



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY
Directorate G - Veterinary and International Affairs
Unit G2 – Animal Health

Brussels
SANCO G2/FB (07.10.2015)

SANTE/7112/2015

WORKING DOCUMENT

Principles and criteria for geographically defining

ASF regionalisation

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Principles and criteria for geographically defining ASF regionalisation

The EU African swine fever (ASF) regionalisation laid down in Commission Implementing Decision 2014/709/EU¹ without prejudice to the provisions of Council Directive 2002/60/EC. Decision 2014/709/EU sets a series of additional animal health movement restrictions and control measures applicable to the dispatch of pigs, pig meat, certain pig products and wild boar meat and products thereof. The way these restrictions are applied is linked with the areas listed in that Implementing Decision under four sections: Part I, Part II, Part III and Part IV of the Annex thereto.

The different parts of the Annex to Decision 2014/709/EU are defined considering the epidemiological situation of ASF, including whether it concerns infection in both pigs holdings and the feral pig population (wild boar) (Part III and IV), infection occurring only in the feral pig population (Part II) or when a certain level of risk exists due to proximity to the infection (Part I). Whether the epidemiological situation has been considered stabilised and the disease has become endemic plays a role in differentiating Part IV (Sardinia) from Part III, where the situation is still dynamic with uncertain evolution. The classification of Member States' territories or parts thereof as Parts I, II, III and IV are adapted by taking into account additional risk factors related to the local epidemiological situation and its evolution. The definitions of territories to be listed in each Part of the Annex to Decision 2014/709/EU take into account the presence of ASF in both wild boar and domestic pigs. While these two categories behave differently and have clearly different biosecurity constrains and movement patterns, it is the wild boar component that has proven to be more difficult to control even though these are not migratory animals. The EU regionalisation approach takes into account both aspects related to domestic pigs and wild boar, however, it is the uncontrollable nature of the wild boar that heavily influences the definition of regionalisation. This impacts the definition of all four Parts of the Annex to Decision 2014/709/EU. The epidemiological unit of concern for the demarcation of those territories in the Annex to that Decision needs to take into consideration the size, the territorial and geographical continuity with adjacent territories, the typology of biotope present, the administrative divisions and the enforceability of the control measures.

Based on an analysis of the epidemiological data from 2014 and 2015 (up to May) from the four Member States affected by ASF virus genotype II, the 2015 EFSA report on ASF² puts forward the following findings relevant for regionalisation:

- the infection continued to spread slowly through the wild boar populations;
- the spread of the disease in the wild boar populations seems to be independent of the density of the wild boar populations;
- the introduction and transboundary spread of ASF occurs through wild boar sub-populations;
- short-distance spread of ASF up to 50 km/year have been observed in the wild boar population which can be attributed to direct contact between infected animals, whereas sudden long-distance spread obviously cannot be explained by direct contact between wild boar alone and suggest the involvement of the human factor.

The areas listed in the Annex to Decision 2014/709/EU should be maintained under restrictions until the epidemiological situation meets the criteria to revert to freedom from infection in wild boar, or

¹ Commission Implementing Decision 2014/709/EU of 9 October 2014 concerning animal health control measures relating to African swine fever in certain Member States and repealing Implementing Decision 2014/178/EU (OJ L 295, 11.10.2014, p. 63).

² <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/4163>

both domestic pigs and wild boar. The principles of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code, along with epidemiological considerations on the disease, provide some guidance on the timing and criteria to be met for recovering the free status of an area formerly restricted due to ASF occurrence.

Main criteria for demarcating Parts I, II, III and IV of the Annex to Implementing Decision 2014/709/EU

- 1) Part IV: occurrence of ASF in both domestic pigs and wild boar. The situation is endemic.
- 2) Part III: occurrence of ASF in both domestic pigs and wild boar. The situation is not yet endemic.
- 3) Part II: occurrence of ASF in wild boar.
- 4) Part I: higher risk area with no cases, nor outbreaks, of ASF and where higher surveillance is applied.
- 5) The definition of the size and shape of any area should take into account at least the following factors:
 - a) geographical aspects linked to the location of the outbreaks/wild boar cases;
 - b) ecological factors (e.g. water ways, forests) and the existence of natural and artificial barriers;
 - c) presence and distribution of wild boar;
 - d) epidemiology of the disease;
 - e) results of specific epidemiological studies;
 - f) historical experience gained on ASF spread;
 - g) administrative divisions, territorial continuity and enforceability of the control measures;
 - h) distribution of pig farms (non-commercial farms, commercial farms and outdoor farms) and the existence of protection and surveillance zones (if any);
 - i) hunting practices and other wildlife management considerations.

Main criteria for lifting the restrictions in areas in Parts I, II, III and IV of the Annex to Implementing Decision 2014/709/EU

In order to prevent ASF spread and to protect the EU single market and trade, a cautious and science-based approach is to be followed for lifting the restrictions. Taking as a baseline the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code and the best knowledge available today, a set of criteria is provided below. Lifting of any area should not take place during the seasonal peaks of higher disease spread periods described by EFSA (e.g. June-August and December-February). A suitable surveillance plan with favourable results should have been in place for enough time.

For the spatial considerations when defining the extent of the area, the criterial referred to above apply.

- 1) lifting Part III regionalisation and reverting to Part II are to be based on the following:
 - a) there have been no ASF outbreak in domestic pigs during the past 12 months or,
 - b) in case of total depopulation of all non-commercial farms with low biosecurity conditions, the period without any outbreaks can be reduced to 3 months.
- 2) lifting Part II regionalisation and reverting to Part I are to be based on the following:
 - a) there have been no ASF cases in wild boar during the past 12 months.
- 3) lifting Part I regionalization is to be based on full consideration of the whole set of epidemiological data in a wider geographical and temporal context.

Lifting of all restrictions of regionalisation is to be based on more extensive considerations and discussions should be undertaken in a later stage of the epidemic. Lifting of Part IV follows similar considerations.