

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: Poland Waives Certain Biosecurity Requirements for Backyard Pig Farms

Country: Poland

Post: Warsaw

Report Category: Agricultural Situation, Policy and Program Announcements, Livestock and Products, Pest/Disease Occurrences

Prepared By: Anna Galica

Approved By: Alicia Hernandez

Report Highlights:

On May 10, 2023, a regulation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development entered into force, reducing biosecurity requirements for raising pigs kept for the production of meat for own use. However, representatives of commercial farms, as well as the veterinarians, have criticized the new provisions due to fears of increased risk of African swine fever spread by small farmers, undermining the work of the past 9 years to control the disease and minimize negative trade impacts.

On May 9, 2023, a [regulation](#) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development was signed, reducing requirements for backyard pig farms. The regulation introduces amendments to biosecurity rules, differentiating the requirements for commercial farms and farms that keep pigs solely for the production of meat for their own use.

According to the regulation, as of May 10, 2023, in the case of farms that keep pigs solely for the production of meat for their own use,

- it will no longer be necessary for farmers to compile an inventory of their pigs by different production groups, nor to update the inventory on an ongoing basis;
- the obligation to keep a register of the means of transport entering the farm to transport pigs, feed or animal by-products, and a register of the entry of persons into the premises where pigs are kept, has been waived;
- there will be no need to comply with the obligation to limit pig handling activities only to persons employed on a given farm;
- the obligation to apply the hygiene measures before handling pigs has been waived;
- it will not be required to prevent outsiders from entering buildings where pigs are kept;
- monitoring and control of rodents is no longer mandatory.

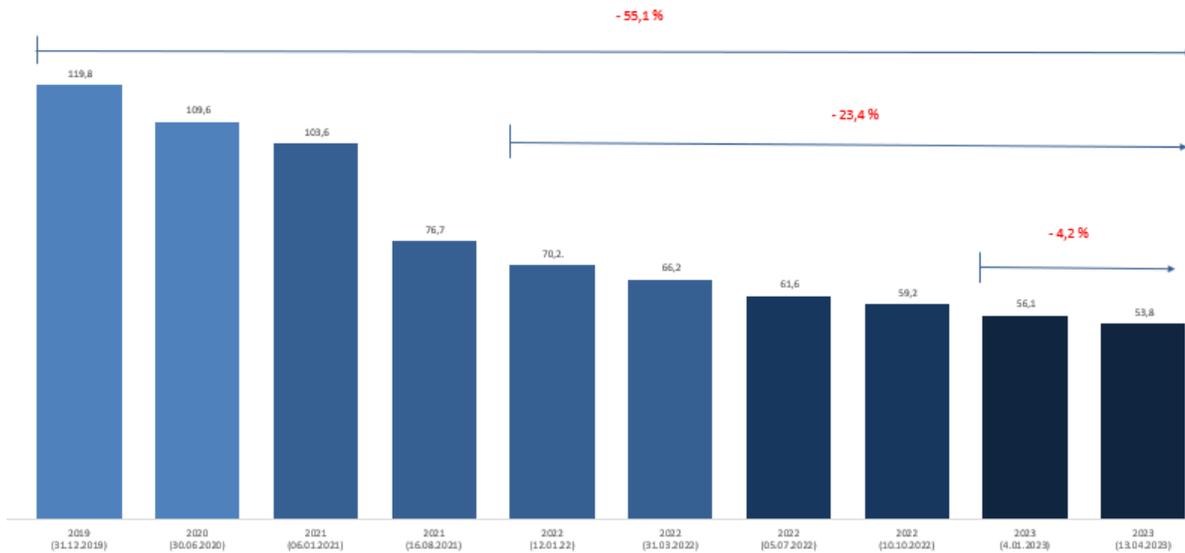
Additionally, in the case of farms located in areas subject to restrictions connected with the occurrence of African swine fever (ASF) and keeping pigs solely for the production of meat for personal use, there is no obligation to lay disinfection mats in front of entrances and exits to the farms.

Changes have also been made to the issue of testing for ASF on farms located in ASF restricted areas, performed when pigs are slaughtered for personal use. This test for farms located in all ASF restricted areas will be performed only in case of suspicion of ASF. The decision on the necessity of such testing will remain at the discretion of the Veterinary Inspection authorities.

