

African Swine Fever and the threat to the Irish Pig Sector

Presentation by pig farmers David Ronan & Shane McAuliffe accompanied by IFA Pig Chairman Roy Gallie & IFA Pig Committee secretary, Robert Malone, to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Opening Statement by David Ronan, Pig Farmer, Co. Tipperary; 17th Dec 2020.

Chairman, Jackie Cahill and members of the Oireachtas, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to make this presentation on a pig disease threat from African Swine Fever (ASF) which has the potential to cause devastation to Ireland's third largest agricultural sector.

I am a 3rd generation pig farmer based in Co. Tipperary supplying the Irish Pig Meat Market with over 50 years, employing over 60 employees. In the last few years, the biggest threats to our business is the potential for an outbreak of a serious disease and sourcing of suitable employees for the farming sector.

With regard to the disease/ASF Issue, I will introduce my colleagues shortly who will expand on this issue but by way of background initially, I wish to outline broadly the reasons why I have come before the Committee today.

The issue of ASF is of such a serious nature for the pig farming community and has been a huge concern to me for a number of years. I have been in contact with my local Tipperary TDs to try and get this issue elevated and highlight the seriousness of the problem to this country.

This disease has far reaching consequences if it arrives here. One needs only to note the collapse of the Chinese market when they had the outbreak.

Furthermore, I would like to see an *All-Ireland Island* approach in order to protect ourselves from ASF. The last 2 diseases that reached the Republic of Ireland came through Northern Ireland i.e. PMWS (Post-weaning multi-systemic wasting syndrome). Failure to implement a system such as Australia where their borders are so stringent, will be detrimental to the industry. Australia has been able to keep out disease for over 2 or 3 decades not only from diseases such as ASF but also PMWS and Blue Ear disease which have severe consequences.

I believe the best way forward is for the Ministers of Agriculture both North and South to collaborate for an All-Ireland approach to safeguard our health status.

My biggest fear currently is that ASF has already managed to travel from Asia, through Eastern Europe and has now arrived in Germany and Belgium. It is only a matter of time before our borders are breached here, if we don't act now, the consequences for the agriculture sector will be catastrophic.

Let me first introduce the following order of speakers:

1. Shane McAuliffe of McAuliffe Farms in Co. Kerry and also EU Pig Ambassador 2019; Email: [REDACTED]
2. Roy Gallie, Chairman, IFA Pig Chairman; Email: [REDACTED]
3. Robert Malone IFA Pig Committee Secretary; Email: [REDACTED]