

PANORAMA

Thematic portfolio



Strengthening preparedness
and resilience to emergencies



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PERSPECTIVES

DOSSIER

AROUND THE WORLD

In June 2019, the offices of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) in the Americas and the Delegate of Canada to the OIE jointly conducted a survey of OIE Members and non-members to better understand the current level of preparedness for African swine fever (ASF) introduction into the region [1].

ASF is a contagious viral disease of domestic and wild pigs that can cause devastating economic and production losses. The dramatic change in the global epidemiology of ASF since 2018 has heightened concerns that the virus might spread to disease-free regions, such as the Americas, home to approximately 177 million domestic pigs.

Given the variability in the level of oversight and veterinary capacity to deal with emerging animal diseases in the region, a coordinated approach to prevent and respond to the threat of ASF is required. To address this need, a Standing Group of Experts on ASF (SGE-ASF) for the Americas was established in September 2019 [1].

Below is a summary of the results from two questionnaires on the matter, and action is being taken to address the findings.

The first questionnaire on risk pathways for ASF included questions regarding live pig imports, pork and pork products, and contaminated fomites

A descriptive analysis of the binary responses (yes/no) was conducted. The key findings were:

- Introduction through live pigs and fomites is unlikely since no country imports pigs from infected countries or has personnel working on infected farms abroad.
- Should the virus enter, spread could occur through inadequate controls of the disinfection and use of vehicles for imported pigs/pig products, which was reported in 59% of countries.
- The biggest risk is through personal imports of pork and pork products, a practice reported by 28% of countries. This risk is compounded by swill feeding and unprotected landfills reported in over half of countries.
- Awareness-raising to discourage imports from infected countries was reported by 90% of countries.

The second questionnaire assessed 42 emergency preparedness measures

The variables were classified into four categories:

- legal authority
- human resources
- infrastructure
- preparedness planning.

The percentage of positive responses within each category was calculated and categorised as:

- green (more than 80%)
- yellow (60%–80%)
- pink (less than 60%).

Countries were grouped by sub-regional level (North America, Central America, Caribbean, South America). The category of preparedness planning was further divided into response plans, training and exercises to inform where capacity-building should be directed.

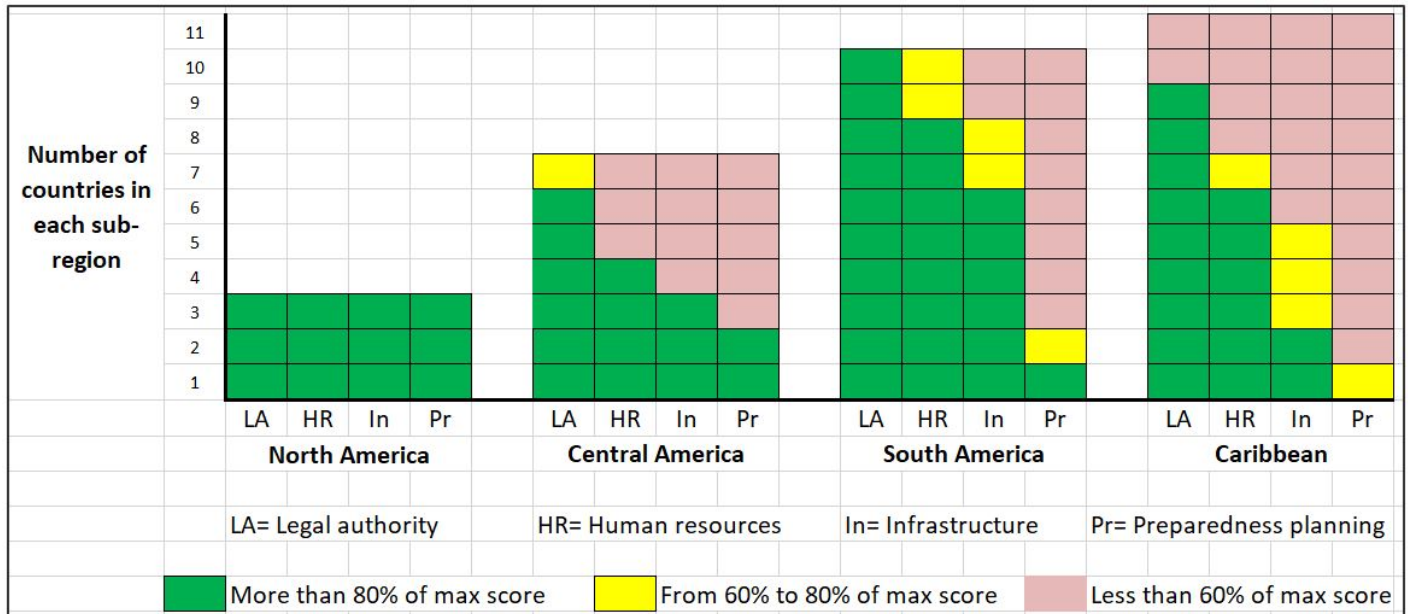


Fig. 1. Analysis of African swine fever emergency preparedness in the Americas by sub-region

The results showed a mixed state of preparedness in all sub-regions, with the exception of North America, where all countries scored above 80% (Fig. 1). In the other sub-regions, most countries reported having the legal authority to control ASF and scored well for human resources. Infrastructure capacity, such as national incident management systems, emergency funding, laboratories, equipment and supplies for investigations, showed more variability.

Preparedness planning was the weakest area. Closer analysis showed that, while some countries have undertaken training in emergency preparedness, this has not been translated to the development of response plans and training exercises.

We aim to keep the Americas ASF-free through capacity-building and coordinated action

Several capacity-building activities have taken place to address key areas identified through the survey. The first two meetings of the SGE–ASF focused on best practices for strengthening border controls and the analysis of risk pathways [2, 3]. Training of OIE Laboratory Focal Points on ASF diagnostics and surveillance was conducted in December 2019, with OIE Communication Focal Points receiving training in August 2020. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) provided broad training on ASF in Central America and the Caribbean.

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PERSPECTIVES

▶ OIE ACTIONS

Emergency preparedness for ASF in the Americas

KEYWORDS

#African swine fever (ASF), #Americas, #capacity building, #communication, #emergency preparedness, #Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GFPTADs), #Standing Group of Experts (SGE), #survey.

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