



VAX4ASF

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VAX4ASF enters its third year with strong progress as ASF reemerges across Europe

- After two years of collaborative research, the project is progressing towards next-generation vaccine prototypes, companion diagnostic tools and science-based strategies to support future ASF control and prevention.
- With African swine fever once again affecting previously unaffected regions, VAX4ASF advances scientific tools to support Europe's preparedness and response.

The European-funded project [VAX4ASF](#) – New Technologies for African Swine Fever Vaccines is entering its third year, carrying forward significant scientific progress at a moment when African Swine Fever (ASF) has re-emerged in Europe in countries like Spain.

ASF virus is one of the most severe threats facing swine production worldwide. The virus, harmless to humans but deadly to pigs, can spread rapidly across regions, causing substantial economic losses, disruption to food supply chains and hardship for rural communities. Spain, the EU's largest pork producer, had been free of ASF for decades. Its sudden reappearance in late 2025 has served as a powerful reminder of the continued vulnerability of the sector, even in countries with strong biosecurity systems.

Against this backdrop, the work of VAX4ASF has never been more relevant. Bringing together 17 partners from Europe, Africa and the United Kingdom, the project aims to develop innovative vaccines, diagnostic tools and science-based strategies capable of transforming the way ASF is managed.

Promising advances in vaccine research

Across its first 24 months, VAX4ASF has made important progress toward next-generation vaccine prototypes that are designed with the goal to be safer and more controlled than traditional approaches. Preparations are now under way for their evaluation in carefully monitored animal trials, an essential step in understanding how the vaccine prototypes work against the virus.



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Advancing in-depth knowledge of the virus

A key part of VAX4ASF's mission is to deepen scientific understanding of how the ASF virus interacts with its host. Over the last two years, researchers have gained valuable insights into immune responses and other biological mechanisms linked to protection. This knowledge may support vaccine design and allows researchers to have a better understanding of how the virus may behave in different settings.

These findings come from extensive collaborative work involving teams in Europe and Africa, helping ensure that the scientific approaches developed through VAX4ASF are relevant to diverse epidemiological contexts.

Laying foundations for future large-scale production

In parallel with laboratory research, the project has begun preparing the technical and logistical foundations required for potential large-scale vaccine development. Early manufacturing considerations, preparation of essential materials and initial quality-related procedures are already being put in place.

These steps do not yet represent production activities, but they are crucial for ensuring that, when a leading vaccine candidate is selected, the project will already have a clear pathway toward future development. This forward-looking approach is particularly important in a sector where rapid response can determine the difference between containment and large-scale outbreaks.

Progress towards a diagnostic tool to support vaccination

A future ASF vaccination programme must be accompanied by an accurate way to distinguish vaccinated animals from those naturally infected. For this reason, VAX4ASF is developing a specialised diagnostic tool often referred to as a "DIVA test".

Over the past 24 months, early versions of this test have been developed and assessed. Work will continue to refine and validate the method as vaccine candidates move forward. A reliable diagnostic tool remains essential to support monitoring, trade and disease-control decisions.

Understanding ASF spread across Europe

Alongside vaccine and diagnostic development, VAX4ASF has also made progress in analysing how ASF spreads in different European regions. By examining data from wild boar populations and domestic farms, researchers are helping to build clearer pictures of how the virus moves through landscapes and production systems.

This kind of modelling is vital for shaping future prevention strategies, including the potential integration of vaccination. It also becomes more relevant in light of recent events in Spain, where ASF re-entered an area previously considered low risk. The insights generated through



VAX4ASF can support the development of timely, informed decisions for farmers, veterinarians and policymakers.

Europe remains exposed to ASF, despite significant biosecurity efforts. They also demonstrate the critical need for new scientific tools, precisely the type of solutions VAX4ASF aims to provide.

Looking ahead: Entering the third year with purpose

As VAX4ASF enters its third year, the project moves forward with renewed determination. The foundations built over the past two years are now enabling the transition to a new phase where innovations created in the laboratory begin to take shape and be developed further.

The coming months will generate further evaluation of the most promising vaccine prototypes, continued refinement of the companion diagnostic tool and deeper modelling work to understand how vaccination could be deployed in real farming and wildlife-management scenarios. At the same time, technical planning for potential large-scale production will continue steadily.

Together, these activities form a coherent pathway toward long-term solutions. In the face of recent ASF outbreaks, VAX4ASF's work is more relevant than ever, with the goal of contributing to the protection of animals, the resilience of rural communities and the security of Europe's food systems.

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