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ADMINISTRATIVE CIRCULAR

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SUBJECT: GUIDELINES ON THE BILATERAL RECOGNITION ON REGIONALIZATION OF AFRICAN SWINE FEVER FROM ACCREDITED COUNTRIES FOR EXPORT OF SWINE, AND SWINE PRODUCTS INTO THE PHILIPPINES

WHEREAS, African Swine Fever (ASF) is a highly contagious and deadly viral disease affecting swine and wild boars, and the introduction of ASF virus into a previously ASF-free country or zone would result in significant crisis for the swine industry;

WHEREAS, the Philippines has been implementing significant efforts towards the recovery from ASF marked by a national zoning and movement plan with areas already considered recovered from the disease. This stresses the significance of implementing science-based monitoring programs broadly in support of regionalization for ASF freedom, as well as the acceptance of World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) Code principles for safe trading in swine and swine products;

WHEREAS, the WOAH Terrestrial Animal Health Code (TAHC) Chapter 4.4 provides guidelines on the bilateral recognition of country or zone status by trading countries, and official recognition of disease freedom, countries may recognize each other's status through a bilateral process. The WOAH regionalization guidelines also assist countries in the establishment and maintenance of different subpopulations with specific health status within their territory;

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Animal Industry - National Veterinary Quarantine Services (BAI-NVQSD) is mandated to adopt measures that would prevent the entry of exotic and communicable diseases into the country consistent with international standards, statutes, and protocol pursuant to Section 5, Act No. 3639 and Section 26, Executive Order No. 338, Series of 2001;

WHEREAS, foreign meat establishments and live animal facilities are required to secure accreditation from the Department of Agriculture pursuant to Section 34, RA 9296 (Meat Inspection Code), and Section 5, Act No. 3639;

WHEREAS, Executive Order No. 105 series of 2020, creates an inter-agency task force to ensure effective coordination among government agencies in response to animal-borne diseases such as ASF. Member-agencies with the Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary as the chairperson, are mandated to formulate appropriate policies, regulations and issue zoning and movement plans. This is to prevent the entry of ASF-infected animals, animal products and by-products and control the spread thereof;

WHEREAS, the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures and WOAH, provide guidelines on the recognition of areas of disease status through a bilateral process;

IN VIEW THEREOF, and in order to assist the Philippine Government in the evaluation of an accredited country's application for recognition of ASF regionalization, this Circular is hereby issued to serve as guidance and requirements governing the importation of swine and swine products, while protecting the Philippines from further spread of ASF.

I. SCOPE

This Circular covers applications for recognition of ASF regionalization from countries that have an existing accreditation from the Department of Agriculture (DA), allowing the export of swine and swine products, into the Philippines.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Accreditation - refers to the authority of the Department of Agriculture (DA) to evaluate foreign meat establishments and live animal facilities based on a set of criteria with the objective of providing eligibility to conduct/undertake specified activities, pursuant to Section 34, RA 9296 (Meat Inspection Code), and Section 5, Act 3639.

African Swine Fever (ASF) - a highly contagious viral disease of domestic and wild pigs of all breeds and ages, caused by ASF virus (ASFV).

Competent Veterinary Authority - refers to the country's Governmental Authority, having the primary responsibility in the whole territory for coordinating the implementation of the standards of the WOAHP Terrestrial Animal Health Code (TAHC).

Chief Veterinary Officer - refers to the appointed Delegate to the WOAHP by the national government who is usually the head of the veterinary authority of the country.

Lead Evaluation Officer/s (LEO)- refers to a BAI veterinarian/s who is in charge of organizing and carrying out assessments of the animal health statuses of foreign areas or compartments, as well as determining the hazard of opening the Philippines' markets to goods from those areas.

Outbreak - refers to the occurrence of one or more cases in an epidemiological unit. A case is defined as an individual swine infected by a pathogenic agent, with or without clinical signs.

Region - refers to a geographic land area which is identifiable by geographical, political or surveyed boundaries, and its geographical limits should be established by the Veterinary Authority of the Exporting Country on the basis of natural, artificial or legal boundaries and made public through official channels.

Free Region - refers to a Region other than the infection region as declared by the Veterinary Authority of the Exporting Country and as accepted and confirmed by the Philippines' Bureau of Animal Industry.

Restricted Region - refers to an infected area defined within a previously free country or established zone, which includes all suspected or confirmed cases that are

epidemiologically linked and where movement control, biosecurity and sanitary measures are applied to prevent the spread of, and to eradicate, the infection or infestation.

Administrative Region - refers to a designated geographic area within a country with its own local government or administrative authority

Regionalization - also referred to as zoning in WOA, a procedure implemented by a Member Country under the provisions of TAHC Chapter 4.4 with a view to defining subpopulations of distinct health status within its territory for the purpose of disease control and/or international trade.

