



Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards

Minutes of the 156th Plenary meeting

**Held on 28 and 29 September 2022, WEB-conference
(Agreed on 14 October 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 Experts¹:
Not applicable
- European Commission and/or Member States representatives:
Luis Vivas-Alegre (DG Health and Food Safety, Unit D1; 29 September PM)
- EFSA:
BIOHAW Unit: Kateryna Chuzhakina, Lorena Corredor Barrera, Sandra Correia, Maria Teresa Da Silva Felicio, Beatriz Guerra, Michaela Hempen, Ernesto Liébana, Winy Messens, Angel Ortiz-Peláez, Valentina Rizzi, Ancuta Cezara Simon, Pietro Stella, Frank Verdonck
KNOW Unit: Milen Georgiev (for item 9.2)
- 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

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 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 155th Plenary meeting held on 13 and 14 July 2022 in Parma

The minutes of the 155th Plenary meeting held on 13 and 14 July 2022 were agreed by written procedure on 29 July 2022⁴.

5. Scientific outputs submitted for possible adoption

5.1 Scientific opinion on the transmission of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) during animal transports (EFSA-Q-2021-00435)⁵

The last meeting of the working group (WG) took place on 19 September. The assessment of the mandate was done in very close collaboration with the AHAW Panel, which was working in parallel on an EC mandate concerning the protection of terrestrial animals during transport. The produced AHAW Panel scientific opinions were recently published. The draft scientific opinion on AMR transport, which targeted bovines, poultry and pigs transported within, from and to the EU/EFTA, was presented for adoption at the BIOHAZ Plenary. The WG Chair presented the main updates regarding the data gaps and research needs, conclusions, summary and abstract of the Opinion. The Scientific Opinion was adopted by the BIOHAZ Panel. The main outcomes of the Opinion will be presented to the European Parliament, requestor of the Scientific Opinion. Its publication is expected within 28 working days from adoption.

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/154th-biohaz-panel-plenary-meeting>

⁵ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2021-00435>

5.2 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)⁶

The last two meetings of the WG took place on 21 July and 1 September 2022. The Chair of the WG presented the draft opinion for possible adoption, highlighting the updates brought to the draft opinion since the previous plenary meeting, taking also into consideration the additional information included in the amended dossier submitted by the applicant in July 2022. The Panel discussed in detail the conclusions of the draft opinion. The Panel decided not to include recommendations and agreed that in principle no section with recommendations will be needed in the future opinions related to applications. The BIOHAZ Panel adopted the scientific opinion. Its publication is expected within 28 working days from adoption.

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. 17: Suitability of taxonomic units notified to EFSA until September 2022 (EFSA-Q-2020-00082)⁷

The last meeting for the preparation of this Statement took place on 20 September (web meeting). Forty-three notifications were received from April to August 2022: 31 are already QPS, 11 are excluded from QPS exercise (7 filamentous fungi, 2 *Enterococcus faecium*, 1 *E. coli*, 1 *Streptomyces*), 1 bacterium was notified without a proper taxonomic identity (*Xanthobacter* SoF1). One further TU was notified by FIP unit - *Ogataea polymorpha* - which is being evaluated for a possible QPS status. The extensive literature search (ELS) exercise for monitoring of possible safety concerns related to the microorganisms that are on the QPS list, for the period covered by this Statement, is being finalised. The next WG meeting will be held on 3 and 4 November (Parma). The Panel Statement 17 will be presented for possible adoption in December 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)⁸

The last meeting took place on 20 September (web meeting). The WG Chair informed the Panel that several issues, some brought by the EFSA units, have been discussed by the experts: the qualifications for two taxonomic units have been revised: *Bacillus paralicheniformis* and *Bacillus velenzensis*. Due to changes in nomenclature, *Lactiplantibacillus argentoratensis* is going to be included in the QPS list. The interpretation of the qualification on acquired antimicrobial resistance genes is being

⁶ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2021-00625>

⁷ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2020-00082>

⁸ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2020-00081>

elaborated by a subgroup of the QPS WG and with the support from the relevant EFSA units (web-meeting on 2 September). The respective WGs will also be consulted. The next WG meeting will be held on 3 and 4 November (Parma). 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)⁹

The WG informed the Panel about the progress on the draft opinion. The section on moulds and potential mycotoxin production has been updated as well as the modelling results for terms of reference (TORs) 3 and 4. The panel noted that the uncertainty analysis still needs to be developed and certainty ranges will be added to the conclusions. The Panel's comments, and in particular the uncertainty analysis, are going to be discussed during the WG meeting on 4 October 2022 and an update will be provided to the panel at the next meeting when the draft opinion will be presented for thorough reading. Possible adoption is foreseen 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)¹⁰

