

Current information on highly pathogenic avian influenza

(45/01) On 8 November, the Friedrich-Loeffler-Institute (FLI) published an updated risk assessment on highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). According to the report, the Friedrich Loeffler Institute continues to assess the risk of the entry, spread and expansion of HPAI H5 viruses in waterfowl populations within **Germany** as high. The risk of HPAI inputs into German poultry farms through direct and indirect contact with wild birds is classified as high. The FLI currently assumes a moderate risk of entry due to the spread of the virus between holdings (secondary outbreaks) within the EU and also within Germany. In Europe, the epidemic pressure caused by avian influenza is slowly rising again. Since September, outbreaks in poultry and cases in wild birds have been increasing in Europe. Outbreaks in poultry farms are being reported from more and more countries. According to the French Animal Health Epidemiological Surveillance Platform (ESA), HPAI has currently been detected in 24 countries, most recently in Albania, Romania, Great Britain and Turkey.

In **France**, the government officially changed the warning level from "moderate" to "elevated" on 8 November. Most recently, outbreaks were reported in a chicken farm in the Morbihan department and in ducks in the Landes department. As the Interprofessional Committee for Foie Gras Palmipeds (CIFOG) reported, the detection in Landes is to be seen as a success of new disease control requirements. This is the only reason why the virus was discovered before transport to the fattening farm.

According to ESA, there has recently been a comparatively strong increase in HPAI detections in **Hungary**. According to the report, 33 new detections were reported from there in the week ending 5 November, affecting duck and goose farms. The epidemic is said to be concentrated in an area with a high density of poultry farms.

In **Poland**, the Supreme Veterinary Office reported the 36th outbreak of HPAI this year. A laying hen farm in the municipality of Środa Wielkopolska in the Greater Poland Voivodeship is affected. 50,200 laying hens were kept on the farm. It is the fourth outbreak of avian influenza recently recorded in this region, with all cases involving laying hen flocks. Among them was a farm with almost 1.4 million animals. There are already warnings of a possible egg shortage in Poland.

This animal disease is also on the rise in **Austria**. After bird flu was confirmed in a large laying hen farm in the Lower Austrian district of Amstetten at the end of October, outbreaks followed on three other farms. On 7 November, the Vienna Ministry of Health tightened the measures against the animal disease. In order to contain the spread, the whole of Austria was declared an area with "increased" risk with effect from 8 November.

In the **United Kingdom**, a poultry farm was hit on 5 November. On a free-range farm with 24,000 animals in a small coastal town in the county of East Riding of Yorkshire in north-east England, the H5N5 virus type has been confirmed. It is the first case of bird flu this season. It was only at the end of May that the British Department of Agriculture (DEFRA) declared the entire country "avian influenza-free". Previously, the last case had occurred in mid-February.

Amendment to the lists of third countries for imports of poultry commodities from the United Kingdom and the United States

(45/02) Annexes V and XIV to Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/404 as regards the entries for the United Kingdom and the United States in the lists of third countries authorised for the entry into the Union of consignments of poultry, germinal products of poultry, and fresh meat and meat products from poultry and game birds has been amended again in relation to highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI).

The corresponding Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2882 has been published in the Official Journal L on 12 November 2024.

The **United Kingdom** has notified the Commission of three outbreaks of HPAI in poultry in the states of California, Utah and Washington, which were confirmed on 15 October and 16 October 2024 and an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) subtype H5N5 in poultry in the county of Yorkshire, England, which was confirmed on 5 November 2024.

The **United States** have notified the Commission of seven outbreaks of HPAI subtype H5N1 in poultry in the states of California and Oregon, which were confirmed on 24 October and 2 November 2024.

With the implementing regulation that has now been published, the EU Commission has suspended the entry into the Union of consignments of poultry, germinal products of poultry, and fresh meat of poultry and game birds from this areas mentioned in the United Kingdom and the United States. Annexes V and XIV to Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/404 were amended accordingly to take account of the current epidemiological situation as regards HPAI in the United Kingdom and the United States. Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2882 entered into force on 13 November 2024 and is available at the following link: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2024/2882/oj

Amendments for the export of meat products to the United Kingdom (Annex)

(45/03) On 5 November 2024, the list of traders from EU and EFTA states approved to export meat products "[List of EU and EFTA trading partners approved to export meat products and treated stomachs, bladders and intestines to Great Britain](#)" was updated on the British website gov.uk. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture has informed the office of this change. The 'List of EU and EFTA trading partners approved to export meat products and treated stomachs, bladders and intestines to Great Britain' is attached to this circular. This update results in important changes for the export of meat products to the United Kingdom with regard to the 'Code of Territory'.

Current situation on African swine fever

(45/04) On 13 November, Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2886 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** and in kept porcine animals in **Italy**. Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2886 is available at the following link: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2024/2886/oj

Germany: Citizens' Council on Nutrition recommends state labelling for all foods

(45/06) The introduction of a mandatory state label for all food recommended by the German Citizens' Council on Nutrition is causing controversy. On 4 November, the proposal was discussed at a public expert meeting of the Bundestag's Nutrition Committee. While several scientists spoke out in favour of such a label, the food service industry and retailers expressed considerable reservations.

In its Recommendation 2, the Citizens' Council recommended a mandatory state label for all food sold in Germany and the European Union. According to the committee's ideas, the label should be simple and take into account the areas of climate, animal welfare and health individually. In addition, the need for a scientific basis is emphasised. If the Citizens' Council has its way, the climate area will be based exclusively on the criterion of greenhouse gas emissions when the label is introduced. However, environmental

aspects are to be added in the following three to five years at the most. In terms of animal welfare, the Citizens' Assembly believes that the label should be modelled proportionally on the animal welfare label.

