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African Swine Fever in Vietnam

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Report Highlights:

Vietnam is the third country in Asia (after China and Mongolia) to report an outbreak of African swine fever (ASF). ASF spreads quickly in a complicated and unpredictable manner and, in over a month, has been reported in 23 out of the total 63 municipalities and provinces in Vietnam despite the Vietnamese Government's (GVN) many drastic preventative measures.

Recognizing the high risk of ASF spreading and its potential economic impacts, Vietnam's Prime Minister has urged strong measures to deal with the disease. However, there is a risk that ASF will continue to spread further to other parts of the country.

Status Update

On February 19, 2019, Vietnam confirmed its first ASF outbreak with the announcement of detections in Thai Binh and Hung Yen provinces, which are located southeast of the capital Hanoi, approximately 160km away from the Chinese border. All ASF-infected pigs were reportedly culled and all infected farms were cleaned and disinfected. Since the February 19 announcement, the GVN has shown a good level of transparency, sending regular updates to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Experts speculate that ASF may have reached Vietnam through a number of different channels, including: (1) trade, transportation, and consumption of pigs and pork products smuggled, suspected of being smuggled, or those without clear origins, particularly in the northern border provinces at the end of 2018 and during Lunar New Year; (2) the large amount of transport vehicles and tourists travelling from other countries to Vietnam, especially those from Asian countries who often have the habit of carrying food containing pork; (3) imports of contaminated feed from ASF-infected countries; and, (4) the practice of feeding swill to pigs.

According to Vietnam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)'s preliminary investigations, one of the main reasons that ASF spread so quickly and widely to other municipalities/provinces was because many livestock farmers and traders were not fully aware of the danger of the disease. As a result, they may have bought and sold, transported, and slaughtered infected pigs or pigs suspected of being infected for immediate economic benefits.

As of March 27, 2019, ASF has been reported in 476 communes within 91 districts in 23 northern and northern central municipalities/provinces, namely Hung Yen, Thai Binh, Hai Phong, Ha Nam, Hai Duong, Hanoi, Nam Dinh, Thanh Hoa, Thai Nguyen, Hoa Binh, Ninh Binh, Lang Son, Dien Bien, Son La, Quang Ninh, Bac Kan, Nghe An, Bac Ninh, Thua Thien Hue, Lai Chau, Bac Giang, Quang Tri and Vinh Phuc. In attempt to control the spread of ASF, Vietnam local governments, in coordination with competent technical authorities, have culled 73,000 infected pigs.¹

Prior to March 20, 2019, ASF was mostly detected in small-scale household operations² with improper hygiene and biosecurity conditions and there were no detections reported in large-scale commercial farms³. However, since March 20, it has spread to large-scale pig-raising households and farms, for example, ASF detection has been reported in a herd of 4,500 pigs in Đông Tảo Commune, Khoai Chau District, Hung Yen Province.⁴ Despite Vietnam's strong efforts to contain ASF, there is still a risk that the disease could further spread to other parts of the country.

