



## Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards

### Minutes of the 154<sup>th</sup> Plenary meeting

**Held on 15 and 16 June 2022, WEB-conference  
(Agreed on 1 July 2022)**

#### Participants

- Panel Members  
Ana Allende, Avelino Alvarez-Ordóñez, Declan Bolton, Sara Bover-Cid, Marianne Chemaly, Alessandra De Cesare, Lieve Herman, Friederike Hilbert, Konstantinos Koutsoumanis, Roland Lindqvist, Maarten Nauta, Giuseppe Ru, Luisa Peixe, Marion Simmons, Panagiotis Skandamis, Elisabetta Suffredini
- Hearing Experts<sup>1</sup>:  
Not applicable
- European Commission and/or Member States representatives:  
Regina Eberhart (DG Health and Food Safety, Unit G2; for item 6.6 and 6.7)
- EFSA:  
BIOHAW Unit: Pierre-Alexandre Beloeil, Kateryna Chuzhakina, Sandra Correia, Maria Teresa Da Silva Felicio, Beatriz Guerra, Michaela Hempen, Maria Francesca Iulietto, Ernesto Liébana, Winy Messens, Angel Ortiz-Peláez, Valentina Rizzi, Eleonora Sarno, Pietro Stella
- Observers:  
Not Applicable

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<sup>1</sup> 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](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/expertselection.pdf)

## **1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Robert Davies.

## **2. Adoption of agenda**

The agenda was adopted without changes.

## **3. Declarations of Interest**

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence<sup>2</sup> and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management<sup>3</sup>, 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.

EFSA Secretariat informed the Panel on the progress in the design of a new tool for the submission of DoIs. Some Panel members will be asked to kindly participate in the piloting of the new tool.

## **4. Agreement of the minutes of the 153<sup>rd</sup> Plenary meeting held on 3 and 4 May 2022 by web-conference**

The minutes of the 153<sup>rd</sup> Plenary meeting held on 3 and 4 May 2022 were agreed by written procedure on 24 May 2022<sup>4</sup>.

## **5. Scientific outputs submitted for possible adoption**

### **5.1 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)<sup>5</sup>**

The last meeting took place on 17 May (Parma). Fifty 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 seven 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 final conclusions regarding these evaluations were discussed and agreed. The extensive literature search for monitoring of the microorganisms that are on the QPS

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate\\_publications/files/policy\\_independence.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/policy_independence.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate\\_publications/files/competing\\_interest\\_management\\_17.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/competing_interest_management_17.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/153rd-biohaz-panel-plenary-meeting>

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

list for the period covered by this statement, did not identify new information that would change the status of previously recommended QPS TUs. The Panel Statement 16 was adopted by the BIOHAZ Panel.

## **6. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion**

### **6.1 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)<sup>6</sup>**

The last meeting took place on 17 May (Parma) and the next is scheduled on 29 June (web-meeting). The WG Chair informed the Panel that during the last meeting several aspects/projects linked to the current document have been presented and discussed by the working group experts: QPS and the synthetic microorganism concept, QPS and WGS analysis and the interpretation of the qualification on acquired antimicrobial resistance genes. All these aspects are being included in the document. The draft opinion will be presented to the BIOHAZ Panel for possible adoption in December 2022.

### **6.2 Scientific opinion on the microbiological safety of aged meat (EFSA-Q-2020-00527)<sup>7</sup>**

The WG informed the Panel about the discussion during the last WG meeting which took place on 14 June 2022. During that meeting, and in agreement with the European Commission, the WG decided that the mathematical model will cover standard fresh meat until the end of the aging process. The subsequent stages until the end of shelf life, including trimming, will be assessed qualitatively owing to the large uncertainties. Adjustments to the modelling approach and presentation of modelling results to answer TORs 3 and 4 were presented and agreed. The draft opinion will be presented to the BIOHAZ Panel for possible adoption in December 2022.

### **6.3 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)<sup>8</sup>**

The last WG meeting took place on 1 June 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 ongoing data extraction is very demanding and requires intensive work from all experts. It is expected to be concluded at the latest by the beginning of September. The draft

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

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

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

questionnaire intended to be distributed to relevant industry stakeholders will be only distributed to the industry collaborators from WASHTOP due to the required need for intensive support to obtain adequate replies. The deliverable 1 from the WASHTOP contract will be submitted to EFSA on 3 June and reviewed by EFSA and WG in order to provide comments on it to WASHTOP by 17 June. The next WG meeting is on 5 July 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.

