

BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS AND ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE UNIT

Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards

Minutes of the 152nd Plenary meeting

**Held on 16 and 17 March 2022, WEB-conference
(Agreed on 5 April 2022)**

Participants

■ Panel Members

Ana Allende, Avelino Alvarez-Ordóñez (17 March 09:00-10:40), 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 and/or Member States representatives:

Regina Eberhart (DG Health and Food Safety, Unit G2; for item 6.6)
Luis Vivas-Alegre (DG Health and Food Safety, Unit D1)

■ EFSA:

BIOHAW Unit: Sean Ashe, Sandra Correia, Maria Teresa Da Silva Felicio, Beatriz Guerra, Michaela Hempen, Maria Francesca Iulietto, Ernesto Liébana, Winy Messens, Angel Ortiz-Peláez, Denise Pezzutti, Valentina Rizzi, Eleonora Sarno, Pietro Stella
MESE Unit: Eugen Christoph (for item 10.1)

■ Observers:

Not Applicable

¹ As defined in Article 15 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/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/expertselection.pdf

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 151st Plenary meeting held on 26 and 27 January 2022 by web-conference

The minutes of the 151st Plenary meeting held on 26 and 27 January 2022 were agreed by written procedure on 14 February 2022⁴.

5. Scientific outputs submitted for possible adoption

No output was submitted for possible adoption at this Plenary meeting.

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 (EFSA-Q-2020-00081)⁵

So far, 4 notifications are included in the assessment: *Streptococcus salivarius*, *Ensifer adhaerens*, *Microbacterium foliorum* and *Pseudomonas fluorescens*, two more were recently notified: *Pseudonocardia autotrophica* and *Companilactobacillus formosensis*. The extensive literature search for monitoring of the microorganisms that are on the QPS list is on progress. The deadline for adoption of Panel Statement 16 is June 2022.

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

⁴ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/151st-biohaz-panel-plenary-meeting>

⁵ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2020-00081>

6.2 Scientific opinion on the update of the list of QPS-recommended biological agents intentionally added to food or feeds as notified to EFSA (EFSA-Q-2020-00083)⁶

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. The draft opinion will provide some statistics on the notifications received during the last 10 years, and a discussion about the suitability of the QPS approach for bacteriophages and synthetic microorganisms. 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 (EFSA-Q-2020-00527)⁷

The last meeting of the WG took place on 10 February 2022 and the WG chair updated the Panel on the progress. The comments received from the Panel members were discussed and requested clarification on moulds (ToR2) will be brought back to the WG. An update was provided on the modelling approach for ToRs 3 and 4; first results from the model simulations will be discussed at the next WG and Plenary meeting. The ToR5 section was presented for the first time and the WG chair expressed the need to discuss also control measures that are not strictly GHP as requested in ToR5. 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 (EFSA-Q-2021-00374), including associated outsourcing activities (OC/EFSA/BIOCONTAM/2021/02)⁸

The last WG meeting took place on 9 March 2022. The WG Chair updated the Panel about the progress of work made with the WG implementing the approved protocol, in particular on the: (i) screening of the retrieved literature following the agreed search strategies and (ii) the summaries of foodborne outbreak and occurrence data extracted from the zoonoses monitoring database. The WG is elaborating customised Excel template files for the data extraction from the full text screening of references for different AQs/SQs. The Panel reviewed the draft questionnaire intended to be distributed to relevant industry stakeholders and provided comments on it as well as the suggestion to pilot test it with a couple of industries before distribution to the stakeholder associations and to the MRA network MSs representatives. Applicants responding to the call for the tender associated with this mandate have been notified about the results of the outcome of the call. The contract with the awarded consortium is expected to be signed in April so that activities can start soon and the kick-off meeting with

⁶ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2020-00081>

⁷ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2020-00527>

⁸ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2021-00374>

consortium partners should take place during the first month after signature of contract. The WG Chair will participate at all meetings with the contractor consortium defined according to tender specifications and efforts will be made to also invite the future contractors to provide update to the WG, when relevant, at WG meetings. The next WG meeting is on 28 April 2022. The deadline for adoption of this opinion is 30 September 2024.