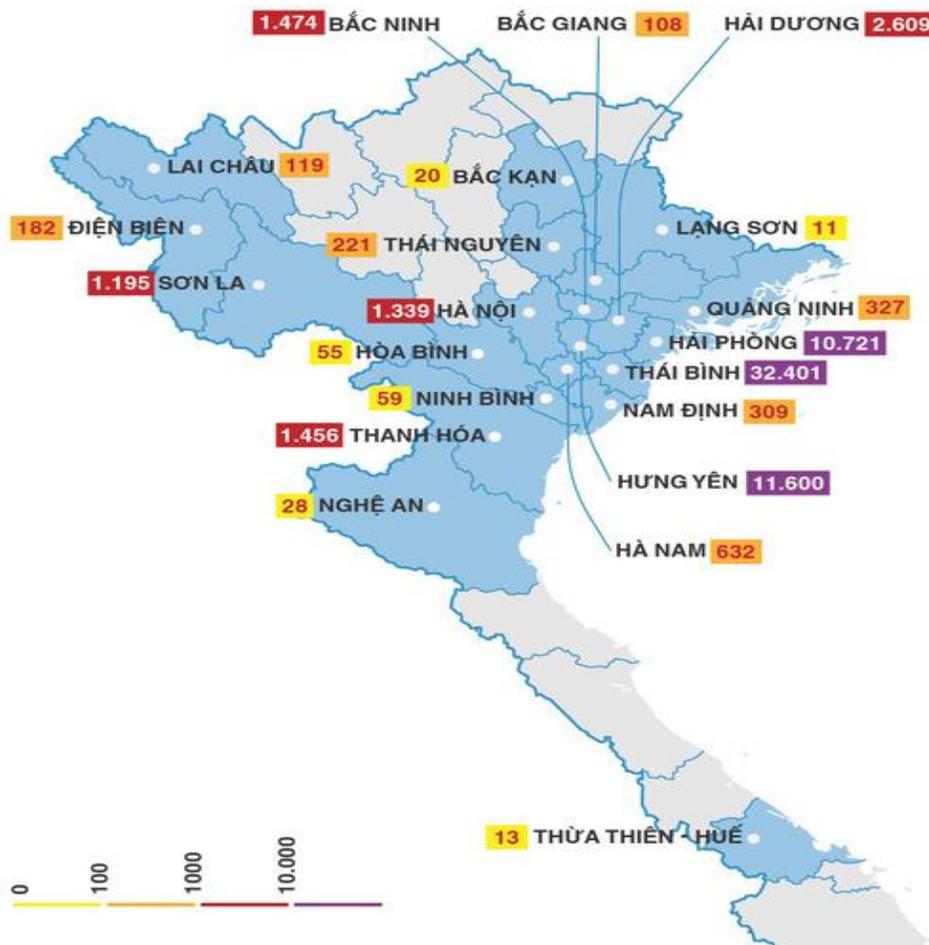
Figure 1: Map of ASF-affected localities and number of culled pigs in each locality (as of March 25, 2019)

¹ <http://www.sggp.org.vn/dich-ta-heo-lan-ra-toi-tinh-thu-23-583662.html>

² According to MARD, in 2018, there were about 2.5 million pig-raising households with a total number of 13.8 million pigs (accounting for 49 percent of the country's total pigs, about 42 percent of country's pork output, and about 22.8 percent of the livestock production value – based on the current price).

³ According to MARD, in 2017, there were 10,167 swine farms with a total number of 14.4 million pigs (accounting for 51 percent of the country's total pigs, about 58 percent of the country's pork output, and about 31.5 percent of the livestock production value – based on the current price)

⁴ <http://baohungyen.vn/kinh-te/201903/dich-ta-lon-chau-phi-lan-rong-toi-21-tinh-thanh-pho-ac81bd0/>



Source: <https://vietnambiz.vn/xoa-diu-noi-lo-nguoi-tieu-dung-truoc-dich-ta-heo-chau-phi-asf-20190326153747909.htm>

Government Actions

As soon as the first confirmed cases were reported, the Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc issued [Directive No.04/CT-TTg](#) on February 20, 2019, requesting all GVN ministries, agencies, and localities to focus on directing and implementing urgent solutions to control ASF. The GVN proactively stepped up its efforts to establish clear jurisdictions for the control of ASF under steering committees at different levels, perform regular site visits, and mobilize both local and international resources to contain the outbreak. Prime Minister Phuc has called for “drastic measures” from “the whole political system” to fight against ASF nationwide and stressed that combating ASF was equal to “fighting against enemies.”⁵ Prime Minister Phuc, himself, chaired a video teleconference on March 4, 2019 with the competent authorities of 63 provinces and municipalities to discuss measures to curb the spread of ASF. He also ordered localities to ban the transportation, trade, slaughtering, and consumption of swine and pork products that are smuggled or suspected of being smuggled and those without clear origin.

