

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: ASF Continues to Plague Romania's Hog Sector

Country: Romania

Post: Bucharest

Report Category: Livestock and Products, Pest/Disease Occurrences

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Report Highlights:

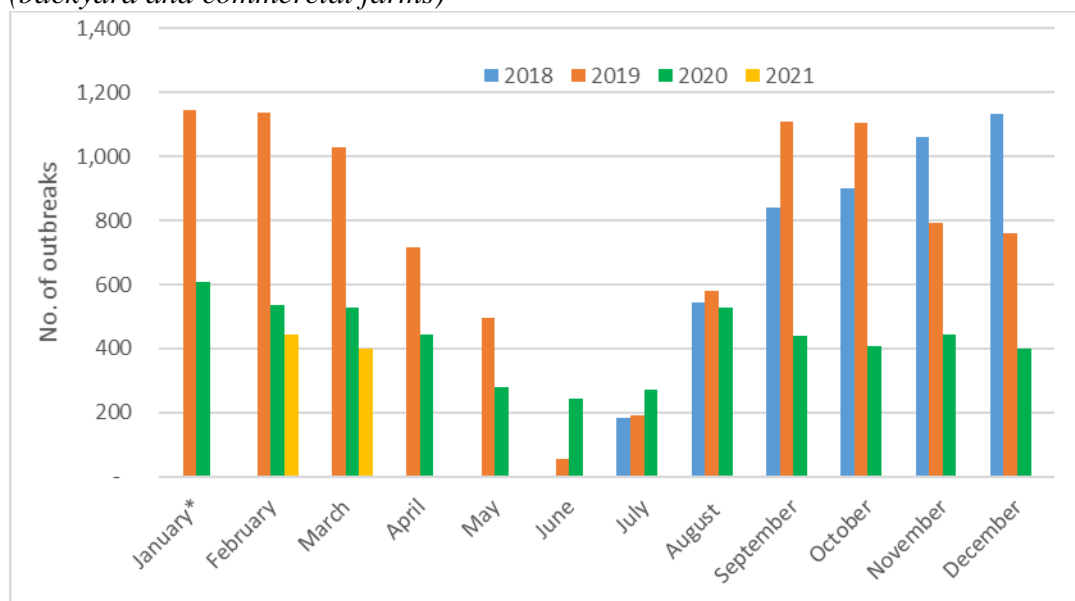
The number of active African swine fever (ASF) outbreaks in Romania continues to trend downward. As of mid-March 2021, Romania saw a 24-percent drop in the number of outbreaks from same time in 2020. However, the number of ASF outbreaks on commercial farms during the first quarter of 2021 increased over last year. A draft ASF surveillance and control action plan is currently being considered by the Romanian government.

Romanian ASF Status Update

According to the data published by the National Veterinary and Food Safety Authority (ANSVSA), as of mid-March 2021, 401 ASF outbreaks were active in Romania, including 14 on commercial farms. While this marks a downward trend in the number of total outbreaks versus the first quarters of 2019 and 2020 (Chart 1), Romanian media reports that ASF's cases among larger hog farms, with inventories of at least 20,000 hogs, is higher. Therefore, the actual impacts on pork meat production, carcass disposal, and disinfection expenses are likely higher. Most recently, in April 2021, a leading hog producer was affected when ASF was detected on a 5,700 head operation located in the western region of Romania.

