



Scientific Panel on Plant Health Minutes of the 100th Plenary meeting

Held on 22 February 2022

EFSA, Parma, WEBMEETING¹

(Agreed on 15 March 2022)

Participants

■ Panel Members

Paula Baptista, Claude Bragard, Elisavet Chatzivassiliou, Francesco Di Serio, Paolo Gonthier, Josep Jaques Miret, Alan MacLeod, Sven Christer Magnusson, Panagiotis Milonas, Juan a. Navas-Cortés, Stephen Parnell, Roel Potting, Philippe Reignault, Emilio Stefani, Hans-Hermann Thulke, Wopke Van der Werf, Jonathan Yuen and Lucia Zappalà

■ Hearing Experts

Thierry Candresse, Michael Jeger, Nico Horn (EPPO), Camille Picard (EPPO), Anne-Sophie Roy (EPPO), Françoise Petter (EPPO), Muriel Suffert (EPPO)

■ European Commission and/or Member States representatives

Dorothee André, Filippa Di Maria, Panagiota Mylona, Wolfgang Reinert and Leonard Shumbe (EC SANTE)

■ EFSA

PLANTS Unit: Caterina Campese, Ewelina Czwienczek, Alice Delbianco, Ciro Gardi, Ignazio Graziosi, Virag Kertesz, Svetla Kozelska, Andrea Maiorano, Luka Mustapic, Patricia Nascimento, Tobin Robinson, Evgenia Sarakatsani, Giuseppe Stancanelli, Emanuela Tacci, Sara Tramontini and Sybren Vos

GMO Unit: Franz Streissl

MESE unit: Olaf Mosbach Schulz

¹ All meetings were rescheduled to web meetings due to Covid-19



■ EFSA Tasking Grant

Alzbeta Mikulova (Università di Padova, IT)

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the meeting participants.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Declarations of Interest Scientific Panel Members

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 in by the Scientific Panel Members invited for the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting had been identified during the screening process or at the Oral Declaration of Interest at the beginning of this meeting.

4. Agreement of the minutes of the 99th Plenary meeting held on 26-27 January 2022, WEB

The minutes of the 99th Plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 17 February 2022.

5. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion and possible adoption/endorsement

5.1. Art. 29 Scientific Opinion on pest categorisation of *Sirex nitobei* (EFSA-Q-2021-00707)

The EFSA Panel on Plant Health performed a pest categorisation of *Sirex nitobei* (Hymenoptera: Siricidae), the nitobe horntail, for the territory of the European Union (EU). *S. nitobei* is not listed in Annex II of Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/2072 but was identified as a potential regulated pest in a commodity risk assessment of *Pinus thunbergii* artificially dwarfed plants from Japan. This species is present in Japan (except Hokkaidô), the Republic of Korea and thirteen Chinese provinces. *S. nitobei* attacks several *Pinus* species and has been reported less frequently on *Abies firma* and *Larix* spp., including *L. leptolepis*. The females oviposit into the sapwood. Eggs are deposited together with a phytotoxic mucus and a symbiotic fungus, *Amylostereum areolatum* or *A. chailletii*. The combined action of the venom and the fungus results in the death of the host trees. The fungus degrades the lignocellulosic components of the wood, and the larvae feed on the liquid fraction of the digested residues left by the fungus. All immature stages live in the hosts sapwood. The lifecycle of the pest lasts one year. *S. nitobei* can travel with conifer wood or plants for planting, but these pathways from third countries are

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

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



closed by prohibition. However, a derogation exists for artificially dwarfed Japanese black pine (*Pinus thunbergii*) from Japan, which therefore provides a potential pathway. Climatic conditions in several EU member states and host plant availability in those areas are conducive for establishment. The introduction of *S. nitobei* is potentially damaging for pines. Phytosanitary measures are available to reduce the likelihood of entry and further spread, and there is a potential for biological control. *S. nitobei* satisfies all the criteria that are within the remit of EFSA to assess for it to be regarded as a potential Union quarantine pest.

The scientific opinion was adopted on 22 February 2022.

