-time PCR for CSF diagnosis. While this approach could be considered appropriate as long as the country is free from CSF, in the case of an outbreak, laboratory contamination with PCR product would be highly likely and could, therefore, confound accurate diagnosis of the disease.

vi. Regulatory measures for the early detection, prevention and control of CSF

Costa Rica stated that imports of pigs and their commodities were authorised from countries or zones free from CSF and FMD without vaccination and in compliance with Chapter 15.2. of the *Terrestrial Code*; a list of imported commodities and countries of origin was provided for the past two years.

The Group acknowledged the recent issuance of a Directive for the application of a group mobilisation and traceability system to all farms and slaughterhouses countrywide with documentation on their origin and destination. This mobilisation guide must be requested by the producer at the offices of the National Service of Animal Health; it is a requirement that the farm is registered for the granting of the guides and for the authorisation of any movements. The Group noted that this Directive replaces the previous system where the transport guide was administered by the police checkpoint closest to the farm and the records were managed by the National Service of Animal Health.

The Group noted that a regulation was in place prohibiting feeding pigs with waste from hospitals, clinics, asylums, marine and air terminals, as well as with products in state of putrefaction or any product that could represent a health risk due to its origin. The Group agreed that the described treatment procedure for swill complied with Article 15.2.22. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

The Group acknowledged that simulation exercises on CSF outbreak management were performed in 2009 and on CSF and Avian Influenza in 2016 in collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture. During the last simulation exercise in 2016, the surveillance protocol, emergency plan and control and eradication measures of CSF were reviewed and points for improvement were updated accordingly. The Group noted that there was no compensation system in place for pigs slaughtered for official disease control purposes, which could have a possible negative impact on voluntary CSF notification by owners.

The Group also expressed some concerns about the sampling regime to be implemented in the event of a CSF outbreak, according to which a randomised sampling frame would be applied to detect the disease at a pre-defined prevalence. The Group would expect that in the case of an outbreak additional sampling would focus on high risk groups.

vii. Consideration of wild and feral pigs, if present, in the surveillance programme and biosecurity measure of domestic and captive wild herds

The Group took note that the only feral pig population (*Sus* spp.) present in Costa Rica was confined to the Cocos Island, 550 kilometres to the west of the mainland and that, due to the geographical isolation it was not included in the active surveillance plan for CSF. The Group noted that passive surveillance was performed on this pig population by the two ranger stations, also in charge for monitoring and controlling the entry to the island.

The Group also acknowledged the presence of wild pigs (*Pecari tajacu and Tayassu pecari*) in forested areas in Costa Rica, as illustrated in relevant maps, which could potentially have contact with the domestic pig population.

The Group noted that a regulation was in place stipulating that the domestic pig population should be properly confined.

The Group agreed that a sufficient level of separation was in place to prevent domestic pigs from coming in contact with wild and feral pig population.

viii. Compliance with the questionnaire in Article 1.6.10.

The Group agreed that the submitted dossier was compliant with the format of the questionnaire in Article 1.6.10. and all the sections were properly completed. The Group appreciated the well-structured dossier provided by Costa Rica and commended the country for the comprehensive answers to the questions raised by the Group.

Conclusion

Considering the information submitted in the dossier and the answers from Costa Rica to the questions raised, the Group considered that the application was compliant with the requirements of Chapter 15.2. and with the questionnaire in Article 1.6.10. of the *Terrestrial Code*. The Group therefore recommended that Costa Rica be recognised as a CSF free country.

The Group recommended that information on the following be submitted to the OIE when Costa Rica reconfirms its CSF status (also detailed in the relevant sections above):

- Continuous inclusion of all subsistence farms in the animal registration system, SIREA;
- Reconsideration and adjustment of sero-survey design particularly in high risk areas;
- Fine-tuning of the testing regime and follow-up investigation protocol on CSF suspicions;
- Evidence of compensation scheme as part of emergency response to disease outbreak.

3.3 Other request

The Group assessed one additional request from a Member for the recognition of CSF free country status. The Group concluded that the Member did not meet the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code* and the dossier was referred back to the applicant Member.

