



FMD Expert Mission to Lesvos

EU VET Initiative

24 – 27 March 2026

PAFF Committee, 22-23 April 2026

Terms of reference:

In response to FMD epidemiological situation in the Lesvos Island of Greece

Providing on-the-spot assistance

- most suitable FMD control and eradication measures
- scientific, technical, managerial aspects

Experts: Georgina Helyes (HU), Roman Matejčík (SK), Tsviatko Alexandrov (BG)

Places visited during the mission

Day 1. Preparatory meeting

Day 2. Travelling to Lesbos and meeting with the Greek competent authority

Day 3.

- ✓ *Meeting with the central and local veterinary authorities and high management of Lesbos Island at the Municipal office in Mytilene*
- ✓ *Visit to two milk collection centers (further restricted zone and protection zone)*
- ✓ *Visit to protection and surveillance zones (included discussion with farmers)*
- ✓ *Visit to ferry port (further restricted zone)*

Day 4. Final meeting with Greek competent authorities



Background

- Greece confirmed its first FMD case in 26 years on 16 March 2026 via PCR testing in cattle in the village of Pelopi on Lesbos Island;
- additional FMD infected establishments have been detected mostly via NSP ELISA.
- On the Lesbos Island there are around 480 000 sheep and goats, 5 000 cattle, 260 pigs.
- No live FMD susceptible animals are traded to other parts of Greece and other countries.

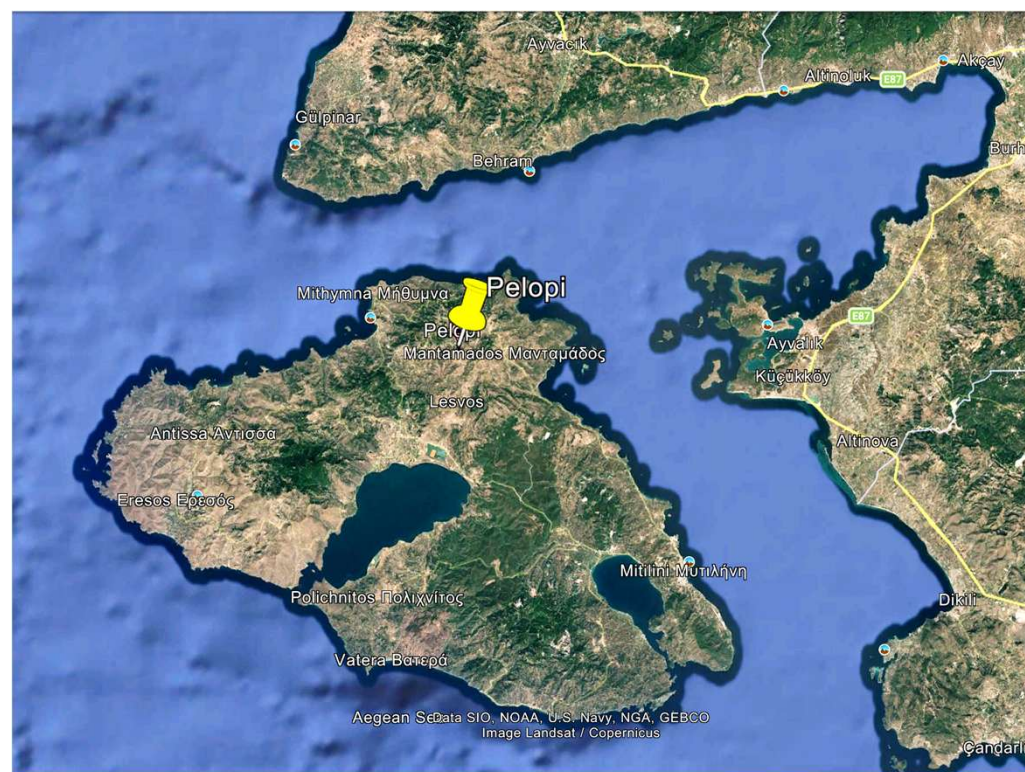
Concrete questions

- How and when the FMD virus did come and spread in Lesbos?
- What are the critical issues and what measures need to be taken most urgently and immediately, in order to control FMD in the Lesbos Island?
- What measures should Greece take to mitigate the risk of the FMD virus spreading to unaffected areas of Lesbos and other territories of Greece, and to enable the early detection and quick response to such an event?

