

25-26 October 2023

09:00-17:30 / 09:00-13:00

MINUTES - Agreed on 9 November 2023

Location: Webconference

Attendees:

o Panel Members:

Ana Allende, Avelino Alvarez-Ordóñez, Declan Bolton, Sara Bover-Cid, Marianne Chemaly, Alessandra De Cesare, Lieve Herman (26 October), Friederike Hilbert, Konstantinos Koutsoumanis, Roland Lindqvist, Maarten Nauta, Romolo Nonno, Giuseppe Ru, Luisa Peixe, Marion Simmons, Panagiotis Skandamis, Elisabetta Suffredini

o Hearing Experts¹:

Not Applicable

o European Commission and/or Member States representatives:

Not attending

o EFSA:

Kateryna Chuzhakina, Sandra Correia, Maria Teresa Da Silva Felicio, Sofia Fusco, Beatriz Guerra, Michaela Hempen, Ernesto Liebana, Joana Lourenco, Winy Messens, Angel Ortiz-Peláez, Eleonora Sarno, Pietro Stella, Frank Verdonck

o Others:

None

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Lieve Herman for participation to the first day of meeting (25 October).

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Declarations of Interest of Panel members

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.

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/en/keydocs/docs/expertselection.pdf>

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. Agreement of the minutes of the 164th Panel Plenary meeting held on 27-28 September 2023 by webconference

The minutes of the 164th Panel plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 19 October 2023.

5. Scientific output(s) submitted for adoption/endorsement

No scientific outputs were submitted for adoption or endorsement.

6. Scientific Output 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-2023-00054)⁴

Last meeting took place on 4 September by web meeting. There was no further development since the last plenary. The next working Group (WG) meeting will be on 7 November in Parma. The QPS opinion document will be presented to the BIOHAZ Panel for possible adoption in December 2025.

6.2 Statement on the update of the list of QPS-recommended biological agents intentionally added to food or feed as notified to EFSA. 19: Suitability of taxonomic units notified to EFSA until September 2023 (EFSA-Q-2021-00771)⁵

Last meeting took place on 4 September by web meeting. Seventy-one notifications were received between April and September 2023 (inclusive): 30 as feed additives, 22 as food enzymes, food additives and flavourings, 7 as novel foods and 12 as PPPs. From these 71, 61 were not evaluated because belong to taxonomic units excluded from the QPS evaluation (26 filamentous fungi, 1 *Enterococcus faecium*, 5 *E. coli* and 1 bacteriophage), and 28 belong to taxonomic units that already have a QPS status. The remaining 10 notifications, corresponding to 9 TUs, were evaluated for a possible QPS status: *Serratia marcescens* (2 notifications), *Weizmannia faecalis*, *Clostridium tyrobutyricum*, *Burkholderia ubonensis*, *Ensifer adhaerens*, *Candida oleophila*, *Pseudomonas putida*, *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii* and *Klebsiella pneumoniae*. The screening phase of the extensive literature search (ELS) for potential safety concerns related to the QPS list TUs is finalised and the article evaluation is being finalized. The last WG meeting will be held in Parma on 7 November. The deadline is 30 December 2023.

6.3 Scientific opinion on microbiological hazards associated with the use of water in postharvest handling and processing operations of fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables and herbs – parts 2-5 (EFSA-Q-2023-00073⁶, EFSA-Q-2023-00074⁷, EFSA-Q-2023-00075⁸ and EFSA-Q-2023-00076⁹), including associated outsourcing activities (OC/EFSA/BIOCONTAM/2021/02

⁴ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00054?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00054>

⁵ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2021-00771?search=EFSA-Q-2021-00771>

⁶ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00073?search=EFSA-Q-2021-00771>

⁷ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00074?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00074>

⁸ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00075?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00075+>

⁹ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00076?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00076>



The last WG meeting took place on 5 October 2023 in Parma. The Chair presented the progress of work made with the Parts 2, 3, 4 and 5 Scientific Opinions. The Panel agreed with the proposal from the WG to structure the sector-specific draft opinions using similar subsections as the ones included in the WHO water safety management plan documents for drinking water. The next WG meeting will be a web meeting on 30 October 2023. The Chair also presented the contents of Deliverable 4 (D4) submitted by the WASHTOP consortium to EFSA as well as an update about the discussions which took place on 23-24 October during the meeting of all WASHTOP consortium partners with EFSA to discuss D4. The Panel provided some comments to D4 which were addressed (in particular to the model) and it was agreed that the proposed model structure can be considered as final. The D4 will be returned to WASHTOP with comments from WG and EFSA and once WASHTOP replies with their agreement on the suggestions made and provides the requested clarifications this deliverable will be considered as approved. 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)¹⁰

The last WG meeting was held on 10-11 October 2023 in Parma during which a brainstorming was held on the knowledge gaps and priorities for future research related to bacterial food safety hazards associated with persistence in food and feed production and processing environments. The concluding remarks and conclusions were carefully reviewed. The revised draft scientific opinion was shared with the BIOHAZ Panel for thorough reading. The WG Chair went through the various comments requiring a discussion with the BIOHAZ Panel. In general, no major comments were received, but the BIOHAZ Panel requested to better balance the list of knowledge gaps and priorities for future research considering both the usefulness for scientists and food business operators. The comments from the BIOHAZ Panel will be discussed at the last WG meeting on 15 and 20 November by web-conference and the scientific opinion finalised. 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)¹¹

