



MINISTÈRE  
DE L'AGRICULTURE  
ET DE L'ALIMENTATION

*Liberté  
Égalité  
Fraternité*



**The French General  
Directorate for Food (DGAL)  
IN ACTION**



# CONTENTS

<b>EDITORIAL</b> .....	<b>05</b>	<b>PLANT AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>THE DGAL'S CENTRAL ROLE IN FOOD HEALTH SAFETY</b> .....	<b>06</b>	- French forests under attack from bark beetles.....	28
<b>2020, A YEAR OF CRISIS, CHALLENGES AND CHANGE</b> .....	<b>11</b>	- Xylella: no let-up in vigilance.....	28
- A new strategic plan and a new organisational structure.....	12	- Plant health: implementation of the EU regulation.....	30
- The challenge and impact of the Covid-19 crisis.....	12	- Beet and neonicotinoids: limited derogations.....	31
- Work on the government's Economic Recovery Plan.....	14	- Separation of plant health product sales from advisory services: now a reality!.....	32
- The challenge of Brexit successfully addressed.....	15	- Hazardous impurities in plant health products.....	33
<b>ANIMAL HEALTH AND PROTECTION</b> .....	<b>17</b>	<b>FOOD AND FOOD SAFETY</b> .....	<b>35</b>
- Avian influenza returns to France.....	18	- The Economic Recovery Plan: unprecedented resources to promote food that is healthy, sustainable, local, and available to all.....	36
- Animal welfare: major progress.....	19	- Food wastage: a broader obligation to donate.....	38
- Convictions of farmers for maltreatment of livestock.....	21	- A website for the food chain surveillance platform.....	39
- The EU "Animal Health Law" regulation.....	22	- "RappelConso": a new website for recalls of hazardous products.....	39
- Wide-ranging communication campaigns: African Swine Fever and Ecoantibio.....	22	- Revision of the Guide to alert management.....	40
- Ensuring slaughterhouse compliance: an example of government action.....	24	- Meat: product withdrawal/recall and a mandatory closure.....	40
		- Norovirus shellfish contamination.....	41
		<b>THE DGAL IN FIGURES</b> .....	<b>43</b>
		- Inspections and controls conducted in 2020.....	44
		- Plant and animal product exports in 2020.....	46



# A year marked by the “One Health” policy



Some years leave a deeper mark than others. 2020 is one of them. The global health crisis we have been living through has not only upset many certainties, it has also reminded us of a necessity: the importance of universal access to food that is healthy, safe and of good quality.

Deep in the Covid storm, the DGAL's teams have stepped up to the mark and proved themselves capable of carrying out the essential tasks entrusted to them to provide the sanitary safety we owe our fellow citizens. The challenge has been fully met and has fed into the definition and implementation of the government's Economic Recovery Plan. This Activity Report sets out to testify to the work done and the numerous results obtained.

The Covid crisis has also reminded us of how close our ties are to the rest of the living world. Human health, animal health, plant health and protection of the environment are one and the same thing. In 2020 this holistic and integrated approach to health risks was central to the building of the DGAL's Strategic Plan which led in early 2021 to a reorganisation of our Directorate around cross-functionality for our departments and a “One Health” philosophy.

2020 turned out to be a strategic year rich in events. I am convinced that the DGAL has emerged from it better equipped to respond to the expectations of our fellow citizens, to maintain a high level of sanitary safety and to enhance the resilience of our food, animal health and plant health systems. It is to this, I hope, that this Activity Report will testify.



**Bruno Ferreira**  
DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR FOOD

# THE DGAL'S CENTRAL ROLE IN FOOD HEALTH SAFETY

The DGAL endeavours to ensure the safety and quality of foodstuffs at every point in the food chain, in addition to the health and protection of animals and plants, working with all those involved: the farming and food industries, consumers, veterinarians, non-profit organisations, among others. It builds the regulations for its assigned tasks and its agencies out in the French départements and regions verify compliance with them. At the EU and international levels, it promotes France's models for food, health and plant protection.



TO FACILITATE  
THE AGROECOLOGICAL TRANSITION,  
THE SUSTAINABILITY OF  
PRODUCTION SYSTEMS AND THEIR HEALTH  
PERFORMANCE USING REGULATORY  
CONTROLS AND  
INCENTIVISING POLICIES.





## CORE TASKS: MANAGEMENT OF FOOD AND PUBLIC HEALTH RISKS

- **The DGAL's core tasks are:**

- To protect the health of consumers, livestock, plants and the environment by laying down and verifying the sanitary conditions in which animal and plant products can be produced and marketed and enter France.

- To respond to societal wishes for a sustainable and resilient food system based on agroecology.

- **By adopting a holistic approach, the DGAL:**

- can anticipate risks and analyse them,

- can implement appropriate measures and predict their development over time.

The surveillance systems managed by the DGAL for preventive action are particularly useful. The complexity of the issues raised requires integrated, transverse risk management that brings to bear a range of technical, scientific and organisational skills.

- **By adopting a more international view of health risks, the DGAL is able to address:**

- the constant expansion of global trade,

- the emergence of new organisms harmful to human beings, animals and plants,

- the consequences of climate change.

## BUDGET AND HUMAN RESOURCES

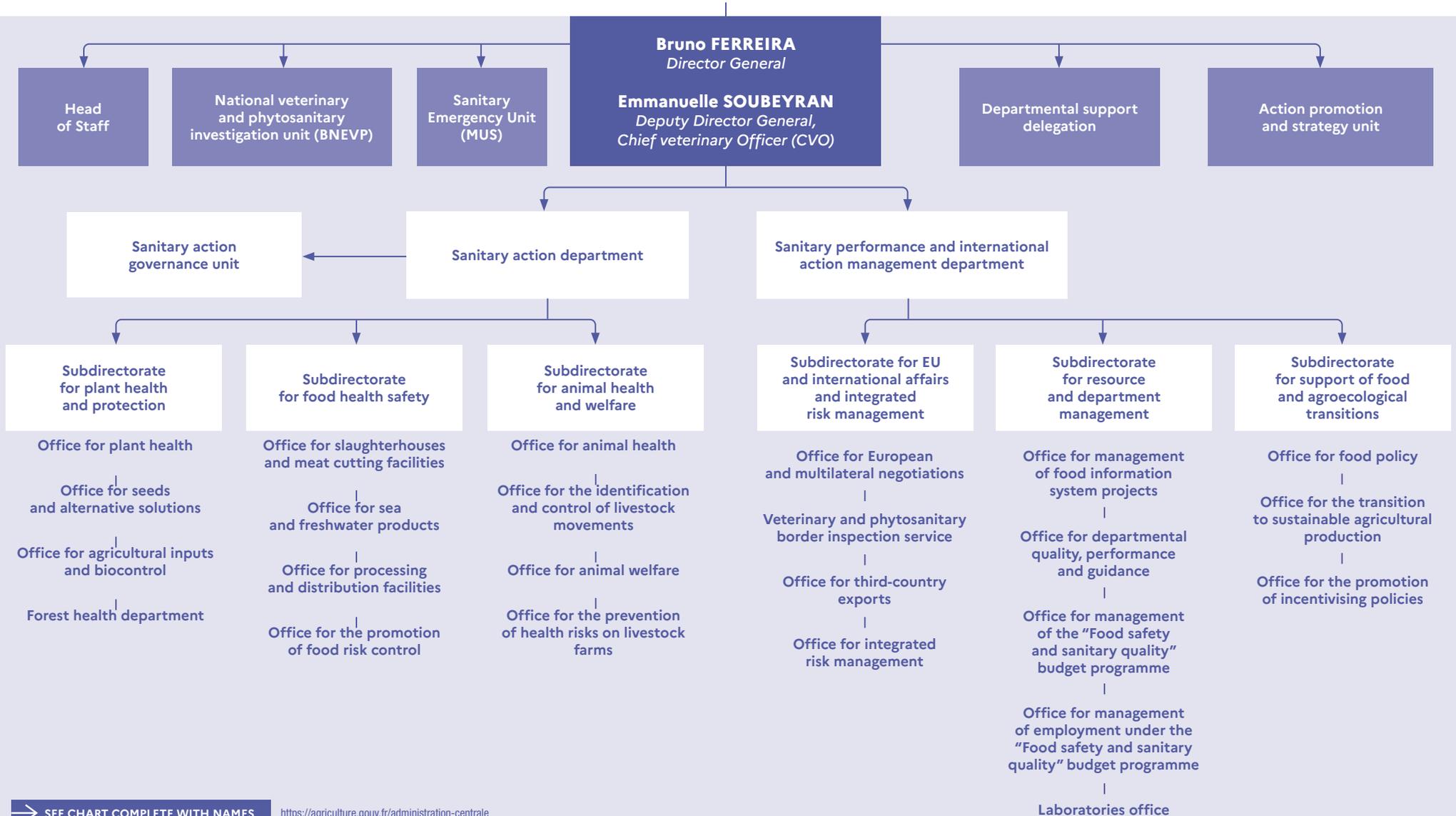
The budget of the General Directorate for Food (DGAL) and its field agencies (programme 206 "Food health safety and quality") stood at €568m for 2020. This funding is for the implementation of public policies on the health and protection of plants, animals, the safety of food for health and food policy.

The employment ceiling under programme 206 stood at 5,006 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff. These positions relate to the field agencies. Budget programme 206 was benefited in 2020 by the creation of a number of posts to address the deployment of additional sanitary and phytosanitary border controls following the entry into force of Brexit. As for the DGAL's central administration, this is staffed by approximately 230 public servants

The DGAL possesses an expert network comprising 48 national specialists/reference individuals (devoting 100% of their time to tasks of national importance and supporting the agencies in the regions and *départements*) and 110 resource individuals (allocating 20-30% of their time to national-level tasks and supporting the agencies in the regions and *départements*) based across the whole of France. These public servants carry out a variety of duties covering the entire scope of the DGAL's remit as well as providing technical backup to the central administration for the application of public policies.



## DGAL ORGANISATION CHART (JULY 2021)





1



# 2020, a year of crisis, challenges and change

Four challenges were addressed by the DGAL in a year of turmoil. A new strategic plan for the DGAL was defined and a new organisational structure came into being in 2021. The Covid-19 crisis, which required adjustments if the Directorate's core activities were to be maintained, had an impact on some of those activities. As for the work on the government's economic recovery plan, this made substantial demands on teams to ensure the swift implementation of support measures. Lastly, the challenge of implementing operational health controls by 1 January 2021 in connection with Brexit was successfully met thanks to the commitment of all concerned and the requested additional human resources.