Fact-finding summary:

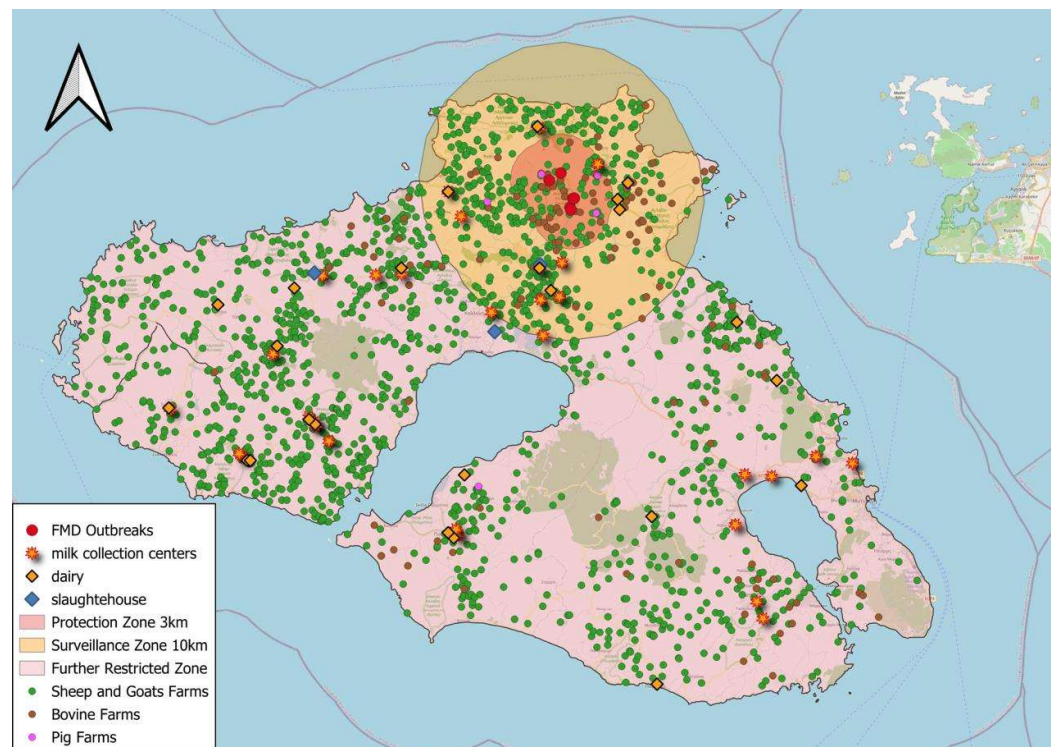
The First confirmed outbreak in cattle in the village of Pelopi

- *First clinical signs reported on 15 March 2026 by a private veterinarian in 8 out of 38 extensively grazed cattle.*
- *Nine samples collected from two cattle resulted positive for FMD by PCR at the NRL on 16 March 2026.*
- *The estimated infection was at approximately day 5–7 (no viremia, no NSP antibodies yet detected).*
- *The virus was identified as serotype SAT1 following antigen detection during a second sampling round.*
- *The same owner also operated a sheep and goat farm 1 km away (250 animals) – tested negative but depopulated*

