



# African swine fever (ASF) virus in wild boar in Belgium : Situation and detailed information

---

## 1. Introduction

On 13 September 2018, African swine fever (ASF) virus was confirmed for the first time since 1985 in Belgium, in wild boar in the southern part of the country. There are no outbreaks in domestic pigs or in captive wild pigs in Belgium and strict measures have been taken in the whole country to prevent contamination of domestic pigs.

An initial infected zone has immediately been established and was later replaced by two regulated zones I and II (European Commission Implementing Decision).

This document gives an overview of :

- the current status in Belgium
- the historic of the event and the zoning
- the Belgian strategy for eradication of ASF
- control and preventive measures
- control measures to ensure that exported pork is free from ASF
- applicable legislation and International Standards
- additional information and annexes

## 2 The current status of ASF in Belgium

Currently a total of 1052 carcasses of wild boar have been analysed in and outside the regulated zone for the presence of ASF virus of which 345 are positive for ASF (PCR) (situation on 17 January 2019 - see maps 6-8 below). All the infected carcasses were found within the high-risk zone II except for 2 cases which are located in the western part of the former zone I (confirmation on 8 January 2019).



Taking into account the location of the new 2 positive cases in the western part of the former zone I, the enhanced passive surveillance for dead wild boar have been intensified in this part. Beside this, when the confirmation of these new positive cases occurred the hunting in this part was immediately suspended until evaluation of the epidemiological situation guaranteed the absence of the disease in order to proceed to hunting without any risk.

The high number of dead wild boars found in this early phase of the ASF epidemic points out the excellent work of the active search for dead wild boars.

The source of the ASF virus introduction is not known at this time and it is unlikely that the precise route of introduction will ever be discovered. The genetic characteristics of the strain involved indicating an eastern European origin, involuntary human involvement (e.g. food left overs containing noncommercial pork products originating from countries where the disease is endemic in pigs dropped in nature by careless truck drivers or tourists) is likely.

### 3. Historic of the event & the zoning

On September 13<sup>th</sup> 2018 the presence of African swine fever (ASF) virus was confirmed by the Belgian National Reference Laboratory for Animal Diseases (Sciensano) for the first time since 1985, in dead wild boar discovered in the most southern part of Belgium. This finding demonstrates the efficiency of the passive surveillance put in place in wild boar following the spread of the disease in Eastern Europe.

An immediate notification was made to the OIE (14 September) and follow-up reports were sent and will follow<sup>1</sup>.

#### **- Phase 1**

##### **14/09-27/11/2018 : - provisional European zoning : the Infected Zone**

*European zoning is established according the European Commission Implementing Decision, and includes measures applicable for wild boar, domestic and captive wild pigs. Regional zoning is established by the Walloon Government for the operational management of wild boar.*

##### European zoning :

*An initial infected zone was immediately established (630 km<sup>2</sup>, see maps 1-2 below) according to Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1242 of 14 September 2018 (confirmed by the Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1281 of 21 September 2018). In the region of the infected zone few domestic pigs are*



kept, most pig holdings being located in Flanders, the northern part of Belgium (94 % of the pig population), that is approximately 200 km away from the infected zone.

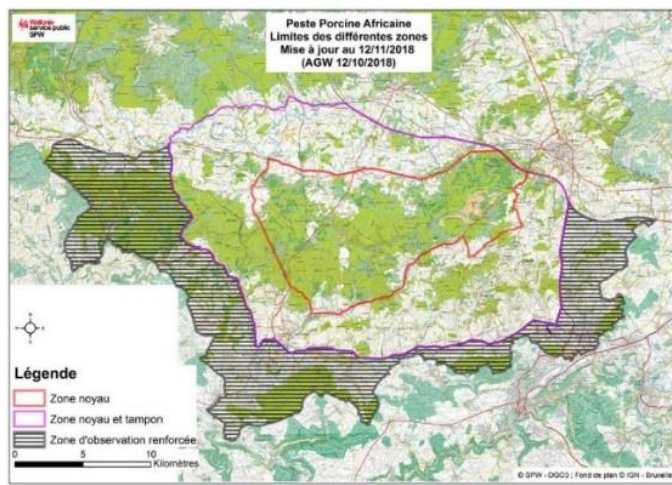
Map 1-2 : European zoning : detail of Belgium, divided into provinces, indicating the infected zone and detail of the infected zone (Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1242 and 2018/1281)



Regional zoning :

Following the decision of the Walloon Regional Minister of 12 October 2018, in order to better manage the activities with regard to wild boar (e.g. hunting, monitoring) and forestry activities, three zones have been defined within the infected zone named the kernel, the buffer and the reinforced observation zones where different measures have been put in place (see Map 3 below and see point 4).

