



31.1.2019

NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Petition No 0878/2018 by Bo Håkansson (Danish), on behalf of the Danish Society for Nature Conservation, against a fence along the Danish-German border to prevent wild boar from migrating

1. Summary of petition

The petitioner expresses concern regarding the upcoming construction of a 70 kilometres fence along the German-Danish border, in compliance with a law adopted by the Danish Parliament on June 4th 2018, aiming to prevent wild boar from migrating from Germany to Denmark and to re-establish a native Danish wild boar population.

In the petitioner's view, such a measure is disproportionate, does not correspond to its stated objective of preventing African Swine Fever being imported into Denmark and also runs counter to the EU's stated objective of reducing landscape fragmentation in Europe. The petitioner also argues that this policy will have an impact on other species than wild boar, with medium-sized mammals hardest affected.

2. Admissibility

Declared admissible on 18 December 2018. Information requested from Commission under Rule 216(6).

3. Commission reply, received on 31 January 2019

The Commission requested scientific advice concerning wild boar management methods including fencing from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). The most recent EFSA opinion was published in July 2018¹ suggesting that there is currently no evidence that large fences have been effective in the containment of wild boar, and that the effectiveness of new large-scale fences to separate wild boar populations will need evaluation in the future. While

¹ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/5344>

some electrical fences have demonstrated the ability to temporarily protect crops from damage caused by wild boar or feral swine with different levels of efficiency, no electrical fence design can be considered 100% wild boar proof on a large scale for a prolonged period of time.

In addition, the European Union has defined, with the support of the Member States, a specific strategic approach for African Swine Fever², which includes prevention and control measures. Taking into account the latest scientific evidence and experience gained, fencing of large areas as a control measure is not referred to in this document.

On 19 December 2018 the Commission organised a Ministerial conference on “Eradication of African Swine Fever in the EU and the long-term management of wild boar populations”. During this event, Member States were invited to ensure a long-term management strategy regarding wild boar populations, including its appropriate reduction. This strategy should be determined after an impact assessment, and specific objectives, measures and joint programmes of cooperation between the agriculture and environmental sector (hunting management, ban of supplementary feeding, agricultural practises) should be tailored to the particular situation of the Member State. It was highlighted during the event that the measures taken in the framework of a long-term management strategy regarding wild boar population will have to be compatible with EU environmental and veterinary legislation, including nature protection requirements, and be properly assessed in terms of scientific basis, impact and effectiveness.

The Commission has also indicated to the Danish Authorities the need to proceed with a detailed assessment on the planned project according to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive³. This assessment should take into consideration, inter alia, the provisions of the Habitats Directive concerning animal species listed in Annexes II, IV(a) and V of the Directive and more particularly Articles 6, 12 and 14. In this context, the Danish authorities will also need to ensure that any risks of habitat fragmentation as a result of the project will be adequately addressed through appropriate prevention or mitigation measures, in line with the overall objective of the Directive to maintain or reach favourable conservation status for all protected species.

Conclusion

In the Commission’s view, the current EU legal framework and guidance documents on African Swine Fever do not recommend large-scale fencing as a measure for wild boar management. However, a long-term management strategy of wild boar populations should be tailored to the particular situation of the Member State. Member States must ensure the compatibility of the measures taken with the EU environmental and veterinary legislative framework.

² https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/animals/docs/ad_control-measures_asf_wrk-doc-sante-2015-7113.pdf

³ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, *OJ L 206*, 22.7.1992, p. 7–50.

It is the duty of the Member States' competent authorities to also ensure the full and correct implementation of the provisions of the Habitats Directive. In the case of the planned wild boar fence, the Danish authorities need to ensure, inter alia, that any risks of habitat fragmentation as a result of the project will be adequately addressed through appropriate prevention or mitigation measures, in line with the overall objective of the Directive to maintain or reach favourable conservation status for all protected species.