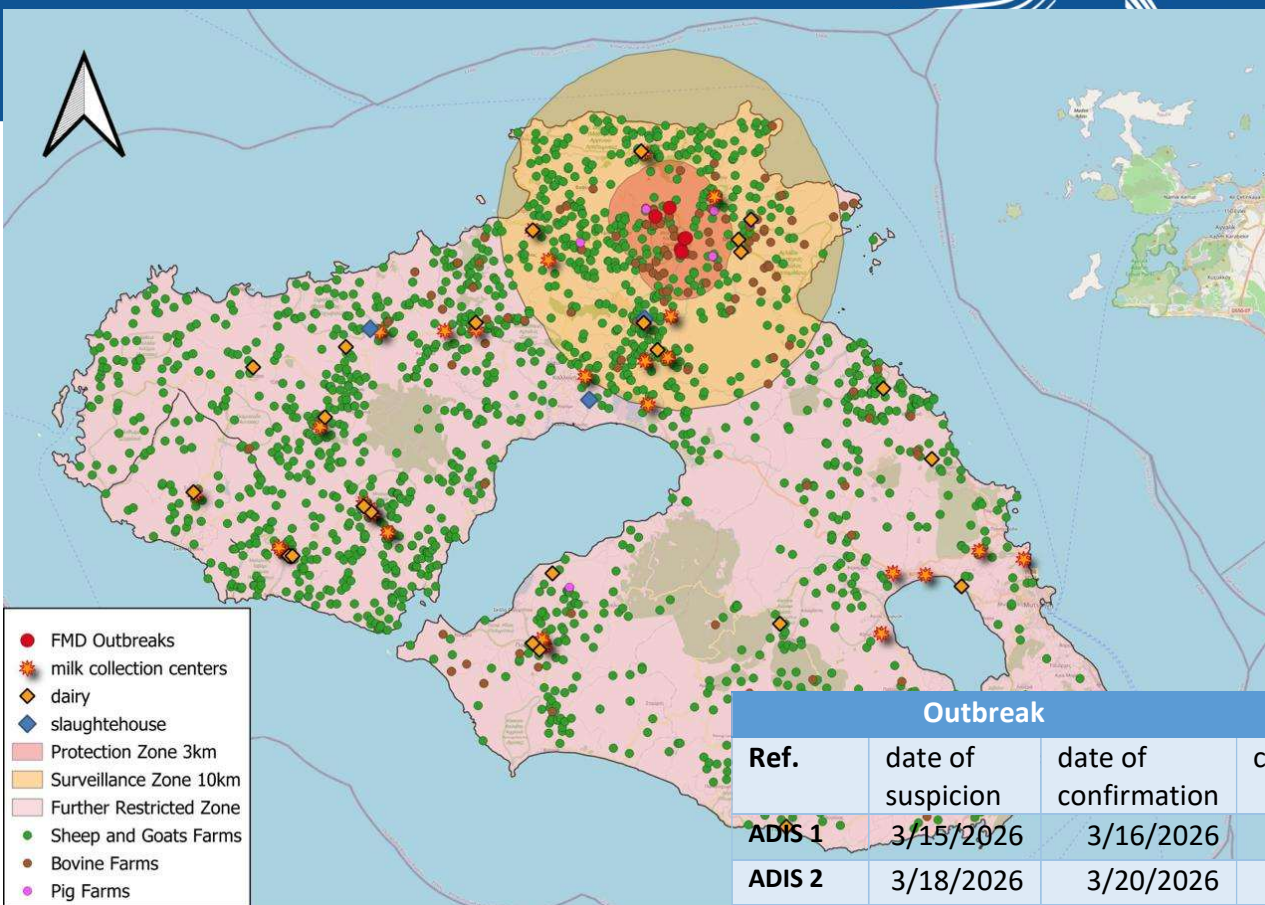


Restricted zones

- 3km protection zone (PZ) and 10 km surveillance zone (SZ) around Pelopi.
- All the rest of the territory of the island is defined as further restricted zone (FRZ).
- In the framework of surveillance additional 14 FMD infected establishments have been detected mostly via NSP ELISA in sheep and cattle by the time of the EUVET.
- All of the outbreaks were in the protection zone and only one outside but in very close proximity of it's border



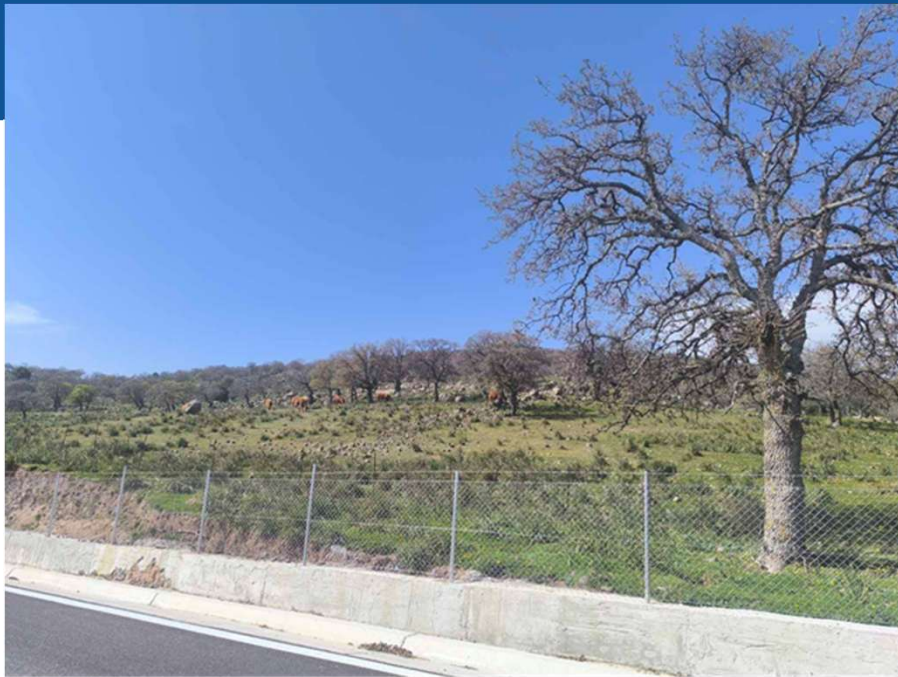
	cattle		sheep & goats			pigs		Slaughter-houses	Milk collection centers	Dairy proc. establishments
	Settlements	farms	cattle	farms	sheep & goats	farms	pigs			
PZ	5	60	1000	213	35,705	5	63	0	3	3
SZ	5	85	1755	653	86,563	11	147	1	2	1
FRZ	220	410	2,088	3036	357,732	7	49	2	20	25
Total	230	555	4,843	3902	480,000	23	259	3	25	28