Map 3 : Regional zoning : limitations of different zones within the initial infected zone



Kernel zone - Buffer zone - Reinforced Observation zone



## Phase 2

**(28/11/2018 - until now) : European zones I and II**

**European zoning** is established according to the European Commission Implementing Decision, and includes measures applicable for wild boar, domestic and captive wild pigs. **Regional zoning** is established by the Walloon Government for the operational management of wild boar.

In 28 November 2018, the zoning was brought in line with the European approach for ASF by implementing decision (EU) 2018/1856 of the European Commission. This formal decision describes the regionalization for against ASF at European level, according to the identified risk.

**It is important to underline that this adjustment of the zoning is neither due to a deterioration of the situation regarding wild boar, nor to an increased risk.** It is simply an administrative adjustment to transform the originally defined provisional infected area into the long term classical double zoning as foreseen by European legislation.

Based on European legislation and following consultation with the federal authorities and regional Walloon authorities, the "infected zone" has therefore been replaced by two separate zones: "Zone I" and "Zone II".

On 21 January 2019, due to the confirmation of two positive cases in wild boar in the western part of Zone I (on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2019) the delimitations of the different zones have been adjusted following the new Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/100 of the 22/01/2019 (see map 4 below). Both zones have been extended towards the west whereby zone II goes up to the Belgian-French border.

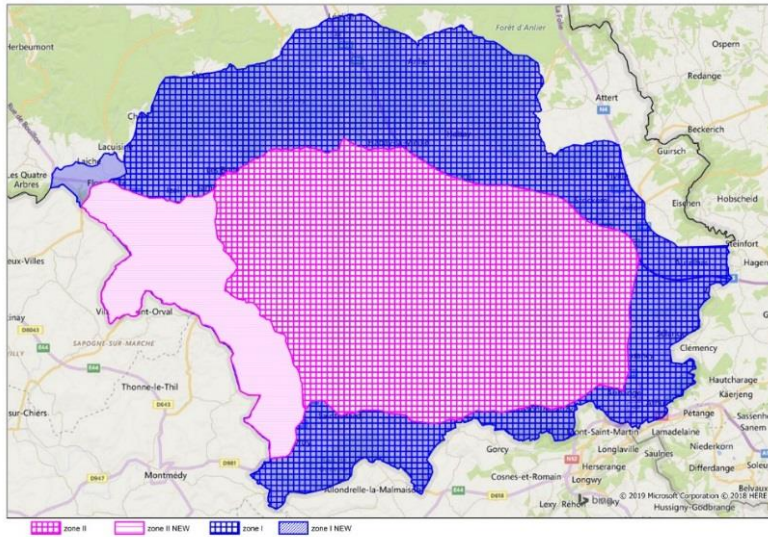




Map 4-5: European zoning : adjustment of the different zones following the new Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/100 of the 22/01/2019)

For more details please consult:

<https://eucommission.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=3db65168d4ad4d829a38560d7f868ace>





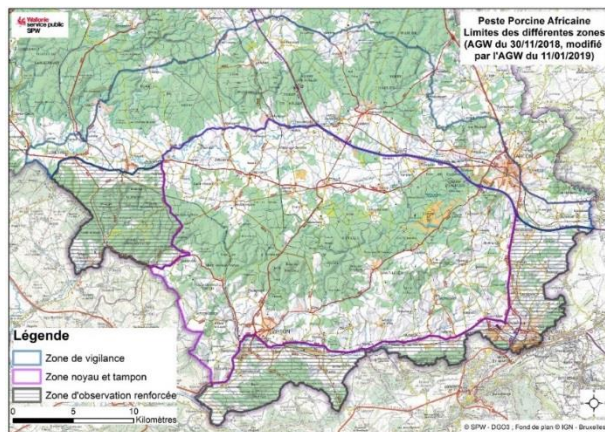
## Regional zoning

Besides this, the kernel and buffer zones have also been adapted, following the decision of the Walloon Regional Minister of 11 January 2018 (see map 5).

