

**SCIENTIFIC PANEL
ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS
161th Plenary Meeting**

26-27 April 2023
09:00-17:00/09:00-17:00
MINUTES - Agreed on 11 May 2023



Location: Parma/Webconference

Attendees:

■ 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, Romolo Nonno, Giuseppe Ru, Luisa Peixe, Marion Simmons, Panagiotis Skandamis, Elisabetta Suffredini

■ Hearing Experts¹:

Not applicable

■ European Commission and/or Member States representatives:

No attendance

■ EFSA:

BIOHAW Unit:

Ruben Barcia, Kateryna Chuzhakina, Sandra Correia, Maria Teresa Da Silva Felicio, Beatriz Guerra, Michaela Hempen, Lisa Kohnle, Ernesto Liebana, Joana Lourenco, Winy Messens, Angel Ortiz-Peláez, Valentina Rizzi, Mirko Rossi, Eleonora Sarno, Ancuta Cezara Simon, Pietro Stella, Frank Verdonck

■ Observers:

Not applicable

■ Others:

Julio Alvarez (AHAW Panel, item 8.5)

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Declarations of Interest

¹ As defined in Article 17 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



In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence² and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management,³ 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 160th Plenary meeting held on 15 and 16 March 2023

The minutes of the 160th Plenary meeting held on 15 and 16 March 2023 were agreed by written procedure on 30 March 2023⁴.

5. Scientific outputs submitted for possible adoption or endorsement

No outputs were submitted for possible adoption or endorsement, although one output was endorsed for public consultation (see agenda item 6.2).

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. 18: Suitability of taxonomic units notified to EFSA until March 2023 (EFSA-Q-2021-00770)⁵

Last meeting took place on 24 March by web-meeting. 38 notifications were received from October 2022 until March 2023; 34 of these will not be evaluated for the following reasons: 14 notifications are related to microorganisms that are excluded from QPS evaluation (8 are notifications of filamentous fungi, 2 of *E. coli*, 4 of *Enterococcus faecium*), and 20 are related to TUs that already have QPS status and did not require further evaluation. Four notifications, corresponding to 4 TU will be evaluated for a possible QPS status: *Anaerobutyricum soehngenii*, Microorganism strain DSM 11798, *Pseudomonas stutzeri* and *Nannochloropsis oculata* (algae). The AI DistillerSR new datasets have been trained for the pre-screening of the articles. The ELS exercise is at article evaluation level. The next WG meeting will be on 3 May in Parma. Document to be presented for thorough reading to the Panel. The deadline for possible adoption is 30 June 2023.

6.2. Statement on how to interpret the QPS qualification on 'acquired antimicrobial resistance genes' (EFSA-Q-2023-00096)⁶

Last (3rd) web-meeting took place on 4 April. The Panel statement (PS) was finalised by the working group for the Public Consultation (PC) that will be launched on 2 May and will be open until 30 May to relevant stakeholders. Next WG meeting is scheduled on 5 June by web-meeting. A PC Report will be prepared and published with the PS after its adoption. The draft PS document was thoroughly discussed and endorsed by

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/160th-biohaz-panel-plenary-meeting>

⁵ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2021-00770>

⁶ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00096>



the Panel to be subject to the PC. The deadline for possible adoption of the PS and acceptance of the PC report is 30 September 2023.

6.3. 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-2023-00054)⁷

Last meeting took place on 24 March by web-meeting. The experts started discussing how this new QPS opinion will be structured. A few proposals for the new challenges/themes to be included in this document were presented but it will be further discussed during the next WG meeting which will be on 3 May in Parma. The QPS opinion document will be presented to the BIOHAZ Panel for possible adoption in December 2025.

