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2nd OIE global conference on antimicrobial resistance

The OIE Global Conference on Animicrobial Resistance (AMR) was held in Marrakech (Morocco) 29-31 October 2018. It included a public forum discussion attended by more than 500 representatives from all over the world, mainly veterinarians working for governmental bodies.

The conference's aim was to collectively examine how best to support member countries in the fulfillment of the objectives of the OIE Strategy on Antimicrobial Resistance and the Prudent Use of Antimicrobials, and the Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance.
It was within this framework that the OIE Director General presented the following points to guide the OIE's work in this regard:

- Put forward the need to develop a deeper knowledge of the mechanisms involved in the development of antimicrobial resistance and animal health management investment needs.
  - In this regard, we have a solid core of scientific alerts and data originating in the field of human medicine.
  - "This is the basis for working out the considerations behind institutional political commitments and global data collection, both in the lab environment and on the ground." The OIE DG then reminded the audience of
- The importance of the concept of One Health encompassing the biological well-being of all living things, human and animal. This holistic approach makes it possible to:
  - coordinate the work of the various organisations and institutions participating in the One Health program, on the global and local level, which means, for example, developing effective monitoring of illegal traffic in antimicrobials,
  - and launch campaigns to raise awareness among the various stockholders, and ensure more effective training of veterinarians and paramedical professionals.

The successful implementation of all programs to help fight AMR in member countries requires posing the following basic questions:

- How, in practice, we can get beyond simply establishing general principles?
- How can we aid the various actors, including producers?
- How can we avoid the risk of simply following fashion?

The conference set out to accomplish the following main institutional goals (for a more detailed list, see Newsletter 594 (September 2018):

- To inform participants about the initiatives taken by the Tripartite partnership (WHO-FAO-OIE) and other organisations involved in the One Health project to control AMR in humans, animals, plants and the environment, on the regional, national and international level;
- Encourage international solidarity to support the OIE and its

member countries in the implementation of its Strategy on Antimicrobial Resistance by encouraging the prudent use of antimicrobials.

Clearly the OIE has succeeded in its aim of reaffirming its leading role in the global fight against AMR and its specific role as the organism of reference in the field of animal health, while also upholding the need to develop a concerted approach with its Tripartite partners, the WHO and the FAO. Local veterinarians and producers also have an important role to play in supporting tlhis world campaign to safeguard human and animal health.

The OIE's cooperation with the main representatives of the food animal industry, including the meat industries, has highlighted the important role of the IMS and its commitment to the complex process of raising awareness on the ground of the risks that AMR presents to humans and animals, sharing scientific and technical knowledge developed in this field, and setting standards for the production use of antimicrobial agents.

The IMS's global implantation and long-standing links with animal health initiatives has enabled it to play a role in supporting OIE policies. This round table involving food industry representatives gave a glimpse of its potential to become one of the actors who will ensure the achievement of the objectives of the combat against the growing problem of AMR among livestock.

Please note that as part of the regular negotiation process in the Codex Alimentarius framework, the Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance (TFAMR6) will receive its recommendations at the upcoming Busan (South Korea) Conference, 10-14 December 2018 (TFAMR6).

As part of this long-term global process that is so important for human health and the maintenance of the best possible sanitary conditions for livestock, IMS members should take the necessary steps to make sure that their views are taken into account and present scientific and technical arguments in accord with OIE guidelines. They should also ensure that they are regularly informed so that they can seek to negotiate the detailed content of lists of antibiotics to be used in the future.

We will continue this presentation of the role of international organisations involved in the fight against AMR in the next issue of this newsletter.

Jacques Servière
IMS Scientific Advisor

Session 6

Industry panel: Driving private sector engagement in the global response to antimicrobial resistance (click here)

The participants in the Second Global Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance and the Prudent Use of Antimicrobials made the following recommendations to the Tripartite organizations (FAO, OIE and WHO) and member countries. (click here) It should be noted that the conclusions expressed by the various speakers are in continuity with the recommendations made by the previous mandate. Among the proposals made, we would highlight a prudent evolution (for instance, the development of autovaccines, the use of antiparasites and a strategy regarding pets).