- The current surveillance strategy: clinical examinations and sampling and testing (both PCR and NSP ELISA) of 10% of the animals in all herds within the PZ and SZ.

- all the work for **surveillance** done by limited number of veterinary staff.
- 12 vets (10 in the PZ and 2 in the SZ).

Ref.	Outbreak		animals, n		PCR		NSP ELISA	
	date of suspicion	date of confirmation	cattle	sheep & goats	tested	positive	tested	positive
ADIS 1	3/15/2026	3/16/2026	38	250	11	6	13	0
ADIS 2	3/18/2026	3/20/2026	15	309	0	0	28	16
ADIS 3	3/20/2026	3/23/2026	0	350	60	0	30	16
ADIS 4	3/18/2026	3/23/2026	0	550	30	0	15	1
ADIS 5	3/18/2026	3/23/2026	23	0	6	0	3	1
ADIS 6	3/21/2026	3/24/2026	0	198	22	2	22	5
ADIS 7	3/18/2026	3/23/2026	13	203	22	1	11	0
ADIS 8	3/21/2026	3/24/2026	1	120	0	0	12	5
ADIS 9	3/21/2026	3/24/2026	0	272	0	0	10	3
ADIS 10	3/21/2026	3/24/2026	0	94	0	0	10	4
ADIS 11	3/21/2026	3/24/2026	0	227	0	0	15	11
ADIS 12	3/21/2026	3/24/2026	0	254	0	0	10	3
ADIS 13	3/19/2026	3/24/2026	34	297	0	0	25	18
			124	3124	151	9	194	80



Epidemiological considerations

- *Proper epidemiological investigation was not completed.*
- *So far, clinical signs of FMD have only been observed in the cattle farm firstly confirmed as positive.*
- *The situation with regard to sheep and goats remains unclear.*
- *The infection has spread subclinically in small ruminants and many more herds of sheep and goats may be affected.*
- *During our visit outbreak management process was ongoing in cattle detected as seropositive only (outbreak ADIS 13) and with no clinical signs reported.*
- *Approximately 800 samples were collected in Lesvos and tested negative for FMD under the TAD programme during 2025 and January–February 2026. Clinical examinations conducted as part of the programme revealed no signs indicative of FMD.*



- All measures in terms of **outbreak management** (Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/687).
- Killing and disposal (by burial on-site) of the susceptible livestock, as well as preliminary cleaning and disinfection for all outbreaks (also those confirmed by NSP ELISA) shortly after confirmation.
- Ban of **grazing on communal pastures**



- A **strict island-wide lockdown** (prohibition on the movement of animals, products, by-products, and feedstuffs off Lesvos; closure of slaughterhouses; retention of 2025 cheese stocks on the island; and ongoing milk disposal).
- No animal movements off Lesvos identified in recent months.

Disinfection checkpoints

- *in Mytilene port and*
- *across the 3 km protection zone and 10 km surveillance zones.*
- *Continuous enforcement by port authorities and police (patrols from 07:00 to 19:00 to ensure full compliance with the movement ban).*



Milk collection system

- 25 milk collection centers with a combined capacity of 90 tones per day.
- Milk from these centers is supplied to 28 dairy plants for further processing.
- Farmers deliver milk directly to the collection centers twice daily.
- milk produced within a designated zone must be delivered to a collection center located in that same zone.
- Vehicles delivering milk are disinfected upon entering and leaving (no cleaning (high-pressure washing) observed).
- Posters displaying FMD clinical signs and awareness information for farmers present.