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, EFSA-Q-2023-00073, EFSA-Q-2023-00074, EFSA-Q-2023-00075 and EFSA-Q-2023-00076), including associated outsourcing activities (OC/EFSA/BIOCONTAM/2021/02)⁸

The last WG meeting took place online on 19 April (afternoon) 2023. The WG Chair presented an extract from the Part 1 opinion including only the "Section 4. Conclusions" which consisted of the very preliminary draft answers to all ToRs. The Panel provided some comments to this section which were discussed during the plenary meeting and will be considered by the WG in their next review of the draft opinion. The Chair also updated the Panel about the progress of work made by the contractor consortium WASHTOP, including the: (1) literature review, (2) experiments that are taking place in industry settings, (3) model development and (4) industry consultation via EUsurvey. Some challenges regarding the conclusion of the literature review component of WASHTOP were explained as well as the efforts that are being made to achieve the successful conclusion of this part of the work (objectives 3 and 4) in order to allow the approval of the respective deliverable during the next weeks. EFSA provided important feedback and suggestions to WASHTOP and we are now waiting for WASHTOP's agreement with these and the implementation of the necessary amendments. The WG Chair also updated the Panel on the next milestones of the WASHTOP tender. The next WG meeting will be on 30 May 2023 (online). The deadline for the adoption of the Part 1 Scientific Opinion is 31 October 2023 and for the adoption of the Parts 2, 3, 4 and 5 Scientific Opinions is 31 December 2024.

6.5. Scientific opinion on the persistence of microbiological hazards in food and feed production and processing environments (EFSA-Q-2022-00217)⁹

The last WG meeting was held on 12 April 2023 by web-conference. The restructuring proposed in the endorsed section of the Scientific Opinion dealing with the identification of the most relevant microbiological food safety hazards associated with persistence in food and feed processing environment (Terms of Reference 1) was agreed. The WG Chair shortly updated the Panel on the literature review to deal with the other ToR. He gave an overview of the number of eligible records obtained as reviews or primary research studies for the food sectors and feed sector, respectively. The extracted data was also presented illustrating how the "features" and "interventions" would be

⁷ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00054>

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

⁹ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2022-00217>



classified. The next WG meeting will be held on 10 May 2023 by web-conference. The deadline for adoption of the Scientific Opinion is 31 December 2023.

6.6. 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 (EFSA-Q-2022-00455)¹⁰

The WG Chair presented the draft opinion to the Panel for thorough reading, including the results of the expert knowledge elicitation (EKE) carried out to address assessment question 5. The main sections of the draft opinion were presented as well as the model. The Panel requested some clarifications on the model and it was agreed to have additional exchanges of information between selected Panel and WG members to address such requests. The WG Chair presented the draft conclusions and recommendations of the opinion. The 7th WG meeting will take place on 12 May 2023. The draft opinion will be submitted for possible adoption at the plenary of 7-8 June 2023.

6.7. Scientific opinion on the public health aspects of *Vibrio* spp. related to the consumption of seafood in the EU (EFSA-Q-2022-00826)¹¹

The second WG meeting was held on 17 March 2023 in Parma. The WG chair reminded about the Terms of Reference (ToR) of this self-task mandate. She presented the draft protocol containing the interpretation of the ToR of the mandate and the problem formulation, i.e. the translation of the ToRs into assessment questions (AQs) and sub-questions (SQs), where applicable. The methods that will be applied for conducting the assessment were presented for most of the questions. The third WG meeting will be held by web-conference on 11 May 2023. The deadline for approval of the protocol was set on 31 July 2023 and the one for adoption of this Scientific Opinion is 30 June 2024.

6.8. Request for scientific and technical assistance to evaluate the application of the Czech Republic to be recognised as having a negligible risk of classical scrapie (EFSA-Q-2023-00088)¹²

The WG Chair updated the Panel on the final composition of the WG and on the progress on the mandate. The first meeting took place on 3 April, where the methodology to be followed and data needs were discussed. The first meeting is scheduled for 9 June. The deadline for this mandate is 31 October 2023.

6.9. Request for scientific and technical assistance regarding the impact of the proposed revised Australia's microbiological monitoring programme for beef and sheep meat exported to the EU (EFSA-Q-2023-00058)¹³

The Panel was updated on the composition of the WG. The first WG meeting is planned on 12 May 2023. The deadline for this mandate is 31 December 2023.

¹⁰ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2022-00455>

¹¹ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2022-00826>

¹² <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00088>

¹³ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00058>



6.10. Request for a re-evaluation of certain aspects of the EFSA scientific opinion of April 2010 on risk assessment of parasites in fishery products, based on new scientific data (EFSA-Q-2023-00090)¹⁴

The Chair of the WG updated the BIOHAZ Panel on the finalization of the process to build the WG. The first meeting on the WG will take place on 3 May (web), followed by a physical meeting in Parma on 24 May. The outputs to address the Mandate will be two scientific opinions of the BIOHAZ Panel, one with deadline March 2024 and one with deadline December 2024.

