

ISSUES & INSIGHTS

Bureau of Customs and Border Protection Funding Critical to Foreign Animal Disease Prevention

SITUATION

If a foreign animal disease (FAD) such as Foot-and-Mouth Disease, African swine fever (ASF) or classical swine fever were to enter the U.S. swine herd, it would cause billions of dollars in losses and lead to an immediate loss of export markets. The most likely path for a FAD to enter the country would be through the importation of infected animals or contaminated products. While the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has the regulatory authority to decline or permit entry of animals and products, the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (BCBP) implements and enforces the USDA rules.

Under the Agricultural Quarantine Inspection (AQI) program, BCBP agriculture specialists and officers at U.S. ports of entry and international mail facilities work to target, detect, and prevent the entry of these potential threats before they have a chance to do any harm. They check containers and trucks for smuggled products, utilize specialized x-ray machines that detect organic materials and employ USDA's "Beagle Brigade," canines trained to sniff out meat and plant materials in international airport passenger areas. BCBP is the first line of defense to protect American pork production and the rest of agriculture from disease.



To address the dramatic drop in user fee collections due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 appropriated \$635 million to fund the AQI program through September 2021. However, BCBP's established staffing levels still indicate they are short more than 700 agricultural inspectors. This is far less than the number of inspectors needed to protect U.S. agriculture in the face of a growing global epidemic of ASF and other diseases that threaten plant and animal health in the United States. In 2020, Congress passed the Protecting America's Food and Agriculture Act, which authorizes funding for 720 new agricultural inspectors at land, air and sea ports to prevent ASF and other FADs from entering the United States. This law authorizes \$96.7 million to hire and train new inspectors in FY22.

NPPC POSITION

NPPC urges Congress to appropriate funding as authorized under the Protecting America's Food and Agriculture Act of 2019. This funding will allow the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (BCBP) to fully staff its agricultural inspection program and keep American agriculture safe from foreign animal and plant diseases. NPPC also strongly supports any necessary measures to keep the AQI program funded in light of the ongoing impact of the pandemic on user fee collections.

FAST FACTS

- Foreign Agriculture Diseases such as Foot-and-Mouth Disease, classical swine fever and African swine fever (ASF) are considered highly transmissible diseases and must be reported to the World Animal Health Organization (OIE). Reporting these diseases would lead to an immediate loss of export markets.
- Recovering from a foreign animal disease requires significant, costly efforts related to depopulation, disposal and clean up. Ongoing surveillance testing would be required to prove elimination of a disease and before the OIE could declare the United States disease free. Lengthy negotiations with trading partners following such a declaration would be required to re-open export markets.
- ASF has moved through Russia and Eastern Europe since 2007 and in August 2018 was reported in China's swine herd. It has been estimated that the number of sows China has lost to ASF is more than the entire U.S. sow herd.

NPPC CONTACTS

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