

Newsletter #10 - Your question



- HAROPA PORT -
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When one health crisis hides another: double impact on meat exports to China?



China is the world's largest consumer and importer of pork by volume, with 1.5 million tonnes (Mt) in 2018. However, it is also the world's leading producer, with 53.4 Mt in 2017, compared to 23.67 Mt for the European Union.

However, since the end of 2018, China has been facing an ever-expanding epidemic of African swine fever which has spread to neighbouring countries. In July 2019, China's pig herd was down 32.2% on 2018, resulting in a nearly 70% surge in pork prices.

This shortage of pigs in China represented an opportunity for the European Union and Brazil. The European Union increased its exports by 45% over the first half of 2019. All members benefited, with Spain coming out on top, recording a 90% increase in sales, in 2019 becoming China's leading supplier ahead of Germany.

In France, an all-time high, exports reached nearly 170 000 tonnes in 2019, up from 100 000 to 110 000 tonnes previously, a volume that already accounted for 20% of French exports. The main French producer announced a 60% increase in sales for 2019

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During the health crisis, the entire meat industry was affected. With lockdown, production lines have been shut down. In terms of logistics, the shortage of empty reefer containers has severely hampered exports to China. According to the main French producers, the availability rate of reefers was thus about 30-40% lower than they needed. This logistical tension has been exacerbated by high freight rates and lack of space on ships.

However, Chinese demand is not weakening this year and, despite logistical difficulties and still high transport costs, Chinese imports are expected to increase during 2020. Chinese demand is also shifting towards high-end meat products. Finally, due to swine fever in Belgium, flows to China have to pass through a French port.

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