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African Swine Fever in Vietnam

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Approved By:

Megan M. Francic

Prepared By:

Nga Bui

Report Highlights:

African swine fever (ASF) continues to spread rapidly throughout Vietnam, despite continuing efforts by the Vietnamese Government (GVN) to limit the impact. Vietnam announced its first detection of ASF on February 19, 2019. As of June 17, 2019, the disease spread to 58 out of 63 municipalities and provinces across the country with 2,637,051 pigs depopulated, equal to nearly 9.4 percent of the country's total swine population. As of June 4, Vietnam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) estimated ASF damage at VND 3.6 trillion (\$154.8 million). ASF's medium and long-term economic and social impacts will depend on the severity of the epidemic, the policy response, and Vietnam's animal disease control capacity. Although there is no human health risk, ASF is already influencing consumer purchasing behavior. Given the complexity of the ASF situation, it may take a significant amount of time before Vietnam can control the disease and fully repopulate its swine herds.

General Information:

Status Update

For the previous ASF status update, please see [GAIN Report VM9012](#). In May 2019, MARD Minister Nguyen Xuan Cuong stated that Vietnam has never faced such a dangerous, complicated, difficult, and expensive epidemic in its livestock production industry as ASF. As of June 17, 2019, there have been detections of ASF in more than 4,180 communes within 429 districts of 58 municipalities and provinces in Vietnam, resulting in the depopulation of 2,637,051 pigs, equal to nearly 9.4 percent of the nation's total swine population.¹ It is important to note that not all depopulated pigs were infected, but any herds surrounding ASF-infected pigs are also culled. The number of ASF-affected provinces has increased from 29 to 58 since May 12. In addition, according to media reports, as of June 6, 2019, the disease has reappeared in 47 communes within 15 provinces.² A reappearing outbreak is characterized by a new case after 30 days of no ASF detections. Of note, ASF has also spread to larger-scale farms. According to Minister Cuong, the rapid spread of the virus was, among others, due to the unusual weather conditions (humid and drizzly weather) in Vietnam this year.

Government's Latest Actions in Response to the Spread of ASF

In addition to the previous GVN's actions in response to the spread of ASF (please see [GAIN Report VM9012](#)), MARD continues to raise the alarm on ASF and the need for more drastic and serious epidemic control activities. Since the detection of the first ASF outbreak, the GVN has issued many guidelines and instructions that share the following key messages, including:

- Prevention as the main defense against ASF due to the unavailability of vaccines or drugs;
- Biosecurity is the only weapon to prevent the spread of ASF;
- All aspects of the government and the agricultural community must be involved in the combat against ASF.

The GVN has also tasked the police and army to help fight ASF outbreaks and stated that veterinary services at all levels and veterinary capacity, in general, need to be strengthened. The government is also encouraging localities to restructure their livestock production sectors and diversify herds to make up for the possible shortage of pork.

Party and Central Government

On May 17, Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc issued [Directive No.4291/VPCP-NN](#) assigning Deputy Prime Minister Trinh Dinh Dung to lead the country's ASF prevention and control program. The Directive states:

¹ According to MARD, as of October 1, 2018, there were 28,151,948 pigs in Vietnam.

² <https://laodong.vn/xa-hoi/dich-ta-lon-chau-phi-24-tinh-dut-duoc-dich-thi-15-tinh-bi-tai-nhiem-737660.ldo>

- MARD shall assume the primary responsibility in coordinating the urgent review of legal documents and developing conditions for livestock production and the slaughtering and consumption of pork products;
- MARD and the Ministry of Science and Technology shall develop a plan for ASF control and prevention, including research and production of vaccines, to proactively combat ASF;
- MARD shall send timely updates on the ASF situation to international organizations and work in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to proactively approach international organizations and countries to request support for Vietnam;
- The Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT) shall promote purchases and freezer storage of clean pigs in the ASF-affected localities in order to minimize the disease's spread, stabilize prices, and help ensure clean food sources to meet the market demand during the coming months and to strengthen market inspections to prevent the trade/transport of pigs and pig products of unknown origin;
- The Ministry of Finance shall work with relevant Ministries and agencies to make proposals on the use of the state budget to support the ASF control and prevention;
- The Ministry of Information and Communications shall instruct media agencies to provide timely and accurate information to the public.

