

# Belmonte eyes new approach vs ASF

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Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte has issued an executive order (EO) that seeks to establish proactive measures in cooperation with supermarkets and retailers to prevent the entry of pork products tainted with African swine fever (ASF). Under the EO's "good faith" clause, mere possession of infected pork will not be penalized if the establishment complies with a quality control plan and promptly reports the incident to city inspectors. "It's a first of its kind with regards to ASF. Maybe it can be a template for addressing other problems. Sometimes the solution is not punitive, but collaborative action especially when good faith is intended," she told reporters yesterday.

Belmonte said stores can be encouraged to report ASF-tainted pork products instead of hiding them, which may cause the disease to spread. Penalties are outlined in laws on food safety and sanitation, she added. Belmonte said the EO is just one of their steps in order for the city to gain an ASF-free status again.

There have been at least three incidents of ASF-infected products making their way to retailers in the city. Since ASF broke out in the city last year, the city government has culled 5,820 pigs raised in illegal backyard piggeries. The city government will also phase out 588 backyard piggeries this year.