



**MEETING OF THE OIE AD HOC GROUP ON THE EVALUATION  
OF CLASSICAL SWINE FEVER STATUS OF MEMBERS<sup>1</sup>**  
**Paris, 22 – 24 October 2019**

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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 24 October 2019.

**1. Opening**

Dr Matthew Stone, Deputy Director General for International Standards and Sciences of the OIE, welcomed the Group. He thanked the experts for their availability and contribution to the work of the OIE and extended his appreciation to their institutes and national governments for allowing their participation in this meeting. Dr Stone acknowledged the amount of work before, during and after the *ad hoc* Group meeting in reviewing the dossiers and thanked the Group for its commitment and its support towards the OIE in fulfilling the mandates given by Members.

Dr Stone highlighted the importance of the quality of the 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.

Dr Stone highlighted the sensitivity and confidentiality of the dossiers received for official recognition and thanked the experts for having 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 mentioned the current animal health situation of African swine fever (ASF) and informed the Group on a global initiative to control the disease launched by the OIE in collaboration with the FAO earlier this year. Whilst ASF and CSF are two different diseases, he pointed out the similarities in terms of the common biosecurity and activities for the prevention and control.

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

The Group was chaired by Dr Vitor Gonçalves. Dr Trevor Drew acted as rapporteur, with the support of the OIE Secretariat. The Group endorsed the proposed agenda.

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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 2020 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/>

### 3. Evaluation of requests from Members for official recognition of a CSF free country status

#### a) Croatia

In August 2019, Croatia submitted a dossier for the official recognition of its CSF free status.

The Group requested additional information and received clarification from Croatia.

##### i. *Animal diseases reporting*

The Group acknowledged that Croatia 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 appreciated that in 2019 enhanced passive surveillance for CSF was implemented through mandatory reporting and laboratory investigation of all swine deaths and abortions and that penalties were in place for failure to report CSF suspect cases. The Group also noted that regular trainings on early detection of diseases including CSF had been organised at least once a year for private veterinarians. In addition, numerous workshops and meetings on biosecurity measures for CSF prevention were held in the last two years for hunters and pig producer associations, complemented by distribution of relevant leaflets to all pig farmers. The Group acknowledged that the awareness programme appeared to be both comprehensive and broad in scope, covering all relevant sectors, and organisation of such activities was supported by the Croatian Veterinary Statutory Body.

##### ii. *Veterinary Services*

The Group appreciated the information on demographics and distribution of pig population presented in tables and maps by county, farm density and age category. The Group noted that registration of all pig farms keeping one or more pigs, as well as registration and identification of all pigs at group level by ear tag or tattoo was mandatory in Croatia. All pig movements had to be notified to the Veterinary Services and accompanied by an animal health certificate issued by an authorised private veterinarian following inspection at farm of origin. Pig movements were registered in the “Central Register of Domestic Animals” database managed by the Croatian Agricultural Agency, which was delegated through contract by the Ministry of Agriculture. The Group appreciated that Croatia transparently described the illegal movements of pigs within and into the country detected in the last 24 months and that appropriate follow-up actions were taken.

Croatia presented estimates on its wild boar population by county, which was based on data derived from hunting. The Group noted that wild boar (*Sus scrofa L.*) were distributed in 974 hunting grounds as game species and 11 designated fenced hunting grounds for breeding purposes. The Group noted good collaboration in place with hunter associations.

An annual report on pig production covering all sectors in Croatia was made available by the country, which provided ancillary evidence of the strong industry engagement.

Overall, the Group considered that the Veterinary Services were well structured and organised, 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 Croatia was recorded in 2008.

iv. *Absence of vaccination in the past 12 months*

The Group acknowledged that vaccination against CSF had ceased in Croatia in 2005 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 noted that in addition to enhanced passive surveillance, a continuous risk based active surveillance programme had been implemented in Croatia since 2009. The surveillance strategies included, among others, serological testing of pigs in high risk areas and virological surveillance of clinical suspect cases and dead animals.