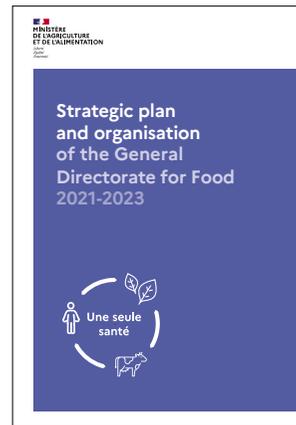
## DEFINITION OF THE 2021-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN AND A NEW ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR THE DGAL

The health crisis failed to slow efforts to define the DGAL's new strategic plan, even if both procedures and timetable needed adjustment.

This strategic plan was defined on a collaborative basis in conjunction with the field agencies over the course of the whole year in 2020. It sets out the main priorities for DGAL programmes over the next three years. The aim is to strengthen:

- DGAL action in the key areas of risk analysis and prevention, adopting an integrated approach to food health safety,
- the DGAL's ability to anticipate issues and exercise influence at the European and international levels, facilitating definition of consolidated positions on crucial topics.

The new plan is based on concrete implementation of the "One Health" strategy and will be underpinned by an overhauled framework for dialogue with, and mobilisation of the general public, industry actors and field agencies. This approach, more open to society in general and its expectations, and conducted on the basis of a stronger relationship of trust, will enable the best possible response to the need for a sustainable and resilient food system founded on agroecology.



***The new DGAL organisational structure produced by the strategic plan was implemented on 15 April 2021. This effort to transform its management, added to the inception of the new structure, will receive joint support from the Ministry and the Interministerial Directorate of Public Transformation (DITP) throughout the whole of 2021.***

Maintenance of the high skill levels required for the successful execution of the DGAL's core tasks and improvement of the working environment of its staff are also core objectives for the years 2021-2023.

→ READ THE STRATEGIC PLAN AND THE BROCHURE  
"A NEW DGAL FOR A CHANGING WORLD"

<https://agriculture.gouv.fr/la-dgal-fixe-sa-feuille-de-route-2021-2023-et-transforme-son-organisation>

## THE COVID-19 CRISIS: CHALLENGE & IMPACT

The Covid-19 crisis led the DGAL – and the Ministry as a whole – to refocus its activities on its core tasks throughout 2020. Remote working was generalised and its teams were able to adapt. The activity continuity plan for times of crisis was triggered in the first lockdown to secure the country's food supplies, a key concern for the French population.

### SANITARY SAFETY CONTROLS IN AGRIFOOD ESTABLISHMENTS

The health crisis made it imperative to define priorities for tasks conducted by the DGAL, especially during the strict lockdown period. During the spring of 2020, the DGAL clearly designated high-priority tasks such as the continuation of inspection activity in slaughterhouses (constant presence of the veterinary inspection services), management of food poisoning outbreaks and surveillance of shellfish farming areas, which meant that staff needed to travel despite the remote working obligation.

Conversely, inspections of other agrifood facilities were rescheduled in accordance with activity involved and the sensitivity of their processes. An effort to absorb some of the inspection backlog led to prioritisation of these checks during the summer over those traditionally carried out in retail outlets.

This meant that the number of food safety checks and inspections by the end of the year stood at 41,600 (as against 58,200 in 2019).

## SLAUGHTERHOUSES

Although many businesses had shut down, slaughterhouses did not stop operating at any point in the lockdown, thereby securing the supply of meat to the public and keeping the whole production chain functioning. The 2,100 officers in slaughterhouse veterinary services therefore continued to carry out their inspection duties in an environment favourable to the survival and propagation of the virus.

Effective application and monitoring of measures to prevent circulation of COVID-19 among our staff were supported day-to-day by all those involved at a local level, and especially slaughterhouse line management, department heads and directors at territorial département level.

At the central level, the DGAL was closely involved in intensifying public communication by distributing a number of practical datasheets and questionnaires to monitor the situation, as well as by providing support to individual departments in difficulty.

Despite several outbreaks detected in slaughterhouses and cutting plants, few cases of sickness were reported among staff members, whose high level of commitment is worthy of recognition.

## MAINTENANCE OF IMPORT CONTROLS AND EXPORT SANITARY CERTIFICATION

Checks on animals and farm products intended for human or livestock consumption arriving from, or going to third countries was identified as a key task for the Ministry of Agriculture. There was therefore a need to ensure continuity of this activity.

The DGAL, and the Veterinary and Phytosanitary Inspection Department (SIVEP) specifically, provided support to Border Inspection Posts (BIP), these being the focus, as early as 16 March 2020, of an activity continuity plan targeting the key activities to be maintained.

Detailed arrangements for remote document checks were put in place and prioritised in order to reduce as far as possible the physical presence of staff at BIPs. The electronic signature functionality for certification, the roll-out of which had begun prior to the pandemic, was continued and expanded to other Border Inspection Posts.

Schedules and duty rosters were defined in order to limit as far as possible the number of staff physically present and to spread out duty tours. It proved possible to limit physical presence and to adjust it to actual flows of livestock and goods through inspection points, these having declined significantly during the crisis, especially in airport BIPs.



## Covid-19 and zoonoses

The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the link between animal health, human health and the environment. The DGAL has contributed to reflection on animal zoonoses and the challenges they represent, doing so in the context of the "One Health" vision it advocates. The questions raised by the possible infection of mink and their transmission of coronavirus to human beings (unproven according to an ANSES opinion document) are additional to those concerning the origin of the virus and the possible existence of an animal reservoir.

## THE GOVERNMENT'S RECOVERY PLAN: THE MEASURES APPLIED BY THE DGAL



The French government's Economic Recovery Plan of 3 September 2020 provides, given its scale in budgetary terms (€100 billion, including €1.2bn for the agricultural component), is unprecedented as an instrument for the implementation of a number of major policies applied by the DGAL: policy on food and on the protection of animals.

The pandemic has highlighted the vital role of agriculture and food sovereignty. The French public has expressed its preference for products that are fresh, local and protective of the environment and animal welfare. Encouraged by the success of the first regional food projects (PATs), the Recovery Plan is funding a further call for project proposals, aiming to double the number of winning projects and enhancing existing PATs.

The Recovery Plan also contains support for school canteens in small communities for the development of local, sustainable and high-quality products, including those from organic farming. In addition, the "Paniers fraicheur" [fresh produce baskets] programme will foster access to fresh, local food for the most disadvantaged and marginalised individuals.

Where animal welfare is concerned, refuges and national and local animal protection non-profit bodies that take in abandoned pets or animals at the end of their lives have been receiving support from December 2020. Assistance to promote access to veterinary care for pets with the



poorest owners is currently being put in place. Support is also being provided in the form of a "biosecurity – animal welfare" pact aimed at enabling livestock farmers to invest for improved prevention of animal diseases, livestock conditions on farms and animal welfare.

The DGAL's teams prepared the way for the effective application of these measures for 2021. The process was then handed over to the field agencies for a large part of the operational management for animals.

### THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN: DGAL-DRIVEN MEASURES

Measures	Budget envelope (€ millions)
Farm biosecurity and animal welfare / support for training	2
Plan for support of care for animals abandoned or at end of life	20
Local, inclusive food supplies	30
Plan for support for school canteens in small communities	50
intensification of regional food projects (PATs)	80
Urban agriculture and shared gardens	30

→ SEE DOSSIER

<https://agriculture.gouv.fr/beneficiez-des-mesures-france-relance-transition-agricole-alimentation-et-foret>

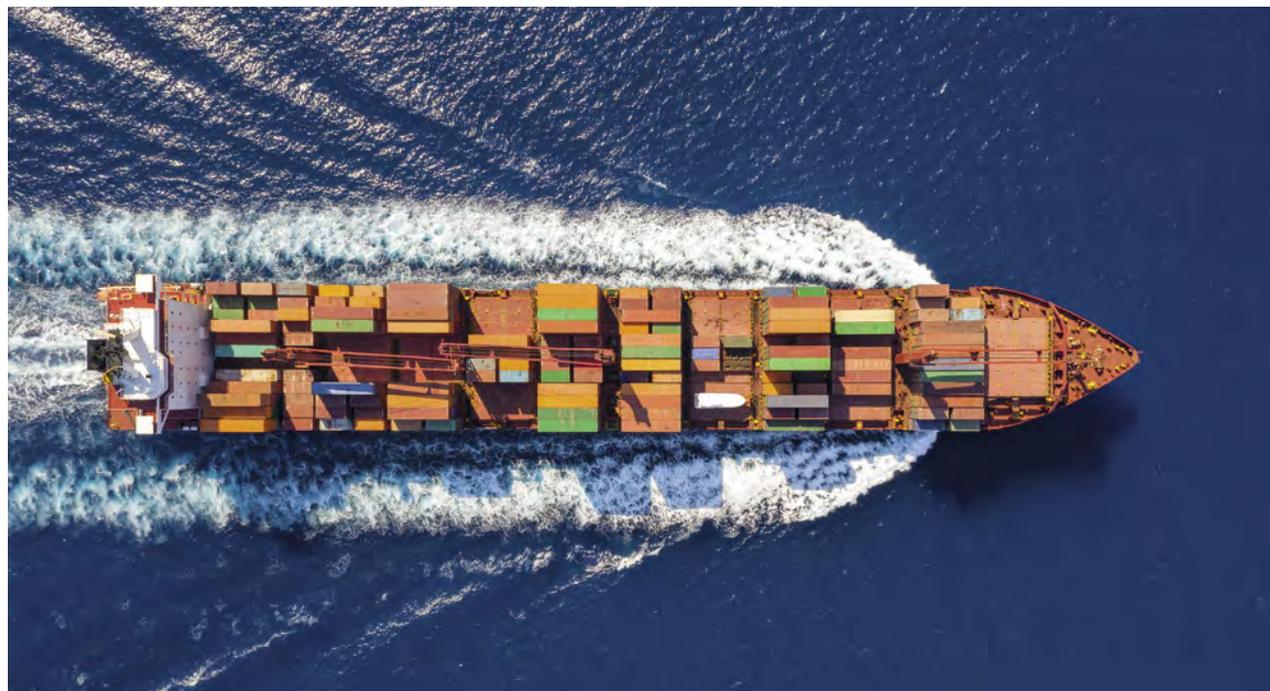
## BREXIT SUCCESSFULLY ADDRESSED. SANITARY CONTROLS OPERATIONAL AS OF 1 JANUARY 2021

Following a further postponement of Brexit by the United Kingdom, preparation for the application of sanitary and phytosanitary controls was a major priority for the DGAL in 2020.

This was a colossal challenge and our teams proved to be equal to the task: the recruitment and training of almost 400 staff, construction or modification of border control facilities in conjunction with the other government agencies, and the positioning of resources dedicated to export certification.