*Map 6 : Regional zoning : adjustment of the different zones*

*For more details, please consult:*

[https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1ayR2xHUJ\\_T7h4cwPjZHK-UoT9cVNkuHR&ll=49.96726117421156%2C5.030785851752626&z=8](https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1ayR2xHUJ_T7h4cwPjZHK-UoT9cVNkuHR&ll=49.96726117421156%2C5.030785851752626&z=8)



Kernel and Buffer zone - Reinforced Observation zone – Vigilance zone

## 4. Belgian strategy for eradication of African swine fever virus

The competent authorities that are involved are the Federal authorities (FASFC) for domestic and captive wild pigs and the Regions for wild boar (wildlife and hunting activities).

Already during the months before the recent outbreak all stakeholders had been alerted through collaborative initiatives and information campaigns of the veterinary services and wildlife authorities. The rapid response and the excellent collaboration between the different partners during the events can be attributed to the high level of preparedness established.



The common goal of all Belgian parties concerned by ASF – veterinary authorities, approved veterinarians, wildlife authorities, farmers, hunters, meat industry, ... – is the eradication of the ASF virus, which is also in line with the harmonized EU veterinary law.

All competent Belgian authorities involved have since the onset of the ASF disease in Belgium elaborated a specific and common strategy for the eradication of the virus, taking into account the advice of the European ASF experts. This common strategy focuses mainly on a **complete standstill within the high-risk zone, active search for dead wild boar within the high-risk zone, a reduction in the number of wild boar through intensified hunting outside the high-risk zone and ASF testing of domestic pigs in whole Belgium. Regardless of the clinical symptoms, ASF testing is compulsory when starting a veterinary treatment on pig farm.**

From 14 till 17 September 2018 Belgium welcomed a delegation of European ASF experts from several Member States to share their expertise and consolidate a control and eradication strategy. A second and third mission took place on 11-12 October 2018 and 7-8 January 2019 to evaluate with Belgian experts the further operational strategy needed to reach our goal of eradication.

In order to proceed to a transboundary and collaborative approach of the eradication of ASF, Belgium has initiated a closer collaboration with the neighboring countries such as daily communication about the situation and technical meetings between wildlife experts of different countries.

In addition to the broad, national collaboration, we believe that a total transparency towards our neighboring countries, other EU Member States and “third countries” (Non-EU Members States) is essential for the management of ASF in Belgium, Europe and worldwide and to ensure the necessary trust between Belgium and its commercial and other partners. Therefore, the Belgian Veterinary Authority – the Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (FASFC) – continues to inform about the situation and the measures taken through different platforms of communication.

## 5. The control and preventive measures

ASF is a notifiable disease. Every suspicion has to be notified to the FASFC. This obligation applies for animal holders, veterinarians, laboratories and all other stakeholders involved (traders, slaughterhouses, etc.).

The competent authorities that are involved are the Federal authorities (FASFC) for domestic and captive wild pigs and the Regions for wild boar (wildlife and hunting activities). Close coordination is ensured at all levels through training and simulation exercises.



a) **Measures in place applied before the appearance of ASF in Belgium**

➤ **In Wild boars**

- Raising awareness of hunters and forest visitors;
- Passive surveillance: Any discovery of a dead wild boar has to be immediately notified to the competent regional authorities, by stating through public hotlines the precise location and absolutely avoiding any contact. Sampling and analysis of found dead wild boars are implemented;
- Active surveillance: ASF analysis on several hunted wild boars.