Chart 1: Romania – Monthly Number of Active Outbreaks

(backyard and commercial farms)



Source: ANSVSA * No available data for 2021

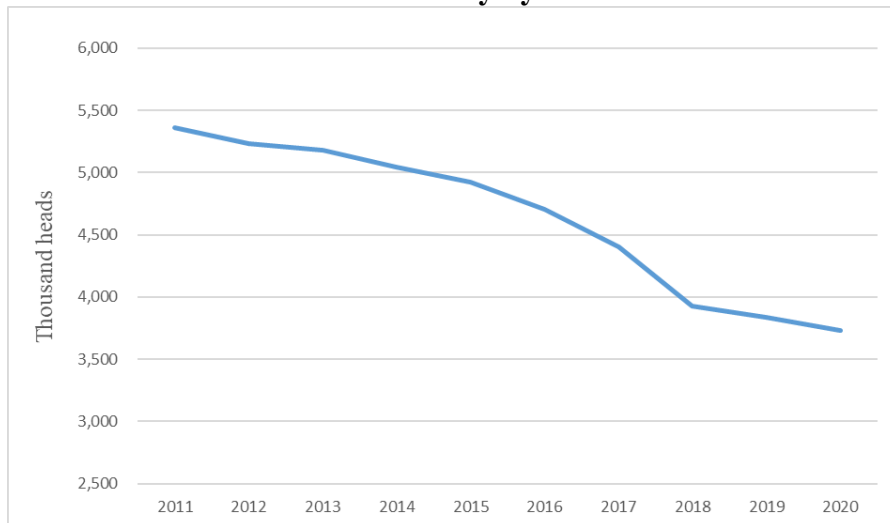
The vast majority of ASF outbreaks occurred among small and backyard farms. However, when commercial farms are located within the protection (3 km radius) or surveillance (10 km radius) zones near ASF-positive backyard farms, those commercial farms are subjected to animal movement restrictions to other farms or to slaughter plants. These movement restrictions may go beyond the prescribed 40-day timeframe if successive outbreaks are confirmed in the same areas. This creates logistical problems for the affected commercial farmers, as they are forced to increase feed and maintenance costs, as well as subject animals to overcrowding in crowded barns.

To date, 4,226 total ASF outbreaks have been confirmed in Romania, 90 of which have occurred on commercial farms. The total number of ASF-positive wild boars in Romania reached 5,345 as of March 2021. Under the ASF eradication program, 766,000 animals have been culled since July 2017. To date, the Romanian government has disbursed upwards of \$145 million from the national budget to compensate over 15,000 pig owners for their losses.

Romania's Hog Inventory Reaches a New Low

Romania's hog inventory continues to trend downward, with a 2.6 percent year-on-year decline in 2020 from 2019 (Chart 2). The number of breeding sows in 2020 also fell by four percent from 309,000 head in 2019 to 297,000 head in 2020. As hog production capacity has been under pressure, fattening farms sought piglets from outside of Romania, which drove live piglet imports in 2020 to increase by 17.6 percent over the previous year.

Chart 2. Romanian swine inventory dynamics



Source: Eurostat

Trade dynamics for Romanian pork has also changed since ASF was first detected in 2017. Following restrictions imposed by Romania's trading partners, pork exports to other EU Member States and non-EU countries plummeted (#HS Code 0203). In 2020, exports reached just one-tenth (3,467 MT) of the 2017 peak figure. The losses of export markets resulted in higher domestic stocks. Higher stocks, along with a drop in demand for fresh pork meat due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, reduced pork imports by 2.5 percent to 272,630 MT, according to the data published by Trade Data Monitor.

Last year draft legislation on mandatory biosecurity rules for each type of hog holding was introduced by the Ministry of Agriculture or ANSVSA. This legislation was strongly supported by the commercial sector, but were criticized by small holders. Ultimately, the draft was tabled for reconsideration.

More recently in March 2021, ANSVSA posted for public consultation a more comprehensive emergency ordinance, in which responsibilities to implement enforce the provisions lie with many regulatory and implementing entities. According to the updated draft, backyard holders cannot hold more than six pigs, cannot breed their animals, and must consume their home-raised pork at home and not sell any meat. The draft ordinance further provides specific animal health and biosecurity rules for both commercial and non-commercial types of holding. This proposed legislation also generated fierce reactions claiming the measure penalize small holders and will reduce rural incomes. In contrast,

representatives of the swine commercial sector view this initiative as the only way to control and eradicate ASF.

Attachments:

No Attachments.