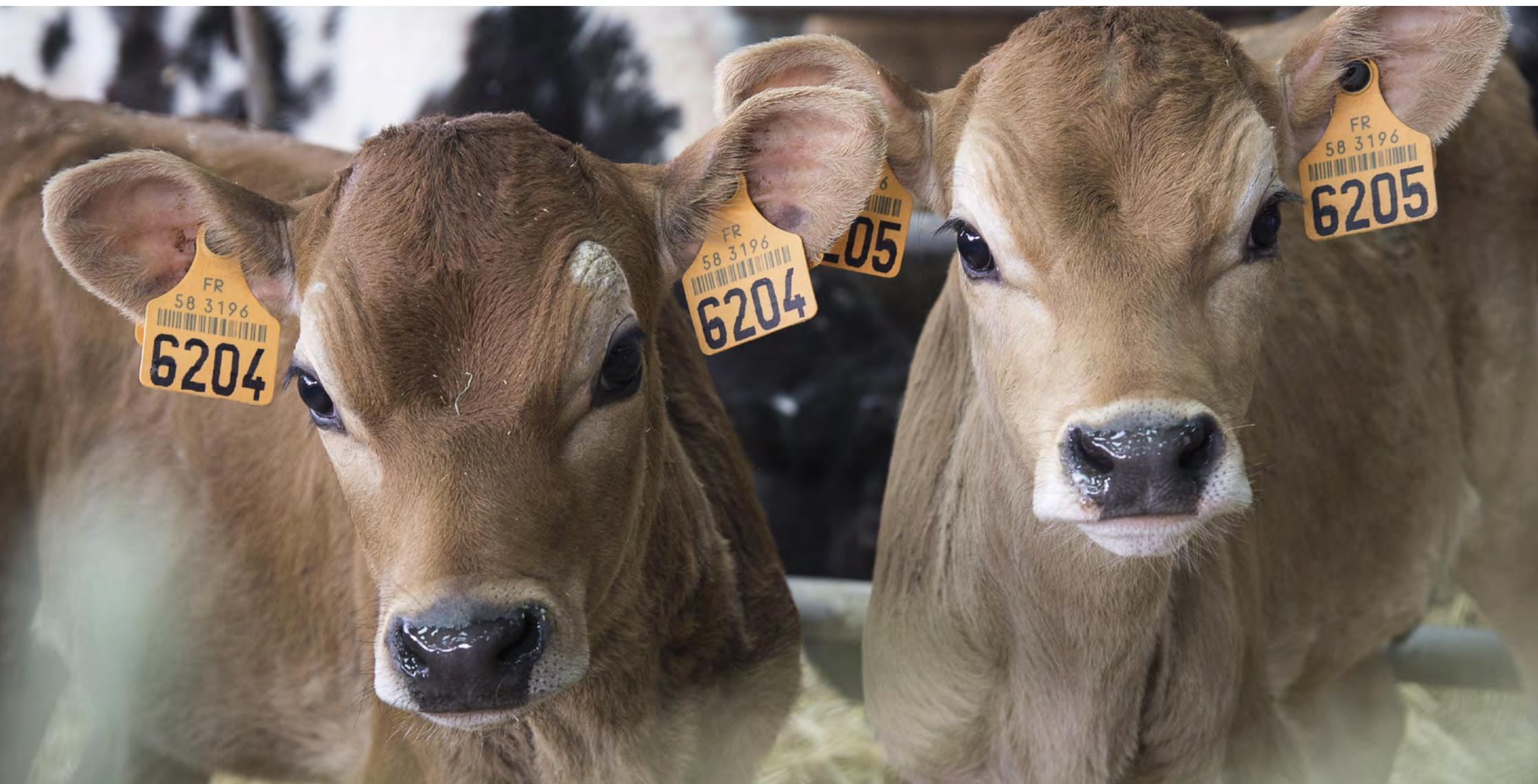
Major efforts to prepare for the application of import controls made demands on staff generally and specifically on SIVEP (Veterinary and phytosanitary inspection service). Likewise, it was necessary to implement goods certification for exports to the United Kingdom. All this work went hand in hand with a major communication campaign to inform not only the economic operators but members of the public wishing, for example, to travel with their pets.

The controls were in place by 1 January 2021, the date for the effective withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union. Congratulations to all staff!



### The European Union's "Farm to Fork" Strategy

The EU's Green Deal for Europe is a response to the climate and environmental challenges. Following the Green Deal, the European Commission put forward its "Farm to Fork" strategy in May 2020 to promote a food system that is fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly through the implementation of public policies on food. This was an opportunity for the DGAL to highlight all the work done not only by its staff but also by all actors in the agricultural world, not only with regard to reductions in farm inputs under the Ecoantibio and Ecophyto plans, most notably, but also through its advocacy at EU level of the policies pursued on food.



# 2



## Animal health and protection

Prevention, biosecurity and animal welfare are the watch-words guiding the DGAL's policy where the health of farm livestock and pets is concerned. In compliance with the new EU regulation "European Animal Health Law" which came into force on 21 April 2021.

## AVIAN INFLUENZA RETURNS TO FRANCE

At the end of the year the highly pathogenic avian influenza virus (“bird flu”) was once again detected within France’s borders. Immediately the first case appeared in November, the DGAL went into action, setting up a crisis unit.

Led by the DGAL, this unit ensured that the crisis was correctly managed, working day-by-day with the agencies in the territorial *départements* (DDecPP) and regions (DRAAF Occitanie and Nouvelle Aquitaine), and with the support of ANSES, the test laboratories in the *départements*, Toulouse Veterinary School and reinforcements provided by other *départements*/regions.

The poultry farming industry had already been severely tested by previous crises in 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 and took decisive action in conjunction with the Ministry’s field agencies (DDecPP and DRAAF) to apply strict control measures: these ranged from a ban on livestock movements or livestock confinement to the culling of animals on infected farms and preventive slaughter to limit the spread of the virus.

Since the appearance of the first case in Corsica in mid-November and the first farm outbreak in the Landes region on 8 December, a large number of outbreaks (475 as of April 2021) were identified, mainly in the south-west and the Landes, where farm stocking density (mainly of palmipeds) is high. Other *départements* were affected, although to a lesser extent: Deux-Sèvres, Vendée, Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin, Ardennes and Haute-Savoie.



### Avian influenza and trade barriers

**An additional consequence of the circulation of the highly pathogenic avian influenza virus is the raising of barriers to trade. DGAL staff intervened alongside FranceAgriMer and in conjunction with the interbranch industry bodies to secure trade flows as far as was feasible, putting to good use all the efforts made since 2017 to achieve recognition of the zoning principle. Fast reaction and preparation by the field agencies were key to reassuring third countries and maintaining their trust in the French sanitary system.**

This meant that the impact of the 2020-2021 crisis in terms of export restrictions was significantly reduced compared with the two previous crises in the years 2015-2017. This was reflected in:

- fewer total embargoes: 14 (compared with 27 in 2016-2017) of which only 8 were of major importance for the industry: Cameroon, China, Korea, Cuba, Iraq, Mali, Philippines and Sri Lanka;

- a substantial increase in acceptance and application of zoning by *département* in countries applying a broader form of zoning (notably by region, as in the case of Ukraine) or rejecting zoning (Brazil, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Taiwan, among others);
- the obtaining of derogations even where certificate content indicated a ban on entry (e.g.: foie gras exports to Thailand and Vietnam);
- thanks to the validation of export certificates for heat-treated products e.g. egg products to Korea).

This good “time of crisis” outcome allows the hope that the lead-times to the lifting of restrictions will be shortened, with a gradual return to disease-free status for individual *départements*, followed later by France as a whole.

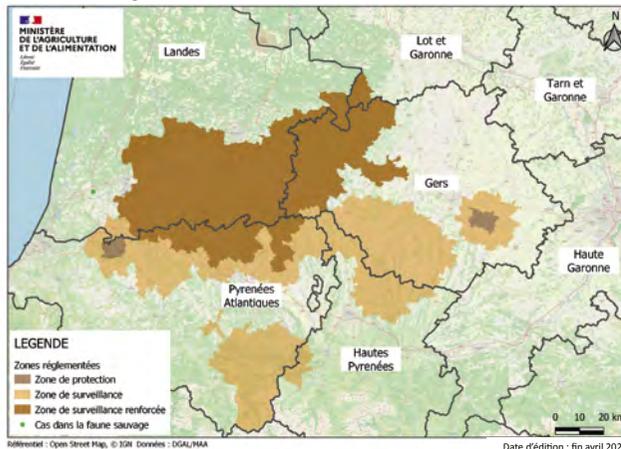
Nearly 3.5 million birds (the majority palmipeds) were culled on preventive grounds in outbreaks around infected farms.

This new crisis arose just before the end-of-year holiday period and at a time when economic outlets had already been restricted by restaurant closures due to the Covid crisis.

Following a gradual rise in the level of risk ("high" as of 17 November 2020), the whole of metropolitan France had returned to "moderate" risk by 24 April, and to a negligible level on 28 May 2021 based on the improved sanitary situation.

A lesson-learning exercise will be organised as soon as possible in order to analyse the various aspects of the management of the crisis and prevent future crises, the economic impact of which can be seen to be major. It is already apparent that a reinforcement of biosecurity measures on livestock farms is inevitable.

Regulated HPAI zones in Southwest France



## ANIMAL WELFARE: MAJOR PROGRESS

An action plan announced at the beginning of 2020 by the Minister is based around 15 measures aimed at intensifying efforts to combat the maltreatment of animals and improve the welfare of domestic animals, farm livestock and pets. Throughout 2020, the DGAL has been involved in intensive consultations with the farming industry on the implementation of these measures.

This action plan sets out to put an end to practices that cause suffering on livestock farms, to strengthen training on, and awareness of animal welfare, to improve livestock quality of life and transportation conditions, in addition to consumer information on livestock farming methods, as well as making owners of pets more accountable to reduce their abandonment.

Work has begun on each of these measures in conjunction with all stakeholders.

French member of parliament Loic Dombrevail was tasked with an examination of the welfare of pets and leisure livestock and he tabled his report on 23 June 2020. It puts forward 121 recommendations on topics such as, most notably, training and information, combating maltreatment, prevention of the abandonment of pets and prevention of abuse. Several of these proposals have been included in the bill for legislation against animal maltreatment adopted in January 2021 by parliament.

In addition, the official decree extending penalties in criminal law for non-compliance with the obligation to



ensure identification of cats was adopted in December 2020. This decree also provides for the designation of a person of reference for animal welfare on all commercial livestock farms from 1 January 2022.

The Ministry of Agriculture has submitted a request to the national reference centre on animal welfare to obtain an objective definition of practices that cause suffering and the identification of alternatives.

Progress on the Animal Welfare Plan 2016-2020 is regularly monitored by the expert committee on animal welfare at CNOPSAV, the farming industry consultation body, based on thirty or so indicators. Encouraging progress on the various focuses for action has been confirmed.

