



African Swine Fever is Triggering Market Shifts

MDF MarketView Timor-Leste #9

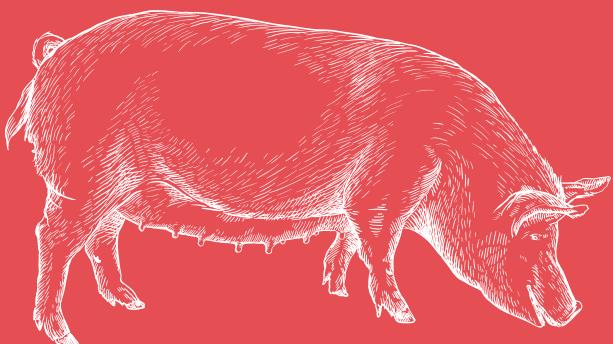
Market Development Facility

October 2022

African Swine Fever (ASF) caused a huge shock to Timor-Leste's pig rearing sector

Pigs are ubiquitous in Timor-Leste. Around 80 per cent of rural households rear pigs. Before African Swine Fever, based on conservative market prices, households on average owned USD1,000 worth of pigs, with a total national herd value of USD160 million. Pigs are important for economic and cultural reasons. They are a store of wealth for rural households and used as food, gifts, and markers of social status. Even before the arrival of ASF, Timor-Leste's pig sector faced challenges. Farmers had limited access to improved breeds and used only rudimentary rearing practices. Pig supply was low. Farmers could not find quality pigs to rear and butchers could not purchase animals for slaughter.

ASF, a highly contagious pig disease, was officially declared to be present in Timor-Leste in September 2019. It is almost 100 per cent fatal and there are no vaccines or treatments that can help. The virus spread quickly throughout the country. Official statistics record that ASF killed at least 129,000 pigs (28 per cent of the national pig population), but the true impact is likely to be much higher. ASF compounded existing problems in the sector and added an urgent need for enhanced biosecurity.





ASF has accelerated behaviour change in pig farmers

Timor-Leste's pig rearing practices made it vulnerable to the spread of ASF. Pigs usually become infected through direct contact with infected pigs, fomites (contaminated vehicles, equipment, or clothing), or through ingestion of material containing infected pig meat. Pigs in Timor-Leste are rarely kept in pens and mixed freely with pigs from other households. Farmers regularly feed their animals feed produced in unhygienic conditions and leftover food, including meat scraps from their kitchens. At the time of the ASF outbreak, MDF had been working to encourage farmers to adopt commercial feed, improved breeds, and improved rearing practices to raise productivity. MDF rapidly shifted focus to integrate ASF awareness and prevention in its interventions.

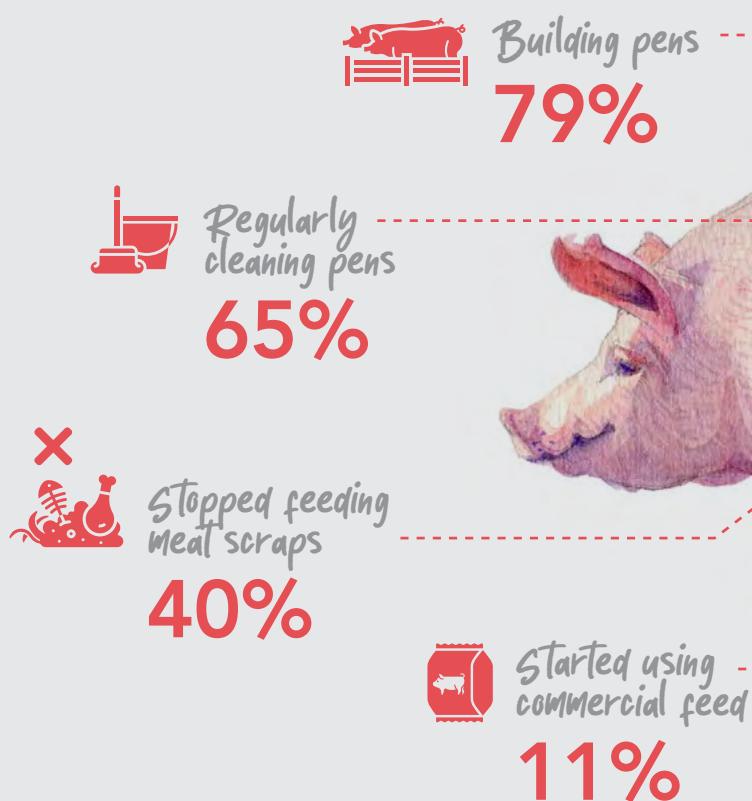
Beginning in early 2020, MDF designed an ASF awareness-raising campaign with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF). High-quality written materials and video content were produced, and a diverse and innovative communications campaign was launched in July 2020. This campaign included television advertisements, SMS messages, social media and influencers, banners and posters, radio, and a mobile cinema. The objective was to build awareness about ASF among farmers and encourage better biosecurity practices to reduce ASF-related pig deaths.

The campaigns focused on teaching farmers to adopt practices that limit the spread of ASF. These practices included building pig pens, regularly cleaning pens, barring people from entering pens, adopting hygienic commercial feed and stopping feeding meat scraps to the animals. The campaigns reached farmers who were highly motivated and quick to adopt improved practices to save their livestock.

MDF'S IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOUND THAT :



Among farmers who received information from the campaigns, **74%** took one or more actions to improve biosecurity. The most common preventative actions were:



Nearly all farmers (**88%**) reported that their pigs stopped dying once they corralled them in pens. MDF found that when a farmer followed the suggested precautions against ASF, an average of two pigs were saved per household.