The Group appreciated the detailed description provided by Croatia on how CSF suspicions were followed up to exclude CSF and reach a final differential diagnosis. The Group noted that positive serological findings were treated as CSF suspect cases, even in the absence of clinical signs or epidemiological links and restrictions would apply. Samples with seropositive results are sent to an OIE Reference Laboratory for CSF for further testing. The Group noted that the last seropositive results were detected in wild boar in 2015 and appropriate follow-up actions were taken to rule out CSF by further serological and virological testing.

The Group acknowledged that Croatia had a national reference laboratory accredited to ISO 17025 for CSF diagnosis, which participated annually in inter-laboratory proficiency tests for CSF organised by an OIE Reference Laboratory.

The Group concluded that a comprehensive surveillance system for CSF was in place in Croatia.

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

The Group noted that Croatia imported pigs and pig products from countries not officially recognised as free from CSF by the OIE. The Group acknowledged that such imports were carried out in compliance with the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code*.

The Group acknowledged that swill feeding was prohibited in Croatia as per legislation in all types of pig farms and that compliance was monitored annually through farm visits for inspection of biosecurity measures in place by authorised veterinarians.

The Group noted that legislation describing strong biosecurity infrastructure and procedures was in place. In the additional information provided, Croatia reported that 63,710 farms had been inspected for this purpose during the last six months and that in 50% of farms keeping 35% of the total pig population, the level of biosecurity measures was found to be low. The Group appreciated that in such farms additional measures were implemented, that included clinical examinations prior to movements and on-farm slaughtering for personal consumption.

The Group noted that two simulation exercises had been organised in 2015 and 2016 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Croatian Veterinary Institute with the participation of veterinarians, veterinary inspectors and laboratory employees. In addition, a contingency plan with regard to detection, control and eradication of CSF was provided by the country. The plan as well as related guidelines and procedures to be followed in case of a CSF suspicion, accompanied by relevant forms, were also available on the official website of the Veterinary Service.

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

The Group acknowledged that serological and virological surveillance was conducted in wild pigs, benefiting from financial incentives for reporting dead wild boar, and the results were presented in graphs. The Group noted that samples of wild boars tested positive to CSF antibodies had been further

analysed using RT-PCR and Virus Neutralisation Test (VNT) and were concluded negative for infection with CSF virus. The Group appreciated that additional sampling was also carried out in counties where seropositive wild boars had been hunted.

The Group noted that legislation was in place stipulating biosecurity measures for preventing contact of domestic pigs with wild boars, according to which all pigs had to be kept on registered farms. In case of an outdoor keeping system, farms had to establish a double fence.

viii. *Compliance with the questionnaire in Article 1.9.1.*

The Group agreed that the submitted dossier was compliant with the format of the questionnaire in Article 1.9.1. and appreciated the comprehensive information presented in the dossier.

*Conclusion*

Considering the information submitted in the dossier and the answers from Croatia to the questions raised, the Group considered that the application was compliant with the requirements of Chapter 15.2. and the questionnaire in Article 1.9.1. of the *Terrestrial Code*. The Group therefore recommended that Croatia be recognised as a CSF free country.

**b) Kazakhstan**

In August 2019, Kazakhstan submitted a dossier for the official recognition of its CSF free status.

The Group requested additional information and received clarification from Kazakhstan.

i. *Animal disease reporting*

The Group noted that Kazakhstan had a record of regular and prompt animal disease reporting and that CSF was notifiable in the country as per legislation.

The Group noted that there were arrangements in place for training and awareness activities, conducted on infectious pig diseases, attended by veterinarians, pig producers and farmers. Considering the low numbers of the CSF suspect cases reported, the Group recommended that more active training activities should be conducted among veterinarians and pig producers to improve reporting. The Group appreciated that there was a system in place for compensation for pigs slaughtered for official disease control purposes.

ii. *Veterinary Services*

The Group appreciated the comprehensive information provided on demographics of domestic and wild pig population and noted that pig production was concentrated in the northern and central regions.