A topic of particular interest and doubtlessly the hottest, concerned the development of lists of detailed recommendations of the antibiotics to be used for each animal pathology. It is probable that these lists will remain national in character, at least in the initial phases of the implementation of the AMR plan. Therefore attention should be paid to the development of the content of these lists as soon as they are made available to the relevant stakeholders.

Are Europe's major pig producers at risk of African swine fever?

There is now a very real danger that African swine fever will spread to the major pig producing areas of Germany and Austria.

The warning comes from the Russian veterinary agency Rosselkhoznador following the dramatic spread of the disease in Romania and also the discovery of cases in wild boar in Belgium in October this year. A recent report from the Russian vets said that they had repeatedly warned the EU about the lack of effectiveness of measures that were being taken by the EU authorities to combat the spread of ASF and that the Russian experts had concluded that the number of wild boar needed to be controlled, but measures have not been adopted by the European Union.

"Only now have they started the destruction of wild boars, which is too late and has caused social tensions in the EU countries," the Rosselkhoznador report says. "Given the epizootic situation, it is possible to predict the further penetration of the disease into the European Union. There is a real risk of ASF introduction to Austria, Germany through wild boars and seeing the ASF pathogen established in the Alpine mountains."

Rosselkhoznador said that because of the steady growth of the wild boar population in Europe, despite reports about the active shooting of wild boars, and the inefficiency of the efforts to manage the boar population, the geography of European countries is ripe for the disease to spread. And the Russian vets said that this led them to be concerned that it could spread over the borders into some other parts of Russia.

There are concerns that the outbreaks in Moldova and Romania that have spread rapidly in recent months will spread further throughout the Balkan region and other neighbouring countries. The first ASF outbreak in Romania was detected on 27 July 2017. By 24 September 24 this year there had been 947 outbreaks of the disease were notified to the OIE, of which 906 among domestic pigs and 41 among wild boar. According to official figures, about 320,000 pigs were have been culled in 14 months in Romania.

Rosselkhoznador said that since the outbreaks in Russia, the Russian authorities have been monitoring the spread of eh disease and had produced models to show how it would spread westwards through Ukraine and Estonia.

Since the first outbreak was discovered in the EU in Lithuania five years ago, the disease had spread rapidly through eight EU countries - Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria - before the discovery of the disease in Belgium. The spread of the disease in the Baltic and Eastern EU states is believed to have been through the migration of wild boar from Belarus and Russia.

Rosselkhoznador has warned the EU that European manufacturers have hidden and hide the real situation about the spread of ASF in their countries. "It is much worse than covered in official reports," the Rosselkhoznador report says. "This leads to the fact that non-heat-treated pig products contaminated with ASF can enter the food chain. Given the large export opportunities of the EU countries, such infected pork poses huge risks for the spread of ASF in other countries, including China."

The initial case of ASF in Belgium was discovered 60 km from the border with Germany and 20 km from the border with Luxembourg and France. By the end of October, the Belgian authorities had reported 124 cases of ASF in wild boar in the Luxembourg region of the country.

Immediately, the EU laid out contingency plans to deal with the disease, including hunting bans in affected areas, movement controls, surveillance, ensuring high levels of biosecurity in all pig holdings, fighting illegal trade in meat or pig products and raising awareness in farmers and the local population.

The European Commission put in place interim protective measures under 2002/60/EC Article 15, delineated by the border with Luxembourg and France. An Infected zone has been established of 630 km2, within which there are strict biosecurity measures. Similar regionalisation biosecurity measures were established in Bulgaria in November to prevent the spread of the disease further in that region and to protect other EU countries as well as amending the control measures for the other affected countries.

The Belgian Food Agency, the Belgian reference laboratory, Scienscano, and the Walloon Region said: "The situation is being taken very seriously by the relevant authorities and policy levels in Belgium and Europe. The measures are

carefully planned and monitored in view of the impact on livestock farming and hunting.

“A national task force was set up in early 2018 in this respect. The various levels of competence will continue to work closely together in order to take the best possible preventive and control measures. The same thing happens at European level, where the necessary contacts were immediately made with the neighbouring countries and the European Commission, which also immediately promised its support in the management.”