National reference laboratory for FMD

- *The NRL in Athens performs all analyses reliably and is staffed by committed personnel.*
- *Approximately 300 samples are tested serologically each day, with a similar number processed daily by PCR for FMD.*
- *This PCR capacity, however, can be strained or delayed when urgent testing for other diseases (such as SGP) takes priority.*
- *Coordination and collaboration with the EURL should continue, including the regular submission of samples from relevant outbreaks.*
- *To improve understanding of the epidemiological situation and transmission pathways, additional samples—particularly from sheep and goats, as well as from cattle with high PCR positivity—should be submitted to the EURL.*

Conclusions and recommendations (1)

Epidemiological situation

- ❑ *The origin of the FMD virus and the timing of its introduction, the epidemiological situation and the extent of the infected area remain uncertain.*
- ❑ *The FMD status of sheep and goats poses the greatest risk of unnoticed spread, which increases the risk for the whole island. Realistically, we must assume that more areas of the island may be infected and must be considered high-risk areas.*
- ❑ *It is recommended that a team of epidemiological experts, as stipulated in the Animal Health Law (Regulation EU 2016/429, Article 57), conducts epidemiological investigations. External expertise may be requested for support.*

Conclusions and recommendations (2)

Risk communication, awareness and surveillance

- ❑ *It is recommended to develop a targeted communication strategy for stakeholders, using a variety of communication channels.*
- ❑ *It is recommended to enhance FMD awareness among farmers, veterinarians, and other key stakeholders in the livestock sector. Efforts should focus on strengthening biosecurity practices and promoting both passive and active surveillance, with an emphasis on early detection.*
- ❑ *The size of surveillance zone must be reconsidered and enlarged.*
- ❑ ***Human resources need to be urgently ensured for proper implementation of the surveillance activities without any delay.***
- ❑ *All farms within the PZ and SZ should be checked for the absence of FMD as soon as possible. This includes both clinical examinations and a random sampling in accordance with the sampling key of 5% prevalence and 95% confidence (for serological surveillance at farm level, for PCR at epidemiological unit level). Surveillance activities should be repeated in several rounds, at intervals of no more than two weeks. The passive surveillance all over Lesvos should be reinforced.*
- ❑ *Awareness and passive surveillance for FMD should be reinforced all over Greece. The Thrace and TADs programmes must be strictly implemented*

Conclusions and recommendations (3)

Control measures

- ❑ *All animals in confirmed FMD positive farms need to be culled and the contact farms (close proximity, same ownership, sharing personnel, technique) should be considered for immediate "stamping out".*
- ❑ *The close proximity and clustering of establishments with susceptible animals, increases the risk of FMDV escape from infected to neighbouring farms before detection and during the outbreak management. Therefore, identification of epidemiological units including number of different establishments and preventive culling should be discussed.*
- ❑ *Continuous support from the police or other competent authorities (24/7) is strongly recommended to maintain effective control measures and prevent unauthorised animal movements.*
- ❑ *The milk originated from infected farms must be destroyed.*
- ❑ *A proper disinfection scheme for vehicles leaving the restricted zones (3 and 10 km zones) has to be implemented. The control of cleaning and disinfection at milk collection centers, particularly in the PZ and SZ should be reinforced.*
- ❑ *Proper official supervision of the implementation of the measures imposed is strongly recommended.*

Conclusions and recommendations (4)

Diagnostic laboratory

- ❑ *The testing capacity of the NRL for FMD should be urgently increased.*
- ❑ *Coordination and collaboration with the EURL should continue. Positive samples should be sent to the EURL for FMD for confirmatory testing and virus characterization.*

Conclusions and recommendations (5)

Vaccination

- ❑ *In case further FMD outbreaks would occur and that it would show to be difficult to control them by the measures that have been implemented so far (stamping out, zoning etc.), vaccination could be considered as an additional tool to control FMD.*
- ❑ *Hence it is advisable, for Greece to develop possible vaccination strategies (for both suppressive and protective vaccination) and discuss them with stakeholders considering the consequences of the different scenarios, so that if vaccination should be implemented, it can be started immediately.*



The EU-VET team would like to thank all colleagues from Greece for their great support and help!

The working atmosphere throughout the mission was excellent. Our Greek colleagues provided full support and assistance, helping to ensure a productive visit. The EUVET team extends its sincere thanks to all colleagues who participated in this mission in Lesvos for their valuable contributions and for engaging in open and transparent discussions!