⁵ <http://en.nhandan.com.vn/society/health/item/7207202-pm-phuc-coping-with-african-swine-fever-the-same-as-fighting-against-enemies.html>

The GVN has instructed all aspects of the government and agricultural community to address ASF:

Ministries and agencies will: accurately inform the public of the disease; encourage people not to boycott pork products that are safe, non-infected, and processed hygienically; strengthen inspections; and provide guidance on good animal husbandry practices and biosecurity livestock management for pig farmers.

Local governments will support farmers who had infected pigs culled, including providing them with financial aid worth a minimum of 80 percent of the market price for culled piglets and pigs raised for meat consumption, with a 1.5-2-fold increase for culled breeding pigs, at the time and place of the outbreak.⁶

Farmers will implement the “five NOs” measures, NO: hiding outbreaks; buying, selling, or transporting dead or sick pigs; slaughtering or consuming dead or sick pigs; incorrectly disposing of swine carcasses into the environment; and using non-heat treated swill.

Local and international resources have been effectively mobilized. Vietnam has actively engaged with international organizations, including OIE and FAO, updating them on ASF developments and seeking support and assistance to find effective solutions to deal with the disease. FAO and OIE have proposed to offer technical assistance and work with agencies under MARD. FAO and OIE conducted an emergency response mission from March 11-15, 2019 in Vietnam to enhance the country’s ability to respond to and prevent further spread of ASF.⁷ Local large-scale livestock businesses have been providing financial support, sterilization chemicals, technical testing and diagnosis equipment and so on.

Following detections of ASF in neighboring countries in 2018, MARD issued a number of regulations and plans to prevent and control the epidemic. This included a national action plan for ASF Emergency Preparedness and Response and the establishment of a Rapid Response Team. Accordingly, ASF-affected farms were depopulated and a strict movement control policy was conducted in affected-provinces. Additionally, the GVN instituted closer monitoring to combat the smuggling, selling, and gifting of swine, pork, and pork products of unclear origin, while banning pork and pork product imports from some ASF infected countries.⁸ MARD has also conducted a number of surveillance and warning activities with active involvement from other GVN Ministries/agencies. For example, the Ministry of Industry and Trade has been closely monitoring the pork market to prevent the trade and transport of pork products of unknown/unclear origin, and to enact prompt measures to ensure the supply of pork products amidst concerns over possible shortages due to the ASF outbreaks in the Northern provinces.⁹ The General Department of Vietnam Customs also issued an official letter requesting local customs departments to tightly control border gates, people and transport vehicles entering Vietnam from ASF-affected countries.¹⁰

⁶ Government Resolution No. 16/NQ-CP dated March 7, 2019.

⁷ <http://www.fao.org/vietnam/news/detail-events/en/c/1185872/>.

⁸ From 20 September 2018, Vietnam temporarily bans pork import from ASF infected provinces of Hungary and Poland until the countries declare free of ASF following OIE regulations. (<http://www.nhandan.com.vn/kinhte/item/37613902-tam-dung-nhap-khau-thit-lon-va-san-pham-thit-lon-tu-hungary-va-ba-lan.html>).

⁹ <http://moit.gov.vn/web/guest/tin-chi-tiet/-/chi-tiet/bo-cong-thuong-hop-khan-ve-dich-ta-lon-chau-phi-14154-16.html>.

¹⁰ http://www.nhandan.com.vn/nation_news/item/37638102-quyet-liet-kiem-soat-benh-dich-ta-lon-chau-phi.html

Given the current mounting ASF threat, a national steering committee for the prevention and control of ASF headed by MARD Minister was set up on March 21, 2019. The committee is tasked with supporting the GVN to direct and coordinate efforts to curb the spread of ASF across the country.

Challenges for ASF Control in Vietnam

Although ASF is not transmissible to humans, the disease continues to spread rapidly. In addition, there is no vaccine or treatment for ASF at this time. As a result, if proper and timely prevention and control measures are not taken, ASF could spread widely to other parts of Vietnam.