To prevent spread of the virus to unaffected countries, Germany issued a decree allowing hunting of wild boar populations during the entire year and has rehearsed response tactics in the case of an African swine fever outbreak.

The German Federal Minister of Food and Agriculture, Julia Klöckner, said: "I take the new situation very seriously. African swine fever has long been a threat to Germany and we are preparing for the crisis, and the legal instruments are in place to fight African swine fever paving the way for complementing the existing measures and combating an outbreak in wild boar more effectively.

“Prevention comes first. In particular, education is needed here because it is above all people, who promote the spread of the disease by, for example, carelessly disposing of leftovers of pork products contaminated with ASF - a source of infection for wild boar. That's why we have started a multilingual education campaign. Here we are spreading information online and with flyers and posters at service stations and rest areas on the roads. "

Denmark has approved plans for a fence along its border with Germany to stop wild boar movements between the countries as a precaution. The Danish Veterinary and Food Administration (DVFA) said: “The risk of Denmark being affected by African swine fever remains low. However, a finding of the disease in Belgium is worrying.

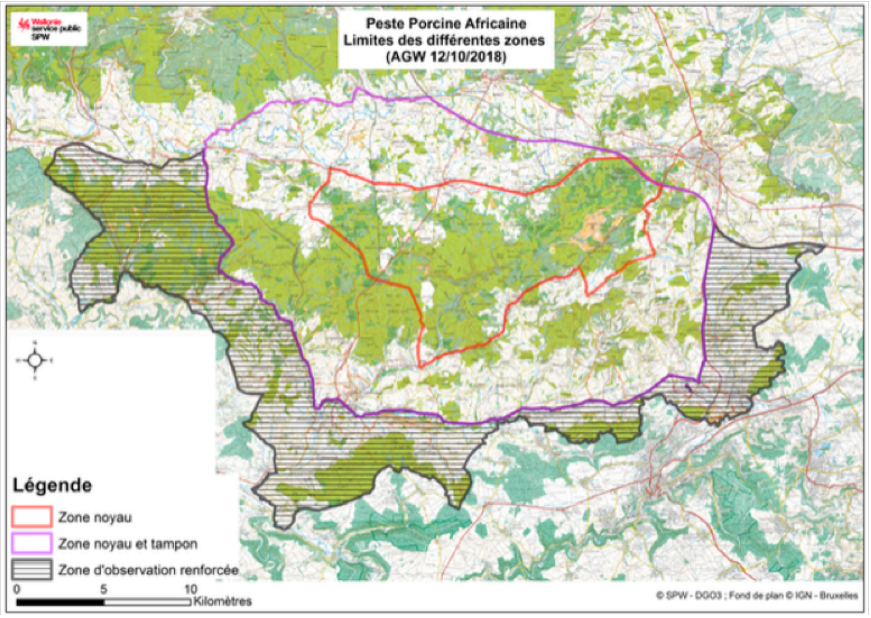
“Actions have been taken to eliminate wild boars in nature in Denmark by planning to raise a fence at the Germany/Danish border and by intensifying the surveillance and control of wild boars. They are to be shot in accordance with Danish legislation administered by the Danish Nature Agency.”

The DVFA added: “The Danish Industry has chosen to supplement the EU and national legislation with the establishment of the industry code "Danish Transport Standard". All vehicles entering Denmark with the purpose of transporting pigs or cattle have to be washed and disinfected at an approved facility after crossing the border. Control of this will be intensified after the latest development of ASF. “The DVFA is monitoring the situation closely and is constantly considering whether there is a need for adjustments or entirely new precautions.”

In the immediate aftermath of the discovery, Belgium culled around 4,000 pigs in the Étalle region, while 13 countries banned pork imports from Belgium, including Taiwan, South Korea, Serbia, Singapore, China, Belarus, Australia, Japan, Philippines, Mexico, Uruguay, Malaysia and India.

In France, Stéphane Travert, the Minister of Agriculture and Food, called on the prefects of the Ardennes, Meuse, Moselle and Meurthe and Moselle, to implement a strengthened action plan specific to the disease, under the coordination of DGAL (General Directorate of Food) to prevent the introduction of the virus into the country.

