



SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS

MINUTES OF THE 151st PLENARY MEETING

**Held on 26 and 27 January 2022, web-conference
(Agreed on 14 February 2022)**

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:

Lucie Carrouée (DG Health and Food Safety, Unit G5; for item 8.2)

Kris De Smet (DG Health and Food Safety, Unit G4; for item 5.1)

Matjaz Klemencic (DG Health and Food Safety, Unit G2; for item 8.2)

Luis Vivas-Alegre (DG Health and Food Safety, Unit D1)

■ EFSA:

■ BIOHAW Unit:

Frank Boelaert, Sandra Correia, Maria Teresa Da Silva Felicio, Beatriz Guerra, Michaela Hempen, Maria Francesca Iulietto, Ernesto Liébana, Winy Messens, Angel Ortiz-Peláez, Valentina Rizzi, Pietro Stella

■ FIP Unit:

Carla Martino (for item 5.2)

■ KNOW Unit:

Georgia Gkrintzali; Angelo Maggiore (for item 9.4)

■ ED Office:

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>.

Marta Hugas (for item 10 on 26 January)

■ **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 this meeting.

4. Agreement of the minutes of the 150th Plenary meeting held on 8 and 9 December 2021, web-conference

The minutes of the 150th Plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 22 December 2021.

5. Scientific outputs submitted for possible adoption or endorsement

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

At the last WG meeting, held on 11 January 2022, the comments raised by the BIOHAZ Panel members at the December 2021 plenary meeting were addressed. Major changes were made in particular in the conclusions related to the recommendation of minimum requirements as regards time and pressure of the high pressure processing (HPP), for the control of relevant pathogens to achieve an equivalent efficacy to that of thermal pasteurisation of milk and colostrum and related to the comparative assessment of the risk to human health that could derive from the consumption of HPP-treated vs. raw vs. pasteurised vs. UHT-treated milk or colostrum. The WG Chair presented the draft Scientific Opinion and many comments raised by the Panel members were discussed and further addressed. The Scientific Opinion was adopted.

5.2. 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 vice-chair presented the outcome of the assessment dealing with Term of Reference (ToR) 2 (the efficacy i.e. on whether the use of this substance significantly reduce the level of contamination of pathogens on carcasses from wild game and small stock aforementioned) and

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

ToR 3 (the potential emergence of reduced susceptibility to biocides and/or resistance to therapeutic antimicrobials linked to the use of the substance) to the Panel members. Comments were discussed and addressed during the meeting. These sections were further discussed and endorsed during the BIOHAZ plenary meeting. The Scientific Opinion will be completed and submitted for possible adoption to the EFSA CEP Panel in due time.

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. 16: Suitability of taxonomic units notified to EFSA until March 2022

So far, 4 notifications are included in the assessment: *Streptococcus salivarius*, *Ensifer adhaerens*, *Microbacterium foliorum* and *Pseudomonas fluorescens*. The extensive literature search for monitoring of the microorganisms that are on the QPS list has been launched. The deadline for adoption of Panel Statement 16 is June 2022.

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

The WG Chair informed the panel about the structure of the draft opinion. The WG agreed to avoid duplication of content already published in the Panel Statements and instead discuss specific topics that are still under discussion. The draft opinion will be presented to the BIOHAZ Panel for possible adoption in December 2022.

6.3. Scientific opinion on the microbiological safety of aged meat

The WG Chair updated the Panel on the progress. The questionnaire sent to industry associations did not result in many replies; follow up questions were sent. A hearing expert is invited to the next WG meeting. An update was provided on the modelling approach for ToRs 3 and 4. The deadline for adoption of this Scientific Opinion is 31 December 2022.

6.4. Scientific opinion on microbiological hazards associated with the use of water in post-harvest handling and processing operations of fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables and herbs, including associated outsourcing activities

The last WG meeting took place on 14 and 15 December 2021. The WG Chair updated the Panel about the progress of work made with the WG on the protocol development. The panel provided some comments on the current draft protocol and agreed formally with the proposed formulation of the problem, evidence needs, description of methods to be used and approach to address the overall uncertainty, approving the protocol. The WG will be updated on minor comments received from the Panel during the next WG meeting. Offers have been received by EFSA for the call for the tender associated as a work package of this mandate and are being evaluated. The next WG meeting is on 8/9 February 2022. The deadline for adoption of this opinion is 30 September 2024.

6.5. European Parliament request for a scientific opinion on the transmission of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) during animal transports

The last meeting of the WG took place on 20 December 2021. The WG Chair updated the Panel on the progress done so far and presented the current protocol. Comments received after the review of the protocol by panel members were discussed. Improvements suggested will be discussed with the WG at next WG meeting on 1 February, and a revised version of the protocol will be shared with the Panel reviewers of the opinion before the WG meeting of 8 March, so that it can be presented for approval at the next BIOHAZ Panel Plenary in March. The deadline for adoption of this Scientific Opinion is 30 September 2022.

