

SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS

MINUTES OF THE 148th PLENARY MEETING

**Held on 15 and 16 September 2021, web-conference
(Agreed on 5 October 2021)**

Participants

■ Panel Members:

Ana Allende, Avelino Alvarez-Ordóñez, Declan Bolton, Sara Bover-Cid, Marianne Chemaly, Robert Davies, Alessandra De Cesare, Lieve Herman, Friederike Hilbert, Konstantinos Koutsoumanis, Roland Lindqvist, Maarten Nauta, Giuseppe Ru, Luisa Peixe, Marion Simmons, Panagiotis Skandamis, Elisabetta Suffredini

■ Hearing Experts¹:

Not applicable

■ European Commission (EC) and/or Member States representatives:

Luis Vivas-Alegre (EC, DG Health and Food Safety, Unit D1; for items 6.8, 8.1, 8.2, 9.1, 9.2)

Jean-Baptiste Perrin (EC, DG Health and Food Safety, Unit G4; for item 6.4)

Wolfgang Trunk (EC, DG Health and Food Safety, Unit E5; for item 5.1)

■ EFSA:

■ BIOCONTAM Unit:

Lorena Corredor, Sandra Correia, Nikolaos Giannoulis, Beatriz Guerra, Michaela Hempen, Ernesto Liébana, Winy Messens, Stefania Musella, Denise Pezzutto, Angel Ortiz-Peláez, Valentina Rizzi, Eleonora Sarno, Pietro Stella

■ ED Office:

Pilar Garcia Vello (for item 5.1)

■ FEED Unit:

Matteo Innocenti, Gloria Lopez-Galvez, Paola Manini (for item 5.1)

■ FIP Unit:

Carla Martino (for item 6.6)

■ GPS Unit:

Maria Astridou, Ilias Papatryfon (for item 10.2)

■ RASA Department:

¹ As defined in Article 17 of the Decision of the Executive Director concerning the selection of members of the Scientific Committee, the Scientific Panels, and the selection of external experts to assist EFSA with its scientific work:
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/expertselection.pdf>.

Juliane Kleiner (for item 10.3)

- **SCER Unit:**

Georgia Gkrintzali (for item 9.2)

- **Observers:**

Not applicable

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Declarations of Interest

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence² and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management³, EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Panel members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of the meeting.

4. Agreement of the minutes of the 147th Plenary meeting held on 7 and 8 July 2021, web-conference

The minutes of the 147th Plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 23 July 2021.

5. Scientific outputs submitted for possible adoption or endorsement

5.1. Scientific opinion on specific maximum levels of cross-contamination for 24 antimicrobial active substances in non-target feed

The Scientific opinion documents Part 1- Methodology, data gaps and general uncertainties; Part 2-13 -the different assessments grouping the substances included in the mandate by classes, were presented for adoption by the BIOHAZ Panel. Regarding ToR1-AMR assessments (to assess the specific concentrations of antimicrobials, resulting from cross-contamination in non-target feed for food-producing animals, below which there would not be an effect on the emergence of and/or selection for resistance to microbial agents relevant for human and animal health), the updates including the estimated FARSC for florfenicol were presented. The assessments of ToR2 (growth promotion/increase of yield) for apramycin and neomycin, chlortetracycline and oxytetracycline, colistin and tylosin, as well as uncertainties, conclusions and recommendations, had been endorsed at the FEEDAP Panel's plenary meeting of 7 September. The EMA CVMP was updated on the latest developments of the draft opinions at their meeting on 9 September. During the plenary, the abstracts, general conclusions and recommendations were revised and agreed. The 13 scientific opinions were adopted and will be published in a virtual issue of the EFSA Journal.

² https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/policy_independence.pdf

³ https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/competing_interest_management_17.pdf

6. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion

6.1. Statement on the update of the list of QPS-recommended biological agents intentionally added to food or feed as notified to EFSA. 15: Suitability of taxonomic units notified to EFSA until September 2021

The WG chair informed the Panel that 59 notifications were received, 3 are included in the current QPS assessment: *Haematococcus pluvialis*, *Paenibacillus lentus* and *Enterococcus lactis*. The extensive literature search for reviewing the QPS list is ongoing. The draft statement will be presented to the BIOHAZ Panel for possible adoption in December 2021.

6.2. Scientific opinion on the update of the list of QPS-recommended biological agents intentionally added to food or feed as notified to EFSA

There was no WG meeting and no update since the last WG meeting. The next meeting is on 29 September 2021. The draft opinion will be presented to the BIOHAZ Panel for possible adoption in December 2022.

