Scientific Network for Zoonoses Monitoring Data
Minutes of the 34th meeting

Held on 13-14 October 2016, Parma
(Agreed on 16 November 2016)

Participants

- Network Representatives of Member States (including EFTA Countries):

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1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants to the 34th meeting of the Scientific Network for Zoonoses Monitoring Data. Apologies were received from the Cyprus, Malta and Iceland representatives.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes. No further items were added.

3. Minutes of the 33rd meeting of the Network held on 11-12 November 2015

The minutes had previously been agreed by written procedure on 18 December 2015 and subsequently published on the EFSA website on 21 December 2015.

4. Topics for discussion
   1.1. Administrative updates

Simona Fusar Poli informed the Network about the new paperless procedure for expert reimbursements. Experts are required to respond to the e-mail from EFSA, sent immediately after the meeting, and attach to their reply the scans of all travel supporting documents. This reply email sent by the expert now constitutes the reimbursement claim.
1.2. 2015 reporting period - feedback from the EFSA’s perspective

The results from the survey sent to reporting countries to obtain their feedback in relation to the 2015 zoonoses reporting period were presented by Anca Stoicescu.

Specific achievements of 2015 data reporting was shared with the participants particularly 2016 being the first year when all data was submitted electronically to the DCF (data collection framework) EFSA acknowledged the considerable effort made by reporting countries to achieve this objective and then described the other new changes implemented for 2015 reporting. These included, again for the first time, the creation of the national reports in Microstrategy, the revisions to the data reporting catalogues, the design and introduction of more complex data validation BRs (business rules) and the new workflow for data collection. Also highlighted was the successful face-to-face training in 17 Member States (MSs) and the 3 MSs trained via Web conference. For future surveys, EFSA agreed with the suggestion to have the survey sent after the reporting period has finished.

Based on an analysis of the survey answers and suggestions, some solutions/improvements proposed included:

- To identify with greater ease the changes to the scientific and technical reporting manuals, an additional document will be produced containing only the changes introduced to the manuals.

- In order to identify in advance any outstanding technical issues in the DCF (data collection framework) prior to the opening of the 2016 reporting period and to enable EFSA to implement any corrections, Estonia and Portugal agreed to test the data collection configuration of the DCF. To undertake this test, both countries will commence reporting 2016 data on 1 March 2016, although other countries are welcome to be part of this initiative.

- To avoid misalignments among the catalogues downloadable from the DCF, the catalogues sent for consultation as part of the annual update of reporting manuals and the catalogues presented in the Excel mapping tools, the Network agreed that only zoonotic agents can be added to the catalogues after 31 January 2017. The Network will be advised of the inclusion of any new zoonotic agent terms.

- Following publication of the reporting manuals, no BRs will be change nor new BRs added. To enable the identification of an error present in the relevant Extensible Markup Language (XML) line, a unique identifier number of the line of XML will be added.

In the discussion that followed, Sweden mentioned that there are still some duplicates in the revised *Salmonella* catalogue. EFSA requested that the list of duplicated terms is sent to EFSA as soon as possible to allow implementation of the necessary changes in the relevant catalogue. Greece supported the introduction of the unique identifier in the XML line to enable the identification of errors in the data while Germany was unhappy with the number of changes introduced at one time. In response to this latter point, EFSA assured the Network that the changes for the next reporting period would be restricted solely to solving the issues encountered during 2015 data reporting.

Greece, Sweden, Spain and the United Kingdom underlined the difficulties of reporting text using the Excel mapping tool and that the tool does not allow for the reporting of all the details required. EFSA acknowledged that the text forms need a thorough revision and this tasks needs to be completed before introducing any changes.

In response to Germany’s point concerning file identification in the dataset folder in the DCF, EFSA advised that for the 2016 data collection, the data provider will see the file name not only in the messages folder in the DCF but also in the dataset folder.

Belgium and the United Kingdom commented that EFSA should consider providing access to and use of Microstrategy on a wider scale: for example to Focal Points. EFSA advised
that the reporting officers are the MSs’ representative for the zoonoses data collection; as such, any request to access data in Microstrategy should be made to reporting officers in order to obtain the necessary authorisation. The United Kingdom further commented that Microstrategy provides reports at national level; however, it would be useful for reporting officers to have some degree of sub-division of reports within a country.