[→ MORE INFORMATION](#)

<https://agriculture.gouv.fr/renforcement-de-la-strategie-pour-le-bien-etre-animal>

## LIVESTOCK CONDITIONS: HARSHER PENALTIES

2020 was a year marked by continued publication of videos by non-profit organisations containing allegations, whether true or not, of breaches of animal protection rules in slaughterhouses. Regulations in this area must be applied strictly and the authorities must be in a position to detect instances of non-compliance, prove them and take appropriate steps in administrative or criminal law.

France's EGAlim law contains a number of measures against the maltreatment of animals, most notably the extension of criminal offences relating to the abuse of livestock on farms to cover transportation and slaughter, plus a doubling of the penalties from 6 months to 1 year of imprisonment plus a fine of up to €15,000.

The arrangements for pig farm inspections have been revised to ensure stricter, more harmonised enforcement.

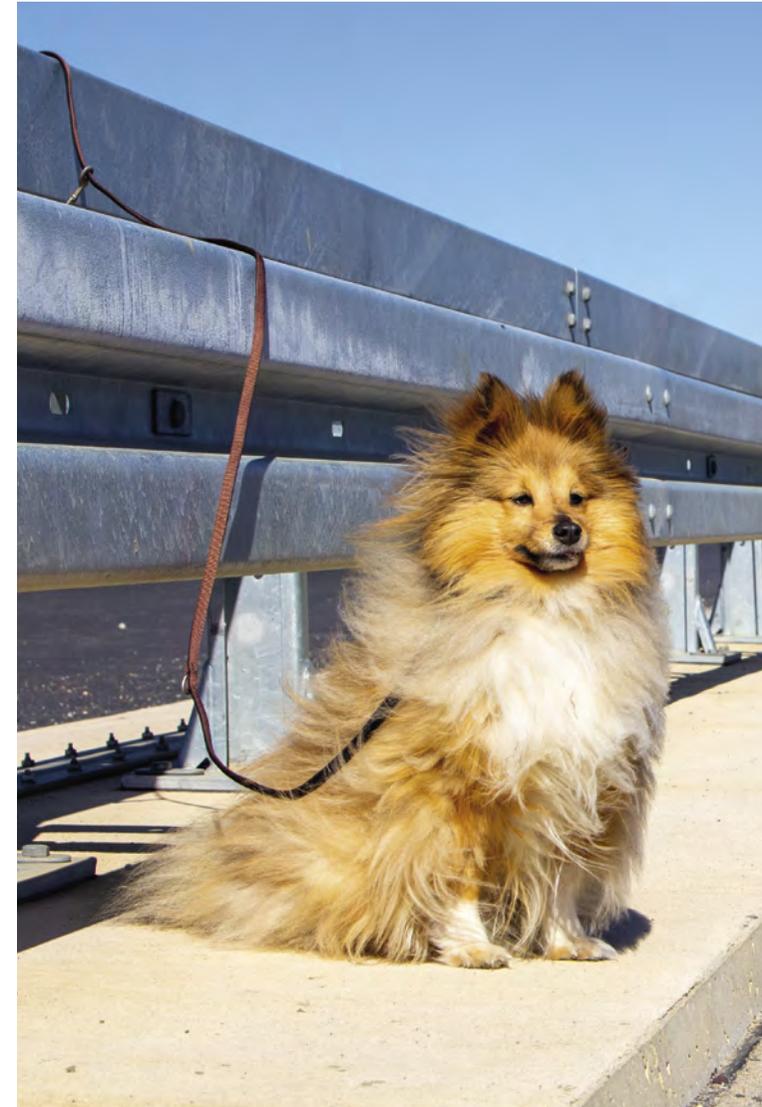
## THE RECOVERY PLAN: MEASURES AGAINST ABANDONMENT OF PETS AND EQUINES

Under the French Economic Recovery Plan announced early in September 2020, animal refuges and national and local non-profit animal protection organisations that take in abandoned pets and equines have been granted government support amounting to €6.76m.

Four months after the launch of this scheme in the départements it had already resulted in selection of 240 projects, 147 for domestic carnivores, 29 for equine refuges and 64 projects for sterilisation campaigns.

On 1 January 2021 therefore, a new scheme was put in place by the government to assist local non-profit animal protection associations irrespective of their size:

- **Support for the funding of cat and dog sterilisation campaigns** (equipment, veterinary costs);
- **Support for the funding of animal refuge construction and fitting out.** Equine refuges are also eligible. This support can be used to fund repair and modernisation work on existing refuges or to create new facilities.





The scheme is additional to the national call for project proposals launched on 10 December by the government with the goal of organising more effectively the network of animal protection non-profits and improving the care provided to pets that are either abandoned or at the end of their lives.

Support for easier access to veterinary care for animals with the most disadvantaged owners was also put in place under France's Economic Recovery Plan.

## CONVICTION OF FARMERS FOR MALTREATMENT OF LIVESTOCK

**A major animal maltreatment case was dealt with by the national unit for veterinary and phytosanitary investigations (BNEVP), part of the DGAL. The verdict was handed down on 1 July along with a harsh sentence. This sends out a strong signal to dissuade those potentially guilty of mistreating animals.**

A police operation conducted jointly by the Gendarmerie, the BNEVP and DDPP77 on a farm in Seine-et-Marne revealed a range of offences involving abuse, failure to provide care and fraud. Over 150 animals were taken into care on the farm, including dogs, puppies, cats, kittens, horses, ponies and rabbits. Found housed in particularly unhealthy conditions, they were collected and handed over to the SPA. The two accused farmers were convicted, fined, given custodial sentences and banned from livestock farming and possession of livestock.



The BNEVP has been making efforts for some years to combat pet trafficking (most notably involving dogs). In the cases handled by the unit the animals have usually been brought into France from other Member States in breach of applicable sanitary requirements – specifically, animal protection regulations.

This was the case for a puppy trafficking ring taken down in February by the BNEVP. The ring used false documentation to bring into France puppies purchased at too young an age in Eastern Europe and improperly vaccinating them before selling them on. The farm owner was arrested, charged and remanded in custody, along with a veterinary accomplice; other close associates were also placed in pre-charge custody.

## THE EU “ANIMAL HEALTH LAW” REGULATION

The EU’s Animal Health Regulation (AHL) came into force on 21 April 2021 in all Member States of the European Union. It lays down a new classification of sanitary hazards, entailing changes in prevention, surveillance and control measures. The DGAL spent 2020 preparing for the application of the regulation’s new provisions, working with the industry.

The AHL covers prevention, surveillance and control of listed animal diseases, conditions governing livestock movements and trade certification, in addition to the sanitary regulations on germinal products. Its scope is wide, covering land and aquatic animals, production livestock, pets and wild fauna.

It sets out clearly the responsibilities of all those involved: commercial operators, veterinarians, laboratories and the competent authorities. Operators holding animals are recognised as responsible for the health of their livestock. Veterinarians have an enhanced role in detecting disease and must inform the relevant authority of suspected and confirmed cases of the diseases listed by the AHL (63 are included). The aim is to foster closer ties between farmers and veterinarians to make earlier action possible, thereby enhancing prevention.

The DGAL has set up working groups for each sector alongside industry representatives and scientists in order to address the major changes entailed for animal health management.

The conditions applicable to trade certification change in this revised framework, which emphasises the tracea-

bility of livestock movements and enhanced farm surveillance and biosecurity. New diseases are now covered by certification requirements (surra, for example) but the general principles remain unchanged. A transitional period ending on 15 October 2021 has been granted for trade within the European Union, with specific adjustments for bluetongue (BT). This transition will enable the roll-out of the new certification software TRACES NT to be finalised.

Early 2021 saw the continuation by the DGAL of negotiations conducted throughout 2020 at EU and national levels, work on legislation and regulations for adjustment of national law along with efforts to explain and inform concerning the field agencies and farming and veterinary partners.



## WIDE-RANGING COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS: AFRICAN SWINE FEVER (ASF) AND ECOANTIBIO

Two campaigns were initiated in November 2020 by the DGAL, one to raise awareness of efforts to control resistance to antibiotics, and the other on prevention of risks of entry of the African Swine Fever (ASF) virus into our country.

The campaign entitled “Antibiotics: the right way at the right time” [*Les antibiotics, comme il faut, quand il faut*] was conducted from November to end December in the specialist media. It was targeted at livestock farmers and pet owners, along with veterinarians. It was launched on 18 November in connection with the European Antibiotic Awareness Day and the launch of World Antimicrobial Awareness Week.

This annual campaign, whose purpose is to encourage sustained effort by all involved to ensure appropriate use of veterinary antibiotics, focuses on biosecurity, vaccination and animal welfare for the prevention of disease on farms, thereby reducing antibiotic use.

The antibiotic sales statistics issued each year by ANSES show that **in the space of eight years livestock exposure to antibiotics across all farming sectors has been cut by 45%.**

Since human and animal health are closely linked, inter-ministerial programmes (most notably with the General

Directorate for Health) are undertaken every year to remind all concerned that antibiotics are a precious resource and must be used economically.

→ LEARN ALL ABOUT THE COMMUNICATION KIT

<https://agriculture.gouv.fr/campagne-2020-les-antibios-comme-il-faut-quand-il-faut>

For the last two and a half years African Swine Fever (ASF), a fatal viral disease affecting pigs and wild boars but non-hazardous for human beings, has been showing a worrying spread in Europe. France has remained free of the disease thanks to drastic steps taken by the DGAL and its regional agencies in Eastern France to prevent the virus from spreading across the country, most notably from Belgium.

The disease had been present since 2014 in wild fauna and on some farms in Eastern Europe and it reached Belgium in 2018. At that point France took major preventive steps along the border with Belgium, notably erecting a fence to prevent wild boar bringing the virus into the country.

The disease established itself on the eastern border of Germany in September 2020. Although France is currently free of ASF, a threat hangs constantly over farmers raising boar and pigs in France, with the attendant risk of very substantial economic losses in the event of an outbreak in our country.

The campaign “African Swine Fever kills pigs”, aimed at raising awareness and prevention, set out to make travellers, farmers and hunters more conscious of the imperative precautions needed to prevent the virus entering or circulating in France. The future of the pig industry will depend on this.



→ READ THE DOSSIER

<https://agriculture.gouv.fr/peste-porcine-africaine>

## Wider access to the Japanese market for French beef

Following lengthy negotiations in which the DGAL was an active participant, on 7 August Japan officially lifted all sanitary restrictions still imposed on French beef exports to that country. The restrictions had been imposed by Japan in the early 2000s in the wake of the bovine spongiform encephalopathy crisis (BSE, or “mad cow disease”).

## SEIZURE OF VETERINARY MEDICINES ILLEGALLY SOLD OVER THE INTERNET

The DGAL’s investigation unit, the BNEVP, has successfully investigated illegal online sales of veterinary drugs. A fine example of international cooperation!

An online retail drug outlet based in Spain was illegally selling to 31 countries around 50,000 units of veterinary medicines every year. The enquiry initiated by the Spanish authorities ended with the seizure of 17 “big bags” and 4 sacks of veterinary medicines worth in the region of €100,000.



