

Australia to inject \$2.54B to prevent African swine fever (ASF)

24 March 2023 | News

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Australian Ministry is set to invest \$2.54 billion to avoid African swine fever (ASF) becoming endemic in Australia's feral pig population.

A new economic analysis by the experts from Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARES) as a reminder of the risks diseases like African swine fever (ASF) would have on Australian agricultural industry. Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Murray Watt said the report was a timely reminder of the importance of keeping Australia's biosecurity system strong.

In early 2022, it was estimated that there is 21% chance of an African Swine Fever detection in Australia in the next five years. ASF is a contagious viral disease of domestic and wild pigs that has established itself in Asia and parts of Europe and continues to spread. ASF has no vaccine and kills about 80 per cent of the pigs it infects but poses no threat to human health.

Australia is committed to prevent pest and disease incursions by allocating \$134 million in funding in the last budget to bolster Australia's biosecurity system. Australia is now developing a model for sustainable biosecurity funding to maintain a strong biosecurity way into the future. Departments are working to minimise disease entry into Australia, by regularly screening and testing meat and animal products at the border.

"We've seen from ABARES the potentially devastating cost of an outbreak of ASF in this country. While Australia is free of ASF, this work underscores the importance of our biosecurity system and why it needs to be resourced appropriately. A small-scale outbreak in domestic pigs would cost the Australian pig industry between \$117 million and \$263 million to manage and eradicate. The worst-case scenario, where ASF becomes endemic in our feral pig population, would cost the industry between \$439 million and \$2.54 billion over 30 years. This would mean lost trade for our exports and higher costs for farmers as they manage biosecurity" iterated Minister Watt.

Meanwhile, Australian Pork Limited Chief Executive Officer Margo Andrae welcomed the Government's ongoing commitment to protecting not only the Australian pork industry, but the broader agricultural community from the threat of African Swine Fever.