



US Swine Health Improvement Plan

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Piloting a proven platform for safeguarding, certifying, and bettering animal health

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To: US Pork Industry Stakeholders

From: US Swine Health Improvement Plan Pilot Project Investigators

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Subject: Introducing the US Swine Health Improvement Plan (ASF-CSF Monitored Certification Program)

Globalization, multi-site production, and a marked dependence on export markets have changed the landscape of swine health and the impact of disease incursion on the US pork industry. The opportunities, challenges, and animal health related risks in the US pork industry have not likely ever been greater. In particular, trade impacting disease risks and recurring endemic diseases of high consequence are substantial animal health related challenges. Scalable solutions to these major and well-recognized challenges are largely beyond the immediate control or influence of any individual producer, packer, state, or existing entity.

Next generation animal health assurance and area regional disease control solutions are needed to secure the future of the highly mobile and export-centric US pork industry. Experience affirms that solutions offered by government or industry, each acting independently, will not be timely, capable, or robust enough to keep pace with industry needs. State and federal animal health agencies lack the resources, capacity, and industry-specific know-how, while industry only solutions lack the coordination and authority to establish official standards and health status certifications across legally recognized areas, states, regions, or by well-defined segments of the commercial pork industry.

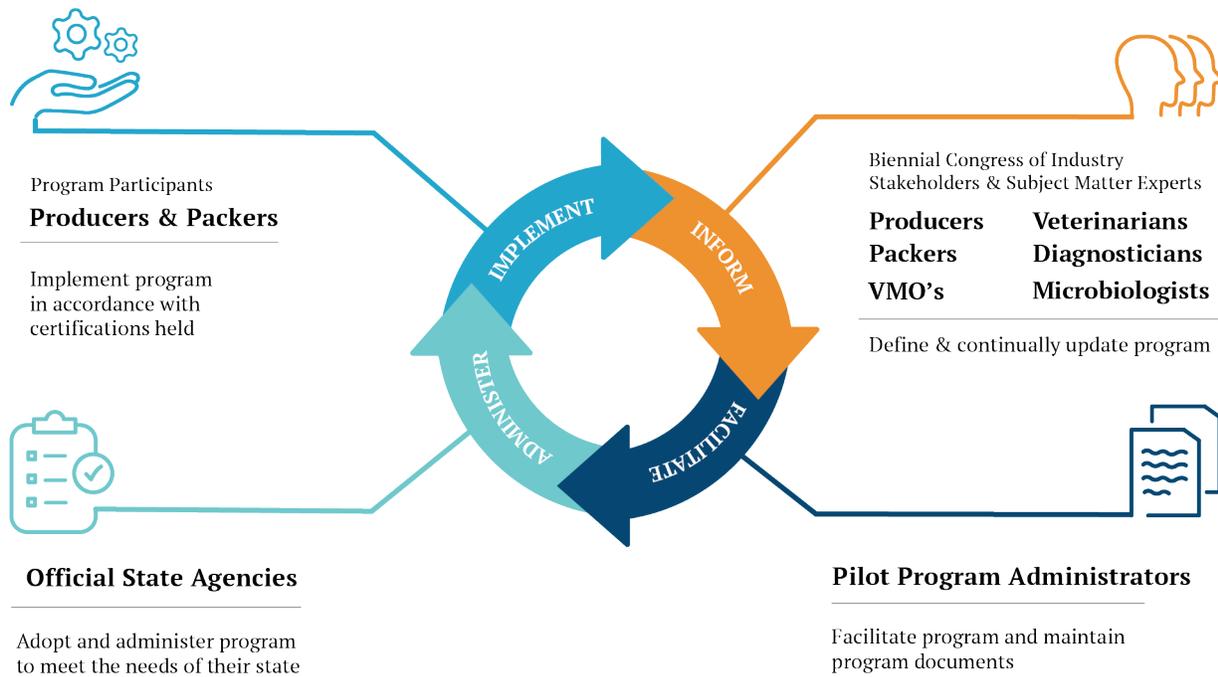
A 12-month case study commissioned by the Swine Health Information Center seeking an in-depth understanding of the US poultry and egg industries' National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) was completed in June 2019. Findings suggest the basic tenets and approach used by the NPIP could serve as a road map for pork producers and packers (slaughter facilities) interested in more directly and systematically addressing the major swine health issues of high consequence, and better positioning the future of the US pork industry in the domestic and global marketplace.