Risk Import Assessment Team (RIAT) - refers to a unit of BAI veterinarians responsible for the coordination of regionalization evaluations as required, as well as data collection and analysis, official correspondence, risk analysis, decision implementation, and assistance with the creation of policies, guidelines, regulations related to the processes.

Swine - refers to live swine and its genetic materials (semen and embryo)

Swine Products - refers to pork products and by-products, or any commodity of swine origin that did not comply with WOA, Article 15.1.23 - heat treatment for at least 30 minutes at a minimum temperature of 70 ° Celsius, any equivalent treatment which has been demonstrated to inactivate ASFV in meat, or any risk mitigation measures directed against ASF;

Terrestrial Animal Health Code (TAHC) - from the WOA providing standards for the improvement of terrestrial animal health and welfare and veterinary public health worldwide. The health measures in the Terrestrial Code are used by the Veterinary Authorities of importing and exporting countries to set up measures providing for early detection, reporting, and control of pathogenic agents, including zoonotic ones, in terrestrial animals (mammals, birds, reptiles, and bees) and preventing their spread via international trade in animals and animal products, while avoiding unjustified sanitary barriers to trade.

III. REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

A. Application Phase

1. Any request for ASF regionalization shall be accepted only from DA-accredited countries allowed to export their swine and swine products to the Philippines.
2. The Competent Authority by the DA-accredited countries shall submit the following:
 - a. Official request for ASF regionalization addressed to the Chief Veterinary Officer of the Philippines.
 - b. Technical Information Questionnaire for Regionalization
 1. Scope (indicate commodities) being requested;
 2. Veterinary control and oversight;
 3. Disease history (indicate cases and locations);
 4. Swine demographics, and density of domestic and wild pig population;
 5. Movement traceability (such as animal identification system, reporting

- protocol, etc.);
- 6. Epidemiological separation for (potential) sources of infection;
- 7. Presence/Involvement of *Ornithodoros* ticks;
- 8. Disease control procedures and measures
 - 8.1. vector control
 - 8.2. indicate the identification of free, infected, protection, and/or containment zones)
 - 8.3. stamping out, cleaning and disinfection, etc.
- 9. Surveillance and epidemiological investigations of the detections in domestic and wild pig population;
- 10. Diagnostic laboratory capabilities,
- 11. Disease detection and notification;
- 12. Emergency preparedness and response;
- 13. Disease prevention and monitoring procedures
 - 13.1. vaccination practices (if any)
 - 13.2. passive surveillance
- 14. Detailed description of ASF Regionalization proposal
- 15. Existing regionalization arrangements with other countries (If applicable)

B. Technical Evaluation Phase

1. The Chief Veterinary Officer shall forward the request to the Chief of the BAI-National Veterinary Quarantine Services Division (BAI-NVQSD), and the BAI-Animal Health and Welfare Division (BAI-AHWD), who serve as the Unit Leaders of the Risk Import Assessment Team (RIAT). The Unit Leaders shall designate the Lead Evaluation Officer/s (LEO) responsible for conducting the evaluation of which shall be composed of technical officers from BAI-NVQSD and BAI-AHWD.
2. The LEO shall acknowledge the receipt of the application and conduct a preliminary review of the completeness of the documents and information submitted, based on the checklist for the review of applications for Regionalization/ Zoning on ASF.
3. If the application passes the preliminary review, the LEO and the RIAT shall use the ASF Regionalization Checklist to record the documents/information submitted and indicate the findings whether it is acceptable, not acceptable, or needs more information. The technical evaluation process shall be completed in at least six (6) months, provided that all required information and documents are complete and comply with the relevant standards and requirements. The six-month period shall be reckoned from the date on which all required documents have been duly submitted to the BAI. In case of non-acceptance or incomplete information during the preliminary review, evaluation, and verification process, the LEO shall notify the applicant country of the findings and may require the submission of additional documents or information.
4. Once the review assessment has been concluded, the LEO and the Unit Leaders shall affix their signatures in the appropriate area of the Checklist Form. The LEO shall provide the overall result of the evaluation with corresponding recommendation to the CVO of the Philippines. The CVO shall approve or disapprove the recommendations.

C. Finalization Phase

1. The BAI shall notify the applicant country of the result through official communication channels. If the exporting country's application was approved, the communication shall include the following:
 - a. Draft ASF Regionalization agreement on: "Animal Health Requirements and Import Terms and Conditions (ITC) in Relation to the Bilateral Recognition of Regionalization on African Swine Fever (ASF) for Swine and Swine Products to be exported to the Philippines".
 - b. Request the submission of a proposed Veterinary Health Certificate (VHC) template in accordance with the provisions specified in the ITC.
2. If the applicant country's application is disapproved, the communication will include the overall result of the evaluation. It may also require the submission of additional documents or information about the applied region, and shall be subjected to re-evaluation as detailed in Section III.A.2.
3. The Chief Veterinary Officers of both countries shall agree on the import terms and conditions document (Annex A) for African Swine Fever regionalization.
4. Bilateral recognition of ASF regionalization shall commence upon satisfactory compliance with all of the requirements listed in Section III.A.2 and upon concurrence of the Philippines and applicant country through the signing of both CVOs of the "Animal Health Requirements and Import Terms and Conditions (ITC) in Relation to the Bilateral Recognition of Regionalization on African Swine Fever (ASF) for Swine and Swine Products to be exported to the Philippines" (Annex A), and the issuance of the Official recognition of the DA via a Memorandum Order signed by the DA Secretary.
5. The ASF Regionalization Agreement shall be valid for a period of 2 years.