The Group took note of the comprehensive animal identification and movement control system in place. An online system was in place since 2013 containing information on animal identification, owners of animals, animal movements and health. Given the complexity of the animal identification and registration system in Kazakhstan, the Group was concerned about its actual level of implementation and enforcement. The Group appreciated sharing of the final report of the OIE PVS follow-up mission conducted in 2018. The Group acknowledged that the movement control of animals was associated with the movement control between foot and mouth disease free zones with different statuses, which provided additional guarantee of the effectiveness of the measures implemented.

iii. *Situation of CSF in the past 12 months*

The Group acknowledged that CSF had never been reported in the country and that Kazakhstan was, therefore, eligible to claim historical freedom from CSF as described in Article 1.4.6. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

iv. *Absence of vaccination in the past 12 months*

From the information in the dossier, the Group was informed that vaccination had been never carried out in Kazakhstan. The Group took note that a vaccine for CSF was registered in Kazakhstan for use in case of an outbreak. Kazakhstan reported that vaccination against CSF was not allowed in the country.

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

The Group noted that passive surveillance was in place in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan provided the number of suspicions reported through passive surveillance and the Group noted that all suspicions were followed up by further investigation including laboratory testing to rule out CSF.

The Group took note of the annual serological survey in place for domestic and wild pigs. The Group noted that all samples were tested using ELISA (antibody and antigen) and RT-PCR. In response to the Group's request, Kazakhstan provided additional information on the follow up investigations on the farms of origin and their geographical distribution, including the preventive measures taken on the farms with seropositive animals prior to obtaining the results of the confirmatory laboratory tests.

The Group was informed that an annual monitoring programme of shot wild boar was conducted in high-risk areas in collaboration with hunters' associations. Samples collected through this programme (spleen, lymph nodes, tonsil, kidneys) were investigated using real-time PCR.

Kazakhstan informed that all animals intended for slaughter were clinically examined ante- and post-mortem by veterinary inspectors. The Group noted that sampling would be carried out in slaughterhouses for laboratory testing in case of CSF suspicions. Kazakhstan reported that there were no CSF suspect cases detected at the slaughterhouses.

Whilst all laboratories involved in CSF diagnosis were accredited in accordance with ISO 17025:2007, it was unclear whether the accreditation was specifically for CSF. From the additional information received, the Group was informed that the accreditation of laboratory methods was on-going and would be finalised by the end of 2019.

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

The Group took note of the comprehensive list of legislation relevant to prevention, detection and response to CSF and other diseases.

The list of countries from which Kazakhstan imported pigs and their products included some which were not officially recognised free from CSF by the OIE. The Group acknowledged that the import conditions from such countries were compliant with the relevant articles of Chapter 15.2. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

Kazakhstan claimed that the entire border with certain neighbouring countries was fenced, thus providing an artificial barrier to reinforce the control of potential illegal movement of animals and migration of wildlife.

The Group noted that the use of food waste for feeding pigs was prohibited as per legislation. From the additional information received from Kazakhstan, it was noted that the veterinarians were conducting

regular farm visits to verify the on-farm compliance with the prescribed legislation, but also to increase awareness of farmers on the prohibition of feeding food waste to pigs.

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

The Group noted the arrangements in place with the Committee of Forestry and Hunters, concerning surveillance in wild boar. The Group was informed that a regulation was in place describing the requirements for confinement of domestic pigs, and for keeping captive or semi-free ranging animals. The Group also took note that this legislation recognised keepers as responsible persons in preventing the contact between captive and semi-free ranging domestic animals with wild animals.

Kazakhstan reported that pigs were kept in facilities approved by the Veterinary Services. The Group noted that these facilities were surrounded by a two-metre fence to prevent any uncontrolled movement of people and animals, as well as contact between domestic pigs with wild and feral pig populations.

viii. *Compliance with the questionnaire in Article 1.9.1.*

The Group agreed that the submitted dossier was compliant with the format of the questionnaire in Article 1.9.1.

*Conclusion*

Considering the information submitted in the dossier and the answers from Kazakhstan to the questions raised, the Group considered that the application was compliant with the requirements of Chapter 15.2., Article 1.4.6. and with the questionnaire in Article 1.9.1. of the Terrestrial Code. The Group therefore recommended that Kazakhstan be officially recognised as a CSF free country.