Our project team of swine interest veterinarians from four land grant universities is spearheading a USDA sponsored pilot project entitled, ***“The Development and Demonstration of a US Swine Health Improvement Plan modelled after the National Poultry Improvement Plan”***.

The primary objectives of this endeavor are to develop and implement a US Swine Health Improvement Plan African Swine Fever (ASF)-Classical Swine Fever (CSF) Monitored certification of US pork production operations modelled after the basic tenets of the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) H5/H7 Avian Influenza Monitored certification of US Commercial Poultry operations. Upon the conclusion of this two-year pilot project (should there be interest), the experiences gained and operations established through the pilot could be transitioned into a more formal and ongoing platform (i.e., US Swine Health Improvement Plan or US SHIP) for safeguarding, certifying, and bettering the health of US swine and longer-term competitiveness of the US pork industry.

Established in 1935, NPIP is an industry, state, and federal partnership that has long played a central role in bettering the health of US poultry and the competitiveness of the US poultry and egg industries. NPIP has no peer in US animal agriculture. NPIP serves to safeguard, certify, and represent the health of US poultry. NPIP’s health status classifications are the officially recognized standards of poultry health used to demonstrate freedom of disease for both trade and non-trade impacting diseases. NPIP provides clear and uniform standards recognized across all 50 US states and by international trading partners. Participation in NPIP is voluntary, and essentially universal among commercial-scale poultry and egg production operations in the US. NPIP’s unique industry, state, and federal partnership provides a platform wherein industry stakeholders play a direct and on-going role in establishing poultry health standards, definitions, and policies for the US poultry and egg industries (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1. NPIP’s ongoing system of operations across the US poultry and egg industries.



NPIP’s H5/H7 Avian Influenza Monitored certification supports ongoing disease surveillance and the adoption of practices that mitigate disease spread into and between farms. The H5/H7 Avian Influenza Monitored certification held by meat-type chicken and turkey slaughter plants, commercial egg laying operations, and states has played a primary role in helping sustain interstate commerce and export markets from unaffected regions during times of an Avian Influenza Virus (AIV) outbreak of significance affecting US Poultry.

The US pork industry has evolved, improved, and changed radically over the last two generations of pork producers. Experiences and ongoing risks associated with the intercontinental movement of disease agents, the ongoing evolution of a complex network of multi-site and multi-state production systems and marketing channels, and an increased dependence on export markets, are among the most significant factors influencing the overall landscape of and impact of swine health on the US pork industry. Trade impacting disease related market risks and the burden of recurring endemic diseases of high consequence are grand challenges. In these investigators’ opinion, the primary, macro level (industry wide) swine health related risks, vulnerabilities, and opportunities for improvement are generally well understood. Twenty-first century approaches and solutions are needed to address the ever-more complex and consequential swine health challenges (and opportunities) that extend beyond the individual producer’s or packer’s farm gate.

History suggests sustainable improvements to the health status of swine herds across large areas, regions, states, and country require industry leaders to set-forth simplistic, practical, strategic, and effective baseline standards of practice that can be widely adopted by commercial pork producers. Biosecurity, traceability, and surveillance have long been foundational elements in the prevention and control of infectious diseases, and in the representation of a given health status across supply chains, areas, and regions. Industry led leadership, collaboration, adaptability, constancy of purpose, and consistency of execution across the masses have been the hallmarks of historical successes.

Establishing a US Swine Health Improvement Plan (US SHIP) presents as opportunity to create an officially recognized and proven platform for sustainably making stepwise progress in addressing animal health related issues of high consequence that extend beyond the immediate influence of an individual state, producer, or packer's farm gate. Proactively establishing an officially recognized platform, system of ongoing operations, certification, and practical surveillance strategies used for mitigating the risks of disease introduction and demonstrating freedom of trade impacting diseases across supply chains, areas, states, and regions prior to an incursion of a trade impacting disease incursion would seemingly be in the best interests of the greater US pork industry.

In contrast, the absence of an industry-driven and empowered body to establish nationally recognized definitions for swine health sets the stage for a patchwork of local standards and definitions. This patchwork lacks the nationally- and internationally-recognized credibility needed to support interstate or international commerce from unaffected regions during a time of crisis. In short, the NPIP model of shared governance shifts much of the burden and responsibilities for developing, continually updating, and implementing swine health related standards, definitions, policies, and rules from the federal and state animal health agencies to an empowered body of industry stakeholders. Based on NPIP's proven record, this approach would better position industry stakeholders to influence issues related to safeguarding, improving, and representing the health of US swine.

