

**SCIENTIFIC PANEL
ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS
162nd Plenary Meeting**



7-8 June 2023

09:00-17:30/09:00-15:30

MINUTES - Agreed on 22 June 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:**

Sandrine Amsler (DG Health and Food Safety, Unit E1; item 9.2)

■ **EFSA:**

BIOHAW Unit:

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

KNOW Unit:

Georgia Gkrintzali (item 9.2)

■ **Observers:**

Not applicable

■ **Others:**

Not applicable

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

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



3. Declarations of Interest

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 161st Plenary meeting held on 26 and 27 April 2023

The minutes of the 161st Plenary meeting held on 26 and 27 April 2023 were agreed by written procedure on 11 May 2023⁴.

5. Scientific outputs submitted for possible adoption or endorsement

5.1. 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 3 May in Parma 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 were evaluated for a possible QPS status: *Anaerobutyricum soehngenii*, Microorganism strain DSM 11798, *Pseudomonas stutzeri* and *Nannochloropsis oculata* (algae) and conclusions presented. The ELS exercise was finalised and summaries presented. Document was adopted by the BIOHAZ Panel.

5.2. 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)⁶

The WG Chair presented the draft opinion to the Panel for possible adoption. The WG chair informed that most of the comments provided by Panel members beforehand had been addressed and the draft amended accordingly. Only the most relevant ones were reviewed by the WG chair during the plenary. Then, the conclusions, summary and abstract were read out loud and commented by Panel members. Minor changes were recommended giving more emphasis to the report of the results and eliminating some statements that could be interpreted as risk management or recommendations. Some of the requests for change were actioned immediately in the draft and the rest

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/161st-biohaz-panel-plenary-meeting>

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

⁶ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2022-00455>



will be addressed after the plenary (formatting of graphs, tables moved to Appendices). Finally, the BIOHAZ Panel adopted the scientific opinion.

6. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion

6.1. Statement on how to interpret the QPS qualification on 'acquired antimicrobial resistance genes' (EFSA-Q-2023-00096)⁷

Last (4th) web-meeting took place on 5 June by web-meeting. The Public Consultation (PC) was launched on 2 May and remained open until 2 June⁸. Dedicated notification emails have been sent to relevant stakeholders and networks (Zoonoses, MRA, EFSA Advisory Forum, Focal Points etc). Next WG meeting will take place on 4 September by web-meeting. PC Report will be prepared and published with the Panel Statement. The summary of the type of input received during the PC was presented to the Panel. The deadline for possible adoption of the PS and acceptance of the PC report is 30 September 2023.

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-2023-00054)⁹

Last meeting took place on 3 May in Parma. The experts started discussing how this new QPS opinion will be structured. The experts discussed a few proposals for the new challenges/themes to be included in this opinion; these were presented to the Panel and preliminarily discussed. The next WG meeting will be on 27 June by web meeting. The QPS opinion document will be presented to the BIOHAZ Panel for possible adoption in December 2025.

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, 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)¹⁰

The last WG meeting took place online on 30 May (afternoon) 2023. The WG Chair presented the full Part 1 opinion discussing all comments received from the Panel. Some of these comments were immediately addressed and others will be considered by the WG in their next review of the draft opinion. The secretariat 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) plans to use the relevant information included in the replies obtained to the EU survey questionnaire. EFSA and the WG are still reviewing the second version of the third deliverable submitted to EFSA, which is expected to be approved this month. The secretariat also updated the Panel on the next milestones of the WASHTOP tender. The next WG meeting will be in Parma from 4 to 5 July 2023. The Panel agreed with anticipating the adoption of the Part 1 Scientific Opinion from October 2023 to September 2023, considering that the current draft was recognised by the Panel to be very mature and consolidated including the answers to

⁷ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00096>

⁸ <https://connect.efsa.europa.eu/RM/s/publicconsultation2/a0109000006r4Ki/pc0434>

⁹ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00054>

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



all ToRs. The deadline for the adoption of the Parts 2, 3, 4 and 5 Scientific Opinions is 31 December 2024.

