

Current situation on highly pathogenic avian influenza

(37/01) In **Germany**, the outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) was officially detected on 11 September in a small flock of about 200 ducks and geese in Zöschen in the district of Saalekreis in Saxony-Anhalt. All necessary animal disease control measures were initiated by the veterinary office of the Saale district.

In **Denmark**, the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) was detected in a poultry farm for the first time this autumn on 10 September. The Danish Health Service's central laboratory for the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, the Statens Serum Institute, detected the animal disease on Tuesday (10 September) on an organic poultry farm with around 6,000 animals in Vester Ulslev, in the municipality of Guldborgsund on the island of Lolland. The Danish Veterinary and Food Authority explains the outbreak with the start of the annual bird migration. A surveillance zone has been set up within a radius of ten kilometres around the affected farm, which severely restricts the transport of poultry. Overall, this is the ninth HPAI outbreak in Denmark this year.

On 16 September 2024, the European Commission published Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/2475 in the EU Official Journal L concerning emergency measures in relation to outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza in certain Member States following the recent HPAI outbreak in **France** (Département Finistère). The annex to the decision (EU) 2024/2475 contains the updated territorial outlines of the protection and surveillance zones as well as the provisional duration of the protective measures.

Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/2475, which has now been published, amends Implementing Decision (EU) 2023/2447 accordingly. Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/2475 is available at the following link: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec_impl/2024/2475/oj

Current situation on African swine fever

(37/02) In the fight against African swine fever (ASF), the federal states in **Germany** see the federal government as having a duty. "This is what the agriculture ministers demanded at the Agriculture Ministers' Conference (AMC) in Oberhof," explained Baden-Württemberg's Minister of Agriculture Peter Hauk on 13 September. In addition, the federal government should advocate at EU level for an expansion of co-financing programmes for ASF prevention and control. The economic effects of the epidemic directly affect farmers and the entire value chain and are in some cases threatening their existence, Hauk noted. He called for cross-border strategies for control and prevention. In addition, there is a need for sufficient slaughtering, cutting, cooling and processing plants for pigs from the ASF exclusion zones. Lower Saxony's Minister of Agriculture Miriam Staudte also pointed out that there is still not enough slaughtering, processing and cooling capacity available for animals from farms that are not affected, but which are located in restriction zones. This could cause massive animal welfare problems. The AMC has therefore decided that restriction requirements must be reduced appropriately in order to simplify the marketing of the healthy animals. The AMC also sees the food retail trade as responsible. The federal government was therefore called upon by the federal states to approach the food retail trade in the interests of animal welfare and to mitigate the economic consequences for animal owners in order to develop joint marketing strategies.

In Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, meanwhile, the restrictions imposed on ASF were lifted last week after only three months, the shortest deadline set by the EU. The Ministry of Agriculture said that the danger has unfortunately not been averted, the epidemic in neighbouring Poland continues to be a cause for great concern.

France has stepped up the surveillance of African swine fever along part of the border with Germany, in the Bas-Rhin and Moselle departments, as ASF continues to spread among wild boars in large parts of Europe. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, the increased surveillance is being carried out in light of growing concerns about the possible introduction of the disease into France.

In **Poland**, African swine fever (ASF) reappeared in mid-September in a large domestic pig population with more than 10,300 animals. The affected farm is located in the municipality of Choszczno in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship. ASF has been around in Poland for a good ten years. The last time ASF was detected in such a large farm was in March 2021, when a farm with almost 16,000 pigs was caught in the Lubuskie voivodeship. This year, a total of 44 ASF outbreaks in domestic pig populations have been confirmed in Poland. A total of 26,000 animals were affected, which had to be killed.

On 18 September, Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2491 laying down specific control measures for African swine fever (ASF) and amending Annex I to Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/594 was published in the Official Journal L. Previously, there have been new outbreaks of African swine fever in wild porcine animals in **Poland**.

Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2491 is available at the following link:

http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2024/2491/oj

Luxembourg's Hansen to become new EU Commissioner for Agriculture

(37/03) On 17 September, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen presented her preferred team for the next EU Commission. The new Commissioner for Agriculture and Food is to be the Luxembourg EPP European politician Christophe Hansen. As von der Leyen announced at a press conference, Hansen is to develop a "new vision for agriculture and food in Europe" on the basis of the Strategic Dialogue (SD). The plan is to be presented within the first 100 days of the mandate. The Spanish socialist and current Environment Minister Teresa Ribera is to dedicate herself to the topics of "Green Transformation and Competitiveness" as Executive Vice President. She is thus responsible for the implementation of the Green Deal. The Swede Jessika Roswall has been nominated as EU Commissioner for the Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy. Roswall is a member of the conservative-conservative Moderate Coalition Party and was previously Swedish EU minister.

The Hungarian Olivér Várhelyi is to become Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare. Várhelyi was already a member of von der Leyen's first Commission as Enlargement Commissioner. However, his confirmation by the European Parliament is considered uncertain. The Slovenian Marta Kos was also considered a candidate for the role of Health Commissioner. Instead, she is now to become Commissioner for Enlargement and the Eastern Neighbourhood - provided that the internal nomination process in Slovenia, in which the national Parliament is also consulted, is completed. The Slovak Maroš Šefčovič is planned as Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security and will also take care of customs policy in this role.

With Ribera, a total of five Deputy Commissioners are to be at von der Leyen's side. As already known in advance, the former Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas is to become Executive Vice President and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs. The Romanian MEP of the S&D group, Roxana Mînzatu, has also been proposed as Vice-President and will be responsible for the issue of skilled workers, among other things. The Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms will be the Italian Raffaele Fitto. Previously, he was a member of the cabinet of Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni. EPP MEP Henna Virkkunen from Finland is to take over the Digital and Disruptive Technologies portfolios as Executive Vice-President.

The incumbent French Foreign Minister Stéphane Séjourné has been nominated as Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy. Séjourné is thus likely to be tasked with one of the core projects of the new Commission. At the presentation of her team, von der Leyen once again emphasised the need for a "courageous" industrial strategy for more innovation and investment. Séjourné's nomination was preceded

by the surprising resignation of the previous French Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry Breton. The latter accused von der Leyen of urging the government in Paris to nominate a new candidate without his knowledge, apparently in exchange for a Commission post considered more influential. All candidates are subject to the proviso that they pass the hearings in the respective specialist Committees of the European Parliament.

EU Parliament rejects Commission proposals on maximum levels for active substances

(37/04) On 18 September, the EU Parliament rejected two proposals by the EU Commission to adjust the limits for residues of several plant protection active substances banned in the EU in food imports. According to the Commission's proposals, verifiable maximum levels should be introduced for fungicides and insecticides banned in the EU in imported foodstuffs. The Strasbourg plenary thus once again emphasises its 'zero tolerance policy'. Specifically, the proposal concerned the fungicidal active ingredient cyproconazole and the insecticide and acaricide spirodiclofen. The vote on the fungicides benomyl, carbendazim and thiophanate-methyl was just as clear-cut: 516 votes against were opposed by 129 votes in favour. The required absolute majority would have been reached with 359 votes in favour.

Essentially, a broad parliamentary majority is concerned with a level playing field for farmers inside and outside the EU. Agricultural products imported from non-EU countries would have to fulfil the same standards as those produced in the EU itself. Authorising higher residue levels for imports would endanger the health of citizens in Europe and in the producing countries themselves, MEPs warn. They are calling for a new draft regulation that sets all maximum residue levels at the lowest detectable level and thus excludes any tolerance for imported food. The Brussels authority must now improve its proposal.

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