Prof Carsten Leo Demming from the Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University welcomed the Citizens' Assembly's proposal. The fact that consumers are currently confused is due to the large number of labels. Christiane Seidel from the Federation of German Consumer Organisations (vzbv) also criticised the current 'label jungle'. Lena Hennes from the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy explained that the animal welfare and health dimensions are easy to implement. According to Hennes, average values could be used for the climate dimension due to the fluctuating emissions from food. However, she considers focussing on greenhouse gas values to be difficult, as organic products, for example, would perform worse and the positive effects in other environmental categories could not be shown. The Citizens' Council's proposal aims to integrate three complex and very different criteria into one label, criticised Manon Struck-Pacyna from the German Food Association. As a result, the industry organisation expects consumers to be overwhelmed when it comes to understanding the label as well as science and industry when it comes to developing and implementing it. The association also warns of new bureaucratic hurdles.

The Citizens' Assembly's recommendation stipulates that the Bundestag should advocate the mandatory introduction of the label throughout the EU. In Germany, it should be introduced voluntarily or - as soon as legally possible - on a mandatory basis. Prof Moritz Hagenmeyer, who is a member of the Citizens' Council's Scientific Advisory Board, said that the plan for a national state label could not be implemented. From the point of view of European law, there is no possibility of introducing such labelling.

Audit report Brazil

(45/07) This report describes the outcome of the hybrid audit of Brazil, carried out from 16 April to 3 May 2024 as part of Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety work programme. The objective of this hybrid audit was to evaluate the systems developed and implemented by Brazilian competent authorities to certify that animal health requirements related to avian influenza are met for consignments of relevant poultry commodities exported to the European Union.

The audit concludes that the system provides sufficient assurances that commodities which might be exported to the EU comply with the most of relevant import requirements, except for the surveillance for HPAI that might not be sufficient for the earliest detection of the disease.

1. The veterinary services can deliver appropriate animal health controls in relevant areas, such as the registration of commercial poultry establishments, bird movements, traceability, and import controls. Coupled with mandatory biosecurity measures applied on commercial establishments, these activities effectively contribute to reducing the likelihood of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) entering the country through imported commodities and provide a good basis for disease control in case the disease reaches commercial farms.
2. The knowledge on non-commercial (backyard) poultry establishments varies between states. The low registration of these farms in some states complicates the organisation of active surveillance, controls, and enhanced surveillance in zones around outbreaks, and they might result in undetected reservoirs of infection. The authorities are making efforts to improve their registration, in particular in HPAI high-risk areas.
3. The official controls on commercial poultry farms give guarantees on the correct and effective application of preventive measures to reduce the risk of HPAI in those establishments and verify the capability of operators to contribute to the early detection of the disease.
4. The less sensitive (mortality) and incomplete production criteria set for declaring suspicion of HPAI, combined with the low sampling of suspected cases not fully adapted to the epidemiological risk, weakens the authority capability to detect disease at earliest occasion. This creates a potential risk of

delayed detection, response and containment of HPAI outbreaks. Although official information campaigns are increasing stakeholders' disease awareness, the situation does not yet provide assurances equivalent to the EU standards and weaken the early warning system for HPAI.

5. The surveillance of HPAI in wild birds does not include all priority locations and key sites, including two of the three main bird migratory routes. Therefore, the authorities have incomplete information for assessing the risks for virus spread following findings of HPAI in wild birds. To address this, the authorities are revising their surveillance plan.
6. The design and implementation of active surveillance for HPAI follows international standards and complements other components of surveillance for the disease. Although its implementation does not contribute to early detection of HPAI, provided the early warning system for the disease is adequately improved, active surveillance can reinforce the credibility of the country's free disease status.
7. Authorities effectively applied measures to control outbreaks in backyard establishments according to the adapted contingency plan. Despite not being equivalent to the zones mandated by EU law, the surveillance and restriction zones established around non-commercial farms with outbreaks were deemed appropriate for preventing the spread of the disease, considering the non-commercial nature of the farms and additional measures implemented.
8. The authorities have designated a laboratory network for avian influenza diagnoses. Despite the official monitoring of the network, some laboratories performing screening tests for avian influenza do not have proof of satisfactory participation in a recent proficiency test to demonstrate the reliability of their results.
9. The only laboratory involved in investigating suspect cases of the disease provides timely and reliable results. However, concerns arise regarding Brazil's extensive poultry production. Given the scale and potential severity of a large HPAI epidemic, the current testing capacity may be insufficient, and it is unclear whether authorities would be able to get timely result delivery to implement subsequent controls. The authority is considering expanding testing capacity by involving other laboratories for disease confirmation.
10. The authorities have not tested their contingency plan for HPAI. The limited practical arrangements in place – especially concerning farm depopulation - raises doubts about their readiness to effectively manage larger epidemics.
11. The verification procedures in place (audits, inspections, supervision of implementation) contribute to ensure compliance with the rules, improve effectiveness of the official controls and activities and facilitate continuous improvement.
12. The certification system is clear and robust, contributing to the overall strength of the system.

The report contains recommendations to the competent authority to address the shortcomings identified. It is available at the following link: <https://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/audit-report/details/4815>

Annex:

- UK- List of EU and EFTA trading partners approved to export meat products

Imprint

Editor: European Poultry, Egg and Game Association (EPEGA),
Am Weidendamm 1A, DE 10117 Berlin

Manager: Christine Amling/Sebastian Werren

Tel.: +49 30 590099-562, E-Mail: info@epeg.org, Internet: <http://www.epeg.org>

The information letter is prepared with the utmost care, but we exclude liability. Reports are confidential and for personal use only.