

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DE
L'AGRICULTURE ET DE
L'AGROALIMENTAIRE**

Ottawa, June 4, 2019

The Honorable Marie-Claude Bibeau
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

Madam Minister,

The Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food held two public meetings on May 16 and 28, 2019, with representatives from the pork industry and Canadian government officials to discuss about the African swine fever (ASF) around the world. Canada is currently spared.

The Canadian pork industry is responsible for over 100,000 jobs and generates \$24 billion. In 2018, Canada was the world's third-largest exporter of pork. The volume exported was 1.3 million tonnes. Although ASF does not pose a risk to human health, its introduction in Canada could have a devastating effect on the swine sector. It is difficult to accurately quantify the impact of such an epidemic in Canada, but it is clear, according to witnesses heard by the Committee, that this would result in significant job losses and financial losses of billions of dollars for all industry stakeholders.

Knowing that there is currently no vaccine or treatment for ASF, the witnesses agreed that the best way to minimize the potential impacts of ASF on the Canadian pork industry is to work – together with all stakeholders – on prevention, preparation and intervention. To this end, the pork industry and the federal and provincial governments are investing in traceability, biosecurity, extension and research. Witnesses also noted the importance of the Canadian government's actions, including its commitment to increase the number of detector dogs teams at Canadian airports in order to strengthen border surveillance of travellers and goods from countries infected with ASF. In addition, Canada has taken a leadership role in organizing the International ASF Forum, on 30 April and 1 May 2019, to discuss how to mitigate the risks associated with the disease and prevent its introduction to the Americas.

Despite these measures, the witnesses pointed out that there is still much work to do to control this disease as soon as possible. Among the recommendations made to counter ASF, witnesses suggested strengthening traceability, biosecurity and surveillance systems, as well as encouraging Canada's trading partners to implement zoning measures during highly contagious animal disease outbreaks in order to maintain international trade. The establishment of a pork promotion and research office has been a longstanding request from the hog sector that would ensure its viability. The witnesses also requested crisis-sensitive risk management programs coordinated with provinces and territories in the case of an outbreak of ASF. Witnesses believe that Canada can prevent and avoid devastating effects of ASF. To this end, it is necessary to increase financial and human resources in addition to facilitating communication between stakeholders in the pork industry before and during an outbreak of the disease.

Canada is a world leader in pork exports. An outbreak of the disease in Canada would result in the country being shut out from export markets. The spread of ASF in Canada would therefore be catastrophic for the pork industry, on economic and human scales. On behalf of the Committee, I encourage the Canadian government to continue its efforts and take all necessary measures, in collaboration with industry and all levels of government, at home and abroad, to prevent the introduction of ASF in Canada. The hog industry expects the Government of Canada to have a well-defined plan prior to the outbreak of an epidemic, take all necessary measures and communicate information to all stakeholders in order to alleviate the uncertainty created by this threat. Therefore, it is crucial that Canada be ready to respond in the event that the disease spreads on our continent to protect the Canadian hog industry.

Please accept, Madam Minister, my best regards.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Pat Finnigan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Pat Finnigan, MP
Chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food