Systems of traceability and routine biosecurity (sanitary) practices are important components of trade impacting disease preparedness and in better positioning the industry to mitigate the impact of recurring endemic diseases. Incorporating baseline traceability and sanitary standards into a voluntary health status certification program would have significant benefits across supply chains, states, regions, or entire US pork industry. The same systems, practices, and structure advanced to mitigate trade-impacting disease related market risks, would also better position the US pork industry to make stepwise progress toward reducing the impact of recurring endemic diseases of high consequence.

US pork industry stakeholders are encouraged to review information concerning this US SHIP ASF-CSF Monitored Certification Program and the preceding NPIP case study on the US SHIP website.

- Google = US Swine Health Improvement Plan (US SHIP)
- Address = <https://usswinehealthimprovementplan.com>

US Pork Producers, Packers (Slaughter Facilities), and State Veterinarians that would like to have their interests represented in the derivation of the program standards for this US SHIP ASF-CSF Monitored Certification Program **[need to complete the five-question interest survey](#)** located on the US SHIP website. Responses received serves to provide this team of pilot project investigators (Program Administrators) the foundational information needed to determine the scope of this precedent-setting endeavor. Specifically, to identify the US Producer, Packers (Slaughter Facilities), and States who would like to have their interests represented in the initial US SHIP House of Delegates. All interested states and US pork supply chains are welcome to participate.

Responses to this [five-question on-line interest survey](#) are due not later than 02/28/2021.

As currently planned, the forming stages for this two-year pilot project are beginning in Fall 2020, with initiation of the program in participating states in the summer of 2021.

Fall 2020 / Q1 2021: Forming Stages

- Identify potentially interested participants
 - States, packers (slaughter facilities), & producers who want their interests represented in the inaugural US SHIP House of Delegates.
- Technical committees create draft version of the Program Standards Documents

Q2/Q3 2021: Finalize version 1 of program standards documents and identify initial participating states

- US SHIP House of Delegates – representatives from states expressing interest convene to determine version 1.0 of US SHIP Program Standards Documents by majority vote.
- Confirm the states to participate in this pilot program.

Q3 2021 = Initiate US SHIP ASF-CSF Monitored Certification Program among participants

- Establish US SHIP Official State Agencies in each participating state.
- Initiate program participant (slaughter facilities & producers) sign-up
- States, packers (slaughter facilities), & producers

Pork producer, packer, and veterinary organizations are encouraged to share, reference, and review this information with their membership. We would ask packers (slaughter facilities) and practicing veterinarians to share and discuss this US SHIP ASF-CSF Monitored Certification Program with their respective pork producer suppliers and clients. State animal health officials and State pork producer associations are encouraged to discuss potential interests among the packers (slaughter facilities) and producers within their respective state and region.

Al Wulfekuhle (a pork producer from Quasqueton, Iowa, and Chair of the National Swine Disease Council) has let these investigators know, “The National Swine Disease Council is looking forward to serving in an advisory capacity to this effort and in seeing this US SHIP ASF-CSF Monitored Certification Program move forward amongst interested producers, packers, and states”.

As described in the more detailed information provided on the US SHIP website, we are asking the state pork producer associations to take the lead role in appointing industry participants to represent their state in the inaugural US SHIP House of Delegates forum that serves to determine the program’s content/standards for certification by majority vote. The number of voting delegate positions for each participating state will be proportionate to the number of NASS-enumerated swine in their respective state.

As with NPIP, each participating state will be responsible for designating an entity to administer this program, verify participant status, and maintain a current list of the certified participants in their respective states (i.e., pilot project - US SHIP Official State Agency). NPIP Official State Agencies are commonly housed at the state animal health official’s office (e.g., State Department of Agriculture or Board of Animal Health), the state producer association, the land grant university in their respective state, or at one of the state’s official veterinary diagnostic laboratories.

Thank you for your consideration of reviewing this letter, the ASF-CSF Monitored Certification Program informational materials on the US SHIP website, and responding to the five-question interest survey as your time and interests allow. After having reviewed the materials provided on the website, please direct any questions to USSHIP@iastate.edu or call the US Swine Health Improvement Plan office (515-294-8611).