6.3. Scientific opinion on the capacity of certain specific processing transformation methods of animal by-products used in the production of organic fertilisers and soil improvers in view of determining the endpoints in the manufacturing chain of certain derived products

The WG Chair presented the draft opinion for thorough reading. The WG Chair thanked Panel members for the comments received. Most of them had been addressed in the version presented during the plenary, will be discussed with the WG in the next meeting or were discussed during the plenary. The Chair explained the expert knowledge elicitation (EKE) exercise to elucidate the final answer to the ToR and the uncertainty analysis, conducted in the 8th working group meeting on 20 August 2021. The chair of the Panel who attended the EKE as observer gave positive feedback and highlighted the feasibility of conducting EKE with multiple answers in a limited time. He asked Panel members to postpone the discussion on the EKE and uncertainty for the point in the agenda dedicated to that in day 2, in which the facilitator, who is working group and Panel member was going to be present. The conclusions were presented to the Panel for the first time. There were minor editorial comments to the conclusions and recommendations, and some new raised during the discussion that will be addressed in the 9th and last working group meeting, on Tuesday 28 September 2021. The opinion will be submitted for adoption to the 149th plenary on 20-21 October 2021. The deadline for adoption of the scientific opinion is 31 October 2021.

6.4. Scientific opinion on the efficacy and safety of high pressure processing of food

There was no WG meeting since the last plenary meeting. The WG chair first presented the planning and gave an overview of the state of play of the assessment of the three ToRs. She informed that the sections dealing with food processing contaminants have been endorsed at the CONTAM plenary meeting on 13-15 July 2021 (*dealing with AQ4 "What are the potential chemical food safety concerns through formation of process contaminants in HPP-treated food compared to untreated food or food submitted to treatments, routinely applied to these foods with the purpose to increase microbiological food safety?"*). The WG Chair went through the specific comments in the draft Scientific Opinion as raised by the Panel members. Those not yet addressed before or during the plenary will be discussed with the WG in the next meeting. The approach presented to assess the relative levels of exposure to pathogens through the consumption of various types of milk was agreed with the panel. The panel suggested to shorten the Scientific Opinion by checking for redundancy and moving parts of the body text to appendices. The next WG meeting related to BIOHAZ issues will be held on 22-23 September 2021. The deadline for adoption is 31 January 2022.

6.5. Scientific opinion on the microbiological safety of aged meat

The WG chair presented the draft protocol which was discussed and approved by the Panel. The next meeting is on 21 September which will focus on developing a questionnaire on meat aging practices to be sent to competent authorities and/or food business associations. The deadline for adoption of this opinion is 31 December 2022.

6.6. Scientific opinion on the evaluation of safety and efficacy of lactic acid to reduce microbiological contamination on carcasses from wild game and small stock

The WG chair presented the outcome of the WG meeting held on 15 July 2021 in which the additional information received by the applicant was discussed. The meeting agenda included the assessment of ToR2 (on the efficacy i.e. does the use of this substance significantly reduce the level of contamination of pathogens on carcasses from wild game and small stock aforementioned) and ToR3 (on the potential emergence of reduced susceptibility to biocides and/or resistance to therapeutic antimicrobials linked to the use of the substance). The next WG meeting to discuss the answers to ToR2 and 3 is scheduled for 6 October 2021.

6.7. Selftask on microbiological hazards associated with the use of water in post-harvest handling and processing operations of fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables and herbs

The WG Chair reminded the Panel about the background and terms of reference of the selftask mandate. She presented to the Panel the WG composition, which is being finalised. The first WG meeting is scheduled for 28 and 29 September 2021. As previously indicated to the Panel, a call for tender for outsourcing activities associated to this mandate will be launched by mid October 2021 and will be aimed at generating data and collecting information that is relevant for the assessment questions of this mandate. The duration of these activities will be 24 months that should be integrated and concluded during the life of this mandate, i.e. 3 years. The deadline for adoption of this opinion is 30 September 2024.

6.8. European Parliament request for a scientific opinion on the transmission of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and zoonotic agents during animals transports

EFSA Secretariat indicated that the European Parliament officially confirmed that the deadline for delivery of the scientific opinion is 30 September 2022. Luisa Peixe was nominated as Chair of the *ad hoc* WG which will be established for this mandate (conditional to screening and approval of her declaration of interests).

7. New Mandates

No new mandates have been received.

8. Feedback from the Scientific Committee/Scientific Panels, EFSA, the European Commission

8.1. Scientific Committee

The 105th Plenary meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC) will take place on 22 and 23 September 2021⁴. The Panel Chair reported that no topics of specific interest for the BIOHAZ Panel were discussed at such meeting.

