

# The Secretariat of Agriculture, lawmakers and the industry reaffirm their commitment to protect the national pork production

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To reinforce the preventive works to reduce the risk of introduction and spread of African swine fever (ASF) in Mexico, the Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development called the Legislative Branch and the national productive sector to continue promoting the timely reporting of any suspected disease outbreaks, so the authority has grounds to act quickly and effectively in the event of an emergency in any region of our country.

In the words of Francisco Javier Trujillo Arriaga, general director of the National Agro-Alimentary Health, Safety and Quality Service (SENASICA): “We must be successful. Failure is not an option because the supply of an essential protein for Mexican consumers, and the sustenance of thousands of families that work in mostly small and medium pig farming operations, is at stake”.

The director made the above statement during his participation in the forum named “Pig farming industry in Mexico: Challenges and opportunities”, held at the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, where he also expressed his support to the initiative of the Livestock Commission of making animal health matters a priority in the legislative agenda, in coordination with Opormex (Mexican Organization of Pig Farmers).

The director also pointed out that since ASF started spreading over Asia and Europe over four years ago, the Mexican government and the industry have reinforced their biosafety systems and have directed most of their efforts to epidemiological surveillance duties, training of technical personnel, and shielding the points of entry of agro-alimentary goods inbound from other countries.

Juan Gay Gutiérrez, general director of Animal Health of the SENASICA, stated that the agency that reports to the Secretariat of Agriculture is at the ready across the 32 federated states to quickly detect any signs of presence of the disease, since they have a literal army of veterinarians that address dozens of weekly reports of suspicious cases.

He explained that the clinical signs of ASF are like that of over 20 erysipelas diseases in pigs, hence the importance of taking samples and analyzing them in official laboratories equipped with cutting edge technology and the maximum biosafety level.

Over 1,600 inspectors watch our country's seaports, airports, and borders, and any ships and airplanes inbound from European, Asian, and African countries afflicted by ASF undergo a special and rigorous protocol, which now includes the Dominican Republic and Haiti where outbreaks have recently occurred.

Mr. Gay Gutiérrez informed the deputies and representatives from the productive sector that the SENASICA has over 70 years of experience in detecting, controlling, and eradicating disastrous animal diseases, such as the foot-and-mouth disease, the classical swine fever, and the type 1 rabbit hemorrhagic disease, which have not reappeared in our country since their eradication.

While underscoring the worthiness of the statements made by the representatives of the SENASICA, Rubén Moreira Valdez, coordinator of the parliamentary group of the PRI political party, made a personal commitment to spread the contents of the forum among the other

caucuses, with the intent of turning them into legislative proposals that help reinforce the pig farming industry.

“This type of forums raises the awareness of the legislators, and provides us with direction to resolve future situations, put budgetary issues on the table, and put authorities on alert, all in benefit for the Mexican countryside”.

Mrs. Refugio Camarena Jauregui, president of the Livestock Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, pointed out that pig farming is one of the top sources of employment and food supply in Mexico and the world, and that all political, private, and social actors are responsible for its protection.

The members of the Commission work in proposals to realize insurance funds for the productive sector, to be prepared to protect our livestock assets from the threat of exotic diseases, such as the African swine fever.

Heriberto Hernández Cárdenas, president of Opormex, called the country's producers to maintain the biosafety measures in their production units, which make possible for Mexico to be one of the few countries that do not have sanitary barriers for the foreign trade of pork meat.

Mexico is the eighth producer and fifth exporter of pork products in the world. Pork exportations to over 27 international destinations, including the shipping of live animals, bring the sector annual earnings of over 79 billion pesos.

Most of this wealth stays on the poorest rural areas of our country; hence this activity is a major welfare and social development factor.

Mr. Hernández Cárdenas renewed the commitment of the industry to the health authorities to keep Mexico as a country free of ASF and stated that their affiliates are working to react against a possible outbreak of the disease, and thus protect the national industry.

César López Amador, general director of the organization, pointed out that Mexico is the main supplier of pork meat to Japan, which is one of the most stringent international markets on matter of health and safety. This fact shows the commitment and excellence of the Mexican livestock industry.

Mrs. Alexandra Luna Orta, executive director of Infarvet (Veterinary Pharmaceutical Industry), pointed out that antimicrobial resistance has become a major problem that threatens the health of the livestock species.

She also commented that the coordinated participation from the federal government, producers, industry, academia, and scientific organizations is necessary to reinforce the permanent education and training of veterinary professionals, the promotion of the appropriate application of drugs in animals, and the prevention of public health issues.