

Mexico, the United States of America and Canada seek an efficient prevention of African Swine Fever



Mexico is host to the II North American African Swine Fever Forum.

The actions carried out by Mexican, U.S. and Canadian veterinarian services to prevent African Swine Fever (ASF) from entering the Americas are a high priority for the Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development since the national pork production must be protected from that threat in order to guarantee the supply of meat products for the population and drive the development of the country's communities.

Francisco Javier Trujillo Arriaga, Head of the National Service of Food Safety and Agriculture Quality (SENASICA), during the opening speech of the II North American ASF Forum, underlined that the North American pork industry must be certain that the veterinarian services of the three countries are working permanently and in coordination to perfect a proven system that has worked for cases such as the Classical Swine Fever.

He pointed out that the efficient prevention of that threat requires the organized collaboration of all procedures, subjects and mechanisms for detection and notification when acting against any eventuality.

"We have a regional international mechanism with the participation of the industry and governments, and we have learned lessons from drills carried out in many countries, thus it now becomes necessary to test a system that is not limited to the national veterinarian services role, but that includes all interested parties, specifically producers and traders, for efficiency sake", explained the Secretariat of Agriculture officer.

He also pointed out that the work carried out at the I North American ASF Forum has been fruitful and he hoped that during this second meeting the initiatives set out reach their full growth and development, such as the development of drills in every North American country.

Jaspinder Komal, Head of Canadian Veterinarian Services, stated that "We have demonstrated that we excel in reacting to the presence of a threat. Now it's up to us to demonstrate our effectiveness in prevention; therefore, we meet to establish

alliances aimed to prevent ASF from reaching the Americas, and if that happens, to be prepared to face it.”

During the recount of the results obtained at the first forum held in Ottawa Canada, the officer from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) pointed out that it is imperative to establish alliances to act together, institute homologous prevention criteria and join efforts for research purposes.

He described in detail the agreements reached during the first forum to aim actions to the prevention of ASF in North America: fostering efficient communications, sealing the borders against the disease, and promoting joint work with producers in order to raise the biosafety levels of their farms.

He considered necessary to add other nations to the global research efforts to develop a ASF vaccine, and informed that rapid response efficiency tests to detect the disease are underway.

“We have made good progress since the Ottawa forum. Canada, the United States of America and Mexico have already performed drills, and we have participated in the drills of our neighbors because it allows us to detect weaknesses and address them. Now, it is necessary to carry out a tri-national exercise to verify that we are aligned and know how we would manage the virus in case it appears.”

The expectation for the forum is the constitution of a permanent group of ASF experts for the Americas which, through existing infrastructure and associations, includes national veterinarian services and institutions such as the OIPORC (Iberoamerican Pig Farming Organization) and the OIRSA (Agricultural and Livestock Health Regional International Organization.) Moreover, the integration of sub-regional work teams, such as the ASF Work Group of the North American Animal Health Committee will be promoted.

The priority subjects for the Mexican forum include border inspection mechanisms, guaranteeing laboratory competency for the timely diagnosis of ASF, implementation of risk communication strategies and generalization of farm biosafety measures, and the incorporation of such biosafety measures to daily production and mobilization procedures by way of communication in order to deepen awareness among the interested sectors.

This includes inviting the countries to develop national action plans against ASF that reflect their pork production sector and risk zones, and promote training to guarantee the effectiveness of laboratories for the timely detection of the disease.

Jens Munk Ebbesen, Head of Veterinarian Services, Camilla Braasch Andersen, Head of the Animal Health Department, and Etienne Bonbon, veterinarian advisor of the Animal Health Emergencies Management Center, all government officers from Denmark, a country noted for their pork production and their effective prevention of ASF, will share their experiences.

Technicians and researchers from universities and organizations from all three countries, and representatives of Comecarne (Mexican Meat Producers Council) and OPORPA (Mexican Pig Farmers Organization) will participate in the forum.

Jack Shere, Deputy Administrator of Emergency Response and Food Defense of the USDA; Abelardo De Gracia Scanapieco, OIRSA's Regional Director of Animal Health, and Juan Gay, General Director of Animal Health and Igor Francisco Romero Sosa, General Director of Pronabive (National Producer of Veterinarian Biologicals) of the Secretariat of Agriculture will also be participating.