➤ **In Domestic and captive wild pigs**

- Access to pig holdings/contact with pigs is forbidden for 48 hours following contact with wild boar;
- It is forbidden to introduce into a pig herd material, machinery, feed and utensils that could have been in contact with ASF virus;
- Introduction of dead or shot wild boar (or parts thereof) in a pig holding or a place where pigs are being held is prohibited;
- It is prohibited to feed swill to pigs;
- Strict biosecurity measures have to be implemented at all pig holdings and at all places where pigs are being kept;
- After introducing pigs into a holding any movement of pigs from this holding is prohibited for 4 weeks except for immediate slaughter. This rule doesn't apply if the introduced pigs have been kept in quarantine for at least 4 weeks;
- Pigs are not allowed to have outdoor access unless effective double fencing is in place;
- All vehicles used for transport of pigs have to be cleaned and disinfected after each transport;
- For transporters of pigs (to and from third countries and to and from every risk area within the EU): Every transporter has to clean and disinfect his vehicle before entering Belgium. Cleaning and disinfection are attested by the transporter in the appropriate document.

b) **Complementary measures in place since the establishment of the Zones I and II (since 28/11/2018)**

A first fence network has been put in place on Thursday the 22th of November 2018 (on the western, northern and southern side of the buffer zone). In addition the highway/big traffic axes on the northern and eastern side serve as physical barriers. A second fence network is being built in the western part of the





reinforced observation zone between the existing fence and the Belgian-French border. The presence of both these fence networks is a valuable tool in the fragmentation of the natural environment of the wild boar in order to destroy the wild boar population in the western part of zone II and to prevent as such the further spread of the disease to France.

➤ **In Wild boars**

- In the kernel and buffer zone :
  - Circulation in the forest is prohibited (derogations for urgent forest works following strict biosecurity measures);
  - Enhanced passive surveillance : active search for dead wild boars, analysis and removal of the carcasses;
  - Active surveillance and eradication of wild boar only in the buffer zone: culling of wild boar (shooting day/night, with or without baiting, trapping,... drive hunting with dogs forbidden, single hunting and silent drives allowed), analysis and removal of dead wild boar;
  - Establishment of specific collection centers.
- In the reinforced observation and vigilance zone :
  - Forest activities (logging and tourism) permitted in the daylight hours;
  - Enhanced passive surveillance : active search, analysis and removal dead wild boar;
  - Active surveillance and eradication of wild boar : culling of wild boar (shooting day/night, with or without baiting, trapping,... drive hunting with dogs forbidden, single hunting and silent drives allowed), analysis and removal of dead wild boar;
  - Establishment of specific collection centers.

➤ **In Domestic and captive wild pigs :**

- Measures applied in the whole country :
  - Enhanced passive surveillance: no treatment of sick pigs without sampling for ASF laboratory testing. Every pig holder has to consult a veterinarian when detecting clinical problems. The veterinarian can only start a



treatment when he delivers cadavers for autopsy or samples to the first line regional animal health laboratories for testing on ASF;

- All assemblies and gatherings of pigs are prohibited.

- Measures applied in zone II and zone I south :

In order to avoid contamination of domestic pigs and captive wild pigs, the Federal Minister of Agriculture, imposed the preventive culling of all domestic pigs and captive wild pigs in Zone II and Zone I south (Federal Ministerial Decree of 26 September 2018). No pigs remain in the commercial and non-commercial pig holdings of this zone. This measure was executed between 27 September and 2 October 2018 (culling of 5222 pigs – 6 commercial pig holdings keeping more than 50 pigs and other non-commercial holdings).

- Measures applied in zone I north :

There are 16 pig farms located in the zone, of which only one is a fattening farm with a capacity of more than 1000 pigs. All pig farmers were individually notified by the FASFC of the new situation during the week of 19/11/2018. Domestic swine will not be culled preventively, as was the case for pigs in the reinforced observation zone, where the risk is higher.

- At national level: no new restrictions therefore apply to live pigs, pork and pork products
- For intra-community trade (between EU Member States):
  - For pork and pork products: no specific legal restrictions are applicable
  - For live pigs: transportation to other Member States is banned, except where a derogation is possible and provided that the following conditions are met:
    - The pigs sold have been on the farm for at least 30 days, or since birth;
    - The farm from where they originate complies with the biosecurity measures applicable to ASF;
    - Within 15 days prior to being transported, the sold pigs undergo an ASF laboratory test which must be negative. On the day of transport, the official veterinarian carries out a clinical examination, which must be favorable;



- Twice a year, at intervals of at least 4 months, the competent veterinary authority must perform an official inspection.
- Measures applied for the export of pork and pork products to third countries;

Export possibilities depend on the conditions required by the third country in question. The certification conditions laid down in the relevant protocols concluded between Belgium and the non-EU countries (third countries) will be scrupulously respected.

