Conservation impacts of African swine fever in the Asia-Pacific region
Joint communique of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Union for Conservation of Nature Species Survival Commission (IUCN SSC) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)
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African swine fever in the Asia Pacific Context

African swine fever (ASF) is a highly contagious and deadly pig disease. Although the ASF virus does not pose a hazard or risk to humans, in the Asian-Pacific Region the disease has severely affected pig production and impacted wild pig populations. ASF has caused huge economic losses and considerable trade disruptions worldwide.

Since the first report of ASF incursion into the Asia-Pacific region in August 2018, the disease has rapidly swept through the region leading to the culling of 100s of millions of pigs in an attempt to control its spread, threatening food security among communities dependent on pig farming. As of June 2021, 15 Member Countries in the region have reported ASF outbreaks.

The **FAO and OIE Initiative for the Global Control of ASF** was launched in 2020 under the umbrella of the GF-TADs[1] as a mechanism to develop, improve, and harmonize national, regional, and global partnerships and coordinate efforts to prevent, mitigate and control this deadly virus.

How is African swine fever endangering wildlife?

Since the introduction of ASF in Asia-Pacific, reported cases among the widespread and common wild boar (*Sus scofa*) have been on the rise. ASF cases in wild pigs are not only a concern due to their role in disease transmission and increased challenge for control, but the disease also poses a threat to the region's biodiversity and wildlife management. The region is unique globally being home to 11 native species of wild pigs. Most of these species are threatened and some have populations so small that they face imminent extinction if infected by ASF.

This joint communique reflects the shared and increasing concern about the impact of the virus on the regions' native pig species including significant mortalities reported in the vulnerable bearded pig *(S. barbatus)* in Sabah, Malaysia, due to ASF. The loss of these species could also affect fragile ecological communities, depriving threatened predators of a vital food source and push them further towards the edge of extinction.

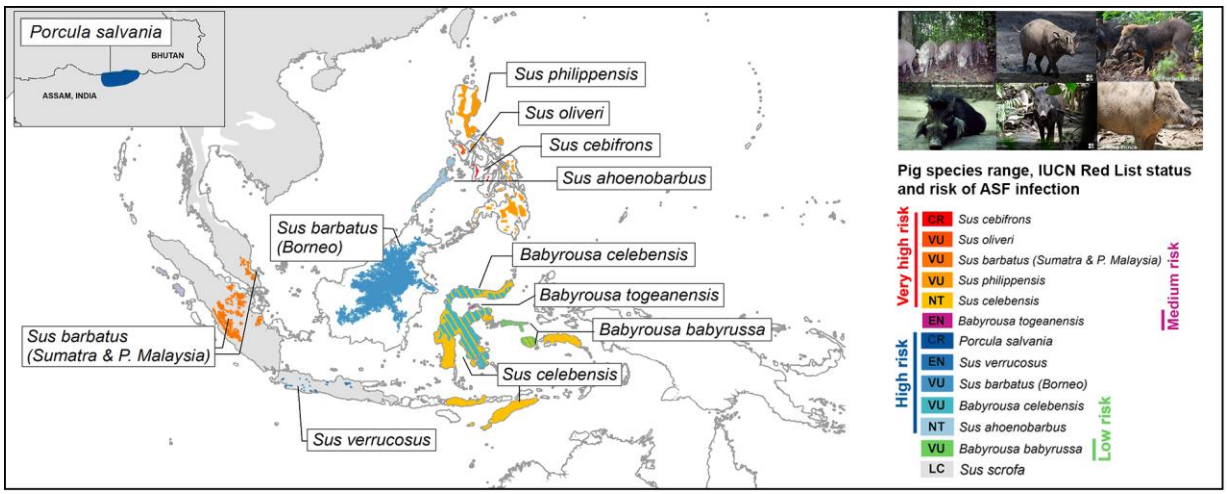

Figure 1. Pig species range in Southeast Asia (Source: Adapted from Luskin et. al., 2000 modified to comply with UN, 2021).