4. Other matters

Proposals from Members regarding new provisions on "historical freedom" and "freedom in all pigs" in Article 15.2.3. of the *Terrestrial Code*, will be discussed at the next meeting of the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases in February 2018. In support of this discussion, the Group considered the provisions proposed for consistency with the *Terrestrial Code* Chapter on African swine fever (ASF).

The Group raised concerns related to i) the practicality of demonstrating freedom in wildlife to the level of confidence required, and ii) the appropriateness for official recognition of CSF free status, both in wildlife and domestic populations.

Whilst sampling of wild and feral pigs was considered feasible in theory, the Group underlined that passive surveillance alone would not be sufficient to give the level of confidence of freedom due to the features of the disease and in comparison to ASF. The Group stressed that such surveillance for CSF would likely be more expensive than any benefits arising from trade activities and in some regions, could also present significant challenges, due to geography and terrain. The Group was therefore of the view that it should be up to the concerned Member to demonstrate its freedom from CSF in wild and feral pigs to its trading partners in bilateral agreements, if relevant.

Furthermore, unless the sampled populations were constrained by natural or artificial barriers, they could only be regarded as a meta-population interacting with others (possibly in an un-monitored area), whose composition, density, and distribution could vary over time. Consequently, the results provided through surveillance activities would only be valid for the time of the last sample taken from the wild and feral pigs. Indeed, considering the epidemiology of CSF in wild and feral pig populations, such sampling would be required to be performed on a frequent and ongoing basis to have any validity. The Group also questioned the applicability of an appropriate level of surveillance to constantly demonstrate freedom in a meta-population moving between countries. The Group was concerned about the responsibility that would be placed on the OIE in endorsing the individual surveillance plans in wild and feral pigs, in order to confidently demonstrate freedom. Notwithstanding, the Group pointed out the distribution and epidemiological role and risk of the wild and feral pigs had to be known and mitigated in the current OIE procedure for official recognition of CSF free status in the domestic and captive wild pigs.

The Group also underlined that recommendations already exist to facilitate such trade in wild and feral pigs or their products.

5. Adoption of report

The *ad hoc* Group reviewed and amended the draft report provided by the rapporteur. The Group agreed that the report would be subject to a short period of circulation to the Group for comments and adoption. Upon circulation, the Group agreed that the report captured the discussions.

.../Appendices

MEETING OF THE OIE *AD HOC* GROUP ON THE EVALUATION OF CLASSICAL SWINE FEVER STATUS OF MEMBERS

Paris, 22 - 23 November 2017

Terms of Reference

The OIE ad hoc group on classical swine fever (CSF) status of Members (the Group) is expected to evaluate the applications for official recognition of CSF free status.

This implies that the experts, members of this Group are expected to:

- 1. Sign off the OIE Undertaking on Confidentiality of information, if not done before.
- 2. Complete the Declaration of Interests Form in advance of the meeting of the Group and forward it to the OIE at the earliest convenience and at least two weeks before the meeting.
- 3. Evaluate the applications from Members for official recognition of CSF free status
 - a) Before the meeting:
 - read and study in detail all dossiers provided by the OIE;
 - into account any other information available in the public domain that is considered pertinent for the evaluation of dossiers;
 - summarise the dossiers according to the Terrestrial Animal Health Code requirements, using the form provided by the OIE;
 - draft the questions whenever the analysis of the dossier raises questions which need to be clarified or completed with additional details by the applicant Member;
 - send the completed form and the possible questions to the OIE, at least one week before the meeting.
 - b) During the meeting:
 - contribute to the discussion with their expertise;
 - · withdraw from the discussions and decision making when possible conflict of interest;
 - provide a detailed report in order to recommend, to the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases, the country(ies) or zone(s) to be recognised (or not) as CSF free and to indicate any information gaps or specific areas that should be addressed in the future by the applicant Member.
 - c) After the meeting:

• contribute electronically to the finalisation of the report if not achieved during the meeting.

MEETING OF THE OIE *AD HOC* GROUP ON THE EVALUATION OF CLASSICAL SWINE FEVER STATUS OF MEMBERS

Paris, 22 - 23 November 2017

Agenda

- 1. Opening
- 2. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of chairperson and rapporteur
- 3. Evaluation of applications from Members for official recognition of CSF free status
 - Argentina
 - Costa Rica
- 4. Other matters
- 5. Adoption of report

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