*If an ASF outbreak in a domestic pig holding should occur (WHICH IS NOT THE CASE!):*

*At the moment there is not any case of ASF in domestic and captive wild pigs. However, should this be the case, the following measures will apply:*

- *National standstill for 72 hours in which all transport of pigs and pig manure is prohibited;*
- *Establishment of a protective zone with a radius of 3 km and a surveillance zone with a radius of 10 km;*
- *Culling of the pigs present in the infected premise and dangerous contact holdings. Destruction of the pig products originating from the infected premise;*
- *Epidemiological investigation to detect the origin of infection and the possible ways of spreading (identifying contact establishments);*
- *Restrictive measures for identified contact establishments;*
- *Prohibition measures for transport and increased surveillance in the established zones;*
- *Biosecurity measures in the whole country.*

*The FASFC provides a list of approved biocides that are effective against the virus of African Swine Fever on its website.*

## **6. Control measures applied to ensure that exported pork is free from ASF virus**

**There are no cases of ASF in domestic and captive wild pigs in Belgium, only the wild boar population is affected.**

Hence, **all pork exported from Belgium is free from ASF virus** (see OIE status point 7).

On 26 September 2018, the Federal Minister of Agriculture has decided by Ministerial Decree to order the **preventive culling of all domestic pigs and captive wild pigs in the initial infected zone (which is the**



**current Zone II and Zone I south**). Products of these pigs will therefore not enter the food chain and will not be used for the feed industry. This is a measure to prevent the spreading of the virus from wild boar to domestic pigs and kept wild pigs, to protect animal health and also to protect the commercial interests of the Belgian pork industry.

By means of the SANITEL database of the FASFC, in which all pig holders, holdings and pig herds are registered as well as movement of pigs, and the identification of pigs by means of their ear tags, the origin of the pigs can be traced. Pigs receive a new, additional, ear tag every time they leave a holding to go to another holding. This allows traceability of all animals to the holdings of origin and residence.

When issuing health certificates for export of pork or pork products from Belgium to third countries, the certifying officers of the FASFC **guarantee the bilateral agreements** laid down in the relevant protocols and certificates concluded between competent authorities of Belgium or the European Commission and the third countries.

## 7. Applicable legislation and International Standards

### Relevant Belgian legislation (only available in French and Dutch):

- Royal Decree of 19 March 2004 on the control of African swine fever;
- Royal Decree of 18 June 2014 laying down the measures to prevent notifiable disease in swine;
- Regional Ministerial Decree of 17 September 2018 laying down prohibiting movement in the forest to limit the spread of African swine fever;
- Federal Ministerial Decree of 26 September 2018 laying down urgent measures on the control of African swine fever;
- Decree of the Walloon Government of 12 October 2018 laying down the different temporary measures for eradication of African swine fever in wild boar;
- Regional Ministerial Decree of 12 October 2018 laying down movement restrictions in the forest to limit the spread of African swine fever;
- Decree of the Walloon Government of 8 November 2018 laying down the possibility of an allowance for the evacuation and transport of culled wild boar to the collect center in the frame of the eradication of ASF;
- Decree of the Walloon Government of 30 November 2018 laying down the different temporary measures for eradication of African swine fever in wild boar (modified 20 December 2018 and 11 January 2019).



**Relevant EU legislation:**

- Council Directive 2002/60/EC of 27 June 2002 laying down specific provisions for the control of African swine fever and amending Directive 92/119/EEC as regards Teschen disease and African swine fever (Annex 1);
- Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1242 of 14 September 2018 concerning certain interim protective measures relating to African swine fever in Belgium, and its Annex detailing the areas that are comprised in the infected zone (Annex 2);
- Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1281 of 21 September 2018 concerning certain interim protective measures relating to African swine fever in Belgium, and its Annex detailing the areas that are comprised in the infected zone (Annex 3).
- Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1856 of 27 November 2018 amending the Annex to Implementing Decision 2014/709/EU concerning animal health control measures relating to African swine fever in certain Member States (Annex 5).
- Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/100 of 22 January 2018 amending the Annex to Implementing Decision 2014/709/EU concerning animal health control measures relating to African swine fever in certain Member States (Annex 6).