6.5 Scientific opinion on the transmission of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) during animal transports (EFSA-Q-2021-00435)⁹

The last meeting of the WG took place on 8 March 2022. The WG Chair gave a short update on the progress made so far by the AMR transport working group (WG). The assessment of the EP AMR and transport mandate is being done in very close collaboration with the AHAW Panel, which is working in parallel on an EC mandate concerning the protection of terrestrial animals during transport. EFSA staff in charge of this EC Mandate informed the BIOHAZ Panel on the current discussions and status of the five scientific opinions that are being developed to answer this mandate (targeting bovines, pigs, horses, small ruminants and caged animals including poultry and rabbits, deadline June 2022). Afterwards, the draft protocol developed to address the assessment of the EP mandate on AMR during transport was discussed and approved by the Panel. The draft scientific opinion (targeting bovines, poultry and pigs transported within, from and to the EU/EFTA) was presented to the experts and main comments were discussed. The deadline for adoption of this Scientific Opinion is 30 September 2022.

6.6 Application for an alternative processing method of Category 3 animal-by products (rendered fats) and used cooking oils for renewable fuels production (EFSA-Q-2021-00625)¹⁰

An update on the new application for an alternative method for production of renewable fuels from used cooking oils and animal rendered fats derived from category 3 animal by-products was presented to the Panel by the WG Chair. Following the validation letter sent by EFSA on 9 February 2022 to the applicant, the six-month period for evaluation started. The WG Chair reviewed the main characteristics of the alternative method and briefed on the amended version of the dossier received in January with the clarifications requested during the completeness check. The first meeting took place on 24 February 2022 and, as a result of the discussions, the WG decided to request additional information (without stopping the clock) from the applicant on the following issues: the by-products of all pre-treatments, the critical control points of the HACCP plan, the need to mix the ABP with a co-product, the pre-treatment of used cooking oils with methods 1-5 or 7, and the categorization of used cooking oils according to the legislation

⁹ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2021-00435>

¹⁰ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2021-00625>

(this last point only for information of the application). Other points discussed but not agreed during the meeting were: the adequacy of the hazard identification, the standards to be applied to Category 3 ABP and the approach to follow in this and future applications on the level of risk reduction. EFSA secretariat informed the panel about the procedure to deal with the confidentiality claim. The 2nd WG meeting will be held on 28 March 2022 and the third as a physical meeting in Parma on 12 May 2022.

6.7 Update on the progress of the endorsed scientific opinion on the evaluation of the safety and efficacy of lactic acid to reduce microbiological surface contamination on carcasses from wild game and small stock (EFSA-Q-2020-00541)¹¹

The WG vice-chair gave an overview of the outcome of the assessment dealing with Term of Reference (ToR) 1 (the toxicological safety of the substance) and ToR 4 (the risk related to the release of the processing plant effluents into the environment) to the Panel members. He also informed the Panel of a minor correction needed in the assessment of ToR2 that was agreed. The Scientific Opinion will be submitted for possible adoption at the CEP Plenary meeting on 24 March 2022.

7. New mandates

7.1 Request for a scientific opinion on the monitoring of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)¹²

The EFSA BIOHAW Unit, in consultation with the BIOHAZ Panel Chair, decided that the mandate needs to be carried out by a new Working Group, and nominated Giuseppe Ru as Chair of the new WG and Marion Simmons as vice-chair of the new WG (nominations conditional on screening and approval of their declaration of interests). There were no additional expressions of interests among the BIOHAZ Panel members to join the WG. The WG Chair presented the new mandate. It was received officially on 4 February 2022 and accepted by EFSA on 22 February 2022. The working group was established on 2 March 2022 and the deadline for the delivery of the scientific opinion is 31 March 2023. Then the WG Chair presented the terms of reference. The areas of expertise required in the WG were identified as follows: specific expertise required (general knowledge of TSE including genetics, epidemiology and surveillance of TSE, and analysis of surveillance data), additional expertise required (epidemiological methods applied to the surveillance of diseases in wild animal populations, genetics of TSE and genotyping assays, and statistics and modelling). The names of the potential WG members were shared with the Panel. The first WG meeting has been fixed for Thursday 7 April 2022, pending the ongoing assessment and evaluation of the declaration of interests.

¹¹ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2020-00541>

¹² <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2022-00114>

7.2 Self-task mandate by the BIOHAZ Panel on the persistence of microbiological hazards in food and feed production and processing environments

The self-task mandate on “persistence of microbiological hazards in food and feed production and processing environments” was accepted by EFSA. The deadline for adoption of this Scientific Opinion is 31 December 2023. The EFSA BIOHAZ Unit, in consultation with the BIOHAZ Panel Chair, decided that the mandate needs to be carried out by a new Working Group, and nominated Avelino Alvarez-Ordóñez as Chair of the new WG (nomination conditional on screening and approval of his declaration of interests).

