

Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia), Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia

on combating African Swine Fever (ASF) in the European Union

Considering the current epizootic situation regarding African swine fever as well as the fact that the ASF problem is impacting an increasing number of countries, both members of the European Union and those outside of it, the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group countries and Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia are of the opinion that countries afflicted with cases of ASF should not only be able to count on the EU financial support but also mandatorily apply reliable, uniformly established and earlier tested procedures of combating this virus, in order to minimize and even fully stop its spread. The regulations should guarantee that measures are taken fast enough and that the methods applied are not inadequate nor ineffective.

Therefore, the Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group countries and Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia have agreed on the following:

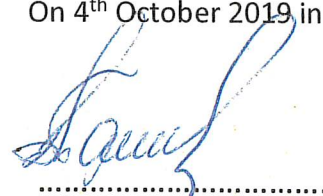
- I. the presence of ASF in the natural environment – among wild boars – increases the risk for farms which keep pigs, as wild boars constitute the key reservoir and vector of this disease. Therefore, the measures taken by EU member states should be targeted, specifically, at reducing the population of this animal species. Regarding the wild boar population management there is a need to establish clear rules of combating ASF among wild boars based on a consistent, systematic reduction of their number – as an instrument for eliminating ASF from the natural environment. It is necessary to establish a clear, common, imperative and mandatory position of the EC and Member States with respect to treating the reduction of wild boar population as a measure for combating ASF.
- II. The detection of the virus in pigs results in the imposition of trade restrictions laid down in the European Union legislation, in particular, in Commission Implementing Decision 2014/709/EU. Years of experience in the application of EU restrictions imposed on countries affected by ASF, show that some restrictions do not directly result in the reduced risk of the spread of disease, while they cause significant difficulties in the functioning of pig breeding in the affected areas. The extent of the restricted areas in connection with the occurrence of ASF should be established adequately to the risk of spreading the disease and the trade regulations within the areas at risk should take on a safe but a more pragmatic dimension.
- III. There is a need for a wider ranging financial support by the EC of measures aimed at combating ASF:
 - a) Since 2014 the measures linked to combating this disease constitute an increasing burden on the national budget of the country in which they are being directly implemented. It is an obvious fact that measures undertaken in given EU country,

protect the remaining EU territory which is free from ASF, therefore indirectly regard all EU Member States. In this context, in the name of solidarity and cooperation, it is necessary to ensure an increased EU co-financing of measures aimed at preventing the spread of ASF to areas currently free from this disease. There is also the need for a broader support by the EC of the measures taken by Member States: linked to biosecurity of farms and culling of wild boars in the restricted areas as established by the EC, in connection with the occurrence of ASF cases or outbreaks;

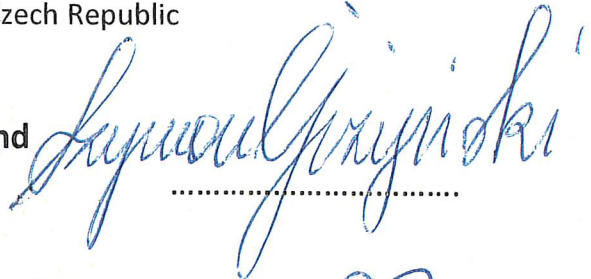
- b) the method of calculating the level of EU co-financing in veterinary programmes by the EC, especially for combating ASF, needs to be revised in order to ensure a similar treatment of costs at an EU level, since the current calculation of unit costs is based on EUROSTAT data on salaries in the Member States; making it highly disproportionate for Member States with lower salaries, and resulting in unit costs which only cover a fragment of the real costs and thus hinder the implementation of national programmes,
 - c) the occurrence of ASF in every Member State results in an adverse situation on the pork market, both internally and externally. The effects are borne by market participants, including farmers keeping pigs and the entire pig industry. Therefore the European Commission should be encouraged to carry out an analysis of available support measures for these entities and urgently present the outcomes of such analysis in order to establish the need for working out new support mechanisms.
- IV. It is necessary to intensify the scientific and research cooperation between selected institutes in EU member states, in favor of stepping up work on the epidemiology of ASF, with special focus on the behaviourism of wild boars, as the key vector and reservoir of the ASF virus in the natural environment.

On 4th October 2019 in Prague, Czech Republic

Bulgaria



Poland



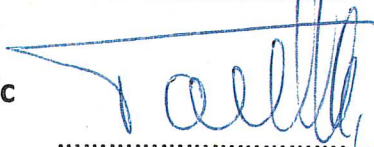
Croatia



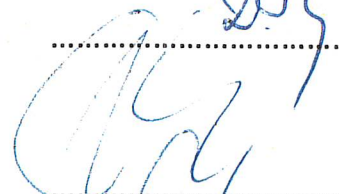
Romania



Czech Republic



Slovakia



Hungary



Slovenia