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

- Documented evidence on the implementation and enforcement of the animal identification and registration system;
- Documented evidence on awareness campaigns carried out aimed at pig producers and increase in number of reported suspected cases;
- Participation in international ring trials to demonstrate on going competency in diagnosis, and provision of current ISO17025 certification for laboratories involved in the testing and investigation of CSF suspect cases.

**c) Malta**

In August 2019, Malta submitted a dossier for the official recognition of its CSF free status.

The Group requested additional information and received clarification from Malta.

i. *Animal disease reporting*

The Group acknowledged that Malta had a record of regular and prompt animal disease reporting and that CSF was a notifiable disease in the country as per legislation since 2002. The Group appreciated that Malta had set up an on-farm emergency service with the aim to provide 24-hours veterinary assistance to farmers responding to notification of disease suspicions or requests for emergency slaughter.

In addition, the Group noted that the training programme on contingency planning for transboundary animal diseases was being updated on an annual basis in the country and that awareness activities (e.g. training on emergency preparedness, production of leaflets and posters) had been conducted in the last

two years for transboundary diseases, which included African swine fever but not CSF. The Group recommended Malta to carry out more CSF specific awareness activities aimed at pig producers.

*ii. Veterinary Services*

The Group noted that registration of all pig farms and pigs was mandatory including those kept as pets. Malta described three types of farms in the country (breeding, breeding and fattening and fattening only) and reported that all farms were considered commercial and no backyard farms were present in the country. The Group acknowledged that Malta was implementing a group traceability system using ear tags or tattoos. Individual pig identification was specifically carried out in animals kept for breeding purposes and as pets. The Group took note that only few cases of unregistered pigs kept as pets had been detected in the last three years and appreciated the follow-up actions taken upon their detection.

The Group noted that all pig movements, including for temporary purposes (e.g. fairs, exhibitions), had to be authorised by the Veterinary Services following the submission of an application for transfer and subsequent issuance of a movement permit. Movements were registered in the National Livestock Database, which was connected to the database maintained in abattoirs to ensure aggregation of information from slaughters.

The Group acknowledged that neither wild boars, feral pigs nor captive wild pigs were present in Malta.

The Group concluded that the Veterinary Services had knowledge and authority over domestic pig herds.

*iii. Situation of CSF in the past 12 months*

The last CSF outbreak in Malta was recorded in 1967. Therefore, Malta was eligible to claim historical freedom from CSF as described in Article 1.4.6. of the Terrestrial Code.

*iv. Absence of vaccination in the past 12 months*

The Group acknowledged that vaccination against CSF had not been carried out in Malta at least since 1978 and was prohibited since 1989 as per legislation. In addition, no CSF vaccines were either registered or authorised by Malta's Veterinary Service.

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

The Group noted that passive surveillance had been conducted through ante- and post-mortem inspections at abattoirs as well as clinical examinations in farms. Whilst pathogen-specific surveillance was not mandatory according to Article 1.4.6. of the Terrestrial Code, the Group acknowledged that active serological surveillance had also been carried out, comprising regular testing of sows slaughtered over a five-month period each year and an intense two-month surveillance period with testing of all pigs slaughtered, aiming to detect a prevalence of at least 1% within the slaughtered population with 95% confidence.

While 93 emergency visits related to pigs were conducted in the framework of the on-farm emergency service the past three years, the Group noted that during this time no CSF suspect cases had been reported. The Group acknowledged the challenges of generating suspicions through surveillance implemented in healthy small populations and encouraged Malta to incorporate CSF in their awareness campaigns to increase the sensitivity of its surveillance system.

The Group noted that CSF antibody ELISA tests were performed in the National Veterinary Laboratory which was formally accredited to ISO 17025. The Group was informed of Malta's plan to include this test in the 2020 audit for accreditation.

The Group took note of the arrangements in place with another competent laboratory for confirmatory testing in case of positive serological results. Considering that testing for virus as well as antibody is essential for diagnosis of infection at an early stage, the Group encouraged Malta to maintain the arrangements with this laboratory and to directly send any samples from suspect cases for virus detection.