Anca Stoicescu offered the opportunity for a ‘hands on’ demonstration to Network members at the end of first day on how to upload data to the DCF and advice to understand, the detailed acknowledgement message generated by DCF which allows the identification of BRs errors. The Network members from Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Luxembourg, Norway, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, and United Kingdom participated in the demonstration.

### 1.3. 2015 reporting period - feedback from the Member States’ perspective

Austria presented their experiences from the 2015 data reporting, which mirrored many points addressed in EFSA’s presentation above (1.2). Austria also strongly suggested a revision to the text forms. Other Network members raised an issue regarding the sampling strategy to select when reporting samples taken when non-conformities are identified during an official inspection.

France presented information on the organisation of the French supervision of Salmonella controls in pig carcasses in 2015. Based on the requirements of the Regulation 218/2014, France decided to collect all the information on the total number and the number of Salmonella positive samples taken by food business operators in accordance with Article 5(5) of Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005, within the frame of point 2.1.4 of Annex I thereof. The results based on this data collection were presented to the Network.

France asked the Network and the EC (European Commission) to consider the comparability of the data collected with how data are interpreted by the EC. The Network was asked to share this information at MS level and with their CVO (chief veterinary officer). The EC informed the meeting that they do not yet have the data for 2015; therefore, it is necessary to look at this first exercise on pigs prior to considering the data.

Simona Iannetti presented the view of Italy regarding 2015 data reporting underlying the main issues encountered during the reporting period. These relate to catalogue and BR inconsistencies between those published and those downloadable from DCF. For the issues identified, EFSA had proposed the solutions (see 1.2). Italy added that they favour the availability of DCF catalogues in Excel format. Italy proposed a new term for the sampling stage catalogues and it underlined that the reporting of M. tuberculosis complex in the Disease Status (DS) tables should be re-evaluated as M. tuberculosis complex includes M. microti that cannot be taken into account for the Prevalence estimation of bovine tuberculosis.

### 1.4. 2015 reporting period - feedback from European Commission’s perspective

The Chair highlighted the areas brought into focus by the 2015 data reporting namely: bovine tuberculosis, double reporting by MSs of data from the co-financed programmes to both the EC and EFSA, reporting on animal populations, reporting on Salmonella in pig meat according to Regulation 854/2004 and reporting on Salmonella serovars (non-target).
Based on the definition of bovine tuberculosis (SANCO/7059/2013 ‘Working Document on causal agents of bovine tuberculosis’), EFSA updated the specific reporting tool for bovine tuberculosis disease status tables, to allow the reporting of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* complex, *M. bovis* and/or *M. caprae*. In the draft 2015 EUSR, EFSA has disentangled the data reported by MSs of *M. bovis*, *M. caprae* and *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* complex.

Austria emphasised that the definition of bovine tuberculosis must be clear in the report and that this matter should be resolved within the EC by the CVOs and politicians. A further point concerned the inclusion of historical *M. caprae* data in the graphs. EFSA clarified that the bovine tuberculosis summary statistics were aligned with the EC’s statistics and were crosschecked with EC desk officers (G2) and that the graphs presented are underpinned by accurate data, including historical data.

During 2016, EFSA has worked intensively together with the EC (G2, G5) on crosschecking national control programme data. This activity has been useful and is required for data reported for the co-financed programmes namely bovine tuberculosis and *Salmonella* target verification data in poultry.

For animal populations, the EC confirmed that there could be double reporting, e.g. with reporting of analogous data in EUROSTAT.

For reporting *Salmonella* in pig meat according to Regulation 854/2004, EFSA will disentangle the data next year based on the options laid down in the Regulation. For Sweden’s point regarding the ISO testing, it is beneficial to know that the accreditation for food-business operators could be inferior to the testing carried out by the competent authorities.

Regarding the reporting on *Salmonella* serovars (non-target), it is important to follow the requirements of the Directive 2003/99/EC that based on the epidemiological situation, all the zoonoses and zoonotic agents have to be monitored and reported.