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

8.1 Scientific Committee

The 107th Plenary meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC) took place on 9-10 February 2022¹³. During such meeting, the BIOHAZ Panel Chair gave a presentation of the achievements of the Panel during 2021 and of the workplan for 2022. Feedback from the SC included, in particular, appreciation for the service provided by the BIOHAZ Panel and WG on QPS, and interest for the current self-task on the use of water in handling and processing of fruits and vegetables. The Panel Chair and EFSA Secretariat informed the Panel of the request from the SC to other Panels and EFSA Units to gather ideas on any new possible cross-cutting guidance from the SC. EFSA Secretariat invited the Panel to provide any possible idea during or after the Plenary meeting so that they can be elaborated and passed to the SC by the end of March 2022.

8.2 European Commission

EFSA Secretariat updated the Panel on the latest discussions with the European Commission (EC) DG SANTE in relation to possible future mandates in the BIOHAZ area.

8.3 Update on Rapid Outbreak Assessments (ROA) and related activities

The latest published ROA on the multi-country outbreak of *Salmonella* Enteritidis (sequence type 11) infections associated with eggs and egg products was presented to the Panel. The description of the event was followed by the traceability analysis of the contaminated foods and by the overall assessment.

¹³ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/it/events/107th-plenary-meeting-scientific-committee>

9. Other topics for information and/or discussion

9.1 Implementation of the guidance on uncertainty analysis in scientific assessments

No discussion took place for this agenda item.

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

EFSA Secretariat informed the Panel that at one of the next Plenaries colleagues from EFSA KNOW Unit will present the latest issues related to emerging biological hazards raised at the annual meetings of the EFSA EREN and STADG-ER Networks.

9.3 Update on the EMA expert groups on the designation of antimicrobials or groups of antimicrobials reserved for treatment of certain infections in humans, and on the establishment of a list of antimicrobials which shall not be used or which may be used subject to certain conditions

BIOHAZ Panel member Luisa Peixe, who is representing EFSA in the abovementioned EMA expert groups, presented the outcome of the EMA CVMP “*Advise on the designation of antimicrobials or groups of antimicrobials reserved for treatment of certain infections in humans - in relation to implementing measures under Article 37(5) of Regulation (EU) 2019/6 on veterinary medicinal products*”, recently published¹⁴. Work is still ongoing with EMA in relation to the Advice on the establishment of a list of antimicrobials which shall not be used, or which may be used subject to certain conditions.

10. Any other business

EFSA Secretariat from EFSA MESE Unit presented to the Panel the plan for a series of trainings related to Expert Knowledge Elicitation organised by EFSA in 2022 for both staff and external experts. Panel members were invited to express interest for the different sessions planned and availability for the specific dates currently scheduled. The Panel expressed interest to have additional training sessions organised in the future.

The BIOHAZ Panel discussed Panel practices in gathering comments on Panel documents. In particular, for working documents to be presented at plenaries for thorough reading or for possible adoption, it was agreed to provide comments until 24 hours before the plenary meeting. At that point the document may be checked out by EFSA Secretariat and additional comments can be provided directly at the Plenary meeting. To allow sufficient time for gathering comments, especially important for physical meetings when participants will usually be travelling on the day before the meeting, EFSA Secretariat will anticipate the sharing of such documents

¹⁴ https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/documents/regulatory-procedural-guideline/advice-designation-antimicrobials-groups-antimicrobials-reserved-treatment-certain-infections-humans/6-veterinary-medicinal-products_en.pdf

with the Panel one day earlier than at present (i.e. at least eight calendar days before the Plenary meeting).

EFSA Secretariat acknowledged the existence of some problems with receiving timely notifications in Teams for some external experts and Panel members not accessing regularly the EFSA environment. The most urgent messages posted will be also notified by email, however the Panel was reminded to check the Panel team on Teams regularly. The Panel was also requested to check Plenary minutes when shared after the meetings. EFSA Secretariat reminded the Panel of some consultations ongoing; a reminder will be sent to the Panel after the meeting.

The Panel provisionally agreed to hold the Plenary meeting of 13-14 July 2022 physically in Parma.