In response to the current complicated ASF situation, on May 20, 2019, the Secretariat of the Communist Party of Vietnam issued [Directive No.34-CT/TW](#) to direct all aspects of government to strengthen their leadership for effective implementation of ASF control and prevention.

In response to comments made by industry, MARD issued [Guidance No. 3708/HD-BNN-TY](#) on May 28, 2019 providing guidance on the slaughter of pigs and the consumption of pig products. The Guidance includes requirements, such as: directing the transport of pigs from farms/farming households to slaughter facilities; pre- and post-cleaning and disinfecting of pig collection facilities and vehicles; testing for ASF before transportation to slaughter facilities; and, quarantine certificates for the movement of animals out of affected provinces. Of note, the Guidance allows slaughter facilities in affected areas to receive and slaughter pigs that are healthy and tested negative from farms located inside and outside epidemic areas. Industry considers this final as a less strict approach than that in MARD's [Decision 4527/QĐ-BNN-TY](#), dated November 15, 2018.³

Given the increasing severity of the ASF outbreaks, the GVN has signaled that it will issue a resolution outlining a number of urgent solutions to ASF. Accordingly, the GVN plans to assign Ministry of Finance to make an immediate, advance payment of about VND 1,200 billion (\$51.5 million) from the central budget to ASF-hit localities to support affected pig farmers.

Local Government Actions

³ Under this Decision, it was strictly forbidden to move pigs and pig products into or out of epidemic areas and areas susceptible to ASF infection. It created difficulties for large-scale slaughterhouses and farms. <http://danviet.vn/nha-nong/kien-nghi-mo-cua-giai-phong-cho-cac-trai-lon-khong-nhiem-benh-979292.html>.

- Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) has discouraged pig farmers from expanding their herds to minimize the spread of ASF.
- 24/7 checkpoints have been set up on key roads to prevent infected pigs from being transported into HCMC for consumption.
- The HCMC People’s Committee has been working with wholesale meat providers such as CP Vietnam, Vissan, San Ha, and Ba Huan to prepare large amounts of safe pork to ensure the city’s demand – 147 tons of pork per day and 400 tons of poultry per day – can be met.⁴ According to the City’s Department of Industry and Trade, HCMC continues to ensure an adequate pork supply, however, the local government is still encouraging businesses to buy healthy pigs and stockpile frozen pork to prepare for potential shortages.
- The southern province of Dong Nai, Vietnam’s “pig capital,” has decided to offer compensation ranging from VND 216,000 (\$9.30) to VND 3.240.000 (\$139.00) per culled pig.⁵
- Ha Nam province, dubbed the pig capital in the north of Vietnam, has spent VND 54 billion (\$2.1 million), or 50 percent of its local government’s contingency budget, to support farmers for the 23 percent of the total herd that was culled due to ASF.⁶

Challenges for ASF Control in Vietnam

ASF is a global threat, with more than 60 ASF affected countries across five continents⁷ and there is growing concern regarding the spread of ASF within regions.⁸ Despite the GVN’s efforts to control the disease, new detections continue. As a result, Vietnam faces challenges to replenishing its herd.

Small pig-raising farms and households are facing the biggest threat from ASF, as they lack the capacity and biosecurity resources to prevent the disease. According to MARD, in 2018, there were about 2.5 million pig-raising households with a total number of 13.8 million pigs or 49 percent of the country’s total pigs. Furthermore, despite the GVN’s public communication campaigns, many pig-raising households still use leftovers/swill from local restaurants/eateries to feed their pigs, adding to the risk of ASF infection. In many localities, pig farmers have reportedly not been able to properly dispose of affected pigs due to the lack of burial space. As a result, many pig farmers have culled the pigs themselves and dumped the carcasses into insecure locations, such as rivers, raising the risk of further spreading the disease.

