



Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards

Minutes of the 153rd Plenary meeting

**Held on 3 and 4 May 2022, WEB-conference
(Agreed on 24 May 2022)**

Participants

- Panel Members
Ana Allende, Avelino Alvarez-Ordóñez, Declan Bolton, Sara Bover-Cid (3 May), Marianne Chemaly, Robert Davies, Alessandra De Cesare, Lieve Herman, Friederike Hilbert, Konstantinos Koutsoumanis, Roland Lindqvist, Maarten Nauta, Giuseppe Ru (3 May), Luisa Peixe, Marion Simmons, Panagiotis Skandamis (3 May), 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: 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
- 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 152nd Plenary meeting held on 16 and 17 March 2022 by web-conference

The minutes of the 152nd Plenary meeting held on 16 and 17 January 2022 were agreed by written procedure on 5 April 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

The last meeting took place on 26 April (web-meeting) and the next is scheduled on 17 May (Parma). 50 microorganisms were notified to EFSA between October 2021 and March 2022, from which 41 were not evaluated because are excluded or have already a QPS status. Nine notifications, corresponding to six TUs were evaluated: four of these (*Streptococcus salivarius*, *Companilactobacillus formosensis*, *Pseudonocardia autotrophica* and *Papiliotrema terrestris*) being evaluated for the first time. The other three, *Microbacterium foliorum*, *Pseudomonas fluorescens* and *Ensifer adhaerens* were re-assessed. The extensive literature search for monitoring

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/it/events/152nd-biohaz-panel-plenary-meeting>

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

of the microorganisms that are on the QPS list for the period covered by this statement, did not identify new information that would change the status of previously recommended QPS TUs. 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 feeds as notified to EFSA (EFSA-Q-2020-00083)⁶

The last meeting took place on 26 April (web-meeting) and the next is scheduled on 17 May (Parma). The WG Chair informed the panel that the scientific opinion is being discussed by the WG experts but that no new aspects have been included since the last plenary. 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 two WG meetings took place on 29 March (half-day) and 26 April 2022 (half-day). The WG chair updated the Panel about the progress on the scientific opinion. Concerning the modelling approach for ToR3, preliminary results were discussed, and the possible application of a correction factor was presented. The Panel agreed to apply a correction factor for dry-aged meat but did not consider it necessary for 'wet-aged meat'. The correlation between time, temperature and water activity, as well as the competition of pathogens with *Lactobacillus* and *Pseudomonas* will be not included in the model. For ToR4, the Panel agreed on a scenario-based approach. The effect of trimming dry-aged meat will be described in qualitatively way. The draft opinion will be presented to the BIOHAZ Panel for possible adoption in 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 28 April 2022. The WG Chair updated the Panel about the progress of work made with the WG, in particular on the ongoing screening of the full text papers retrieved following the agreed search strategies and the data extraction using a customised Excel template file for AQ3, AQ4 and SQ6. The draft questionnaire intended to be distributed to relevant industry stakeholders has been distributed to one specific industry for pilot testing before distribution to the stakeholder associations and to the MRA network MSs representatives. The contract with the awarded WASHTOP consortium was signed on 4 April and the kick-off meeting with consortium partners will take place on 6 May. The WG Chair briefly presented a summary of the technical offer from this

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. The next WG meeting is on 1 June 2022. The deadline for adoption of this opinion is 30 September 2024 but considering the delayed date of signature of the contract for the associated tender that will lead to an overlap of the approval of the final report from the tender and the thorough reading of the scientific opinion, an extension of the deadline for this scientific opinion may be required in the future.

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 April 2022. The WG Chair gave a short update on the progress made so far by the AMR transport working group. The assessment of the 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. The main updates of the draft scientific opinion (targeting bovines, poultry and pigs transported within, from and to the EU/EFTA), and in particular those done regarding the assessment of risk factors and mitigation options, were presented to the experts and main comments were discussed. As already informed, there is a lack of data on AMR in relation to transport. Thus, information of spread/contamination of other zoonotic agents is also being considered. 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

The chair presented the draft opinion for first reading. Two main points were brought to the attention of the Panel. At the moment the working group is considering establishing a standard for all applications in which Category 3 animal by-products is the material to be treated. Related to this point, the need to do a proper hazard identification or just selecting the most resistant indicator microorganism is a major ongoing point for discussion in the working group. The working group is considering the possibility of stopping the clock and ask the applicant again for some additional information, having in mind they have been approached twice already. The chair asked the Panel for advice on these two issues. The Panel supported the idea of stopping the clock and ask again the applicant, and recommended EFSA to update the 2010 Guidelines on the format of the ABP applications. The 4th WG meeting is scheduled for 30 June 2022.

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

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

6.7 Scientific opinion on the monitoring of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)¹¹

The chair reminded the Panel members of the terms of reference of the mandate. He also gave a brief summary of the first meeting that took place on 7 April 2022: a brainstorming session followed the introductions, general presentation of the mandate, the terms of reference, and the administration and organization of the working group. The main topics discussed in the brainstorming were: the data available and data needs, how to take on board the fact that two forms of disease are present in Europe, and the potential objectives of genotyping surveillance samples. The second WG meeting has been fixed for Wednesday 11 May 2022, and the third for 10 June 2022, as the first physical meeting of this working group.

6.8 Scientific opinion on the persistence of microbiological hazards in food and feed production and processing environments¹²

The ad-hoc WG to deal with this self-task mandate has been finalised. The planning was presented; the first WG meeting will take place by web-conference on 16 May 2022. The deadline for approval of the protocol was set on 31 October 2022 and the one for adoption of this Scientific Opinion is 31 December 2023.

7. New mandates

No new mandates were received since the previous Plenary meeting.

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

8.1 Scientific Committee

The 108th Plenary meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC) took place on 27-28 April 2022¹³. During such meeting, the BIOHAZ Panel Vice-Chair Lieve Herman presented a proposal for the SC work programme 2022-2024 on a cross-cutting guidance related to risk assessment of microorganisms used in the agri-food chain. The SC will proceed with prioritisation of those ideas in the coming months.

8.2 European Commission

EFSA Secretariat and European Commission (EC) DG SANTE briefly updated the Panel on the state of play concerning possible future mandates from the EC in the BIOHAZ area.

¹¹ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2022-00114>

¹² <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2022-00217>

¹³ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/it/events/108th-plenary-meeting-scientific-committee>

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

The latest published ROA on the multi-country outbreak of monophasic *Salmonella* Typhimurium sequence type 34 linked to chocolate 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.

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 indicated that at the June or July 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. No other issues were raised from the Panel.

10. Any other business

EFSA Secretariat informed the Panel about an invitation received for delivering a speech at the Conference FoodMicro2022 in relation to the scientific opinions delivered by the BIOHAZ Panel, in particular in relation to predictive microbiology. The Panel agreed that EFSA Secretariat and the Panel Chair will select the topic to be included in such speech and involve as appropriate a subset of Panel members to be actively involved in the preparation of the material to be presented at the Conference.

Panel Member Lieve Herman presented to the BIOHAZ Panel an update on the EFSA Microorganisms Pipelines Project (MoPS).

EFSA Secretariat informed the Panel about the upcoming EFSA Foresight workshop on "*Circular Future: emerging feed sources, technologies and related risks*" scheduled for 9-10 June. More information with the link to register for the event for the interested Panel Members will be circulated after the Plenary.

EFSA Secretariat informed the Panel that the Plenary meeting of The Panel provisionally agreed to hold the Plenary meeting of 6-7 December 2022 will be open to observers.