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## Romania

**Post:** Bucharest

### **Rising Toll of the African Swine Fever Virus in Romania**

**Report Categories:**

Livestock and Products

Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

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**Report Highlights:**

Romania recently reported additional African swine fever (ASF) detections in northwestern and southeastern regions. The Romanian National Veterinary Authority is concentrating its efforts to stop any further cases in affected areas and to mitigate the risk of contagion in new areas. To date, more than 45,000 pigs have been culled. The Romanian Government is amending regulations and considering new measures to support affected hog farmers and the pork industry.

### General Information:

## Status of the ASF Outbreaks

In June 2018, ASF was detected in southeastern Tulcea County. In July, additional ASF detections occurred in the four counties surrounding Tulcea County. Moreover, additional detections were reported in July in the same northwestern counties where Romania's first ASF cases were confirmed last year. According to new information from the Romanian National Veterinary Authority, 440 cases are confirmed in domestic pig operations, including two cases in a large commercial farm, as well as 16 ASF cases confirmed in wild boars in the northwestern and southeastern regions so far in 2018 (see the map below).



*Source: National Veterinary Authority, FAS*

To date, ASF has been confirmed in the following counties: Satu-Mare (five cases in backyard farms, and eight cases in wild boars), Bihor (17 cases in backyard farms, and one case in a wild boar), Salaj (one case in a wild boar), Tulcea (397 cases in backyard farms, two cases in one commercial farm, and six cases in wild boars), Braila and Constanta (each with seven cases in backyard farms) and Ialomita (five cases in backyard farms). The most recent outbreak was confirmed in Galati County, which borders Tulcea County.

The first ASF detection at a commercial farm was confirmed in late June 2018. The process of culling

the entire herd of 45,000 hogs is nearly completed. Pork meat stocks from this farm were declared unfit for consumption. Slaughter in the pork plant which also owns the affected farm has also been suspended. A second commercial farm in the Tulcea County is also suspected of ASF, although it remains to be confirmed. If confirmed, an additional 19,000 hogs would be culled, bringing the total number of culled hogs from commercial and backyard farms to nearly 65,000.

## **Financial Compensation**

Given the speed of contagion in June and July, and the potential threat ASF poses to Romania's entire pork industry, the disease is receiving high-level political attention from the Parliament and the Prime Minister's Office. At the technical level, the National Veterinary Authority is getting support from Government of Romania (GOR) to control the outbreaks and implement the ASF Contingency Plan. For example, the GOR recently amended legislation regarding financial compensations through Decision 484/2018. As a result, financial compensations are calculated by criteria including breed, genetic value, sex, weight, and market price for pork. The GOR also increased bounties for hunting wild boars, and for reporting cases of dead or sick wild boars. In some areas, particularly in ASF-affected areas, hunting may be restricted. Some experts warn that a large influx of hunters would drive the wild boars to migrate and spread the virus further.

Smallholder farmers are eligible for a certain compensation when reporting suspicious cases of sick or dead domestic pigs and ASF is confirmed. However, some smallholders are reluctant to report because they fear compensations will be late and/or not enough to cover their losses. Thus, backyard farms are likely to remain a high-risk for ASF.

The funding sources for financial compensations are from the Romanian and the European Union budgets. Eligibility for financial support would include culled animals, income losses generated by halting pork meat production, destroyed meat and/or animal products, income losses due to pork market price collapse.

## **Trade Impact**

ASF is likely to put additional pressure on Romania's balance of trade vis-à-vis live piglets and pork meat. Prices for domestic pork meat are likely to rise and pork imports are likely to increase. During the first four months of 2018, Romania imported about 28 percent more pork meat as compared to the corresponding period in 2017.

ASF also negatively affects farms with hogs presumably not infected, particularly in vulnerable areas. The National Veterinary Authority imposed temporary movement restrictions in order to avoid contagion. Even if officials approve movements of healthy hogs to slaughter plants, farmers fear the plants would not accept the deliveries, given the origin. Romania's entire pork industry is on a high alert and hog farmers are tightening their biosecurity measures even further. Livestock and feed industries joined the National Veterinary Authority's efforts in disseminating information about ASF and disease prevention measures at commercial and backyard farms.

Local farmers are desperately urging the GOR to take additional measures to mitigate or eliminate the risk of spreading the disease. The Bulgarian Government started to build a protective fence along its

border with ASF-positive counties in southeastern Romania. The 130 km-long fence covers about one-fifth of the Romanian-Bulgarian border and is intended to prevent wild boars from crossing into Bulgaria.