### 1.5. EU Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (BSE/TSE) data reporting: future changes

Yves Van der Stede informed the Network of the background to the new data collection on BSE/TSE. Based on the mandate received from the EC, EFSA needs to prepare the data collection for BSE/TSE, validate and analyse the collected data as well as draft the report in consultation with MSs and publish it. A new working group was created by EFSA and the terms of reference of this working group presented.

The next steps of the new data collection are:

- A proposal for a new Network on BSE/TES data collection will be sent to the EFSA Advisory Forum in November 2016;
- A pilot study with voluntary countries for data submission in 2017;
- User manuals, guidance documents and a tool for data submission will be published in 2017;
- Trainings for data submission (at the end 2017);
- 2018 – data collection with all the MSs.

In response to the presentation Norway and the United Kingdom asked if there is a need to set up a new Network given that many of the members of the zoonoses Network would also be members of the new network on TSE/BSE. If a new Network is to be created, back-to-back meetings with the zoonoses network meeting was proposed to optimise use of expert time. EFSA agreed to reflect on this suggestion and propose a way forward. To clarify the issue who would report data on TSE in the MSs EFSA will send questions by email to the Network. As a separate point, Switzerland highlighted the
possibility of double reporting of information on BSE with OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health).

1.6. **State of progress for the production of EUSR 2015 zoonoses and FBO**

The Chair presented the steps for the consultation and publication of the 2015 EU Summary Report (EUSR) on zoonoses and food-borne outbreaks (FBO) as well as the draft main findings of the 2015 EUSR.

Giusi Amore informed the Network about the changes in the FBO chapter of the 2015 EUSR. She presented the new structure of the FBO chapter, including the display, in maps and graphs of the new analysis. In the FBO data analysis in the 2015 EUSR a new categorisation of the causative agents was introduced as well as the overview by food vehicle and place of exposure.

Owing to the strict deadlines with the publisher, MSs were requested to send their comments to zoonoses@efsa.europa.eu by 28 October 2016.

1.7. **Pre-agreement on sharing data on the website/Data Warehouse**

Doreen Dolores Russell presented the existing agreement on sharing zoonoses data based on the EFSA Scientific DWH (Data Warehouse) access rules which were agreed at the EC Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (PAFF) prior to publication. The rules state that publically accessible data have the same level of aggregation as those published in EU Summary Reports.

The current situation related to PAD (public access to documents) requests was also presented highlighting the increase in the number of requests for access to data, greater awareness of the right to request the release of documents from public administrations, the interpretation of EU Courts and the strengthening the transparency principle.

In the light of this, EFSA would like to have a pre-agreement on sharing these data excluding variables (data elements) identified as confidential and/or commercially sensitive. The current agreement relates to the DWH access rules document that states that data can be shared at the same level of aggregation as in the summary reports.

The intention is to present a proposal to the AMR Network to open discussions on an ‘ex-ante’ agreement to publish raw antimicrobial resistance data based on a proposal from EFSA, of the data elements to make publicly available. In response to this proposal, Spain and Ireland said that a decision on this matter falls within the remit of PAFF and not the Network. EFSA will reflect on how to proceed and present a proposal at a future zoonoses Network meeting.

France asked for information about the numbers that access the national reports. EFSA subsequently confirmed that due to the configuration of the national reports page on the EFSA website such information was not possible to obtain at present. However, after the meeting the EFSA web team gave some statistics regarding access to the 2014 EUSR. The EUSR report was accessed nearly 4,000 times (not including direct links from search engines such as Google) and has been cited 27 times according to statistics provided by Wiley.

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1.8. Risk characterization of European Ciguatera Food poisoning

Ana Afonso presented the objective of the project and its thematic areas. The epidemiological part of the project was explained the scope of which is to determine the incidence and epidemiological characteristics of ciguatera cases in Europe. This will be performed through establishing a ciguatera case definition, identifying data sources for ciguatera cases and outbreaks, elaborating on the surveillance protocol, collecting ciguatera cases and outbreak information and performing an analysis of the information.