As regards pig movement, in ASF-free areas it will be possible to move pigs between farms that keep pigs solely for the purpose of producing meat for their own use, if these farms are located in the same municipality or a neighboring municipality, without complying with the enhanced biosecurity rules compliant with Annex III to Commission Implementing [Regulation \(EU\) 2023/594](#) laying down special disease control measures for African swine fever. On the other hand, in the case of the movement of pigs kept for production for own use in ASF restricted areas, all the requirements will have to be complied with.

The regulation is a response to the requests of small farmers who find the biosecurity rules excessive and have resigned from pig production in massive numbers. According to the data from the Agency of Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture, cited in the report by Gobarto company, as of April 13, 2023, the number of registered pig herds was 53,800, which is 4.2 percent less than at the beginning of 2023. More than 1.2 million pigs were lost in Poland last year. Meanwhile, only in the first quarter of 2023, the decrease was already 432,000 head. Poland currently has 8.5 million pigs.

Graph. 1. Number of Pig Herds in Poland in 2019-2023



Source: Gobarto report

However, the measures were widely criticized by large, professional pig farmers, who are threatened by backyard farms with lower biosecurity standards creating more risk of ASF spread. The Industry Alliance on Combating ASF, which combines representatives of commercial pig producers, meat processors, and the feed industry, was very critical of the changes when the draft regulation was published. According to the industry, the ASF epidemiological situation in Poland poses an ongoing threat to the country's pork sector, and deviates from the essential elements of biosecurity on backyard farms on the proposed scale is unjustified. They were worried that commercial farms, who maintain a sanitary regime, would suffer the consequences of a lack of biosecurity and outbreaks in their neighbors' backyards.

Moreover, Agricultural Chambers, who represent farmers, from Wielkopolskie and Kujawsko-Pomorskie regions, which are the areas with the highest pig population in Poland, are worried about the consequences of a significant reduction in the requirements for protection against ASF in backyard pig farms. In their opinion, the fight against ASF, thanks to the efforts of farmers, veterinarians and hunters, has finally begun to bear fruit. In 2023, so far only one ASF outbreak in a pig farm was noted. Therefore, they do not understand the intention of introducing the regulation, and believe that it exposes the fate of those producers who are still trying to endure in this sector to failure and loss of their source of income. "We believe that with the enactment of such a bad law, the European Commission, will take a very restrictive approach to the abolition of zones with ASF restrictions that are still in force in Poland," Wielkopolska Agricultural Chamber claims.

The Chambers, on behalf of farmers, are therefore calling for the repeal of the regulation as soon as possible. And if this does not happen, they claim that there should at least be a fund that will cover 100 percent of the losses of commercial farmers, in the event of an outbreak of ASF in a small farm, which will result from this regulation.

Also, the National Trade Union of Veterinarians (NTUV) appeals to small farmers not to give up on biosecurity rules, in particular at harvest time. This period is extremely sensitive in terms of the occurrence of new outbreaks of the disease. Practice shows how unpredictable the appearance of the ASF virus can be in previously unoccupied areas of the country. The occurrence of ASF on a farm affects the legal and economic situation of farmers in the entire region around the outbreak and blocks the movement of animals for a certain period of time. Above all, they recommend that farmers, regardless of the liberalization of the law, continue to apply the hygiene measures necessary to reduce the risk of spreading ASF, including: washing and sanitizing hands, cleaning and sanitizing footwear, ongoing cleaning, and sanitizing of tools and equipment used to handle pigs. An important issue, NTUV adds, is the strict self-discipline of not allowing outsiders into the facility where the pigs are kept.

In their appeal, NTUV underlines that “liberalization of the law doesn't mean you can stop being mindful. The virus continues to exist in the wild, and there is no indication that it is in retreat. Let's not let the effects and efforts of the industry and the Veterinary Inspection carried out over the past 9 years towards changing the awareness and behavior of farmers be overturned. Above all, let's use common sense, recommend procedures that minimize the risk of any infectious diseases. Promoting the principles of hygiene in animal husbandry and breeding, awareness of the possibility of danger and not underestimating it are among the basic conditions for the reconstruction of the Polish pig population, and it is imperative to remember this.”

Attachments:

No Attachments.