Consumer Reactions to ASF

⁴ <http://tphcm.chinhphu.vn/dich-ta-heo-chau-phi-%E2%80%9Cap-sat%E2%80%9D-tphcm-gap-rut-ung-pho>

⁵ <https://tuoitre.vn/dong-nai-giam-muc-ho-tro-tieu-huy-heo-bi-dich-ta-chau-phi-20190606195428339.htm>

⁶ <http://baochinhphu.vn/Utilities/PrintView.aspx?distributionid=367837>

⁷ The 87th World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) Annual Meeting in Paris in May 2019

⁸ According to OIE, China reported its first outbreaks in August 2018, followed by Mongolia in January 2019, by Vietnam in February 2019, by Cambodia in April 2019, and by Democratic People’s Republic of Korea on 23 May 2019

Although the GVN has reassured consumers that pork is safe for consumption and not to boycott pork and pork products, many companies and schools have stopped using these products for prepared meals for their employees and students. Recognizing that consumer reactions to ASF could have a large, negative impact on the Vietnam's swine industry, the GVN has launched public education campaigns to raise consumer awareness and advise people not to boycott pork. Vietnamese consumers have a strong preference for "fresh" or "warm" meat, i.e. newly slaughtered, un-chilled pork, sold at traditional markets, as their primary source of meat over imported chilled or frozen cuts. Thus, almost all pork produced in Vietnam is sold as "fresh/warm" meat. The GVN's concern is that the stockpile of frozen pork may not sell well due to the consumption habit of the Vietnamese consumers.

While Vietnamese consumers have a strong preference for fresh food, there have also been increasing food safety concerns in recent years. Given ASF outbreak reports, many consumers have switched to alternate meats, such as chicken and other poultry, with many reducing or even stopping their consumption of pork products, despite the fact that there is no human health risk. Other consumers are changing preference to buy higher-priced pork and pork products from modern retail outlets, such as supermarkets, as opposed to traditional/wet markets. Modern retailers such as CoopMart, Big C, and VinMart have seen a slight increase in the sales of pork compared to the pre-ASF period. There is anecdotal evidence of rising pork prices in northern Vietnam.

Impacts of ASF

ASF will have significant impacts on the production and trade in pork, other meats, and livestock feed ingredients. As projected in the 2019 April 9 Netherlands-based Rabobank Group report, Vietnam's pork production will likely decrease by more than 10 percent this year. Other sources are forecasting that Vietnam may have to import meats of all kinds to make up for the deficiency in domestic production.

ASF outbreaks have decreased the global pork supply, leading to potentially higher pork prices and greater demand for non-pork meat products, such as beef and poultry. Sources are stating that Vietnam's ASF outbreaks and the possible declining demand from China due to China's tariffs imposed on the U.S. pork (62 percent) and beef (37 percent) may lead to greater U.S. pork and other meat exports to Vietnam. Statistics showed that U.S. poultry exports to Vietnam have already surged 24 percent by value and 48 percent by quantity in the first quarter of 2019, as compared to the same period last year. Hong Kong, Russia, and Brazil are other important exporters of pork and poultry to Vietnam. India and Australia dominate the beef export market.

ASF outbreaks have reportedly depressed Vietnam's feed consumption, especially for hog feed. Prior to the outbreak of ASF, pork production accounted for the vast majority of the total feed market of approximately 30 million tons. Industry reports that some feed companies have experienced a 30-50 percent drop in sales.⁹ Industry expects Vietnam's feed product imports to decline due to ASF and the shrinking pig population. Please see [GAIN Vietnam Grain and Feed Annual 2019 and the forthcoming Vietnam Grain and Feed Update](#) for more information. However, Post expects demand for poultry and aqua feed imports will remain strong.

⁹ http://agromonitor.vn/thuc-an-chan-nuoi-lao-dao-theo-dich-ta-lon-chau-phi_106299.html