Mr Travert, implemented zoning measures, placed restrictions of certain activities such as hunting and enhanced surveillance of livestock and wildlife in the four departments bordering Belgium. The plan also includes the strengthening of biosecurity measures to prevent the introduction of the virus into pig farms and as well slaughterhouse surveillance measures.



Protection Zones for African swine fever outbreak in Belgium. (Source Chasse Belgium)

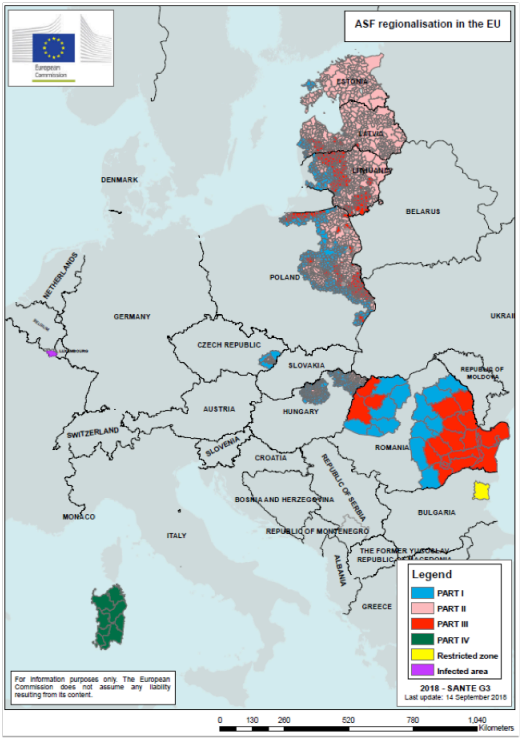
Vets in the Czech Republic immediately ordered heightened checks on imports of pig meat products from Belgium as well as the other EU states that have been affected by ASF.

In the UK, the Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs said: "The risk level remains at medium. The risk of exposure to the pig population in the UK is still highly dependent on the level of biosecurity on individual pig premises but is still considered to be low, although the situation is being kept under review.

"As the weather gets colder over the winter, it is more difficult to effectively disinfect vehicles and equipment, but the ASF virus can persist in cold temperatures for many weeks. It is important to highlight that all products of porcine origin (including wild boar), unless processed in a certain way, is a high-risk commodity from affected areas.

"These products include fresh or frozen pig meat, salamis and hams, skins and 4 bristles, germinal products, live animals, hunting trophies and any equipment which has had contact with an affected animal or the environment where they are found."

Chris Harris
Agriculture and Food Journalist



African swine fever in the EU (Source European Commission)

A proposal to jointly regulate cultured meat

When meat is "meat," where should it fit under the law?.

Over the past year, so-called "cultured meat" — that is, meat grown from animal cells in a laboratory rather than on the animal itself — has gone from being a snickered-at curiosity to being a potentially legitimate market alternative to traditional meat products. The problem, however, has been how to regulate it. Is cultured meat an actual meat, which would mean regulation including inspection, by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS), or is it a food to be regulated by the Food and Drug Administration?

This kind of question has come up before — frozen meat-topped pizza, for example, is both a meat and a food — but never at such an elemental level. The very definition of meat is being stretched by cultured meat products.

Back in August, the North American Meat Institute and Memphis Meats, a producer of cultured meat, sent a joint letter to the Trump Administration that USDA and FDA both "…have roles to play in regulating cell-based meat and poultry products. To ensure the regulatory system protects consumers while fostering innovation, it is imperative that the agencies coordinate and collaborate in their efforts, consistent with established policy."

Joint regulation

Last month, FDA and USDA agreed. As reported on Nov. 20 by Food Business News, the two agencies proposed to "have FDA oversee cell collection, cell banks and cell growth and differentiation. Production and labeling of food products derived from cultured cells of livestock and poultry will fall into USDA's jurisdiction." In a joint statement, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue and FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb said: "This regulatory framework will leverage both the FDA's experience regulating cell-culture technology and living biosystems and the USDA's expertise in regulating livestock and poultry products for human consumption. USDA and FDA are confident that this regulatory framework can be successfully implemented and assure the safety of these products."

