

Expert opinion on controlling African swine fever in Sardinia



OIE-ASF REFERENCE LABORATORY

L. Mur^a, B. Martínez-López^{a,b}, F. Feliziani^c, Ana Sánchez^a, J.M. Sánchez-Vizcaíno^a

^a VISA VET Center and OIE Reference Laboratory for ASF, University Complutense of Madrid. Madrid. Spain

^b IREC (CSIC-UCLM-JCCM), Ciudad Real, Spain

^c IZS Umbria e Marche, Perugia, Italy



Introduction

African swine fever (ASF), one of the most devastating diseases of swines, is endemic in Sardinia since 1978, being the unique territory of the European Union where ASF is still present. Several programs have been applied along these years in the island for controlling and eradicating the disease achieving partial improvements. European Commission recently approved the financial contribution from the Union for the eradication of ASF in Sardinia to support a new expensive eradication plan (1).

In such moment, when important funding will be invested for controlling the disease in Sardinia, it is completely necessary to merge efforts and knowledge of all the stakeholders implicated in the problem for developing the best program for fighting against the disease.

Material & Methods

A workshop was held in Cagliari, Sardinia the 1st December 2012 entitled "Eradicazione della peste suina africana in Sardegna: aspetti tecnici e strategie" (Eradication of ASF in Sardinia: technical aspects and strategy). Public and field veterinarians from Sardinia assisted to the conference organized by "La Società italiana di Medicina preventiva".

The audience was asked to list the most important measures in their opinion, required for the eradication of ASF in the island. The questionnaires with the anonymous answers were collected and scanned for their further analysis. Answers were digitalized and included in a data-base for their analysis.

Objective

Collect and analyse the opinion of sardinian field veterinarians about the measures required for controlling ASF in Sardinia.



Results

41 questionnaires were collected, most of them (75%) including several proposals for controlling ASF. The range of answers provided vary from 1 to 7, with a total number of measures proposed of 99.

Most of the measures proposed (70.7%) were voted by more than two persons, suggesting a common criteria or thinking among the participants. The detailed analysis of the disaggregated measures voted by more than 3 persons is represented on Figure 1.

The proposed measures were aggregated on seven topics depending on the final objective of the measure. Based on this aggregation, the most voted topics were the control of free ranging pigs (21%) and economic measures (2%) followed by sociology/cultural changes (15%) (Figure 2).

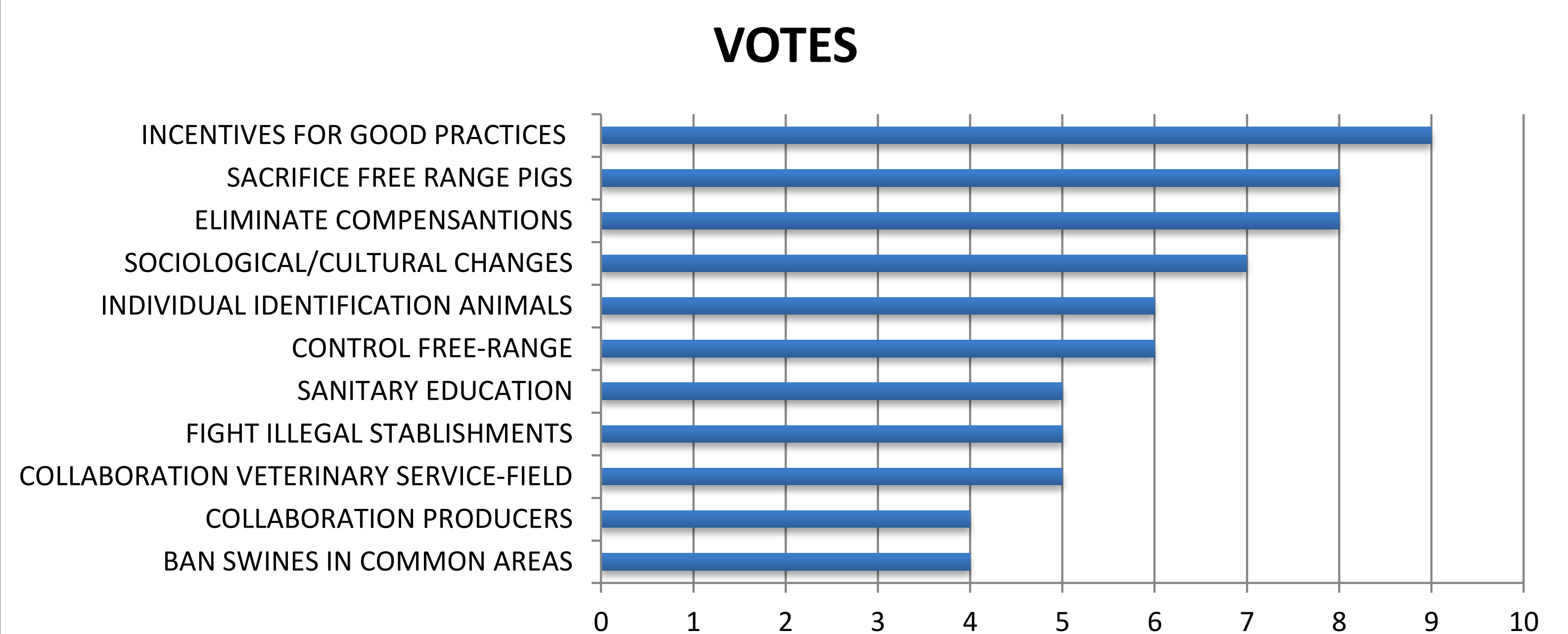


Figure 1: Control measures most proposed for eradication of ASF in Sardinia .