The last WG meeting was held by web-conference on 13 October 2023. The WG Chair presented the revised section of the draft scientific opinion dealing with SQ1.1 (*Vibrio* spp. of highest public health relevance). The BIOHAZ Panel, following the discussion, endorsed this section of the opinion. The conclusion remains that, based on epidemiological evidence and occurrence in seafood, species other than *V. parahaemolyticus*, *V. vulnificus* and non-O1, non-O139 *V. cholerae* are less frequently found in seafood placed or intended to be placed on the EU market and have been rarely identified as the cause of illness in humans in the EU through seafood consumption. Therefore, only the *Vibrio* spp. mentioned above will be further considered in the opinion. Some more advanced sections of the draft opinion were discussed with the BIOHAZ Panel and no major comments were received. The next WG meeting will be held on 5 December 2023 in Parma. The deadline for adoption of this Scientific Opinion is 30 June 2024.

6.6 Scientific report of EFSA on the impact of the proposed revised Australia's microbiological monitoring programme for beef and sheep meat exported to the EU (EFSA-Q-2023-00058)¹²

¹⁰ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2022-00217?search=EFSA-Q-2022-00217>

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

¹² <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00058?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00058>



The last WG meeting was held on 12th October 2023 to which a hearing expert was invited to present the calculations for the operating characteristics (OC) curves presented in the equivalence submission. The WG Chair updated the Panel about the impact of this additional information on the ongoing assessment. Two options were presented, either assuming a worst-case scenario based on carcass samples or carrying out a complete analysis including the data from bulk meat and primal cuts. A complete analysis would require the analysis of the bulk meat and primal cut data and an additional model to include these in the estimation of the average annual number of alerts. The way forward will be discussed further in consultation with the European Commission. The next WG meeting is scheduled on 8th November 2023. The deadline for this mandate is 31 December 2023.

6.7 Scientific opinion on 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)¹³

The seventh meeting of the WG took place on 5 October in EFSA premises. The Chair of the WG presented the developments since the last plenary for the draft scientific opinion with regards to term of reference 1: main EU/EFTA aquaculture finfish species, parasites of public health importance, and data on the occurrence of those parasites in the finfish species considered; term of reference 2: update on the diagnostic/detection methods since 2010; and term of reference 3: update on the methods/treatments available or under development for the inactivation or removal of those parasites. The eighth WG meeting will be held on 14 November 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.

6.8 Scientific opinion on the potential BSE risk posed by ruminant collagen and gelatine other than derived from hides and skins (EFSA-Q-2023-00105)¹⁴

The Chair of the WG reminded the term of reference and presented the work progress since the last plenary. The second meeting of the WG took place on 9-10 October. The WG reviewed the clarifications to the terms of reference sent by the EC, reviewed the data and information from the industry and decided on the approaches. As part of the protocol development, five assessment questions were presented. Regarding the methodology, the Chair presented the main features of the quantitative risk assessment based on a simplified version of the model developed for the EFSA 2020 opinion for the production of gelatine from an infected bovine animal. Two more versions of the model will be developed: one for sheep and another for bovine excluding skull and vertebral column. The Chair informed of the discussions on the possible submission for adoption in June 2024, three months before the agreed deadline. Given the transfer of the TSE portfolio to the AHAW Panel from 1 January 2024, this would prevent the overlapping with the AHAW Panel and the possible adoption by the renovated AHAW Panel. The final decision will be made in December for which an extra meeting has been scheduled. It is expected that the protocol will be submitted for approval to the BIOHAZ Panel in December. The possibility of conducting an informal/semi-formal EKE to produce final conclusions was suggested by the Chair. The Panel recommended to decide as soon as possible and prepare well in advance this exercise. The third meeting is scheduled for 24 November 2023.

6.9 Application alternative method ECN tunnel composting (EFSA-Q-2023-00448)¹⁵

¹³ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00090?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00090>

¹⁴ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00105>

¹⁵ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00448?search=EFSA-Q-2023-00448%29+>



The Chair of the WG reminded of the new ABP application submitted by the Belgian competent authority on behalf of the European Compost Network (ECN) on New European Transformation Parameters for Composting Animal By-Products in a Tunnel. He highlighted the differences with the application evaluated in 2019-2020. Then the workplan was shared with the Panel. The contractor will deliver the draft of the scientific opinion by 20 November, one week before the first meeting of the ABP working group. The draft opinion will be submitted then for first reading to the BIOHAZ Panel on the December plenary. There is no date for the second WG meeting yet.