The two agency heads added: "Because our agencies have the statutory authority necessary to appropriately regulate cell-cultured food products derived from livestock and poultry the administration does not believe that legislation on this topic is necessary."

The meat industry had hoped that USDA would have sole authority. The concern is that FDA regulation, which is less stringent than USDA's, would give cultured meat an unfair advantage over traditional

meat. However, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, the most powerful of the various American meat trade groups, called the decision to jointly regulate cultured meat "a step in the right direction," adding that "there is still a lot of work to do on this issue to ensure that real beef producers and consumers are protected and treated fairly."

Cultured meat producers welcomed the proposal for joint regulation. "It is critically important that the United States have a sound and sensible approach to regulating cultured meat products," a spokesperson with Just Inc., the meat and plant-based food company formerly known as Hampton Creek, told *Restaurant Hospitality* magazine. "The United States has an opportunity to lead the world in this transformative industry […] Establishing a regulatory framework for cultured meat quickly and efficiently is vital. Otherwise, the public will be deprived of these anticipated benefits." By the end of 2018, Just Inc. plans to produce a commercially viable combination cultured meat-poultry product. Other producers have announced plans to have cultured meat products on the market in 2020 and 2021.

What's in a name?

Besides how to regulate it, another issue has been what to call the product. Some meat companies have objected to the use of the word "meat" in connection with lab-grown products, insisting that meat can come from only slaughtered animals. Others simply call the lab product "fake meat." Proposals to call lab-grown meat "clean meat" have also met resistance from the mainstream meat industry, which doesn't like the implication that traditional meat is somehow "dirty."

Just Inc. prefers "cultured meat." "Ultimately, the meat we're making will be created in large cultivators and will resemble a beer brewery or similar facility used for production of cultured food products," a Just spokesperson told *Restaurant Hospitality*. "As such, we call our meat 'cultured meat.'" In October, Peter Licari, Just Inc.'s chief technology officer, told a joint FDA/USDA public hearing that the agencies should determine a nomenclature that would "differentiate cell-cultured products from traditional meat products but appropriately acknowledge these products as meat."

One reason cultured meat is still searching for what to call itself is that the product is very new. Unlike meat alternatives such as "veggie burgers" and other meat analog products, which are alternatives to traditional meat products in the way imitation vanilla is an alternative to the real thing, cultured meat opens an entirely new category. It was just five years ago, in 2013, in an effort costing an estimated US$375,000, that scientists in the Netherlands took cells from a cow, grew them into strips of meat, then ground the strips to make a hamburger. That first hamburger made from cultured meat was consumed at a press conference in London.

As reported by Newsweek magazine, "Since then funding for artificial meat has skyrocketed, with private companies and high-profile investors making huge strides into its commercial development. Meat is derived from stem cells taken from poultry and livestock that is then turned into muscle tissue."

Making money — and making a difference?

As reported by Politico, "There are at least 10 lab-grown meat companies across the globe that are furiously working to figure out how to get their products to market. Some of the startups are driven by a desire to reduce animal agriculture's environmental footprint as developing countries increasingly drive demand for meat and dairy products. Major investors who've moved to get into the action include innovators like Bill Gates, Richard Branson, and Tyson Ventures, an investment arm of meat giant Tyson Foods."

However cultured meat is ultimately regulated, and what its name eventually becomes, these investors are attracted by cultured meat for the opportunity to make money, of course, but also by other reasons, reports Newsweek. "There are many benefits to lab-grown meat. It would eliminate the need for animals to be bred and slaughtered — in the U.S. alone, around 9 billion chickens and 32 million cattle are killed every year. It would also help limit climate change — agriculture, and meat production in particular, is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. There would also be major financial incentives if the technology could be successfully scaled."

While these claimed benefits may attract investors, some remain open for debate — the supposed environmental benefits, for example, and benefits for the climate. There are benefits, too, to animal agriculture as traditionally practiced by the mainstream meat industry, namely the provision of nutritious protein at relatively low cost. In any case, the place of cultured meat within or without the traditional meat industry will remain a point of discussion for years to come.

Steve Bjerklie, Contributing Editor, *Meat & Poultry* Magazine; correspondent, *The Economist*