6.4. Scientific opinion on the persistence of microbiological hazards in food and feed production and processing environments (EFSA-Q-2022-00217)¹¹

The last WG meeting was held on 10 May 2023 by web-conference. An update on the assessment question 6 “*What are the perspectives of integrating the information gathered in the previous AQs in risk assessment?*” was given. This covered the perspectives of the bottom-up quantitative microbial risk assessment (QMRA) with the persistence module, using cooked meat as a case study. The model performance was shown, and the R shiny app of the “Persistence model Listeria” introduced. The baseline situation and relative risk of scenarios were presented. It was discussed which parameter(s) in the model would best represent persistence and what would most impact on the risk reduction. Further it was requested to suggest at the next plenary what this assessment would cover: (i) the available persistence models and data needs; (ii) the hazard *L. monocytogenes* or also *Salmonella*, and (iii) the inclusion of the top-down approach. The next WG meeting will be held on 9 June 2023 in Parma. The deadline for adoption of the Scientific Opinion is 31 December 2023.

6.5. Scientific opinion on the public health aspects of *Vibrio* spp. related to the consumption of seafood in the EU (EFSA-Q-2022-00826)¹²

The third WG meeting was held on 5 June 2023 by web-conference. The WG chair presented the protocol to the Panel for possible approval. She informed that all the comments provided by Panel members before the WG meeting have been discussed with the WG members and the draft amended accordingly. The most relevant ones were reviewed by the WG Chair during the plenary and, following discussion, the protocol was approved. The third WG meeting will be held by web-conference on 17 July 2023. The deadline for adoption of this Scientific Opinion is 30 June 2024.

6.6. 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-2023-00059)¹³

The WG Chair informed that there was no specific update to provide to the Panel. There had not been any meeting since the previous plenary. The next will take place on Friday 9 June 2023 as a full-day physical meeting. The WG Chair informed though that the work is progressing well and probably the draft report will be shared with the Panel in the July plenary.

6.7. 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)¹⁴

The WG chair updated the panel on the outcome of the first WG meeting held on 12 May 2023. The approach was agreed with this EC, i.e. comparing the current and proposed monitoring system using Australian beef and sheep carcase monitoring data.

¹¹ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2022-00217>

¹² <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2022-00826>

¹³ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00059>

¹⁴ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00058>



The WG discussed the draft protocol which will be presented to the panel together with the model outline at the July plenary. The next WG meeting is 14 July 2023. The deadline for this mandate is 31 December 2023.

6.8. 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)¹⁵

The second meeting on the WG took place on 24 May. The Chair of the WG reminded the BIOHAZ Panel about the Terms of Reference (ToRs) of the EU mandate. He presented the draft protocol containing ToRs interpretation, the problem formulation, i.e. the translation of the ToRs into assessment questions (AQs) and sub-questions (SQs), where applicable, as well as the methods that will be applied for conducting the assessment. The third WG meeting will be held by web-conference on 21 June 2023. 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.

6.9. 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)¹⁶

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. The working group is being established. Invitations and DoI requests will be sent soon with the idea to hold the first meeting in July, either the week before the July plenary or after. It was also announced the nomination of Avelino Alvarez-Ordóñez as Chair of the new WG.

7. New mandates

EFSA Secretariat informed the Panel that a new application related to the area of Animal by-products is in the process of being submitted to EFSA. Upon receipt, the application will undergo completeness check.

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

8.1. Scientific Committee

No new meeting of the Scientific Committee has taken place before the previous BIOHAZ Plenary meeting.

8.2. European Commission

No discussion took place under this agenda item.

¹⁵ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00090>

¹⁶ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00105>



9. Other topics for information and/or discussion

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

Discussion on this agenda item was postponed to the next plenary meeting.

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

EFSA staff Georgia Gkrintzali updated the Panel in relation to the topics discussed during the 28th and 29th EFSA Emerging Risks Exchange Network (EREN)^{17,18} of relevance for biological hazards, focusing in particular on: relevance of *Bacillus cytotoxicus* as a foodborne pathogen, microbiological hazards in non-dairy plant-based cheese substitutes, correlation between the *Salmonella* contamination of sesame seeds and the presence of ethylene oxide residues, spread of *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, increased consumption of crocodile meat and risk posed by *Salmonella*, and characterization of *Escherichia coli* from edible insect species.

EFSA staff Pietro Stella updated the Panel on the feedback received from the European Commission (DG SANTE) in relation to the ideas collected and discussed at the previous plenaries on possible activities aimed at improving future preparedness to food safety incidents. European Commission representative indicated that further feedback will be provided shortly to EFSA. This will be considered to decide on the way forward for development of any of those ideas within the recently initiated EFSA Focal Point operational framework 2023-2027.

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

Discussion on this agenda item was postponed to the next plenary meeting.

10. Any other business

No other topic was discussed.

¹⁷ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/28th-emerging-risks-exchange-network-meeting>

¹⁸ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/29th-emerging-risks-exchange-network-meeting>