

The Latest News on African Swine Fever

South Korea Now ASF-Positive

South Korea has now joined eight other Asian countries in becoming positive for African swine fever (ASF). This comes after pigs were found positive for ASF near the nation's border with North Korea, which has been positive for the virus since May.

Kim Hyun-soo, South Korea's agricultural minister, said the country's first case of the highly contagious disease was confirmed on Sept. 17 based on tests conducted on five pigs that died earlier this week on a farm in the city of Paju (see red dot on map). Another case is suspected in the nearby town of Yeoncheon.

The government has strengthened efforts to disinfect farms and transport vehicles and ordered a 48-hour standstill on all pig farms, slaughterhouses and feed mills across the country to prevent the spread of the disease. South Korea has ordered about 6,000 farms that produce more than 11 million pigs.



South Korea does not import any pork products or live pigs from China due to that country's animal disease status. It mainly imports from the United States and Germany, and pork imports account for about a third of the country's total pork supplies.

The Philippines Extends ASF Territory in Asia

It came as no surprise to anyone who has been watching the worldwide march of ASF over the past year when recent tests confirmed that some herds in the multi-island nation of the Philippines (two red squares in bottom right of map) were positive for the costly disease. According to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), on Sept. 9, the Philippines Department of Agriculture confirmed that the first ASF outbreak started July 25 in mostly backyard pigs, with 7,952 pigs having died or been culled. Of the samples sent to the United Kingdom for analysis, 14 of the 20 from the Rodriguez municipality in Rizal Province, the Guiguinto municipality in Bulacan Province and Antipolo City in Rizal Province tested positive for ASF [reference1]. Food scraps from hotels and restaurants fed to pigs, or from imported pork products, are suspected as the cause [reference2].

In a recent interview, Philippine Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III said, "I am sure that DTI (Department of Trade and Industry) and DA (Department of Agriculture) are on top of this."

African swine fever (ASF) has now claimed the ninth country in Asia, further disrupting pork supplies in a pork-hungry part of the world.



China Ratchets Up Policies to Increase Domestic Pork Supply

With its domestic pork prices up nearly 50% from year-ago levels, the Chinese government is taking additional measures as it attempts to mitigate the pork supply disaster that ASF has created.

In the short term, some Chinese provinces and cities are announcing the release of some of their strategic pork reserves to help quell their citizens' insatiable demand for pork. According to numerous media reports, even with the tapping of these reserves, it's unlikely this action will result in adequate domestic supplies as it's noted that every Chinese person consumes the equivalent of half a pig each year.

In a notice posted Sept. 3, China's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs along with the Ministry of Finance mandated several measures related to ASF. These include: 1) Government subsidy for mandatory culling due to ASF, 2) Temporary, low-interest loans for breeding and large-scale pig farms, 3) Incentives to relocate pigs to outlying counties (especially to support development of pig production, prevention and control of animal diseases, and construction of infrastructure for circulation), 4) Improved insurance coverage of pigs, 5) Support of policies for implementing improved pig breeding, such as the purchase and use of elite pig semen, and support of the construction of wash and decontamination centers for pig transport vehicles, and 6) Strengthened provincial financial coordination.



Only two days later, China went on to announce another ASF-related set of policies. They were aimed at three measurable objectives: Pork self-sufficiency rate, the pig farm up-sizing rate and the comprehensive utilization rate of manure from large farms. The country is clearly trying to stabilize the 14-month-plus decimation of its pork industry by primarily supporting large pork producers who stand the most realistic chance of re-supplying the nation's enormous pork needs.

For the long haul, Chinese intentions are focused on three major areas: Creating modern breeding herds, having robust disease prevention and control systems in place, and creating a modernized pig transportation system. In the meantime, the reality of widespread ASF in this country and others nearby will not help China in this quest.

Australia Hardens Borders in Wake of ASF Threat

By virtue of its proximity to Asia and today's nonstop international travel, Australia's agriculture minister, Bridget McKenzie, recently held an emergency roundtable of experts to identify what more can be done to keep the deadly pig disease out with its "Don't Be Sorry Just Declare It" incoming passenger campaign.

"African swine fever is potentially the biggest animal disease event the world has ever seen, and it's marching south through Asia, toward Australia," she said. "We need to make sure we're doing all we can to keep this disease out."

The Australian government reports that since it has toughened inspections of people and packages arriving from countries affected by ASF, it has seized 23 tons of pork. Of this, nearly 15% was positive for the ASF virus.

To help protect its domestic pig herd, McKenzie said, "We've suspended trade of high-risk pig products from affected countries, and we've banned travelers bringing in pork jerky from all countries, but more can be done if we partner with industry."

ASF Present in Over 40 Countries