8.2. European Commission

⁴ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/it/events/event/105th-plenary-meeting-scientific-committee>

Luis Vivas-Alegre (EC, DG SANTE) reminded the Panel about the upcoming EFSA training workshop 'Degree of certainty in scientific advice: implications for risk management and communication', which is scheduled for 22-23 November 2021. EFSA Secretariat gave an update to the Panel with regard to the ongoing SANTE-EFSA mid-term planning exercise aiming at defining the future needs of SANTE in terms of scientific advice from EFSA.

8.3. Update on Rapid Outbreak Assessments and related activities

The latest EFSA-ECDC Rapid Outbreak Assessment on a "Multi-country outbreak of *Salmonella* Braenderup ST22, presumed to be linked to imported melons" was presented. The report was published on 20 July 2021. The epidemiological and microbiological investigations from both the human and food sectors, and the traceability of the presumptive vehicle of infections were illustrated together with the joint European WGS clustering analysis and assessment on the outbreak.

9. Other scientific topics for information and/or discussion

9.1. Implementation of the guidance on uncertainty analysis in scientific assessments

Panel member Maarten Nauta provided feedback to the Panel in relation to the EKE that took place during the last meeting of the WG on Organic fertilisers endpoint during its last WG meeting (see also agenda item 6.3), including its preparation, the procedure followed during the EKE, the roles of the EKE facilitator and rapporteur. Challenges and lessons learnt for future exercises were discussed, and the Panel agreed to collect relevant documents used in this EKE so to have them readily available for future similar exercises. The Panel members who are also members of the SCER cross-cutting WG on Uncertainty will discuss this, together with the possibility of the development of training material with the SCER WG.

9.2. Topics of scientific concern in the area of biological hazards and BIOHAZ self-tasks

The Panel and Secretariat discussed the results of a ranking exercise of the ideas for possible future self-tasks gathered at the previous plenary meeting, also taking into account the feedback provided by EC SANTE during the summer. Five topics were considered particularly relevant (i.e. persistence of hazards in food processing environments; *Campylobacter* in cattle; safety of minimally processed foods; biological safety of organic farming; methods to optimise detection of foodborne pathogens). It was agreed that EFSA Secretariat will reflect further on possible criteria to further prioritise these five topics, also in collaboration with EC colleagues, before going back to the Panel with a proposal.

10. Any other business

EFSA Secretariat updated the Panel on the ongoing work related to the preparation of the EU One Health 2020 Zoonoses report and related communications tools (*Item 10.1*), and indicated that the Panel will be consulted on the draft report during the period 11-26 October 2021.

EFSA Secretariat (GPS Unit) presented to the Panel the EFSA 2027 Strategy⁵ (*Item 10.2*), including the drivers that influenced the Strategy, the Strategy objectives (SO1: deliver trustworthy scientific advice and communication of risks from farm to fork; SO2: ensure preparedness for future risk analysis needs; SO3: empower people and ensure organisational agility). Examples of expected outcomes, operational results and key actions from the Strategy relevant for biological hazards were presented.

⁵ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/it/corporate-pubs/efsa-strategy-2027-science-safe-food-sustainability>

The Head of the RASA Department Juliane Kleiner explained the reasons behind EFSA's new organisational structure (*Item 10.3*). In order to implement the new obligations and new processes required by the Transparency Regulation (TR), the ART Programme designed a harmonised high-level Risk Assessment (RA) process divided in four main steps: Mandate & dossier intake, Preliminary activities to Risk Assessment, Risk Assessment, and Output publication and dissemination. To best support the changes triggered by the TR, the next step was to redesign EFSA's internal structure: among other changes, EFSA will have one department focusing on RA production (Assess Department), and one focusing on services in support of RA production (Enable Department). The final organigramme will be confirmed by the EFSA Management Team on 24 September. The Head of the RASA Department also gave an overview of the most recent DOI issues, explaining that while the technical Task Force will work on the issues reported, the automatic request for expert DOI submission will be disabled from 18 September. Experts will be asked to use the alternative workflow described on the EFSA Competing Interest Management rules. More info will follow to experts via email.

EFSA Secretariat indicated to the Panel that, given that all opinions have been adopted at the plenary (see *Item 5.1*), the additional plenary meeting preliminarily scheduled for 28 September will not take place.

EFSA Secretariat indicated to the Panel that a letter was received by EFSA with suggestions in relation to the infographic published by EFSA to accompany the publication of the BIOHAZ scientific opinion 'Guidance on date marking and related food information: part 2 (food information)'. An answer will be provided in collaboration with the EFSA COMMUNICATION Unit.