D. Monitoring and Evaluation

1. The implementation of the bilateral ASF regionalization agreement shall be subject to regular evaluation conducted by the BAI-NVQSD at least once every calendar year, to assess its relevance and effectiveness.
2. After the 2-year validity period, the countries are required to submit a new application with updated Technical Information Questionnaire for ASF Regionalization (Section III.A.2.)

IV. IMPORT TERMS AND CONDITIONS ON ASF REGIONALIZATION

The following provisions are the Import Terms and Conditions that shall be the obligations of the present agreement. Any violations to the following obligations, the Philippines reserves the right to terminate the agreement at any time without prior notice and with immediate effect.

A. General Conditions

1. The regionalization agreement shall apply to administrative region located outside the restricted regions that have been declared free from African Swine Fever by the Veterinary Authority of the exporting country, and whose status is duly recognized by the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI).
2. The commodities under the bilateral recognition of African Swine Fever regionalization are based on the granted Accreditation of the Department of Agriculture (DA).
3. The Veterinary Authority of exporting country is required to submit an annual report to the BAI concerning the African Swine Fever situation, including surveillance, monitoring, and control measures. This report ensures that the BAI is informed of the African Swine Fever status and any developments that may necessitate modifications to the established bilateral African Swine Fever regionalization agreement with the Philippines.

B. Specific Conditions

4. Supplemental to the requirements indicated for each consignment's import terms and conditions, the international veterinary certificate issued by the Veterinary Authority of the exporting country, under the recognized African Swine Fever regionalization, shall contain the following **additional** attestations, whichever is applicable depending on the country's accreditation status:

4.1 For the export of swine, the following requirements are as follows:

- 4.1.1 On the day of shipment, the swine showed no clinical signs of African Swine Fever;
- 4.1.2 The swine originated from an African Swine Fever-free administrative region;
- 4.1.3 The swine originated from an animal group that was monitored for African Swine Fever and was found to be negative;
- 4.1.4 The swine have not been transported through African Swine Fever restricted regions;
- 4.1.5 If they have been transported through African Swine Fever restricted region, the live swine were placed under specified conditions to reduce disease risk, such as using expressways, containers are sealed with an official seal as determined by the veterinary authority of exporting country, and shall only disembark at the point of entry;
- 4.1.6 If the swine have been vaccinated against African Swine Fever, the nature of the vaccine used and the date of vaccination must be indicated in the international veterinary certificate.
- 4.1.7 For genetic materials, the donor swine shall follow the requirements of Section III(4.1.1 – 4.1.6).

4.2 For export of swine products, the following requirements are as follows:

- 4.2.1 The entire consignment of swine products comes from swine, which originated from an African Swine Fever-free administrative region and has been transported into the swine slaughtering facilities only via free regions OR if they pass through the infected regions before being carried into slaughterhouses, appropriate vehicles in terms of animal health which do not allow contamination of pathogens of swine infectious diseases during the transport must be used. In addition, the competent authority of exporting country must ensure that the swine was directly

sent from the origin to the slaughterhouses in a vehicle that was not opened on the way.

- 4.2.2 The entire consignment of swine products was slaughtered in an approved (by the Veterinary Authority) slaughterhouse/abattoir from the African Swine Fever-free administrative region, and was subjected to ante- and post-mortem inspection, with favorable results, in accordance with the WOAHA TAHC recommendations.

V. REVIEW CLAUSE

Pursuant to Section 5 of RA 11032, this Circular is hereby issued consistent with the provisions on pilot implementation of regulations. There shall be a mandatory review after two (2) years from the issuance of this Circular in compliance with the provisions for ex-post assessment of regulations pursuant to Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) Memorandum Circular No. 2022-06. Revisions to this Circular shall observe the principles of good regulatory practices set forth in Department Order No. 10, series of 2024.

V. SEPARABILITY AND REPEALING CLAUSE

If any portion of this Circular is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other portions thereof which are not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect. All existing memorandum circular, rules, and regulations or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Order are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

VI. EFFECTIVITY

This Circular shall take effect immediately following the completion of its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation and its filing with the National Administrative Register, U.P. Law Center.

Done this 1st day of OCTOBER 2025.


FRANCISCO P. TIU LAUREL JR.
Secretary



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