6.10 Request for a scientific opinion on the evaluation of the safety and efficacy of peroxyacetic acid (PAA) to reduce microbiological surface contamination on beef carcasses, half carcasses and quarter carcasses (EFSA-Q-2022-00626)¹⁶

EFSA staff from the BIOHAW Unit and the vice-Chair of the WG briefed the BIOHAZ Panel on the outcome of the meeting of the working group from the CEP Panel on the evaluation of substances used to reduce microbial contamination from products of animal origin, held on 16 October 2023 by web-conference. The request for additional information was discussed and will be sent to the applicant. The initial deadline to deliver the Scientific Opinion of 11 September 2023 will be extended accordingly.

7. New mandates

No new mandates were received since the previous Plenary meetings.

8. Feedback from the Scientific Committee/ Scientific Panels/EFSA/ EC

8.1 Scientific Committee

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

8.2 European Commission

No new feedback or information has been received from the European Commission about upcoming mandates or other relevant topics for discussion in addition to what indicated at the previous Plenary meeting.

8.3 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 Senftenberg ST14 infections possibly linked to cherry-like tomatoes. The event background was followed by the description of the food investigation and the joint EFSA-ECDC assessment¹⁷.

8.4 Update on activities of the EFSA Scientific Network on MRA

BIOHAW Unit staff informed the Panel about the 23rd annual meeting of the network on Microbiological Risk Assessment (MRA), that took place on 4-5 October 2023. Participants

¹⁶ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2022-00626?search=EFSA-Q-2022-00626>

¹⁷ <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.2903/sp.efsa.2023.EN-8211>



from 21 Member States, Norway and Switzerland as well as Observers from Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia attended in Parma or online. Apologies were received from Malta, Poland, Romania and Spain. A wide range of activities related to microbial risk assessment were presented including pathogenicity of STEC, risks due to power failure, heating and refrigerated storage of eggs, milk from dairy farms with botulism, *Echinococcus* eggs on berries, *Salmonella* in the pork chain, *Campylobacter* transmission routes, *Listeria monocytogenes* growth and presence in ready-to-eat foods, pathogenic *Enterobacteriaceae* in cakes, pericarditis in broilers at post-mortem and update on *Taenia solium* outbreak. Activities of the EFSA BIOHAZ Panel and the BIOHAW Unit were presented. Meeting minutes are published on the EFSA website.¹⁸ The next annual meeting is planned for autumn 2024.

8.5 Update on activities of the EFSA Scientific Network on BSE-TSE

BIOHAW unit staff briefed on the 18th annual meeting of the BSE/TSE network, that took place on 11 October 2023, as a half-day only meeting. Participants from 23 EU Member States, Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia attended the meeting online. This is the first time the meeting has this format. The scientific session was eliminated and only the general session was included in the agenda. The topics presented were: animal and public health risks of relaxing the feed ban by the Netherlands; provisional results of the 2022 TSE EU summary report, updates of the TSE activities by the TSE EURL, EFSA and the WOAAH. The EC sent a presentation on the regulatory aspects of TSE in the last 12 months, that was presented by EFSA on their behalf. At the end, there was an open discussion with all members and speakers. The main topics discussed were: the delisting of atypical BSE by the WOAAH, the latest updates of the situation of CWD in Norway and future plans, the importance of having meetings like the EFSA network in a context of decaying interest in TSE, the potential risks associated with changes in the regulatory framework of TSE by the EU and the uncertainties about many aspects of the different TSE, the future surveillance for TSE in Europe following the changes by the WOAAH, and the impact of the end co-funding of TSE testing by the EC from next year. Meeting minutes are published on the EFSA website.¹⁹

9. Other topics for information and/or discussion

9.1 Implementation of the guidance on uncertainty analysis in scientific assessments

Discussion on this topic was postponed to the next BIOHAZ plenary meeting.

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

EFSA staff from BIOHAW Unit summarised to the Panel recent exchanges between the EFSA BIOHAW Unit and the European Commission in relation to findings, in the last years, of resistance to carbapenems in *E. coli* isolated from food-producing animals and food in various EU countries, mediated by some resistance mechanisms increasingly found in human isolates. The item was also presented for discussion to the EFSA Advisory Forum on 4-5 October 2023 and to the EFSA Scientific Network on MRA. In both occasions Member State representatives expressed concerns for the findings and supported the need to investigate them further. EFSA BIOHAW unit is discussing internally how to follow-up on this topic, and the BIOHAZ Panel supported the drafting of a BIOHAZ selftask addressing this.

¹⁸ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/23rd-meeting-efsa-network-microbiological-risk-assessment>

¹⁹ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/18th-meeting-efsa-biocontam-biohaz-bse-tse-network>



It was also reported that during the last EFSA Scientific Network on MRA (see also item 8.4), among the topics brought up for discussion by Member States on the agenda, an item was included on possible risks related to plant-based alternatives to dairy products. This was also prioritised by the BIOHAZ Panel in recent plenaries as a topic to be considered for possible activities aimed at improving future preparedness to food safety incidents.

10. Any other business

As a follow-up of information provided at the previous plenary meeting, EFSA Staff from the BIOHAW confirmed to the Panel that EFSA will support a scientific session at the conference FoodMicro2024. The Panel was reminded that the next Plenary meeting, taking place on 6-7 December 2023, will be open to observers.