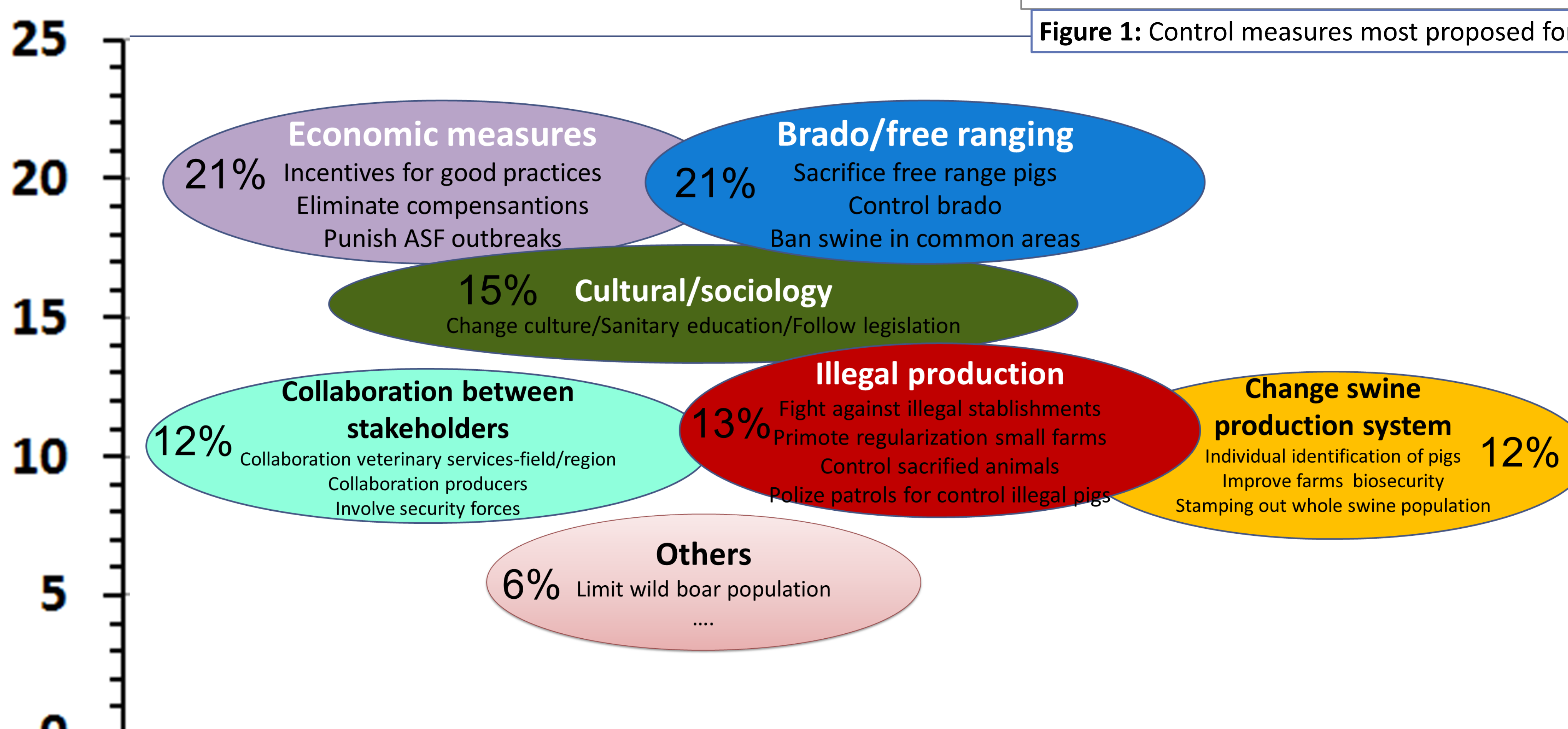


Figure 2: Distribution of votes of control measures proposed for the eradication of ASF.

Other control measures less popular (2 votes) included more radical actions as stamping out of the whole population, the involvement of security forces in the process or the establishment of a police patrol for controlling illegal pigs.

The improvement of biosecurity on farms, limit the population of wild boar in the island and promote the regularization of family farms were also mentioned by the participants.

References

- 1) Commission Implementing Decision. 2012/761/EU
- 2) Sardegna Salute [http://www.sardegna salute.it/index.php?xsl=313&s=36929&v=2&c=3268]
- 3) Mur et al., 2012. Transb Emer dis. 59; 526-531.
- 4) Rolesu et al., 2007. Vet Ital 43; 463-467.

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Discussion & Conclusion

The opinion of the field veterinarians collected here clearly reflects that ASF in Sardinia is not just a sanitary problem, but mix of a socio-cultural-economic factors, as it was previously suggested (2). Consequently, the control measures should cover many fields, from economic measures until management of free range animals, including sanitary education, animal identification and management practices.

Some of the measures proposed by the experts are difficult to apply due to the in specificity of the topic (e.g. cultural/sociology change). However, some others were clearly explained and seems to reflect the general opinion of the audience, as the positive rewards for the good management practices, elimination of compensation system and individual identification of the animals. The repetitive votes for a drastic intervention on free range pigs, in contrast with the limit mention of wild boar (2 votes) emphasizes the previous hypothesis (3,4) of the limit role of wild boar in ASF maintenance.

The measures proposed here reflects the wide experience and knowledge of the veterinary collectivity that have been fighting against ASF in Sardinia for long periods of time