EFSA will send questions by email to the Network members about the type of food-borne outbreaks due to marine biotoxins that are investigated and if detection tests on fish for ciguatoxin are performed.

1.9. Outcome of the Data Communities

Doreen Dolores Russell presented the background of the establishment of the ‘Zoonoses Communities’ which were established as an outcome of a brainstorming session at the Zoonoses Network, 6th specific meeting on IT data reporting in December 2015, to empower MSs to address and suggest solutions/improvements to specific areas of the data collection processes. This resulted in the creation of four communities to cover different data collection areas: training, data analysis, harmonisation of standards and reporting guidelines, and data quality. The scope of each of the community was described and the Chair of each community presented the outcome of discussions within the group. The low participation of the Network members in the ‘Zoonoses Communities’ was mentioned as disadvantageous to the success of the communities.

Greece and Finland pointed out that it is difficult to commit to online communities on a voluntary basis due to time constraints, while Norway added that the current topics discussed in the communities are more appropriate for the Network’s consideration. Norway further suggested questionnaires on these topics are provided before each zoonoses Network meeting.

Finland proposed that inconsistency within pick lists could be a possible topic for discussion while Ireland suggested that the communities be extended to other domains, for example establishing a community on catalogue management. Sweden added that virtual communities are tools for brainstorming, but are not suitable when there is a demanding task to perform.

Following comments received from the Network EFSA will resend the invitation email to Network members to join the Zoonoses Community on Data Quality and will reflect on the comments received during the discussions on this topic.

1.10. The milestones for the preparation and production of 2016 EUSRs

The Chair presented the proposed milestones for the production of the 2016 EUSR on zoonoses and food-borne outbreaks.

The Network discussed all timelines and agreed on the following:

The reporting period will commence on 1 April 2017 and the legal reporting deadline is 31 May 2016. The data submitted by MSs will be validated through the reports created in Microstrategy.

The milestones of 2016 data collection were agreed as follows:

- Publication of the supporting manuals: 31 January 2017;
- 3 June 2017: EU summary tables will be displayed in the DMS (Document Management System) covering the data submitted by 31 May;
15 June 2017: letters requesting scientific clarifications and/or amendments (if needed) will be sent to the MSs;

5 July 2017: EFSA will validate the final submitted and corrected data (against a number of criteria). After 5 July 2017, data cannot be changed, as the data extracted on this date will be used to draft the report. Therefore, MSs will have one month (3 June – 5 July) to correct any data as needed,

It was agreed that the report consultation period will be in the second 2 weeks of October 2017.

Publication: December 2017.

The Network was supportive and positive on the timelines proposed and asked EFSA to adhere strictly to these timelines to enable MSs to plan their work at national level.

1.11. Data Warehouse – demonstration of the reports produced in Microstrategy

Luca Pasinato gave a live demonstration of the Microstrategy/DWH tool and how the data can be displayed using the default reports. The Network was presented with different reports, including the national reports now available in Microstrategy and advised that the demonstration was added to the agenda based on the requests received via the feedback from the 2015 data reporting survey.

5. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants to the second day of the 34th meeting of the Scientific Network for Zoonoses Monitoring Data. Apologies were received from Cyprus, Malta and Iceland representatives.

6. Topics for discussion (second day)

1.12. Presentation by Sweden on attitudes to Salmonella control programme among Swedish poultry producers and veterinarians

Elina Lahti, the Swedish representative in the Zoonoses Network informed the meeting of attitudes to the Salmonella control programme among Swedish poultry producers and veterinarians. She described poultry production in Sweden together with the Salmonella control programmes that commenced in the 1970s for meat and eggs and the current programmes since 2005 that cover all poultry species and all serotypes.

Even though control programmes are in place, the competent authority decided to evaluate the programme using a qualitative and quantitative assessment. Interviews focussing on producers and veterinarians were undertaken and the preliminary findings from these interviews presented to the Network. These initial findings will trigger suggestions for improvements from the qualitative and quantitative analysis undertaken.