#### **6.4 Scientific opinion on the transmission of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) during animal transports (EFSA-Q-2021-00435)<sup>9</sup>**

The last meeting of the WG took place on 7 June 2022. 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 draft scientific opinion, which targets bovines, poultry and pigs transported within, from and to the EU/EFTA, was presented for first reading. The WG Chair presented the main updates regarding the assessment of risk factors and mitigation options, as well as the identified data gaps and main research needs. The preliminary conclusions were presented to the Panel 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 updated draft Scientific Opinion will be submitted for thorough reading at the next Panel Plenary (13-14 July). The deadline for adoption is 30 September 2022.

#### **6.5 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)<sup>10</sup>**

The chair presented the draft opinion for thorough reading. He explained the decision to stop the clock and ask the applicant for clarifications and additional information following the recommendations of the BIOHAZ Panel and the discussions in the last working group meeting. Following correspondence with the applicant, an amended dossier is expected to be submitted. He explained as well the proposed standards to be applied to alternative methods for the processing of Category 3 ABP, which were accepted with minor comments. The chair of the BIOHAZ Panel encouraged the EC to consider the possibility of sending a mandate to update the 2010 EFSA statement on the format of ABP applications. The EC highlighted the time devoted to the discussion of the application despite the consideration

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

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

of the stringent parameters of the method. The next meeting is initially scheduled for 30 June, but it will be moved to 21 July 2022 if the applicant submits the new dossier between 20 June 2022 and the deadline given of 18 July 2022. If the latter, then the adoption of the opinion will have to be postponed to the September plenary. If it has to be adopted earlier, then a short plenary or adoption by written procedure will be the other two possibilities.

### **6.6 Scientific opinion on the monitoring of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)<sup>11</sup>**

The chair presented for the first time the draft of the template of the protocol, mainly the assessment and sub-assessment questions for the five ToRs. Some aspects of the methodologies to be applied and the evidence needs were discussed as well. There were no major comments by the Panel members. The next meeting will take place on Monday 18 July, as a half-day web-meeting.

### **6.7 Scientific opinion on the persistence of microbiological hazards in food and feed production and processing environments<sup>12</sup>**

The first WG meeting was held by web-conference on 16 May 2022. The WG chair reminded about the Terms of Reference (ToR) of this self-task mandate and the link between the ToRs. He then gave feedback of the progress at that meeting, which was dedicated also to informing the WG members on the remit and governance of EFSA and the way the scientific advice is produced. The WG discussed and clarified the ToRs. Important was to discuss about the meaning of “persistence”, and about the “microbiological food safety hazards” and “food and feed production and processing environments” that would be excluded from the assessment. The ToRs were translated into draft assessment questions. It was stressed that ToR1 would need to be addressed first as the outcome of it (i.e. most relevant microbiological food safety hazards associated with persistence) feeds into the other ToRs. A brainstorming was held on the approaches, methodology and data needs. A timeline for Plenary and WG meetings in 2022 was presented. The second WG meeting will be held on 1 July 2022 by web-conference. 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.

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

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

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

### **8.1 Scientific Committee**

No new meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC) took place since the previous BIOHAZ Plenary meeting.

### **8.2 European Commission**

EFSA Secretariat briefly updated the Panel on the state of play concerning possible future mandates from the EC in the BIOHAZ area. According to information received from the EC, three mandates will be submitted soon to EFSA in relation to the following BIOHAZ topics: one mandate related to an application on the use of substances for the removal of microbial surface contamination from food of animal origin (which would be addressed under the lead of the EFSA CEP Panel), one mandate related to the processing of porcine processed animal proteins, and one mandate related to the risks posed by parasites in fishery products.

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

The update of 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<sup>13</sup>. The description of the event was followed by the traceability analysis, by the microbiological findings 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**

As previously indicated, EFSA Secretariat mentioned that at the 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 updated 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. EFSA accepted the invitation and a subset of

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/supporting/pub/en-7352>

Panel members and EFSA staff is being involved in preparing the intervention.

EFSA Secretariat informed the Panel about the following preliminary plan for the upcoming plenary meetings for 2022: July and October plenary meetings are planned as physical meetings in Parma, September and December plenary meetings are planned as web-conferences. The December plenary will be open to observers.