[1] GF-TADs - Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases

IUCN, FAO and OIE Proposed Approach to Wildlife Conservation

By stressing the interconnection between humans, animals, and their shared environment, we must take into consideration our role in animal and environmental health in order to safeguard both people's livelihoods and our unique fragile ecosystems. These include environmental and wildlife components that are essential to maintain food chains and ensure ecological resilience.

A winning approach to ASF control that also includes wildlife conservation starts with biosecurity, surveillance, monitoring and response systems inclusive of all wild pig species, which are critical for understanding, preventing and controlling spillovers at the domestic animal-wildlife interface.

For any pig species, domestic or wild, measures should include early detection, adequate risk communication and risk management of ASF through the timely notification of ASF cases to local authorities and subsequent reporting to OIE-WAHIS[2]. They should also consider the implementation of practical management, biosecurity and intervention measures as described in the '*African swine fever in wild boar ecology and biosecurity*', an FAO-OIE-EC Manual.

Any intervention needs multi-sectoral and multi-institutional cooperation involving government ministries, veterinary services, wildlife services, non-governmental organizations, researchers, industry, and communities.

Most important, it requires synergized action where responsibilities for investigation and response to disease events are shared amongst government ministries, such as for animal health, agriculture, environment, wildlife and forestry.

The IUCN, FAO and OIE *recognize* the importance of maintaining healthy wildlife populations and ecosystems and the devastating impact a viral disease like ASF can have on these.

Together, we *call for* increased dialogue between government ministries with responsibility for ASF and relevant experts to develop government policies that mitigate the impacts of the disease on wildlife, livestock health and rural livelihoods.

We *encourage* stronger biosecurity, surveillance, monitoring and response systems across all sectors, inclusive of all domestic and wild animal species.

Finally, we *encourage* collaborations between key sectors and government ministries and urge them to agree on policies that integrate responsibilities on ASF control.

Key African swine fever resources and bibliography

IUCN SSC Wild Pig Specialist Group: https://sites.google.com/site/wildpigspecialistgroup/home

Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs): http://www.gf-tads.org/asf/asf/en/

OIE global updates: https://www.oie.int/en/disease/african-swine-fever/

OIE Regional and Sub-Regional Representation for the Asia and the Pacific: https://rr-asia.oie.int/en/projects/asf/

OIE World Animal Health Information System: https://wahis.oie.int

FAO ASF: http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/programmes/en/empres/ASF/index.html

Guberti, V., Khomenko, S., Masiulis, M. & Kerba S. 2019. African swine fever in wild boar ecology and biosecurity. FAO Animal Production and Health Manual No. 22. Rome, FAO, OIE and EC. http://www.fao.org/3/ca5987en/CA5987EN.pdf

OIE Wildlife health framework: https://www.oie.int/app/uploads/2021/03/a-wildlifehealth-conceptnote.pdf

Denstedt, E., Porco, A., Hwang, J., Nga, N.T.T., Ngoc, P.T.B., Chea, S., Khammavong, K., Milavong, P., Sours, S., Osbjer, K., Tum, S., Douangngeun, B., Theppanya, W., Van Long, N., Thanh Phuong, N., Tin Vinh Quang, L., Van Hung, V., Thi Hoa, N., Le Anh, D., Fine, A., & Pruvot, M.2020. Detection of African swine fever virus in free-ranging wild boar in Southeast Asia. *Transboundary and Emerging Diseases.*

Luskin, M. S., Meijaard, E., Surya, S., Sheherazade, Walzer, C., & Linkie, M. 2020. African Swine Fever threatens Southeast Asia's 11 endemic wild pig species. *Conservation Letters*, e12784.

Ewers, R. M., Nathan, S. K., & Lee, P. A. 2021. African swine fever ravaging Borneo's wild pigs. *Nature*, 593, 37-37.

[2] OIE-WAHIS - OIE World Animal Health Information System