**Terrestrial Animal Health Code of the World Animal Health Organization OIE**

Article 15.1.3 of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code on 'country or zone free from ASF', makes a distinction between two free statuses:

- Freedom in all suids;
- Freedom in domestic and captive wild pigs.

Due to the detection of ASF in wild boar, Belgium has lost its status 'freedom in all suids' but still complies with the conditions to keep the status 'freedom in domestic and captive wild pigs'. In conformity with these internationally agreed rules, the Belgian Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr. Jean-François Heymans, also Belgian delegate to the OIE, published on the website of the FASFC<sup>1</sup> an official attestation of the OIE status of Belgium as "**ASF free for domestic pigs and captive wild pigs**". Please find in attachment the attestation (Annex 4).

Article 15.1.2 provides: '*Commodities of domestic or captive wild pigs can be traded safely in accordance with the relevant Articles of this chapter from countries complying with the provisions of this Article, even if they notify infection with ASFV in wild or feral pigs or African wild suids.*'





### **WTO Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

Article 6.3 provides: *'Exporting Members claiming that areas within their territories are pest- or disease-free areas or areas of low pest or disease prevalence shall provide the necessary evidence thereof in order to objectively demonstrate to the importing Member that such areas are, and are likely to remain, pest or disease-free areas.'*

**Through this document Belgium is fulfilling this latter obligation.**

### **Belgium is free from ASF in domestic and captive wild pigs!**

**In accordance with the International Standards cited above, pork and pork products coming from Belgium can be traded safely without restrictions.**

## **8. Additional information**

<sup>1</sup> Additional information in English is available on the website of the FASFC: <http://www.favv-afsc.fgov.be/businesssectors/animalproduction/animalhealth/africanswinefever/>

This page also provides the link to the immediate notification report to the OIE and follow-up reports.

The FASFC has made available a separate website on ASF to inform all parties involved, only available in Dutch and French: <http://www.favv.be/avp/>

Additional information regarding the measures set in place by the Walloon Region is only available in French: <http://www.wallonie.be/fr/actualites/mesures-de-lutte-contre-la-peste-porcine-africaine>

Additional information regarding control measures for African Swine Fever on the website of the European Commission: [https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/animal-diseases/control-measures/asf\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/animal-diseases/control-measures/asf_en)

#### **Contact FASFC:**

- For any request for information on technical/sanitary aspects:  
Dr. Vet. Philippe Houdart, Head of the Crisis management and prevention department:  
+32 (0) 2 211 82 81 – mobile number: +32 (0) 478 50 01 72 – [philippe.houdart@favv.be](mailto:philippe.houdart@favv.be)



- For any request for information on trade aspects:  
Leslie Lambregts, Director of Staff department International Affairs, DG Control Policy:  
+32 (0) 2 211 86 22 – mobile number: +32 (0) 497 51 64 85 – [pccb.s4@favv.be](mailto:pccb.s4@favv.be)

## 9. Annexes

**Annex 1:** Council Directive 2002/60/EC of 27 June 2002 laying down specific provisions for the control of African swine fever and amending Directive 92/119/EEC as regards Teschen disease and African swine fever.

**Annex 2:** Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1242 of 14 September 2018 concerning certain interim protective measures relating to African swine fever in Belgium, and its Annex detailing the areas that should be comprised in the infected zone.

**Annex 3:** Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1281 of 21 September 2018 concerning certain interim protective measures relating to African swine fever in Belgium, and its Annex detailing the areas that should be comprised in the infected zone.

**Annex 4:** Official CVO attestation of the OIE status of Belgium as “ASF free for domestic pigs and captive wild pigs”.

**Annex 5:** Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1856 of 27 November 2018 amending the Annex to Implementing Decision 2014/709/EU concerning animal health control measures relating to African swine fever in certain Member States.

**Annex 6:** Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/100 of 22 January 2018 amending the Annex to Implementing Decision 2014/709/EU concerning animal health control measures relating to African swine fever in certain Member States.

---