

EU urges member states to toughen swine fever controls

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Europe's top agriculture official urged EU member states to take tougher measures to contain the spread of African swine fever after the latest outbreak in Belgium.

Europe's top agriculture official on Tuesday urged EU member states to prepare tougher measures to contain the spread of African swine fever

after the latest outbreak in Belgium.

EU Agriculture Commissioner Phil Hogan welcomed Belgium's decision to quarantine a region where wild [boar](#) have died of the [virus](#)—and to preemptively slaughter up to 4,000 domestic pigs.

But, speaking to reporters after a meeting of EU agriculture ministers in Austria, Hogan recalled that the outbreak had begun in eastern Europe and that nine member [states](#) have been hit so far.

"We're not succeeding as well as we should, or could, at the moment. We need everybody's cooperation in the member states," he said.

"We need to take a very serious look now at the spread of this disease and to take it more seriously perhaps in some member states than we have been in relation to bio-security measures.

"We stand ready to help all member states who wish to seek advice, who wish to seek support in a co-financing way in order to stem this disease because it is a threat to the farmers' livelihood but also a threat to the pig meat trade of Europe."

Hogan did not single out any member state for criticism, but noted that the outbreak had begun in the Baltic states and spread to Poland, Romania and the Czech Republic before somehow leaping to Belgium.

To head-off the spread of the virus, which was detected on its soil on September 13, Belgian authorities have ordered a preventive pig slaughter in part of the south of the country.

Farmers will be compensated, partly by Belgium and partly by Europe, but the disease could threaten an industry that supports 15,000 jobs.

African swine fever virus (ASFV), which is endemic in parts of Africa and Asia, is not dangerous to humans but is fatal to [pigs](#) and wild boar.

Thus far, nine Belgian boar have been found dead from the virus, in the south of the country.

A 630-square-kilometre (240-square-mile) exclusion zone has been set up, but some farmers are pushing for tougher measures such as a boar cull.

Ten countries outside the union have already banned imports of Belgian pork, but the EU internal market is much more important to the industry.

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