The enquiries carried out in France by the DGAL’s investigation unit in partnership with France’s veterinary medicines agency and French customs’ medicinal drug observatory confirmed the facts and raised the matter to supranational status.

**There is a ban on all Internet sales of prescription veterinary drugs.**

## ENSURING SLAUGHTERHOUSE COMPLIANCE: AN EXAMPLE OF GOVERNMENT ACTION IN THE CENTRE-VAL DE LOIRE REGION

Every year the checks carried out on a daily basis in slaughterhouses by the DGAL's inspection teams assigned to DDecPP field offices lead to the rectification of instances of non-compliance (on sanitary or animal protection issues) in a number of facilities. Below is an example in France's Centre-Val de Loire region from 2020.



Faced with major instances of structural and operational non-compliance in this pig abattoir, the departmental directorate for the protection of the public (DDPP) took official steps.

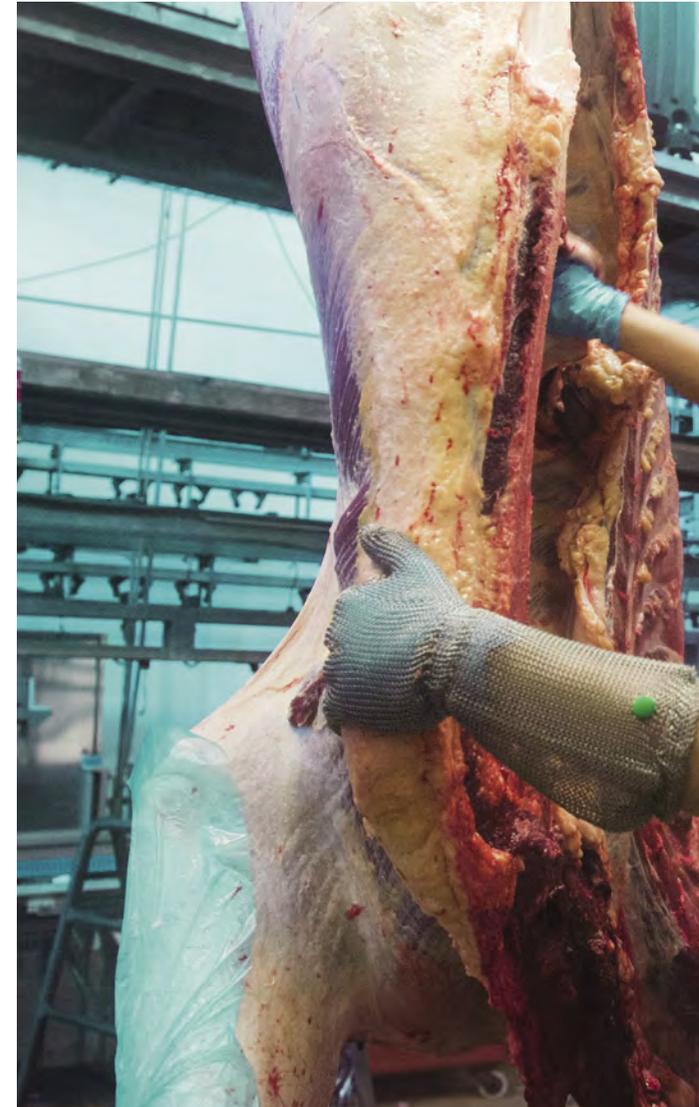
An audit carried out by national slaughterhouse specialists (DGAL), plus assistance provided by those experts and the DGAL's office for slaughter and cutting facilities, led to assistance in determining the right follow-up strategy for the directorate in the département and the local inspectorate.

Threatened with suspension of its licence, the facility took corrective steps to improve its process and undertook wide-ranging modification work which had been envisaged for some time but never actually started.

The process thus commenced allowed licence suspension to be avoided. The plant was also able to benefit from the economic recovery plan for certain additional investments such as animal protection CCTV surveillance and improved piggery safety for personnel.

Monitoring by government staff continues to be enhanced in order to ensure that the improvements obtained remain in place, allowing retention of the licence while awaiting completion of the work to ensure that the premises are compliant.

Once such compliance is assured, the facility would also obtain access to desired developments such as the option to export.





## A CASE OF RABIES: VIGILANCE STILL NEEDED

### A CASE OF CANINE RABIES WAS CONFIRMED BY THE PREFECTURE OF CHARENTE-MARITIME IN FEBRUARY 2020 AT SAINT-MARTIN-DE-RÉ.

The dog had not contracted rabies in France, which is free of the disease, but in a country where rabies is present. The animal had arrived illegally in France.

An investigation was immediately launched by the departmental directorate for protection of the public (DDPP) and the Regional Health Agency (ARS). The aim was to find other individuals and carnivores (e.g. dogs, cats, ferrets) that may have been in contact with the rabid dog.

Recommendations were made immediately to the owners of carnivores in the vicinity in order to avoid contact with other carnivores and bites or scratches to people. Rabies is a fatal disease transmitted through bites or the licking of broken skin. It affects not only dogs and cats but also humans (who cannot however transmit it). There is no effective treatment, but vaccination can protect animals.

Although France is free of rabies, cases are regularly detected in domestic carnivores imported from countries affected by the disease in breach of legal requirements (most notably vaccination and animal identification). The DGAL regularly reminds the public of those requirements in communication campaigns.

→ FOR MORE INFORMATION

<https://agriculture.gouv.fr/gare-la-rage>



# 3



## Plant and environmental health

Surveillance of sanitary hazards and prevention of disease, while at the same time reducing the use of plant protection products and encouraging reliable alternative solutions: all this contributes to achieving the DGAL's goal of ensuring a transition to a more sustainable, more environmentally friendly agriculture.

## FRENCH FORESTS UNDER ATTACK FROM BARK BEETLES

2020 was a year of continuing health crises affecting French forests. The bark beetle crisis on spruce continued and worsened in Eastern France and the Burgundy-Franche-Comté region.

The staff of the DGAL and the Ministry's regional departments (SRAL/ DRAAF) remain proactive because further infestations of these insects could occur in 2021 and cause high levels of dieback in these trees.

The DGAL's forest health department, via its network of correspondents/observers in the regions, organised insect trapping programmes for bark beetles to monitor developments in their presence and to issue warnings to forest owners. It helped monitor the damage caused by the beetles, taking part in the programme for outbreak detection and sanitary felling based on remote sensing.

An official order promulgated on 14 January 2021 extended the support programme for exploitation of woods affected by bark beetles until 31 August 2021 and its budget envelope has been increased from €6m to €12m.

The DGAL's network of experts and observers has also been brought to bear on forest dieback affecting other species and an investigation has been initiated specifically into the health of oak stands, the primary French forest species. Cross-border monitoring of invasive organisms has been arranged with the authorities in French-speaking Belgium to assess the spread and impact of gall midges on Douglas Fir needles (conifers). The gall midge



is a tiny fly originally from North America; its spread has been facilitated by drought since its first appearance in France in 2015, and it could affect tree growth.

All of this information makes it possible to target the forest stands that need to be reconstituted under the major €150m reforestation plan included in the Economic Recovery Plan.

## PLANT HEALTH CRISES

2020 was also marked by major events involving plant health, among them the first outbreaks of ToBRFV (Tomato Brown Rugose Fruit Virus) in France, discovered in greenhouses in Brittany, plus multiple alerts concerning seeds, along with the detection of the first outbreak of the *Xylella fastidiosa* bacterium in a plant nursery in Occitanie, a French region hitherto unaffected. The regional agencies (DRAAF-SRAL) have been involved in extensive work to manage these outbreaks and limit the spread of the organisms causing the diseases. The ToBRFV outbreaks have been eradicated.

### **XYLELLA: NO LET-UP IN VIGILANCE**

EU regulations were revised in 2020 to enhance surveillance and control effectiveness and an outbreak was detected in Occitanie for the first time in August 2020. *Xylella fastidiosa* has been hitting south-eastern France (Provence-Côte d'Azur, Corsica) since 2015 and southern European countries (Spain, Italy, Portugal).

**This bacterium can infest over 200 plant species and, given the lack of available treatment, is the subject of a mandatory control requirement.**

In order to address the very different phytosanitary situations across Europe, a new EU regulation came into force on 14 August 2020. This new instrument brings changes to the overall surveillance strategy which will now be based on harmonised, ambitious sampling programmes targeting insects and all host plants of the relevant subspecies of the bacterium, even those presenting no symptoms. This will improve our knowledge of the sanitary status of different regions and help contain the disease more effectively.

The scope of the control programmes has been reduced to make outbreak management more efficient (invento-

ries, insect control, plant clearance), covering areas that are less extensive and therefore easier to manage over short timespans. Lastly, the new EU regulation provides greater flexibility for derogations relating to the clearance of vulnerable plants in infected areas as well as their circulation outside regulated zones.

➔ MORE INFORMATION ON XYLELLA

<https://agriculture.gouv.fr/xylella-fastidiosa-une-bacterie-mortelle-pour-300-especes-vegetales>

**The awareness-raising campaign directed at travellers and the industry was repeated in 2020 in order to recall the security requirements for avoidance of “transportation” of the bacterium: no plants to be brought back in baggage – plants to be purchased at specified locations.**



## Protecting plants to protect life

The Ministry hosted several important gatherings at the International Agricultural Show in Paris as part of International Year of Plant Health (IYPH).

Both young and old had a daily opportunity to test their knowledge in an entertaining, lively quiz organised by AgroParisTech students. On 26 February, visitors could attend a round table on plant health. Following an overview of the main plant pests presented by Philippe Reignault (director of the ANSES plant health laboratory), Cécile Cotillon (deputy director for plant health and protection at the DGAL) reminded the audience of the role of government, the importance of prevention and existing disease control resources. Jonathan Gaudin (an INRAE plant pathologist) went on to recall that plant health is everybody’s business and described a smartphone application to aid pest and disease recognition.



## ToBRFV: THE VIRUS THAT IS WORRYING THE TOMATO SECTOR

ToBRFV (Tomato Brown Rugose Fruit Virus) endangers vegetable crops, especially tomatoes and sweet peppers. It was detected for the first time in France in February 2020 on greenhouse tomatoes in Finistère. It is easily spread simply by physical contact.

The regional plant health agencies emphasise the need to take preventive action by adhering to strict biosecurity rules in all plant nurseries and on farms growing tomatoes and peppers.



## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW EU REGULATION

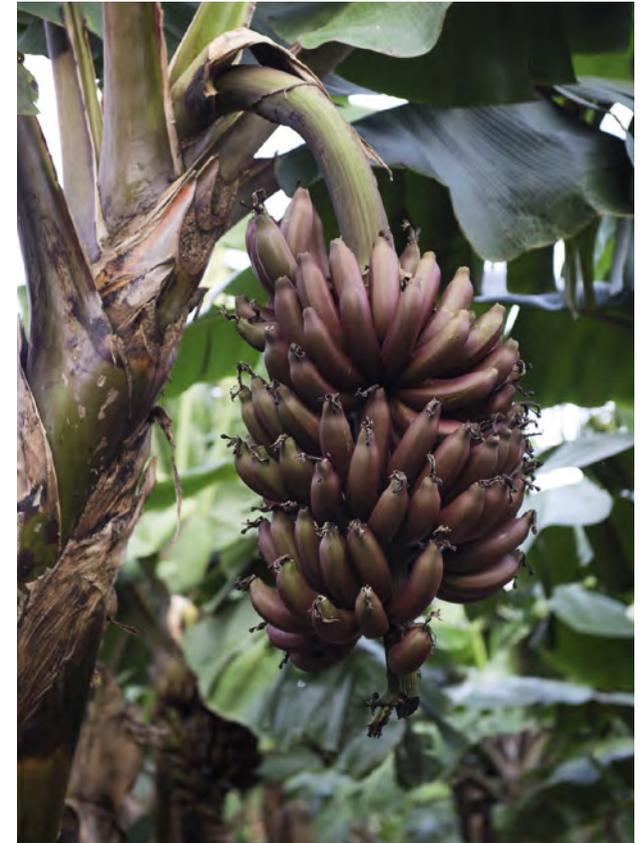
In force since 14 December 2019, the EU plant health regulation overhauls official surveillance of plant pests and the requirements imposed on business operators. Protection of EU territory against the arrival and spread of plant pests: such is the core objective of this new regulation whose implementation unfolded throughout 2020.

The new regulation notably provides for the following:

- a new pest classification;
- a preventive strategy for imports;
- enhanced accountability for sector operators;
- reinforcement and generalisation of the phytosanitary passport for intra-EU trade.

The application of this regulation means that certain commercial operators with activities relating to plants and plant products (e.g. fruit producers, plant nurseries, market gardeners, distributors) will now be required to apply for entry on an operators' register.

Such registration is an imperative prerequisite for obtaining licences to issue phytosanitary passports and apply ISPM 15 wood compliance markings as well as obtaining export certificates. This must now be carried out remotely via the "Mes Demarches" [official formalities] website.



➔ MORE INFORMATION ON THE EU REGULATION

<https://agriculture.gouv.fr/sante-des-vegetaux-un-nouveau-cadre-reglementaire-evolution-des-obligations-pour-les-professionnels>

## LIMITED DEROGATIONS FOR NEONICOTINOID-TREATED SEEDS

**In the spring of 2020, the sugar beet sector was faced with massive infestations of aphids carrying the yellows virus. Confronted with this serious crisis, in order to protect our food sovereignty the government proposed a law authorising a derogation for the 2021 to 2023 growing seasons allowing the use of seeds treated with products containing neonicotinoids (or substances with the same modes of action). The use of such seeds had been banned since 1 September 2018.**

For the last two years, French beet growers had stopped using plant protection products containing active ingredients belonging to the neonicotinoid family, unlike their European competitors who were availing themselves of the derogations provided for in European law on condition that they are “justified because of a danger which could not be contained by any other reasonable means”.

The 2020 growing season demonstrated that the technical alternatives now available have shown themselves to be ineffective on sugar beet crops, especially in the weather conditions of early 2020, endangering the viability of the sector and thereby our sovereignty where sugar production is concerned.

In autumn 2020, the government proposed an amendment to legislation banning the use of neonicotinoids in France. The law of 14 December reaffirms in principle the ban on use of these plant protection products, those with identical modes of operation and seeds treated with them. The legislation also provides for the option

to authorise temporarily, on the basis of a strictly framed derogation, the use of sugar beet seeds treated with products containing such substances.

On the basis of an opinion issued by ANSES on 23 December 2020 concerning measures to mitigate the risks for crop rotation following a beet crop grown with coated seeds, and following a public consultation process and the opinion of the supervisory council formed under the law, the official order of 6 February 2021 authorised the

use of treated sugar beet seeds – for the 2021 season and for a duration of 120 days. This order also sets out in detail specific risk mitigation measures for subsequent crops of maize and rapeseed, subject to issuance of an ANSES opinion.



## SEPARATION OF PLANT HEALTH PRODUCT SALES FROM ADVISORY SERVICES: NOW A REALITY!

As laid down by the EGAlim food law, the separation of sales/application activities from advisory services for the use of plant protection products came into force on 1 January 2021. The purpose of this is to forestall any risk of conflict of interest that might arise from the coexistence of these activities in the same business, thus guaranteeing the independence of the advice given to farmers.

Separation of sales from advisory services makes it possible to guarantee that professional users of plant protection products get advice that is genuinely directed at improving the use of the products and adhering to the principles underlying integrated crop protection.

Throughout the year, certifying bodies carry out audits of the relevant firms to ascertain whether these new requirements are being met.



## A NATIONAL BIOCONTROL STRATEGY

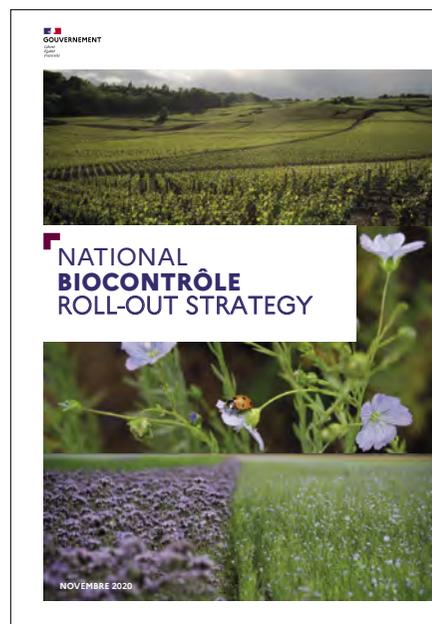
The government has adopted a national strategy for the roll-out of biocontrol as stipulated in the EGAlim law. Promulgated in November 2020 and drafted in conjunction with the whole range of stakeholders involved in the agroecological transition, the strategy is being driven jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ministry for the Ecological Transition.

The roll-out of biocontrol is fully in line with the objectives relating to [reductions in the use of plant protection products](#) set by the French government and now by the European Commission in the "Green Deal" and the "Farm to Fork" strategy tabled in May 2020..

As part of their sales activity, distributors can promote and facilitate the execution of standardised actions granting entitlement to plant protection product saving certificates (*certificats d'économie de produits phytomédicaments* - CEPP). Around 40% of CEPP programmes relate to biocontrol solutions, of which there are approximately 200.

→ FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE STRATEGY

<https://agriculture.gouv.fr/strategie-nationale-de-deploiement-du-biocontrôle>



## CARROTS: MARKET GARDENERS PROSECUTED FOR BANNED PESTICIDE USE

In 2020, the DGAL's investigation unit (BNEVP) played a role in a criminal enquiry targeting growers of carrots in Normandy accused of using a banned plant protection product.

During the investigation conducted in close conjunction with the French Gendarmerie, soil samples taken on site revealed the presence of dichloropropene, confirming the suspicion that the producers had been using a plant protection product banned since 2018 containing this unapproved active ingredient.

The criminal enquiry thus opened led to the charging of 14 market gardeners as users of the product, three importers for selling it and three hauliers. They were questioned in November 2020 either in pre-charge custody or voluntarily in the Manche, Gard and Eastern Pyrenees départements.

The sector professionals charged are being prosecuted most notably for "marketing, possession and use of plant protection products not covered by an official authorisation".

The court hearing was scheduled for May 2021.

## HAZARDOUS IMPURITIES IN PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS

Following an alert from the inspection authorities in another Member State, the BNEVP opened a very wide-ranging investigation into the presence of chemical impurities in a number of plant protection products officially approved and marketed in France.

The BNEVP's attention was specifically focused on fungicidal products based on Captan. Some of these are widely used and did in fact prove to be non-compliant due to the presence in excess of the official limit of a toxic impurity potentially prejudicial to public health and the environment.

The revelation of breaches of this limit in many batches marketed in France and the European Union led the investigation unit in autumn 2020 to impound all batches of Captan-based product while awaiting further informa-

tion. This step enabled the compliance of these products to be verified and an assessment of the terms on which they could be put back on the market.

The enquiries and the confirmation of the anomalies justified the order for the withdrawal from sale and the destruction of a number of batches. This investigation has led to heightened surveillance of fungicidal products based on Captan.



## Suspicious seeds

In the summer of 2020 a number of private citizens in France reported that they had received postal packages containing small bags of seeds that they had not ordered. Given their unknown origin, it was possible that the seeds contained in the bags might present a health risk linked to the introduction of organisms harmful to plants (e.g. fungus, pests, viruses) or invasive exotic plant species. The DGAL tasked the BNEVP with an enquiry. This did not result in the detection of the presence of any regulated harmful organisms. These unsolicited seed packages from senders located in Asia relate to business practices aimed at creating an illusion of increased sales volume, thus enhancing the Internet search referencing of their website (known as "brushing"). It is planned to take steps via the embassies of the relevant countries to put an end to the sending of these packages.



## 4



## Food and food safety

Guaranteeing that food is safe for health is central to the DGAL's official missions, missions it fulfils by carrying out inspections and verifications at every stage in the food chain. The Directorate also seeks to detect fraud perpetrated in areas within its official remit. It also directs the application of public policy on food, encouraging all stakeholders to commit to food that is sustainable, local and available to all.

## THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN: UNPRECEDENTED RESOURCES TO PROMOTE FOOD THAT IS HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE, LOCAL, AND AVAILABLE TO ALL

The unprecedented circumstances surrounding Covid-19 threw a spotlight on major food-related issues such as the need to ensure continuity of the food chain, which had been compromised most notably by the closure of commercial and institutional catering facilities, or access to food for the most marginalised members of the community, the latter being increasingly numerous, as is indicated by an increase of around 20% in recourse to food aid.

In addition to its involvement during the initial Covid lockdown, the DGAL acted to put in place the various food-related measures included in the Economic Recovery Plan.

### ENHANCEMENT OF REGIONAL FOOD PROJECTS

Regional food projects (PATs) were seen as good instruments for rapid reaction based on the knowledge possessed by stakeholder networks, and the ability to link them up and reorganise local distribution channels and tailor food aid for the needs of the most deprived.

Encouraged by the success of the first PATs funded by the National Food Programme (PNA), the economic recovery plan includes €80m for PAT funding, of which €3m is to go to a new call for project proposals (€7.5m), the goal being to bring about a substantial increase in the number of winning projects and to enhance existing PATs. The

first tranche was launched in December 2020.

Initiatives come from local government, non-profit bodies and farmer groupings, among other sources, and should enable all concerned in their respective local regions to address and involved themselves in food-related issues.

### SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL CANTEENS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

The DGAL has implemented one of the measures in the Economic Recovery Plan aimed at supporting school canteens in rural communities in order to achieve the 50% target in the EGalim food legislation: development of supplies of products that are local, sustainable and of good quality, including organic farming products. €50m was therefore allocated to purchases of the equipment and appliances required for cooking and processing fresh produce, training kitchen staff and investing in canteen modernisation.

### January 2021 saw the launch of several Economic Recovery Plan support schemes driven or promoted by the DGAL:

- A measure for “urban agriculture and shared gardens” (€30m): calls for project proposals in the territorial *départements* for the creation and development of shared gardens;
- A measure for “local, inclusive food” (€30m – access for all to fresh, local products): launch of the components “support for national projects from network leaders” and “support for local projects”.



Map presented in the press conference of 30 March 2021

## 39 WINNERS OF THE PNA 2019-2020 CALL FOR PROJECTS

On 16 October 2020, World Food Day, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food published a list of 24 new Regional Food Projects (PATs) selected following the call for project proposals under the 2019-2020 National Food Programme (PNA) (€2m), in addition to 15 innovative and pilot projects capable of seeding exemplary programmes.

The winners included: projects for supplying school canteens with local and organic products, projects for food education, combating food wastage, programmes for access to good food for marginalised members of the community, plus inclusive food outlets and markets for local producers.

These projects, each driven by a local authority, a non-profit organisation or possibly a grouping of farmers, are based in a local area and bring together all stakeholders to ensure that food is rooted in the local region.

The 2019- 2023 National Food Programme (PNA) is the main framework in which the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's policy on food is driven by the DGAL. The PNA is to a large extent based in local regions and the close involvement of actors on the ground is ensured by Regional Food Projects (PATs).



## INSTITUTIONAL CATERING: A CHARTER OF COMMITMENTS SIGNED BY THE SECTOR AND THE MINISTRY

At the Paris International Agricultural Show in February 2020 a charter entitled "Institutional catering in action" was signed by the Ministry and the main sector operators. They were acting to promote improved quality in the meals served and to achieve one of the goals set out in the EGALim law.

The main institutional catering operators committed to pooling their efforts to achieve one of the EGALim law's flagship goals: a minimum of 50% sustainable, high-quality products, including at least 20% organic, in the meals served by 1 January 2022, and for all products, promotion of food rooted in local regions.

The charter was signed by a number of sector operators, most notably the national institutional catering federation (SNRC), the interbranch representative body for directly managed institutional catering (Restau'co), the French confederation of wholesale and international commerce (CGI), the national association of food industries (ANIA), the general retail food confederation (CGAD), the agricultural cooperative association (Coop ration Agricole), the federation of wholesale markets in France, the fruit and vegetable wholesalers association, FEDALIS, and the association for the coordination of fresh food supplies (ACOFAL).

Despite the uncertainties arising from the health, economic and social crisis, the EGALim roadmap continues remains fully relevant. Food is a determining factor for health and the pandemic reminds us of this crucial issue with regard to comorbidities such as diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular disease. For many children, the school canteen is the only place where they can get a daily balanced meal.

Institutional catering is a key food sector in France, with over 80,000 restaurants and nearly 4 billion meals served up every year.

The national institutional catering council (CNRC) set up in 2019 supports those involved in implementing the provisions of the EGALim law where institutional catering is concerned, in conjunction with the DGAL. It also provides them with a range of tools on the [macantine.gouv.fr](http://macantine.gouv.fr) website, most notably [a guide to vegetarian menus](#) and [a vegetarian recipe book](#), which have been produced as part of experimental programmes in school catering,...

→ READ THE CHARTER OF COMMITMENTS

<https://agriculture.gouv.fr/la-restauration-collective-en-mutation>

## FOOD WASTAGE: A BROADER OBLIGATION TO DONATE

Following on from the “Garot Law” of 2016, food donations were expanded in 2020 by extending the obligation to offer donation agreements to institutional catering operators (preparing more than 3,000 meals/day) to agrifood companies or to wholesalers (with over €50m annual turnover). The official decree of 20 October 2020 specifies these obligations, whose application is assisted by the DGAL.

For several years now, the increasing numbers of those living in poverty has led over 5.5 million to make use of the food banks set up across France by non-profit associations and institutions. The crisis surrounding Covid-19 has worsened this situation.

Donation of foodstuffs to the poorest members of the community is an essential lever for combating marginalisation by providing access to food that is safe, healthy, diverse, of good quality and sufficient in quantity.

Designated as a priority in the National Food Programme (PNA), food aid helps address issues of both social justice and food wastage.

Templates for contractual agreements have been created by the DGAL for use in each donating sector in consultation with industry professionals and food aid non-profits. Such agreements set out clearly the respective duties of those involved in order to guarantee that donations are effective, and that the food is safe for health and of good quality.



## A WEBSITE FOR THE FOOD CHAIN SURVEILLANCE PLATFORM

The food chain surveillance (SCA) platform has opened its website, enhancing its system of surveillance for the benefit of consumers.

This website (<https://www.plateforme-sca.fr>) supplements those of two other epidemiological surveillance platforms, one on animal health (<https://www.plateforme-esa.fr>) and the other on plant health (<https://plateforme-esv.fr>). All three “tools”, for use by actors in animal health, plant health and food chain sanitary safety are part of an integrated “One Health” approach.

The SCA platform, which brings together public- and private-sector partners, allows information to be shared from sanitary surveillance, methodological documentation and study results in furtherance of food safety.

Members of institutions and technical institutes, livestock farming and agrifood professionals, health professionals: all can find on this new website the focuses of the work of the SCA platform, alert bulletins and the results of the initial efforts for integrated surveillance of Salmonella, a foodborne bacterial hazard whose cost to national health and the economy continues to be major.



The fourteen signatories of the SCA platform framework agreement are the Ministries of Agriculture, Health and the Economy (DGAL, DGS, DGCCRF), national scientific bodies (ANSES, Santé Publique France, INRAE), technical institutes (ACTA, ACTIA), industry bodies (ANIA, CGAD, Coopération Agricole, FCD, Oqualim) and test laboratories (ADILVA).

## RAPPELCONSO: A NEW WEBSITE FOR THE RECALL OF HAZARDOUS PRODUCTS

Announced by the government in the wake of the failures observed in the handling of the recall of salmonella-contaminated milk in 2018, the RappelConso website sets out to increase consumer trust in the product recall process and facilitate communication on alerts for the industry. It was developed in consultation with three ministries: Economy, Finance and Economic Recovery (DGCCRF), Agriculture & Food (DGAL) and the Ecological Transition.



RappelConso represents a practical response to consumers’ legitimate demands for access to reliable, verified information on hazardous product warnings. The website has been open for access by consumers since 1 April 2021 in web and mobile versions at <https://rappel.conso.gouv.fr>



## REVISION OF THE GUIDE TO ALERT MANAGEMENT: SECTOR CONSULTATIONS

The guide that advises on management of food-related alerts is a tool based on consensus between the sanitary authorities (DGAL, DGCCRF, DGS), responsible for control, and the relevant business operators. The DGAL is leading its revision in conjunction with the DGCCRF and DGS, and in consultation with the operators, who are in the front line where the safety for health of marketed foodstuffs is concerned. The guide dates from 2009 and is being revised to match the present context.

For the last ten years, the volume of activity and the number of alerts linked to test results connected with self-inspections have increased substantially due to the increased sensitivity of verification tools. Moreover, new dangers are now taken into consideration. Modes of purchase (online, drive, etc.), modes of consumption, test methods, the opening of the "RappelConso" website and the regulations have also brought changes.

Around thirty stakeholders from outside government, most notably the members of the National Food Council (CNA), were consulted for this revision over a period of 21 days in June 2020.

In November 2020 a document responding to contributions was published on the consultation website <https://gouvernement-et-citoyens.consultation.etalab.gouv.fr>. Since then, the DGAL and the DGCCRF have been working on drafting the revised version of the guide.

Further consultation of the stakeholders on the document is planned before publication.

### Bitter squashes: do not eat!

In late September 2020, in the wake of several reported food poisoning outbreaks, an investigation was conducted by DGAL and DGCCRF staff which pointed to the consumption of bitter squashes. The batches concerned were withdrawn from sale or recalled. Bitter-tasting squashes should not be eaten.

This is because consumption of even small quantities is enough to cause symptoms shortly after ingestion, these usually being relatively minor and of short duration.



## MEAT: PRODUCT WITHDRAWAL/ RECALL AND A CLOSURE ORDER

An inspection carried out in an establishment by the directorate for protection of the public (DDPP) in the Seine-et-Marne *département* revealed that its production and marketing processes were not being conducted in compliance with health requirements.

On 14 August, the DGAL's Sanitary Emergency Unit (MUS) withdrew from sale or recalled all products, mainly beef, poultry meat and smoked fish, produced without the required official sanitary approval. On 13 August, the Prefect for Seine-et-Marne ordered a halt to all production by the facility until further notice.

The DDPP has continued its enquiries, most notably regarding the traceability of the products, which may be harmful to health.

## NOROVIRUS CONTAMINATION OF SHELLFISH: NUMEROUS VICTIMS AND AREA CLOSURES

A meeting was held with representatives of the shellfish farming industry at the Ministry early in January 2020 to review the current status of incidents of food poisoning in a number of regions since December following consumption of norovirus-contaminated shellfish.

Around twenty shellfish farming areas in seven *départements* were closed due to suspected food poisoning outbreaks linked to the consumption of oysters, incidents reported to the sanitary authorities (Agence Régionale de Santé, DDCSPP). Heavy rain associated with the winter epidemic of norovirus gastroenteritis and a period of high oyster consumption are very likely to have been contributory factors in these incidents.

On notification of a food poisoning outbreak, investigations were immediately initiated by the health authorities to identify the origin of the infection and close down the contaminated areas for 28 days. Products already on the market from the relevant areas were targeted by a withdrawal order.



## CATTLE TRAFFICKING AND ILLICIT SLAUGHTER

In October 2019, a special unit of the Gendarmerie contacted the DGAL's investigation body (BNEVP) concerning a firm based in Eastern France in which serious malpractice had been noted. This led to the arrest of the person responsible.

There were illegal practices in the firm, which specialised in the meat trade: intimidation of employees, violence, fraud, theft of carcasses in a slaughterhouse, unlicensed meat cutting, and more.

Following the approach from the Gendarmerie, in 2020 the BNEVP worked in close collaboration with magistrates and the Gendarmerie to gather evidence, carry out various searches of premises and ultimately arrest the main organiser of the criminal activity. The accused, the subject of an international arrest warrant, was formally charged and placed in detention. The investigation has continued, most notably with regard to the illicit slaughter aspect. Substantial criminally-acquired assets were confiscated.