Greece noted that it is difficult to apply biosecurity measures for the free-range poultry and Sweden replied that this industry can create its own rules outlining a specific method. Austria requested information about the market situation concerning the percentage covered by national production and from imports and Sweden responded to this question with the relevant statistics.

1.13. Measuring and enhancing data quality: a partnership with MSs

Francesco Vernazza presented proposed definitions for data quality and a data quality framework. Data quality is not only about compliance with legislation, it is also about the fitness-for-use of the data collected. Data quality is measured to allow it to be monitored and for this purpose, different dimensions and different elements of the data collection
and the data models are considered. Some preliminary quality cross-domain performance indicators (PI) proposals to measure the data quality were described to the meeting participants.

Stefano Cappe presented the Framework Partnership Agreement, due to be piloted next year with five MSs as a way to improve data quality across four data domains one of which is zoonoses. The main objectives of the partnership are to establish data collection co-ordination at country level, to monitor and improve data quality and to provide long-term co-funding to data providers. Information on the participating pilot countries in this project, the co-financing scheme and the next steps was shared with the Network.

Norway stated that the Network needs to discuss what data are needed and what is relevant for data collection including strategic discussions on what kind of data should be collected as some requirements are legal but others not. Norway also reminded the Network that beyond the EUSR, data are needed for the national reports and cautioned against using in text forms something that is not needed. EFSA replied that the concept of data quality starts from the use of the data; the extent of fulfilment of the needs identified for use of the data is the indicator for data quality. Sweden agreed with Norway said that quality is not just technical but also extends to the gathering of the data needed and includes representativeness of the data. The United Kingdom made the comment that if they submit the data on time, i.e. by legal deadline, they may still score low due to the other proposed indicators. Greece added that - depending on how the MS is organised - a data steward is unnecessary, and that the roles of those involved with official controls and those who transmit the data are different. In addition levels of bureaucracy are not the same in each country consequently it is important, when launching projects of this nature to have an understanding of the data domains as well national issues. The representative of Greece added that Working Groups would be more beneficial than the Zoonoses Communities.

Sweden acknowledged that for MSs, having one contact point at MS level may not be beneficial for the initiative. Denmark expressed satisfaction in relation to the project given the benefits for obtaining the best data for the EUSR and the best set of data for MSs needs, with the caveat that data for risk assessment compliance are considered good to have rather than essential. Ireland welcomed the data quality initiative and the decoupling of the Focal Points from the proposed national co-ordinator role. Ireland noted that it would be useful to receive examples from EFSA of where data have been used in the past and why/where data quality has not been good. Ireland also noted that some performance indicators may need to be domain specific and driven by the needs of the data as well as how the data are used nationally as well as at EU level. Finland said that data quality assurance should be implemented by the MSs themselves. France added that it is useful for the strategy for the network as bad results can be discussed and explained e.g. salmonella in pig carcases and also asked if AMR will be covered. EFSA confirmed that AMR data will be covered.

EFSA highlighted to the Network that the funding of the data steward also can support the national system and that data quality is important for data analysis at national level.

Germany commented that given that data quality is so important, EFSA should take on board the opinions and concerns of networks to obtain a ‘buy in’ commitment in order to make data quality work. Germany further suggested that EFSA considers other means (besides yammer communities) to improve data quality.


Anca Stoicescu presented the changes to the reporting of 2016 data that will be included in the 2016 data collection. Most of the improvements of the 2016 data collection were described in the presentation about the feedback of 2015 data reporting when solutions
to solve the issues identified were proposed. Improvements will be made in the DCF, Microstrategy reports, business rules, catalogues, data models, Excel mapping tool and reporting manuals.

The most important change concerns the flow of data confirmation. Once the data will be confirmed in Microstrategy by pressing the ‘confirm data’ button, it will not be possible to replace the data; in case of any changes needed the data can be ‘amended’. New business rules will be added for improved validation at the point data enter the DCF.

