

# Mexico, the United States, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti agree to a joint strategy to eradicate the African swine fever in countries of the region

The Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development made available to the region the technical expertise of the National Agro-Alimentary Health, Safety and Quality Service (SENASICA), to reinforce the veterinary services of the countries affected by the pest.



During a virtual meeting with their peers, the secretary of Agriculture introduced the proposal from the SENASICA, through which they will share their expertise in zoonitary intelligence.

The Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development informed that, to advance in the control and eradication of the African swine fever (ASF) in the Dominican Republic and Haiti and consequently reduce the risk of dispersal to other countries in the Americas, technical work groups, led by specialists from Mexico and the United States, will be created to reinforce the veterinary services of those Caribbean nations.

During a virtual meeting with his peers from the U.S., the Dominican Republic, and Haiti, Víctor Villalobos Arámbula, head of the federal agency, submitted the proposal by which experts from the National Agro-Alimentary Health, Safety and Quality Service (SENASICA) will share their expertise in zosanitary intelligence, anti-epidemic measures, and reinforcement of the inspection services at seaports, airports, and borders.

Based on the 2019 ASF massive simulation carried out in Mexico, which had observers from the United States and Canada in attendance, the federal official proposed the scheduling of a regional exercise to tests the effectiveness and response capacity of the veterinary services and productive sectors in the Americas, against the threat from the viral pig disease.

To reinforce the actions from the technical groups, the work carried out in recent years by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the IICA (Interamerican Institute of Cooperation for Agriculture), and the OIRSA (Regional International Organization of Agriculture and Livestock Health) will be added.

Accompanied by Francisco Javier Trujillo Arriaga, general director of the SENASICA, Secretary Villalobos Arámbula stated that in recent years Mexico has aimed its preventive actions to raising awareness among the industry and its population.

In this respect, he proposed the establishment of comprehensive media campaign programs in the island, since the migration of Haitian citizens, who can travel with contaminated goods, needs to be addressed.

Thomas Vilsack, head of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), highlighted the experience of over 75 years of collaboration with Mexico in animal health matters, and the joint efforts will boost the success of the control and eradication actions at the Caribbean countries.

Accompanied by Kevin Shea, head of the U.S. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), the U.S. Official assured that this joint effort that Haiti and the Dominican Republic will implement will be useful to build-up a framework that can be used to address any new future agricultural and livestock challenges that arise from climate change and the mobilization of goods through tourism, trade, and migration.

The APHIS will coordinate with the SENASICA and the health agencies of the Caribbean countries to realize, as soon as possible, their first joint exercises.

Limber Cruz, Minister of Agriculture of the Dominican Republic, highlighted the support of Mexico and the United States to speed-up the eradication of the disease in his country and the whole island, since both nations share a common 389 km border, which would render ineffective any solo effort.

Further, the minister explained that the Dominican government increased their contention actions after detecting the first ASF focuses on their territory a year ago, and that to date, 95 veterinary teams work on site, quarantine measures at seaports and airports have been reinforced, and the number of diagnostic tests has increased to over six thousand per week.

The agency entrusted to him is aware of their responsibility in eradicating the disease as soon as possible and preventing the spread thereof to other countries in the continent.

Charlot Bredy, Minister of Agriculture of Haiti hailed the support received in recent months by the USDA, the FAO, and the IICA, which has been critical to make gains in the control of the disease, and for the training provided to the veterinary and productive sector.

Further, he stated that the Haitian government, despite their financial shortcomings, has worked vigorously to address the risks at the production units, has trained over four thousand producers to reinforce biosafety measures, and prevent the mobilization of live animals.

They have relied on the support of U.S. Laboratories for the diagnostic process, and to date, 529 tests have turned positive, out of 1,984 sampled pigs, which has led to the immediate slaughter of 3,500 animals.

The ministers of Agriculture agreed that their technical teams start exchanging information next week to lay down the work plan to be developed in this region of the Caribbean.