

Secretariat of Agriculture announces a Massive Simulation Exercise to protect pork production in Mexico

From September 24 to 26, the Secretariat will carry out a simulation exercise on African Swine Fever in eight states, with participation of over 500 specialists, technicians, academics, producers, journalists and international observers.



In order to reinforce the actions carried out by Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development (Sader) to maintain Mexico free from African Swine Fever (ASF), the National Service for Agro-Alimentary Public Health, Safety and Quality (Senasica) will carry out a Massive Simulation Exercise on September 24-26.

Its objective is to promote the coordination and exchange of information among actors related to health emergencies, as well as evaluating human and material resources to test the response capacity of veterinary services in the event that there is any disease in Mexico that affects pigs and wild boars.

At a press conference, the head director of Senasica, Francisco Javier Trujillo Arriaga, indicated that this is a very important preventive activity, because it is about protecting the food sufficiency of Mexico, as well as giving certainty to the production sector, business partners and consumers.

He stressed that Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development, Víctor Villalobos Arámbula, has guaranteed the budget that Senasica requires to protect Mexican agricultural and food heritage, especially when it comes to preventing and addressing health emergencies.

He emphasized that Mexico has an important health tradition of decades in which it has developed the technical capacity to timely detect and control exotic diseases, in addition to working with transparency and together with its main business partners: United States (USA) and Canada.

He reiterated that Mexico is the tenth exporter of food worldwide, mainly because of its agricultural diversity and its high health status. He stated that in case of any emergency that threatens Mexican agricultural heritage, Sader is prepared for timely detection and containment.

The director of exports and imports of Senasica, Fernando Rivera Espinoza, said that Mexico exports pork meat to 27 of the main markets of the five continents. He added that during 2018, 131,000 tons were sent abroad, mainly to Japan, China and South Korea.

The director of the Mexico-United States Commission for Prevention of Foot-and-Mouth Disease and Other Exotic Animal Diseases (CPA), Roberto Navarro López, explained that the Massive Simulation Exercise will operate based on four cornerstones agreed at the Trilateral Forum on ASF of Ottawa, Canada, held on May 1 of this year: Preparatory planning, Biosafety strengthening, Protection of market continuity and Coordination in risk communication.

These axes of work have been agreed with the commercial partners of North America, in order to prevent, in first place, the entrance of ASF to this region of the continent.

Mexican government seeks to demonstrate that it has a high degree of preparation to quickly control exotic diseases such as ASF, he said. "Be certain that if the disease comes to our country, we will detect it in time and if we have an early detection, we can conduct very fast removal actions," he said.

With the Massive Simulation Exercise, action mechanisms will be evaluated; it will be proven that biosecurity measures that are applied to prevent the entry of the disease are efficient and effective communication with audiences will be established in order to promote informed decisions and trust in government and industry.

Eight states will participate in the Massive Simulation Exercise

The simulation exercise will be carried out simultaneously in Chiapas, Guanajuato, Nuevo León, Puebla, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, Sonora and Yucatán, with participation of over 500 people, including academics, researchers, technicians and health inspection officers of the Senasica, personnel of the Sader, participating states and national security agencies.

Furthermore, there will be representatives from the production sector, journalists and technicians from the US, Canada and the International Regional Agency for Agricultural Health (OIRSA), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), among others.

The Senasica will implement the National Animal Health Emergency Device (Dinesa) and exercise counter-epidemic actions that must be applied for the control and eradication of the disease, adapted to the different scenarios.

During this Massive Simulation Exercise, the production sector and veterinary doctors will be made aware of the importance of immediate notification, as a key element; so that an emergency operation is activated in a timely manner and the eradication of the disease can be quickly achieved.

Similarly, internal communication mechanisms will be exercised and with state authorities, the production sector and society, as well as the promotion of relationship and coordination between all sectors involved.

The ASF represents an important risk for the national pork production; therefore, simulation exercises are necessary to guarantee a quick, coordinated and effective response to the possibility of any outbreak of this exotic disease in Mexico.

The ASF does not affect humans, only pigs. It is present in most of Africa and recently there have been outbreaks in countries of Europe and Asia.

The disease, which is not present in America, is hemorrhagic with very clear symptoms: fever, lack of appetite, vomiting, nasal discharge, difficulty of breathing,

mucous or bloody diarrhea and purple or bruised coloration of the skin, mainly in ears, abdomen and thighs.

It should be noted that, in keeping with its productive trend, the national pork sector will close this year with a growth of 5.7 percent with respect to 1,501,000 tons produced in 2018.

This is a higher percentage than the average livestock activity in Mexico, which has an expected growth of 2.7 percent by the end of 2019.