

**For discussion on  
16 November 2018**

**ACFEH Paper 7/2018**

**Advisory Council on Food and Environmental Hygiene  
Outbreak of African Swine Fever on the Mainland**

**Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the Government's work in response to the recent outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF) on the Mainland.

**Background**

2. ASF is a contagious viral disease in pigs which will not be transmitted to human, hence posing no food safety or public health risk. Nevertheless, ASF poses a severe threat to pig production and may cause significant loss to pig farms, as it is highly contagious with a high mortality rate, but there is currently no vaccine nor treatment available.

3. According to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), there have been some 1 800 outbreaks of ASF in Europe, Africa and Asia between 2016 and 2018, causing losses of some 820 000 swine (excluding wild boars). The outbreak on the Mainland found in early August 2018 was the first report of ASF in Asia. As at 8 November, there have been outbreaks of ASF in 15 provinces/cities on the Mainland. Given the high mortality rate and the rapid pace of spreading of ASF, the outbreak on the Mainland could affect the supply of live pigs to Hong Kong.

4. Currently, some 94% of live pigs consumed in Hong Kong are supplied from the Mainland, with the remaining 6% by 43 local pig farms. Guangdong Province is the largest source of supply of live pigs to Hong Kong, accounting for over half of the market share. Since the outbreaks in August, the General Administration of Customs and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MoARA) have been stepping up control at the Mainland farm level, with a view to ensuring disease-free supply from the source and preventing the disease from spreading. Notwithstanding outbreaks in different provinces, so far, there is no outbreak in Guangdong, and none of the registered Mainland pig farms in 15 different provinces for supplying Hong Kong is affected. The supply of live pigs from the Mainland remains generally stable.

## **Preventive Measures and Contingency Plans**

5. As ASF could cause massive infection and death in pigs within short period of time which may affect the supply of live pigs, we have put in place a suite of preventive measures to minimise the risk of infection to Hong Kong, and drawn up contingency plans. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), including the Centre for Food Safety (CFS), have since August stepped up the biosecurity measures in various areas, including local pig farms, slaughterhouses and boundary checkpoints.

6. At local farm level, AFCD has sent letters and held seminars to remind and educate farmers to step up biosecurity measures and stay vigilant of sign of ASF infection. To ensure compliance, in particular biosecurity, AFCD has enhanced inspections to all local pig farms by doing two additional rounds of inspections on top of the routine monthly inspections. According to AFCD's observation, most farms have put in place good biosecurity measures including cleansing and disinfection of vehicles and personnel. AFCD has also drawn up a protocol on disinfection work for pig-carrying trucks, which is a crucial means for preventing infection to farms, for educating farmers on the good practice. In addition, local farmers have already suspended the importation of breeders from the Mainland. A few farmers who have been feeding pigs with swill of animal origin, which is considered one of the major channels of transmitting ASF to pigs, are phasing out the practice with technical advice and financial support from AFCD. A complete ban on the practice of swill feeding will be expressly set out in the licensing conditions as a mandatory requirement for all pig farms as soon as practical.

7. At slaughterhouse level, FEHD has strengthened the cleansing and disinfection work, including the slaughter lines, lairages, as well as vehicles and personnel entering and leaving the slaughterhouses, with a view to minimising the risk of spreading ASF virus from the slaughterhouses. Disinfection pools will be installed at the slaughterhouses in Sheung Shui for more thorough disinfection of vehicle wheels. Training has been provided to the personnel of the slaughterhouses to watch out for signs of ASF infection.

8. Regarding imported pigs, the Mainland authorities have recently announced a package of measures in quarantine and control in transporting live pigs to Hong Kong which ensures that live pigs for supply to Hong Kong undergo strict quarantine and control by the Mainland Customs authorities. CFS would ensure that all live pig consignments from the Mainland are from

registered farms and accompanied by valid health certificates issued by the Mainland Customs authorities. In addition, CFS would also closely monitor the health status of live pigs at the border control point to detect significant morbidity and mortality in the animal consignments. CFS and the Customs and Excise Department have also enhanced joint operations at border control points to crack down illegal importation of fresh meat. From August to October 2018, the number of prosecutions against the offenders (i.e. 47) was more than double of that recorded during the same period last year.

9. Apart from enhancing biosecurity, CFS will continue to conduct ante-mortem and post-mortem inspections in slaughterhouses on both imported and local pigs to ensure that those fit for human consumption are released to the market.

10. In addition, relevant departments have prepared a series of contingency plans on cleansing of sites and culling of pigs in the event of outbreak.

### **Liaison with Mainland counterparts**

11. Since early August, the Government has been maintaining close liaisons with relevant Mainland authorities, both at the upper echelon and working level, on the development and response actions. Timely notifications on the outbreak of ASF have been constantly received from MoARA, enabling us to plan our follow-up work in a swift and effective manner. During her visit to Beijing in end October 2018, the Secretary for Food and Health also raised her concern over the threat of ASF, and learnt from the relevant authorities of the latest situation of the outbreak of ASF on the Mainland, as well as their efforts in curbing the spread of the disease at the source and ensuring steady supply of live pigs to Hong Kong.

### **Conclusion**

12. ASF is a serious threat to the pig rearing sector. The Government has been making extensive preparations thus far, but we need to remain vigilant and work closely with the Mainland authorities and local stakeholders in order to guard against the disease from impacting on the local pig farms.

13. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

**Food and Health Bureau  
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department  
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department  
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