For new terms, the Network members agreed with the addition to the sampling stage catalogue of new three new terms: ‘Official kennel’, ‘Restaurant or Cafe or Pub or Bar or Hotel or Catering service’ and ‘Automatic distribution system for raw milk’. The terms proposed for sampler (‘Private’), sampling context (‘Test for trade requirements’) and sample type (‘animal sample - Bronchoalveolar lavage’) catalogues will not be included in the updated catalogues as the understanding of the terms between countries were different. It was agreed that at least one of generic terms from the matrix catalogue proposed to be deprecated should be kept (for example ‘All feeding stuffs’).

The timelines for the catalogues updates was indicated: they will to be finalised by end of October 2016, sent for consultation on 10 January 2017 and the final version will be ready by 31 January 2017.

Regarding improvements to the data models as specified by the GDE2 (Guidance on Data Exchange, version 2) standard, two data elements are to be added: a mandatory data element that corresponds to a unique record identifier (except for AMR) and a data element that corresponds to amendment type (amType). The unique record identifier has to contain a unique identifier for each record by country. This will enable the updating of a particular record due to the presence of its unique record identifier when the data is in the DWH (data warehouse) and is in the ‘confirmed’ status. The amType data element will contain the type of update to be performed (delete or update) as described in the GDE2 document. The Network was strongly advised to inform the relevant persons in the MSs about these changes.

For the text forms data model, zoonotic agent and sample type will be mandatory when reporting information on prevalence (PREV), antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and disease status (DS).

The prevalence sample based data model will not be used for 2016 data, unless it is a deliverable from a procurement project. Only aggregated data will be included in the EUSR on zoonoses and FBO.

The Excel mapping tools will be updated adding two new columns: record unique identifier (which is already present in the AMR Excel mapping tool) and amendment type.

The importance of respecting the timelines for proposing new terms and the consultation period was emphasised as the reporting guidelines containing catalogues and business rules will be published on 31 January 2017, and any changes (with the exception of zoonotic agent catalogue) will not be implemented after this date.

1.15. Update on EFSA’s Molecular Typing Project

Valentina Rizzi provided an update on the activities related to the project on the collection of molecular typing data on isolates from food, feed and animal samples. The

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The background of the project was presented and the issues concerning ownership and confidentiality of the data. The coordination activities, on-going activities and future activities were presented together with information about laboratory engagement. Finland noted that molecular typing data are not compiled at MS level and EFSA explained that the historical data are also welcome in the database.

Germany explained that there are 16 competent authorities in Germany who are the data owners. Thus, to be able to participate Germany would need access to the data base for the risk managers at national level (BVL), not only for the reference laboratories. France asked about data ownership. Sweden noted that there are legal issues regarding the identifier and the joint database. EFSA advised that data ownership, availability, access, use, publication and confidentiality are included in the Collaboration Agreement on the management of data on molecular testing of food, feed and animal isolates of selected food-borne pathogens and their use. This also concerns molecular typing data on isolates from human infections for public health purposes.

Denmark asked if EFSA have consulted with other databases for the whole genome sequencing (WGS) data and Poland mentioned that the database for molecular typing is not suitable for WGS.

1.16. Terms of the reference of the Zoonoses Network

Mary Gilsenan presented the background of the revision of the terms of the reference of the Zoonoses Network. She advised that once issues related with data transmission and validation will be resolved more data driven scientific discussions could be included in Network meetings.

She reminded Network members of their role to liaise at country level before and after meetings and to ensure that the most appropriate person comes to the meeting given the content of the agenda. Members are encouraged to propose items to be included in the agenda of forthcoming meetings.

Following the discussion, EFSA agreed to re-order the terms of reference giving more emphasis to more strategic matters and to incorporate suggestions received during the meeting regarding reference to data quality and fit for purpose data. EFSA agreed to circulate the amended text for final comments after the meeting. The Network was asked to provide feedback by 27 October 2016.

7. Dates for next meeting

The Network agreed the date of the 2017 zoonoses network meeting: 18-19 October 2017.

8. Conclusions

A summary of the main discussions and agreements reached during the meeting was presented. The Chair advised that the main actions would be sent by email to the network after the meeting. The Chair requested the Network members to complete the evaluation form and to submit ideas for discussion at future Network meetings.

9. Closure of the Network meeting

The Chair thanked the Network members for an intensive and productive meeting, and closed the meeting at 13:15.