There is also a high risk of the emergence of other infectious diseases and further ASF transmissions from neighboring countries to Vietnam in the near future. Furthermore, according to MARD's Department of Animal Health, due to recent mergers of district and commune-level animal health agencies and other agencies, there are no dedicated animal health agencies at the district and commune levels to closely monitor ASF and provide adequate training and guidance, making control and surveillance of the disease more challenging.

Another challenge is the continuing lack of awareness of the threat of spreading ASF. Despite the aforementioned government outreach, a number of swine farmers have still tried to sell off ASF-infected pigs or pigs suspected of ASF infection. In addition, some farmers may use infected pigs as food for other animals to avoid immediate economic losses. Other farmers may fail to strictly comply with preventive measures, recommended cleaning and disinfecting guidelines, or MARD's regulations regarding the suitable restocking time, or fail to report suspected ASF infections to the competent authorities.

MARD has identified three regions as being highly susceptible to ASF, namely the Red River Delta region (currently in red alert status), the northern mountainous region, and the southeastern region (Vietnam's key livestock production area). Although the largest swine herd (estimated at about 2.5 million pigs) is located in the south, most of the production in the southern region tends to be small-scale and fragmented.¹¹ This, combined with higher pork prices in the southern region, is resulting in an increasing trend of a large number of pigs being transported from the north to the south, increasing the risk of further (and bigger) outbreaks.

Impacts

If not controlled properly, ASF poses a huge threat to the local livestock industry. At this stage, it is difficult to predict the scope and the extent of the impacts on Vietnam, but Post expects the country's livestock sector will be significantly impacted over the near-future.

Vietnam's livestock industry is already facing many difficulties and challenges, such as low-livestock productivity, poor quality and food safety control, and low competitiveness. In addition to the ASF threat, the livestock sector has also been dealing with the spread of other contagious diseases, such as foot and mouth disease and Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome. According to MARD's report, in 2018, there were about 30 million pigs in Vietnam, producing 3.82 million tons of pork and

¹¹ Dangcongsan.vn/xa-hoi/dong-nai-quyet-liet-phong-chong-dich-ta-lon-chau-phi-515670.html

pork products, accounting for 72 percent of the country's meat output. If ASF outbreaks continue, farmers may be reluctant to replenish their herd, leading to a longer-term disruption in the supply chain, supply shortages, and higher prices. Post believes that domestic pig production will remain flat in both calendar year (CY) 2019 and CY20. This will, in turn, reduce the demand for swine feed. However, Post expects poultry and aqua feed production to remain strong, offsetting any fall in swine feed production and leading to a small increase in feed production. Please see the forthcoming Vietnam Grain and Feed Annual report for more information on the effect of ASF on the feed market. In addition, Post expects pork imports to increase in order to keep up with growing consumer demand.

Given current fears of the spread of ASF and to address consumer food safety concerns, some food enterprises have announced their intention to tighten their control over input material sources and to cease using domestic pork meat. Although many of these food processing companies have indicated that they may begin sourcing imported pork meat from ASF-free countries, in reality, VietGAP-certified pork or pork meat with clear origins, will likely still sell well on the market. And as previously noted, major livestock companies with advanced biosecurity, such as the CP Vietnam, Dabaco, and the Masan Group, have developed "3F" supply chains (feed, farm, food) which have not been affected by ASF so far. ASF-related import bans from other countries could threaten export-oriented pork businesses. GVN sources have stated that Vietnam will not ban pork imports from ASF-free countries.

Since the pork price collapse in 2017, Vietnam's livestock industry has been shifting from backyard production to concentrated large-scale farms with integrated value chains. ASF will likely accelerate this trend and lead to the adoption of better food safety controls and traceability to protect domestic sales and exports from future outbreaks. In addition, according to some agricultural experts, the current ASF outbreak could be an impetus for livestock industry reforms, such as organized farming, improved productivity and quality, and enhanced competitiveness of domestically raised products, particularly as the GVN passed its Law on Livestock Production in November 2018, which will enter into force on 1/1/2020.

Post will continue to monitor ASF developments and look for opportunities to collaborate with Vietnam on the issue.