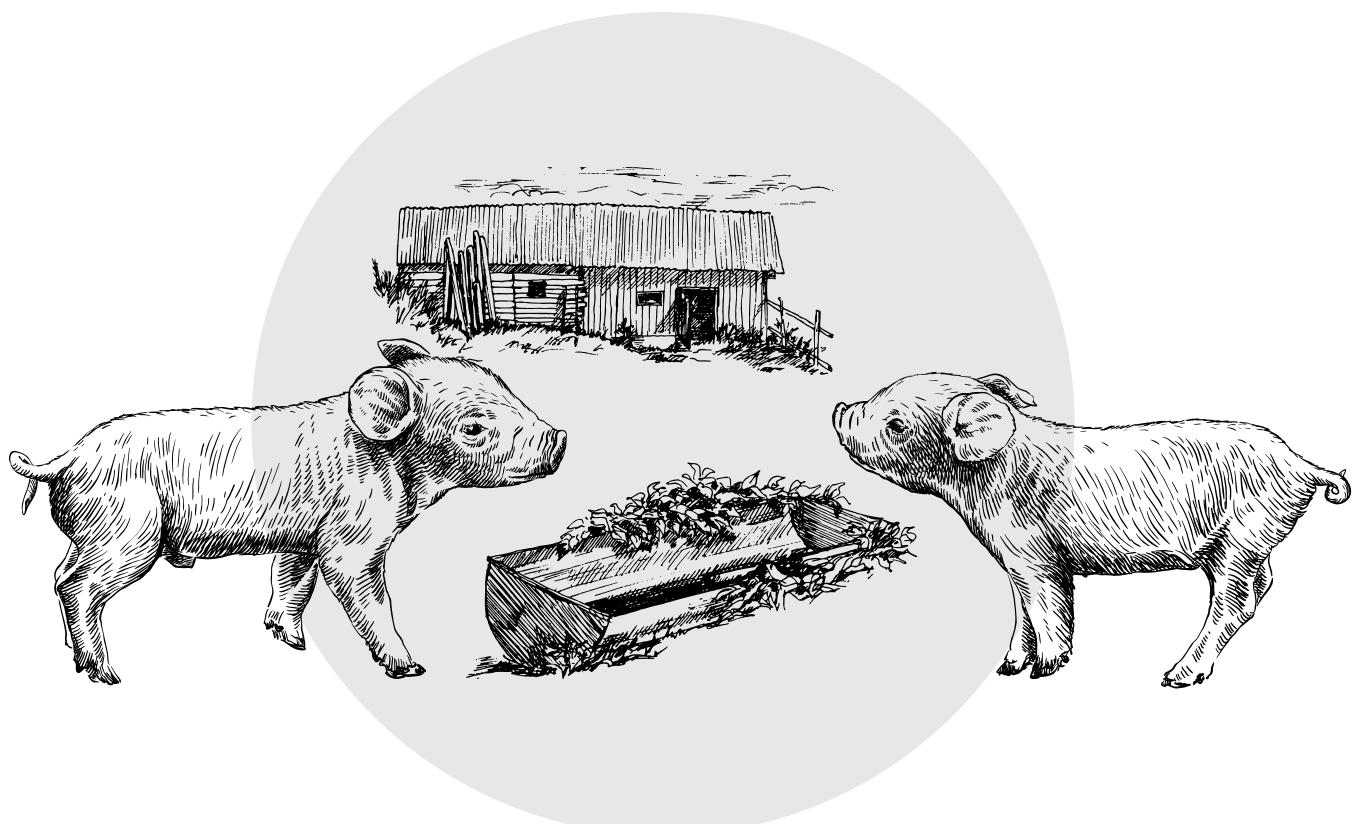
These practices will also have long term benefits to the productivity of pig farming in Timor-Leste. Around **50%** said that after following the campaign's recommendations, they observed better livestock health and **38%** experienced better pig growth.

Promising signs of recovery but challenges remain

ASF remains a threat but changes on farms, in businesses and in government offices point to the recovery of a more resilient pig sector in Timor-Leste. Sustained shifts in behaviour are expected to continue to benefit pig farmers in 2022 and beyond, by reducing the spread of disease, raising productivity, and increasing the availability of feed and piglets.

The recovery is being hampered, however, most notably by shortages of piglets, pushing up prices. The price of a local breed piglet has increased from USD 50 to USD 100 since ASF. For an exotic breed piglet, the price risen from USD 150 to USD 250. More farmers are shifting into the piglet breeding business in response to high prices, but demand far outstrips supply.

High piglet prices, together with the investment needed to avoid the spread of ASF (such as pen construction and commercial feed) risk pricing lower-income farmers out of the market. MDF is working to increase piglet supply, signing four new interventions in pig breeding in 2021. MDF is also working with a breeder to pilot artificial insemination in Timor-Leste for the first time, to encourage the introduction of improved genetics.





- Facility Wide: Level 7, 307 Queen Street, Brisbane, QLD 4000, Australia
- Fiji / Pacific Regional: Garden City Business Park, Grantham Road, Suva, Fiji
- Timor-Leste: 2nd Street, Palm Business & Trade Centre, Surik Mas, Dili
- Sri Lanka: No. 349, 6/1, Lee Hedges Tower, Galle Road, Colombo 03, Sri Lanka
- Papua New Guinea: Level 10, MRDC Haus, Musgrave St, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea
- Samoa: Pat Ah Him Building (Nia Mall), Unit 20, Second Floor, Saleufi St, Apia, Samoa

This publication has been funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The views expressed in this publication are the author's alone and are not necessarily the views of the Australian Government.