5.2. Art. 29 Scientific Opinion on pest categorisation of *Malacosoma disstria* (EFSA-Q-2021-00709)

The European Commission requested the EFSA Panel on Plant Health to conduct a pest categorisation of *Malacosoma disstria* Hübner (Lepidoptera: Lasiocampidae), commonly known as the forest tent caterpillar, for the territory of the European Union (EU). *M. disstria* is a North American polyphagous leaf-eating pest primarily feeding on deciduous trees belonging to the genera *Acer*, *Malus*, *Populus*, *Prunus*, *Quercus* and *Tilia*. It is a univoltine species. Eggs are laid on twigs and branches. Larvae emerge in the spring to feed on buds and fresh leaves. Host plants can be completely defoliated although they often re-leaf and recover within a few weeks. Nevertheless, three consecutive years of heavy defoliation or repeated periods of defoliation combined with drought can cause extensive tree mortality. As such, *M. disstria* is regarded as one of the most serious hardwood forestry insect pests in North America. Population upsurges leading to outbreaks are cyclical, generally nine to 13 years apart and can last two to three years. Outbreaks have been reported in eastern North America since the late 18th Century. Outbreaks in western Canada have spanned up to 200,000 km². Plants for planting, cut branches and isolated bark provide pathways for entry. Host availability and climate suitability suggest that large parts of the EU would be suitable for establishment. The pest could spread naturally by flight within the EU. Eggs on plants for planting could also facilitate spread. The introduction of *M. disstria* into the EU could lead to serious outbreaks causing significant damage to forest, orchard and amenity trees and shrubs. Phytosanitary measures are available to inhibit the entry and spread of this species. *M. disstria* satisfies the criteria that are within the remit of EFSA to assess for it to be regarded as a potential Union quarantine pest.

The scientific opinion was adopted on 22 February 2022.

5.3. Art. 29 Scientific Opinion on Commodity risk assessment of grafted plants of *Malus domestica* from Moldova (EFSA-Q-2020-00531)

The European Commission requested the EFSA Panel on Plant Health to prepare and deliver risk assessments for commodities listed in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/2019 as "High risk plants, plant products and other objects". This Scientific Opinion covers plant health risks posed by defoliated and in dormant phase, grafted bare rooted plants for planting of *Malus domestica* imported from Moldova, taking into account the available scientific information, including the technical information provided by the applicant country. A list of 1,118 pests potentially associated with the commodity species was compiled. The relevance of these pests was assessed following defined criteria and based on evidence. The EU-quarantine pest *Xiphinema rivesi* non-EU populations fulfilled these criteria and was selected for further evaluation. For this pest, the risk mitigation measures proposed in the technical dossier from Moldova were evaluated taking into account the possible limiting factors. For this pest, an expert judgement is given on



the likelihood of pest freedom taking into consideration the risk mitigation measures acting on it, including uncertainties associated with the assessment. The Expert Knowledge Elicitation indicated, with 95% certainty, that between 9,991 and 10,000 plants per 10,000 would be free of *X. rivesi*.

The scientific opinion was adopted on 22 February 2022.

6. Feedback from Scientific Panel including their Working Groups, Scientific Committee, EFSA and European Commission

6.1. Update on the PLH Panel Open Plenary on 30-31 March 2022 and presentation of the EFSA guidelines for Panel plenary meetings open to observers

The Panel was informed of the programme for the PLH Panel 101th plenary meeting open to observers which will be online on 30-31 March 2022. The Panel was also reminded of the EFSA guidelines for Panel plenary meetings open to observers.

7. The 100th PLH Panel plenary meeting: discussion on achievements and future challenges

7.1. The future of plant health in EFSA (*Bernhard Url, EFSA Executive Director*)

After the establishment of the EFSA Plant Health Panel in 2006, several hundreds scientific outputs have been produced to advise on the risk to plant health for the EU territory, dealing with a broad range of plant pests and their potential impact on crops, forestry and environment. The Panel has also developed a series of guidance documents (on environmental risk assessment, quantitative pest risk assessment and commodity risk assessment) in line with the international FAO IPPC standards and with the legislative requirements of the EU Plant Health Law, which integrate uncertainty analysis into their quantitative approaches and thus allow comparison of scenarios and quantification of risk. In the period 2014-2020, the EFSA Plant Health Panel has played a key role in supporting the start of the new EU Plant Health Law, by delivering ca. 200 pest categorisations for all the EU quarantine plant pests for which a recent risk assessment by EFSA, EPPO or EU MS was not available. To cope with this high number of scientific advices, a fit for purpose approach was applied, where a pest categorisations (phase-1) was delivered for all the pests, whereas a more complex quantitative probabilistic pest risk assessment (phase-2) was produced only for a smaller proportion of pests for which, as agreed with risk managers at EC DG SANTE, a more thorough comparison of scenarios was needed. Nowadays, the current work plan 2021-2026 of the EFSA Plant Health Panel focuses the assessment on risks caused by new and emerging plant pests, applying the two-phase approach as well as piloting more rapid phase-2 assessment also with inclusion of climate change scenarios. EFSA is also strongly supporting the plant health surveillance of EU Member States by producing pest survey cards and guidelines for pest survey and crop survey.