6.6. Application for an alternative processing method for Category 3 animal-by products (rendered fats) and used cooking oils for biodiesel production

An update on the new application for an alternative method for production of biodiesel from rendered fats derived from category 3 animal by-products was presented to the Panel by EFSA secretariat. On 8 December a letter was sent to the applicant requesting clarification or additional information with deadline 8 January. The applicant requested an extension and the new unit Front-Desk & Workforce planning (FDP) granted it until 28 January 2022. The applicant submitted a new dossier addressing the points of the letter on 26 January 2022. The new dossier is under revision by BIOHAW and FDP. If there is no need to ask for additional information or clarification, the evaluation could start at the beginning of February. With the 6-month statutory deadline the opinion should be delivered then at the beginning of August 2022, with the possible adoption in the July plenary.

7. New Mandates

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

8.1. Scientific Committee

No new Plenary meeting of the Scientific Committee has taken place since the previous EFSA BIOHAZ Plenary meeting.

8.2. European Commission

European Commission (EC) representatives Lucie Carrouée and Matjaz Klemencic updated the Panel on the ongoing EC activities related to antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and animal-by products (ABP) respectively. Midterm evaluation of the EU One Health Action Plan against AMR is starting at EC level. Matjaz Klemencic indicated that a new request for scientific advice will be addressed to EFSA in the second quarter of 2022 in relation to the assessment of ABP processing methods as a follow-up of recent decisions related to the feedban.

9. Other scientific topics for information and/or discussion

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

EFSA Secretariat updated the Panel on an ongoing EFSA study in relation to communication of uncertainty in scientific assessments. Such activity foresees drafting a summary of fictitious but realistic risk assessments in the biological and chemical areas and testing the clarity of expression of uncertainty in its conclusions with selected risk managers at EU and Member State level. Further updates on the results of this study will be shared when available.

9.2. Topics of scientific concern in the area of biological hazards and BIOHAZ self-tasks (including draft self-task on the persistence of hazards in food-producing environments)

The revised proposal for a self-task mandate by the BIOHAZ Panel was presented. It was proposed and agreed to focus the mandate specifically on plants involved in food and feed processing where operations like cutting, slicing, mixing, packaging, etc, of raw materials or end-products take place. Thus, for food, apart from food processing, also slaughterhouses and plant factories would be included. Plants where feed is produced/processed would also be included. Therefore, the title of the mandate was revised to "persistence of microbiological hazards in food and feed production and processing environments". The background and terms

of reference were discussed, and the mandate was approved by the BIOHAZ panel, pending few revisions to be made in the background for clarification. The Panel Chair asked for expressions of interest among Panel members to participate as members of the working group for this mandate.

9.3. Presentation on the EU One Health 2020 Zoonoses Report

Following to the brief update provided during the previous BIOHAZ Plenary meeting, EFSA Staff (BIOCONTAM Unit) presented a more detailed summary of the main findings of the EU One Health Zoonoses report, which was published on 9 December 2021⁴, focusing especially on the following zoonotic pathogens: *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, *Yersinia*, Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* and *Listeria*, and on reported food-borne outbreaks. BIOHAZ Panel members discussed the findings of the annual report. EFSA Secretariat and the BIOHAZ Panel concluded that it would be useful to collect in a systematic way the feedback from the Panel on the findings of the report, including recommendations on topics that would deserve particular attention and further analysis by both risk assessors and risk managers.

9.4. Food and feed safety vulnerabilities in a circular economy: preliminary results of an EFSA outsourced project

EFSA Secretariat (KNOW Unit) presented to the Panel the preliminary results of an ongoing EFSA project on circular economy. Such project aims to: i) gather and evaluate the evidence for vulnerabilities of a circular economy for food/feed safety, plant, animal and the environment; ii) explore possible synergies, opportunities and challenges for integrated approaches for environmental and food safety risk assessment; iii) build a network of stakeholders to support and contribute to these aims. So far an extensive literature search was carried out to identify emerging risks in the area of sources of novel food and feed. After providing examples of relevant issues to be further investigated within the project, the BIOHAZ Panel expressed interest on receiving further updates on the project. It was agreed that as soon as interim reports will be available, the Panel will be further consulted, and that more information will be provided in due time about involvement of EFSA Panels in the project.

10. Any other business

EFSA secretariat presented a new mandate on the monitoring of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). It has not been officially arrived, but the EC agreed with presenting it in this plenary. The terms of reference will request EFSA to analyse the results of the monitoring programme carried out in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland between 1 September 2017 and 28 February 2022, to describe any new knowledge on the epidemiology of CWD in Europe, to recommend, if considered appropriate, future CWD monitoring activities, to describe the criteria relevant for considering an area not to be infected with CWD, and to provide the design of a genotyping protocol for the samples stored during the 3-year monitoring programme. The deadline for delivery of the scientific opinion will be 31 March 2023. The Panel Chair asked for expressions of interest among Panel members to participate as members of the working group for this mandate.

EFSA Secretariat informed the Panel that a new mandate was sent from the European Commission to ECDC, ECHA, EEA, EFSA and EMA in relation to the impact of the use of azole fungicides other than as human medicines on the development of azole-resistant *Aspergillus* spp. EFSA will provide overall coordination of the mandate. The output will be a scientific report of EFSA and does not require adoption by scientific Panels. The BIOHAZ Panel will be kept updated on the progress and will be consulted upon need.

EFSA Secretariat presented to the Panel the new structure of the EFSA ASSESS Department and of the EFSA BIOHAW Unit.

⁴ The European Union One Health 2020 Zoonoses Report: <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2021.6971>