### Withdrawal and recall of salmonella-contaminated prepared meat products

31 cases of salmonella infection, including 19 children, were identified by the national centre of reference (CNR) for salmonella (Pasteur Institute) and Santé Publique France in October and November. The DGAL's Sanitary Emergency Unit (MUS) led the investigations on the products concerned.

The handling of this alert involving victims highlighted the importance of inspection and hygiene relating to raw materials as well as the part played by the sanitary control plans that allow firms to control the critical points in their production processes.





5



## The DGAL in figures

# Inspections and checks carried out in 2020

The DGAL has 5,006 full time equivalent (FTE) staff, plus 14,000 government-approved sanitary veterinarians, 30 national reference laboratories and around 150 specialist test laboratories, the majority assigned to France's territorial *départements*.

### CONTROLS ON THIRD-COUNTRY IMPORTS

Imported products	Number of batches checked	Number of batches rejected
Animals and animal products	34,110	228
Plants and plant products	53,744	647
Animal feed of non-animal origin	2,926	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90,780</b>	<b>878</b>

### CERTIFICATION OF INTRA-EU TRADE

		Number of checks
Live animals	Certification inspections (leaving France)	95,549
	Inspections for verification of compliance of batches entering France	269

### ANIMAL HEALTH AND PROTECTION INSPECTIONS

ANIMAL PROTECTION	Number of inspections	Follow-up procedures	Comprising:				Total or partial closure
			Official warnings	Official notices to remedy	Penalty notices	Permit withdrawal or suspension	
<b>TOTAL, comprising:</b>	<b>12,965</b>	<b>3,825</b>	<b>2,225</b>	<b>1,380</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>
Farm livestock	3,935						
Livestock transportation	5,170						
Pets	1,400						
Equines	730						
Animal laboratory trials	230						
Checks in slaughterhouses	1,500						

PUBLIC HEALTH IN LIVESTOCK FARMING	Number of inspections	Follow-up procedures	Comprising:				Total or partial closure
			Official warnings	Official notices to remedy	Penalty notices	Permit withdrawal or suspension	
<b>TOTAL, comprising:</b>	<b>15,285</b>	<b>1,830</b>	<b>1,195</b>	<b>610</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>
Sanitary inspections on farms	1,480						
Biosecurity	1,750						
Salmonella	7,900						
Animal identification	1,780						
Veterinary pharmacy	1,075						
Animal by-products	570						
Animal feed	195						
Breeding	220						
Trade in live animals	315						

**ANNUAL PROGRAMME FOR SURVEILLANCE OF CONTAMINATION IN PRIMARY PRODUCTION, FOOD AND FEED**

The results of the 2020 campaign will be available in the PSPC 2020 overview report to be published in September 2021.

	Samples taken in 2019	Of which: number non-compliant	Sampling scheduled for 2020
<b>TOTAL, comprising:</b>	<b>68,549</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>59,000</b>
Physico-chemical contaminants <sup>1</sup> in animal products	52,924	330	50,000
Biological contaminants <sup>2</sup> and toxins in animal products	2,908	83	1,700
Residues of plant protection products in primary plant production	1,614	92	1,600
Contaminants in products imported from third countries	1,404	10	3% of imported batches
Antimicrobial resistance in commensal and zoonotic bacteria	9,699	/	4,000

**PLANT HEALTH AND PROTECTION INSPECTIONS**

	Number of inspections	Follow-up procedures	Comprising:				Total or partial closure
			Official warnings	Official notices to remedy	Penalty notices	Permit withdrawal or suspension	
<b>TOTAL, comprising:</b>	<b>22,910</b>	<b>5,600</b>	<b>3,785</b>	<b>1,545</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>
Inspections of users of plant protection products	4,910						
Inspections at plant protection product distribution stage	570						
Inspections for verification of adherence to hygiene rules	570						
Inspections for EU phytosanitary passport issuance	4,110						
Surveillance of regulated and emerging organisms	12,750						

**FOOD SAFETY INSPECTIONS**

	Number of inspections	Follow-up procedures	Comprising:					Total or partial closure	Other measures <sup>4</sup>
			Official warnings	Official notices to remedy	Penalty notices	Permit withdrawal or suspension			
<b>TOTAL, comprising:</b>	<b>41,600</b>	<b>21,690</b>	<b>16 755</b>	<b>4 000</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>70</b>	
Slaughter <sup>3</sup> , processing and storage facilities	14,750	5,620							
Institutional catering	7,590	4,130							
Commercial catering	10,740	7,220							
Retail outlets	8,520	4,720							

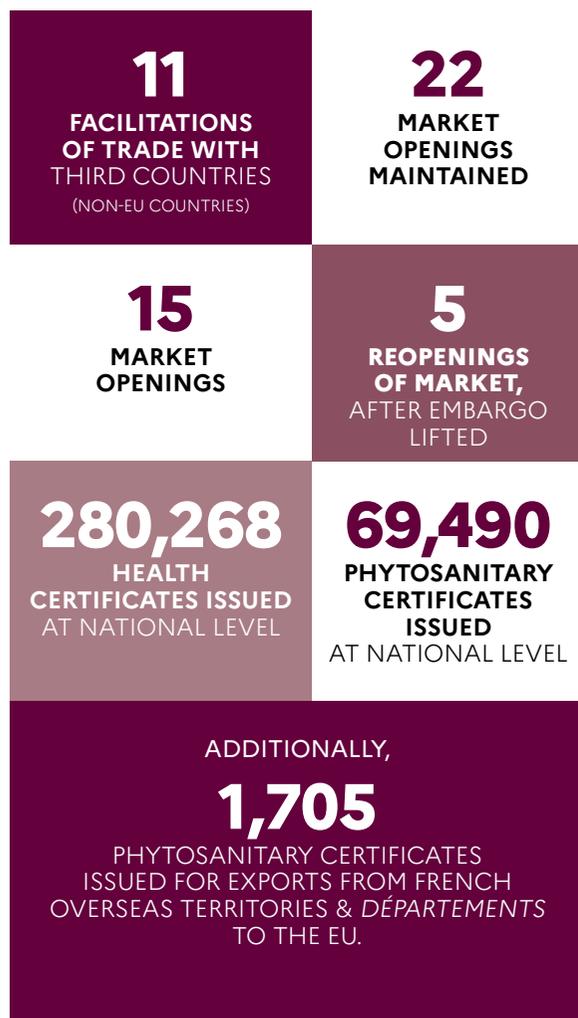
1 Comprising veterinary medicines, banned substances, growth promoters, pesticides, antiparasitics and trace metals

2 Comprising bacteria, organic pollutants (other than pesticides), mycotoxins and phycotoxins

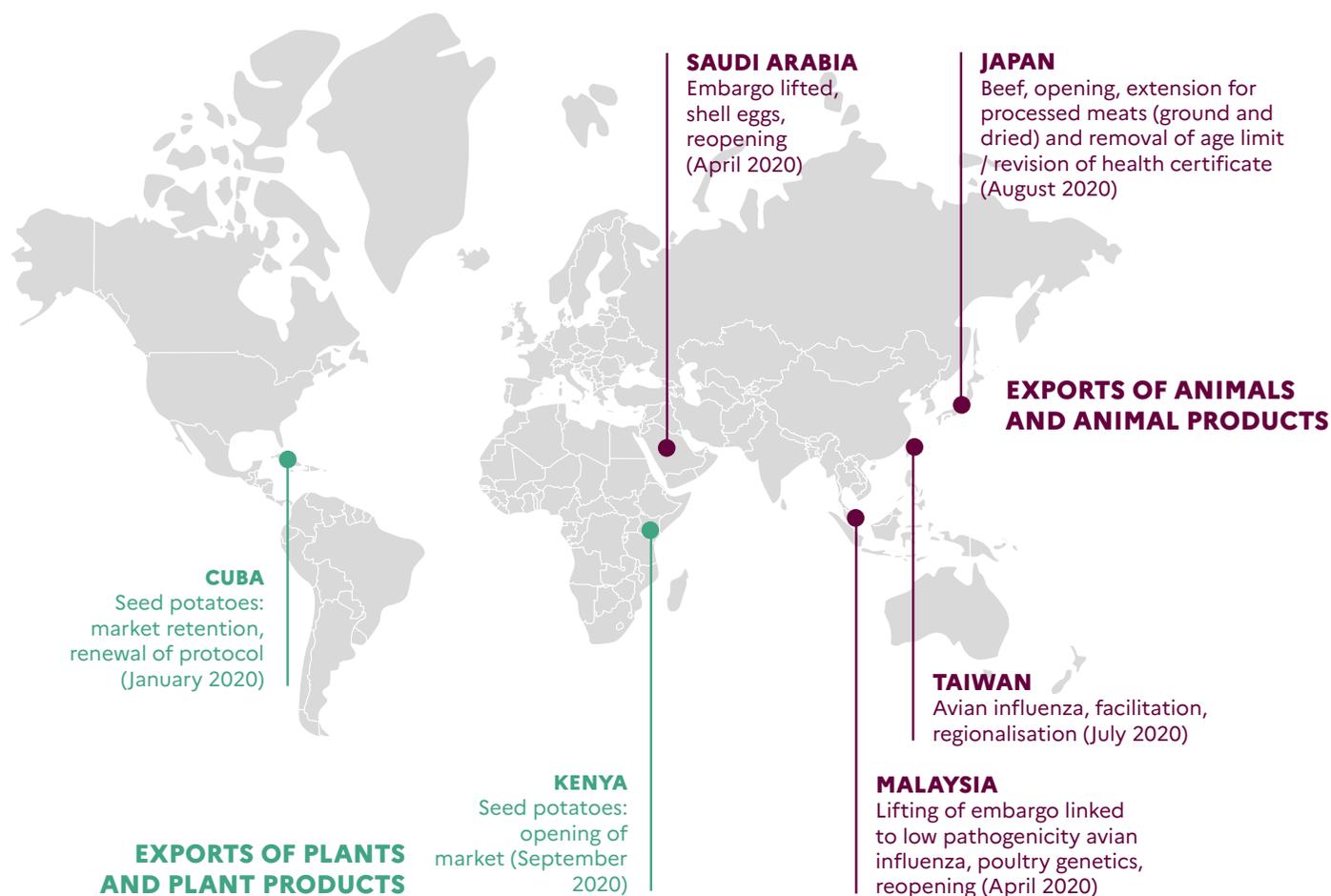
3 This figure includes only annual inspections in slaughter facilities where the veterinary services also provide permanent inspection. In the Covid-19 context inspections were maintained as a priority in the highest-risk facilities, including slaughterhouses. Reductions in checks did not affect facilities presenting the highest level of risk.

4 Obligation to provide training, impounding or destruction of goods, cleaning, product recall, alterations to premises, etc.

## EXPORTS OF PLANT AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS IN 2020



### ALLEVIATION OF TRADE BARRIERS OBTAINED



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