Recently, to improve its capacity to support the new EU Regulation (EU) 2019/1381 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain, EFSA has reorganised its science activities, concentrating all risk assessments for food safety, animal health and plant health into a single department (the risk assessment production ASSESS department). This re-organisation has created new opportunities



for collaboration within EFSA among the areas of plant health, plant protection and environmental risk assessment. Plant health makes a key contribution to biosecurity by reducing the risks of introduction of plant pests (that may affect agriculture, forest and the environment), but plant health is also very closely linked with food safety, particularly with the plant protection products and the risk of mycotoxins. The invasion of a new plant pest can cause disturbances and needs for adaptation to long term established cropping or forestry practices, integrated pest and disease management and biological control strategies. To contribute to the EU Green Deal and to the sustainable development goals, plant health will play a major role in sustainability of agriculture, conservation of the environment (including biodiversity) and food safety. To achieve this, there is a need to further strengthen the already existing good cooperation with the EU institutions, the Member States authorities, the international partner organisations like the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation (EPPO) and the FAO International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), the scientists and the stakeholders.

In the occasion of the 100th plenary meeting of the EFSA Plant Health Panel, EFSA would like to particularly thank the five Scientific Panels on Plant health succeeding since 2006, the Working Groups, the EFSA PLANTS unit, the experts and the institutions from EU Member States, the EPPO and the IPPC for the trustworthy partnerships and the colleagues from the European Commission DG SANTE for their planning ahead, close cooperation and trust in EFSA's plant health work.

7.2. Plant health in the EPPO strategy (*Nico Horn, EPPO Director-General*)

The European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO) is the Regional Plant Protection Organization for the Euro-Mediterranean region, as defined by the Art IX of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), responsible for cooperation and harmonization in plant protection. It is an intergovernmental body which has grown from its 15 original members in 1951 to today's 52 member countries, including nearly every country in the European and Mediterranean region, as well as Central-Asian countries which were previously part of USSR. All European Union Member States are members of EPPO, and collaborations are established with EFSA and with the European Reference Laboratories (EURLs). In addition to its 52 member countries, the European Commission and the Eurasian Economic Commission are permanent observers at EPPO. EPPO will continue to develop regional standards and guidance for diagnostics, risk assessment, surveillance, inspection and risk management and to support implementation of these standards by organizing workshops and conferences. EPPO offers a platform for experts to meet and interact. In its Strategic Plan for 2021 – 2025, EPPO has a new Strategic Objective: Communication to NPPOs and stakeholders. EPPO will continue to make up-to-date information easily available in databases like EPPO Global Database, the PRA Platform, and Database on Diagnostic Expertise. The EPPO Strategic Plan offers flexibility in discussion with EPPO member countries to react on developments in a changing environment. EPPO aims to strengthen relationship with the European Food Safety Authority, the European Commission and the Eurasian Economic Commission to collaborate and avoid overlap in work as to establish future collaboration to serve the needs of its member countries. EPPO includes among its members many non-EU countries and could be a bridge between the EU countries and the non-EU countries in the EPPO region. We will be working together for many more years in a changing world with each of us having added value for the protection of plant health.



7.3. Achievements of the EFSA Plant Health Panel 2015-2018 (*Mike Jeger and Thierry Candresse, former Chair and Vicechair of the EFSA Plant Health Panel 2015-2018*)

The EFSA Plant Health Panel 2015-2018 was composed by 21 experts (of which 10 were new Panel members) from 10 different countries. During its term, the Panel has delivered 88 scientific opinions and statements: 70 pest categorisations - phase 1 (of which 61 for single pests and nine for pest groups); nine quantitative pest risk assessments - phase 2; five scientific opinions and statements on *Xylella fastidiosa*; three scientific opinions on citrus diseases (citrus canker and citrus black spot); one Panel Guidance on quantitative pest risk assessment. The main achievements of the Panel were:

- the development of the quantitative pest risk assessment (QPRA) methodology, which allows to analyse and compare different scenarios;
- the implementation of a fit for purpose two-phase approach for pest risk assessment to support the new EU plant health law, with phase 1-pest categorization conducted on all pests and phase 2-QPRA applied only when a quantitative comparison of scenarios is needed)
- the continuation of scientific and technical support to the EU on *Xylella fastidiosa* and other emerging plant pests.