The Group noted that in September 2019 Malta had participated in an inter-laboratory proficiency testing and was planning to participate in another one organised by an OIE Reference Laboratory in November 2019.

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

The Group acknowledged that Malta was part of a regional animal health network and had participated in regular meetings aimed at risk information sharing between the network members.

While the Group noted that a simulation exercise only for FMD had been performed in 2018, it was acknowledged that the exercise had a broader scope covering general aspects of a contingency plan, such as biosecurity, epidemiological investigation, and culling and disposal of animals.

From the additional information provided, the Group noted that Malta implemented the conditions prescribed by the European Union (EU) legislation with regard to importation of pigs and pig products and therefore only pigs and pig products acceptable to EU countries were allowed into the country. The Group concluded that the importation conditions complied with Articles 15.2.8 to 15.2.21. of the Terrestrial Code.

The Group acknowledged that collection, transport and use of food waste for feeding pigs was prohibited as per legislation. Compliance with this legislation was monitored during farm visits through visual inspection of the premises, feeding system and type and quantity of feed purchased, as well as at abattoirs during post-mortem examination through inspection of gastric contents.

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

The Group acknowledged that neither wild boars, feral pigs nor captive wild pigs were present in Malta.

viii. *Compliance with the questionnaire in Article 1.9.1.*

The Group agreed that the submitted dossier was compliant with the format of the questionnaire in Article 1.9.1. and appreciated the concise presentation of information in the dossier.

*Conclusion*

Considering the information submitted in the dossier and the answers received from Malta to the questions raised, the Group considered that Malta's application was compliant with the requirements of Chapter 15.2., Article 1.4.6. and with the questionnaire in Article 1.9.1. of the Terrestrial Code. The Group therefore recommended that Malta be officially recognised as a CSF free country.

The Group assessed requests from two Members for the official recognition of a CSF free status and concluded that the applications did not meet the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code*. The dossiers were referred back to the respective applicant Members.

#### **4. Evaluation of a request from a Member for official recognition of a CSF free zone status**

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



## 5. Other matters

Concerning information on the surveillance of wild and feral pig populations, many countries with *Suida* other than *Sus scrofa* gave greater focus to the former (non-*Sus scrofa Suida*) rather than the latter (*Sus scrofa*). Since other *Suida* are considered not to play any significant role in the epidemiology of CSF, the Group suggested that this could be clarified in the questionnaire.

The *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals* (Article 1.1.5.2) states that laboratories seeking accreditation of testing, the use of ISO/IEC 17025 or equivalent is essential. Since such accreditation is subject to ongoing assessment and renewal, the Group requested that the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases consider whether, as part of the annual reconfirmation, countries holding official freedom status for CSF (and other diseases), should provide a current certificate of accreditation for their national laboratory (or other laboratory, if other arrangements are in place), in respect of tests for that disease. This would provide ongoing assurance to trading partners of ongoing accuracy of testing associated with surveillance and investigation.

## 6. Adoption of report

The *ad hoc* Group reviewed and amended the draft report. 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.

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.../Appendices

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

**Paris, 22 – 24 October 2019**

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**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 received from Members in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedure for official recognition of disease 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. Evaluation of requests from Members for official recognition of a CSF free country status.
    - a) Before the meeting:
      - read and study in detail all dossiers provided by the OIE;
      - take 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.
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**MEETING OF THE OIE AD HOC GROUP ON THE EVALUATION  
OF CLASSICAL SWINE FEVER STATUS OF MEMBERS**

**Paris, 22-24 October 2019**

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**Agenda**

1. Opening
  2. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of chairperson and rapporteur
  3. Evaluation of requests from Members for official recognition of a CSF free country status
    - Croatia
    - Kazakhstan
    - Malta
  4. Evaluation of a request from a Member for official recognition of a CSF free zone status
  5. Other matters
  6. Adoption of report
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**MEETING OF THE OIE AD HOC GROUP ON THE EVALUATION  
OF CLASSICAL SWINE FEVER STATUS OF MEMBERS**

**Paris, 22-24 October 2019**

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