6.11. Request for a scientific opinion on the potential BSE risk posed by ruminant collagen and gelatine other than derived from hides and skins (EFSA-Q-2023-00105)¹⁵

The mandate, received from the European Commission and accepted by EFSA on 14 February 2023, was presented in detail to the Panel. The mandate asks EFSA to estimate the BSE risk of gelatine and collagen derived from ovine/caprine and from bovine material other than hides and skins, i.e. from bones, and produced in accordance with specific regulatory requirements established in food- and feed-related legislation. The EFSA BIOHAZ 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 WG. The deadline for this mandates is 30 September 2024.

7. New mandates

No new mandates were received since the previous BIOHAZ Plenary meeting.

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

8.1. Scientific Committee

The BIOHAZ Panel Chair briefly reported the outcome of the last meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC)¹⁶. He indicated that the SC is resuming work towards the finalisation of a draft guidance on appraising and integrating evidence from epidemiological studies for use in EFSA's scientific assessments, which is however not closely connected to the BIOHAZ area. The Panel may be consulted in due time on this document.

8.2. European Commission

No discussion took place under this agenda item.

8.3. EFSA Guidance on protocol development for EFSA's scientific assessments and related public consultation

¹⁴ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00090>

¹⁵ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00105>

¹⁶ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/113th-plenary-meeting-scientific-committee>



No comments were provided by the BIOHAZ Panel members on the guidance document currently under public consultation.

8.4. Update on Rapid Outbreak Assessments and related activities

EFSA staff Eleonora Sarno presented the latest published report on the assessment of a multi-country outbreak of infections caused by *Salmonella* Virchow ST16 infections linked to the consumption of meat products containing chicken meat. The event background was followed by the description of the food investigation and the joint EFSA-ECDC assessment.

8.5. Presentation on EFSA AHAW Panel's opinion on the assessment of listing and categorisation of animal diseases within the framework of the Animal Health Law (Regulation (EU) No 2016/429) - antimicrobial-resistant veterinary pathogens

EFSA AHAW Panel Member Julio Alvarez and EFSA Staff Lisa Kohnle presented to the Panel the outcomes of a mandate sent from the European Commission to assess antimicrobial-resistant bacteria responsible for animal transmissible diseases, with a view to listing such pathogens for European Union action. EFSA developed an ad hoc method (published in a Scientific Opinion) on the procedures to be followed to identify and assess the most relevant antimicrobial-resistant animal pathogens that constitute a threat to animal health, and subsequently applied the method to the relevant resistant pathogens identified¹⁷.

9. Other topics for information and/or discussion

9.1. Implementation of the guidance on uncertainty analysis in scientific assessments

Panel member Maarten Nauta presented to the Panel a preliminary review about the implementation of uncertainty analysis within BIOHAZ Panel's scientific opinions since year 2020. A more thorough discussion will follow at the next plenary meeting, with a view of agreeing on lessons learnt from uncertainty analysis implementation and identifying the most suitable methods to implement depending on the type of assessment questions to be answered. The SC WG on Uncertainty will be also informed and consulted on this exercise. In the meanwhile, all Panel members were asked to review the preliminary documents shared.

9.2. Topics of scientific concern in the area of biological hazards and preparedness

EFSA staff Pietro Stella presented to the Panel a summary of the ideas collected by some Panel members and EFSA staff on possible activities aimed at improving future preparedness to food safety crises, and proposed the selection of three topics as priority ones. Such priority topics are related to the valorisation of food waste, to the use of manure and sludge in agriculture and to plant-based alternatives to dairy products, and to possible related risks. The Panel agreed with such selection. As agreed with European Commission's representatives at the BIOHAZ plenary meeting of January 2023, such topics will be discussed with the European Commission before deciding on how to proceed with any related activity. The Panel will be updated during the next plenary meeting.

¹⁷ <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/8bd9466e00f040ac91769480c70e891e?item=2>



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

Panel member Luisa Peixe briefly updated the Panel on the state of play of the above EMA activities, to whom she is participating on behalf of EFSA. A more thorough update will be given during the next plenary meeting.

10. Any other business

No other topic was discussed.