The last WG meeting took place on 14-15 September 2022. The WG Chair updated the Panel about the progress of work made with the WG underlining that the performed data extraction from the adopted literature search strategies was very demanding and required intensive work from all experts. The WG Chair presented some preliminary overall analysis based on all data extracted from literature and/or on selected individual studies that could be used as examples to answer some assessment questions (AQs) and sub-questions (SQs). It was noted that this work is still in progress, as there has been no time yet to allow the careful analysis of the data extraction that has just been concluded. The FDA has kindly shared with EFSA the R codes of two models identified as relevant for this mandate. Preliminary fine-tuning work on the model describing the contamination rates, efficacy of disinfection treatments in the washing tank as well as the cross-contamination dynamics in the washing tank for *E. coli* in lettuce was presented and possible ideas for further development were discussed with the Panel. Panel members Kostas Koutsoumanis, Roland Lindqvist and Maarten Nauta volunteered to review any future model developed by the WG and/or WASHTOP consortium for the AQs/SQs. The Panel was also updated about the next deadlines for the WASHTOP consortium tender, in particular for the submission, review and approval of deliverable 2. The WG Chair highlighted the additional efforts that are required to align as effectively as possible the consortium's activities with the self-task mandate

⁹ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2020-00527>

¹⁰ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2021-00374>

maximising the interaction with contractors to ensure the usefulness of the deliverables of the WASHTOP consortium tender. The next WG meeting is on 24-25 October 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 monitoring of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)¹¹

The last WG meeting took place on 5-6 September 2022. The Chair of the WG updated the Panel on the progress on the different terms of reference of the mandate. He explained the approach being taken by the WG in analysing the CWD surveillance data, estimating the design prevalence and estimating the sensitivity of the surveillance system (ToR 1), reviewing and describing the new knowledge on the epidemiology of CWD in Europe (ToR 2), and the exchange of views by the WG in relation to the other terms of reference. The next meeting will take place on 20 October 2022.

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

The WG Chair gave feedback of the outcome of the third WG meeting held on 22-23 September 2022 in Parma. Of note are the further clarifications of the ToRs that were agreed with the panel: (a) persistence would not include continuous reintroduction in the facility of the same organism; (b) viruses and parasitic protozoa will be excluded from the assessment; (c) Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA)/production through indoor hydroponic operations would be included in fruit and vegetable processing. The assessment questions and conceptual model as included in the protocol were agreed. Few comments on the approach were received. The preliminary list of pathogens of public health relevance in the various sectors was presented for feedback. For part of ToR5 (to develop the perspectives of integrating the information gathered in the previous ToRs in risk assessment), a presentation was given covering the possible risk questions, the approaches using either a top-down (virtual) or bottom-up approach with their strengths and weaknesses, and how persistence could be included in a QMRA. The next WG meeting will be held on 11 October 2022 by web-conference. The protocol will be presented for approval at this WG meeting as the deadline for its approval was set on 31 October 2022. The deadline for adoption of the Scientific Opinion is 31 December 2023.

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

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

6.7 Scientific opinion on the efficacy of methods 2 and 5 and method 7 set out in Regulation (EU) No 142/2011 to inactivate relevant pathogens when producing processed animal protein of porcine origin intended to feed poultry and aquaculture animals

The EFSA BIOHAW Unit informed the Panel about the decision, taken in consultation with the BIOHAZ Panel Chair, that the mandate needs to be carried out by a new Working Group, and about the nomination of Alessandra De Cesare as Chair of the new WG. The WG Chair reminded the Panel about the mandate and its terms of reference and updated the Panel on the setting up of the WG, its composition and areas of expertise. The first meeting of the WG is scheduled for 28 October 2022. The deadline for delivery of the scientific opinion is 30 June 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 110th Plenary meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC) took place on 21-22 September 2022¹³. The Panel Chair briefly reported the discussions held during the SC meeting, in particular about the following items: i) presentation given by the BIOHAZ Panel chair in relation to a comparison between microbial and chemical risk assessment methodologies; ii) discussion on the Scientific Committee work-programme 2023-2024, including possible work related to a topic proposed by the BIOHAZ Panel in the past on risk assessment of microorganisms used in the agri-food chain; iii) discussion on the Draft guidance on Protocol development. In relation to the last item, it was agreed to schedule a presentation during the next BIOHAZ plenary meeting.

8.2 European Commission

EFSA Secretariat reminded the Panel on the state of play concerning upcoming mandates from the EC in the BIOHAZ area.

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.

¹³ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/110th-plenary-meeting-scientific-committee>

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

The proposal for a self-task mandate by the BIOHAZ panel on the public health impact of *Vibrio* spp. by consumption of seafood in the EU was presented to the BIOHAZ Panel. Comments were received that will be addressed and a new draft will be presented at the next plenary meeting.

9.3 BIOHAZ Plenary meeting dates for 2023

The BIOHAZ Panel agreed on the dates for 2023 plenary meetings, as follows: 25-26 January, 15-16 March, 26-27 April, 7-8 June, 12-13 July, 27-28 September, 25-26 October, 6-7 December 2023.

10. Any other business

No additional item was discussed.