7.4. The EFSA Plant Health Panel - 2018 and beyond (*Claude Bragard, Francesco Di Serio and Jonathan Yuen*)

The EFSA Plant Health Panel 2018-2021 is currently composed by 20 experts (of which 14 are new panel members) from 11 different countries. The term of this Panel was prolonged until a new Panel would be established following the new EU Food Safety law. The Panel has delivered so far 125 scientific opinions: 85 pest categorisations - phase 1 (of which 62 for single pests and 23 for pest groups; two quantitative pest risk assessments - phase 2; one Panel guidance on commodity risk assessment for High Risk Plants; 35 commodity risk assessments (of which 30 for High Risk Plants dossiers and five for derogations to the EU plant health law). The main achievements of the Panel are:

- the development of the commodity risk assessment methodology, for High Risk Plants and for derogation to the EU Plant health Law
- continuing the implementation of the two phases approach for pest risk assessment
- continuing the implementation of QPRA with scenarios analysis and comparison, also applying a 1-tier simplified assessment for spread and impact (aligned with the methodology for the EU priority pest assessment) as well as piloting the inclusion of climate change scenarios in some of the assessments.

Other challenges were also identified by the Panel (in the context of discussing in 2019 the EFSA priorities and strategy for risk assessment in plant health): the identification of hot spots for plant pests introduction into the EU; the integration of landscape/spatial aspects in QPRA; the lack of knowledge on use and resistance to antimicrobials in plant pathogenic bacteria. These aspects are currently being addressed by research grants and EFSA activities.



7.5. Plant health and the European Green Deal (*Dorothee André, EC DG SANTE*)

The European Green Deal sets out how to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. To achieve the climate and environmental ambitions of the Green Deal, the EU Farm to Fork Strategy aims to create a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system, through the general goals of reducing the environmental and climate footprint of the EU food system, strengthening its resilience, ensuring food security in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss and leading a global transition towards competitive sustainability from farm to fork. Such objectives are quantified in terms of: reduction of pesticides; reduction of nutrient losses and use of fertilisers; increase of organic farming and organic aquaculture.

In the area of plant health, which is a key aspect of sustainability of agriculture and forestry and which is an important element in the Farm to Fork Strategy thus, the new EU Plant Health Law, Regulation (Reg 2016/2031), is in place since 14 December 2019 and is an important tool to achieve it.

The objective of the EU plant health law is to protect EU agriculture, horticulture and environment from plant pests. New incentives and a proactive approach are at the heart of this new regulation. The challenges for protection of plant health are nowadays greater due to the increased international trade and travels. Additionally, climate change is making the climatic environment more suited for exotic pests. This comes hand in hand with the new plant species growing in new areas due to climatic suitability, or with endemic plant species being more stressed due to climate change and being more prone to pest infestations.

The work of EFSA and the work of the EFSA Plant Health panel have been essential in supporting EU risk management decisions related to plant health legislation. Numerous risk assessments have been the scientific and technical basis for follow-up legislation. A long list of PLH Panel scientific opinions was produced during the last years:

- Pest categorisations to support the inclusion of plant pests in the EU list of regulated pests
- Pest risk assessments for specific pests that provided the scientific and technical basis for drafting import and internal movement requirements
- Assessments of technical dossiers submitted by Third Countries leading to derogations from prohibitions (annex VI or High Risk Plants) or to derogations from import requirements, based on a commodity risk assessment methodology worked out by EFSA
- recently, assessment of system approaches for pest control followed by the EU trading partners, allowing some fine tuning of the Third countries approaches

In addition, EFSA has been providing support to the Commission and the EU Members States in other activities, such as horizon scanning, surveillance and data to support the JRC analysis resulting in the list of the EU priority pests.

DG SANTE has sent many mandates in plant health to EFSA in the last years. Many thanks to the EFSA Plant Health Panel and to EFSA for their hard work, the timely delivery of the opinions and the excellent cooperation between our services.