



World Customs Organization

Rue du Marché 30, B-1210 Brussels, Belgium
T: +32 (0)2 209 92 11 / info@wcoomd.org
Bank account: IBAN 210-0475126-72

Dear Director General,

I would like to inform you about recent developments concerning risks associated to **African swine fever (ASF)** and the role Customs can play through strong cooperation with Veterinary Authorities in border operations.

As you may be aware, Coordinated Border Management (CBM) continues to be a key priority for the World Customs Organization (WCO) and it is reflected as such in the Organization's Strategic Plan. The WCO places significant focus on improving border management, particularly through reinforcing cooperation with other border agencies to foster and establish international harmonization, reduce burdens on both trade and governments and secure international borders. For these reasons, the WCO has intensified cooperation with a number of international standard-setting organizations that are of relevance to Customs and border management. One of those international organizations is the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). Within the framework of our Cooperation Agreement signed in 2015, the OIE has requested the WCO's support in raising awareness amongst WCO Members about ways to minimise the risk of spread of ASF.

ASF is currently having a detrimental impact at different levels of society in several countries across **Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Europe**. This disease is not known to be a danger to human health; however, it poses a major threat to pig health and welfare and, therefore, to pig production systems. Considering that pigs have become a main source of animal protein among a growing human population, ASF not only impacts the livelihoods of small and large-scale pig producers, but also threatens food security worldwide.

As the disease can be spread from one country to another through the illegal movement of infected pigs or via people carrying contaminated pork products, Customs can play a role in ensuring that this deadly pig disease does not cross borders should they intercept any commodities at risk. Given the increased movements of people, animals and animal products, I would like to emphasise the importance of Customs and all other relevant border agencies to ensure a CBM approach and to implement effective risk mitigation measures.

In view of the high risk of ASF spreading across country borders during periods of high passenger movement, such as the upcoming Lunar New Year (January 25 to February 20), I invite you to increase your vigilance during these periods and to remain aware of the communication material targeted to transport authorities which was created in the framework of the OIE campaign "**ASF Kills Pigs**". I also encourage you to share this campaign in your country.

Additionally, I would like refer you to the tools prepared by the OIE targeted at travellers and a campaign guide that shows how to implement these tools at different stages of air passenger transit, including at Customs checkpoints. All these tools are available in English, French, Spanish, Mandarin, and Russian. These tools can be



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found on the OIE's website (www.oie.int) or at : <https://trello.com/b/GloiZoik/african-swine-fever-oie>

Moreover, I also encourage you to share any alerts and updates regarding ASF through the WCO Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO) network and the Global Rapid Alert Network (GRAN) CENComm Closed User Group. The WCO Information and Intelligence Centre (I2C) is monitoring the situation, and will publish updated news reporting on the WCO IRIS platform (<https://iris.wcoomd.org/>) during this critical period.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your collaboration with other border agencies at the national level.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Kunio Mikuriya', is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Kunio Mikuriya
WCO Secretary General