

# SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON PLANT HEALTH

119<sup>th</sup> Plenary meeting – Open to observers

30-31 January and 1 February 2024

9:00-13:00

MINUTES - Agreed on 21 February 2024



**Location:** Teleconference

**Attendees:**

○ PLH Panel Members:

Claude BRAGARD (Chair), Paula BAPTISTA, Elisavet CHATZIVASSILIOU, Francesco DI SERIO, Paolo GONTHIER, Josep JAQUES, Annamarie JUSTESEN, Alan MACLEOD, Christer MAGNUSSON, Panagiotis MILONAS, Juan NAVAS-CORTES, Stephen PARNELL, Philippe REIGNAULT, Roel POTTING, Emilio STEFANI, Hans-Hermann THULKE, Antonio VICENT CIVERA, Wopke VAN DER WERF, Jonathan YUEN, Lucia ZAPPALÀ.

○ EFSA PLANTS Unit:

Joao Filipe CAVALHEIRO, Ewelina CZWIENCZEK, Cristiana DO VALE CORREIA, Ciro GARDI, Alex GOBBI, Dejana GOLIC, Agata KACZMAREK, Virág KERTÉSZ, Andrea MAIORANO, Raghavendra Reddy MANDA, Marco PAUTASSO, Giuseppe STANCANELLI, Franz STREISSL, Emanuela TACCI, Anastasia TERZIDOU

○ EFSA Coordinated Communications: Filippo POSITANO

○ MESE Unit: Olaf MOSBACH-SHULZ

○ Hearing Experts:

Cristina CASTRACANI (University of Parma), Marc DE MEYER (EU Project FF IPM), Massimo FACCOLI (University of Padova), Valerie GRIMAUULT (EPPO), Matteo MARCHIORO (University of Padova), Dmitri MUSOLIN (EPPO), Nikolaos PAPADOPOULOS (EU project FF IPM), Camille PICARD (EPPO), Andrea SCIARRETTA (EU Project FF IPM).

○ Observers:

Adel ABDELAAL, Antigoni AKRIVOU, Antigoni AKRIVOU, Maria Teresa BARRES BENLLOCH, Valter BELLUCCI, Anita BENKO BELOGLAVEC, Pietro BERTOLOTTA, Rene BIBARS-REITER, Niklas BJÖRKLUND, Chiara BIGNAMI, Cengiz BOSTANCI, Helena BRAGANÇA, Grazia BRAMANTE, Alies BRANDJES, Felix BREDENOW, Felix BREDENOW, Angela BRUNETTI, Jorge CAPITÃO, Magdalena CARA, MIRELA CEAN, Paola COCCETTI, Jose Juan CORTES PLANA, Rosaria COZZOLINO, Leonor CRUZ, Ciarán CULLEN, Iliaria CUTINO, Zsófia CZAKÓ, Katarzyna DĄBROWSKA, Usharani DANDAMUDI, Naim DELIJAJ, Sara DI LONARDO, Pauline FARIGOULE, Lorenzo FERRONI, Francesca GARGANESE, Elisabetta GARGANI, Marta GINER, Eugenia GOUVEIA, Walid HAMADA, Magdalena HASENZAGL, Gábor Indra HIDALGO, Mira IBRIK, Maria INACIO, Tiziana IRDANI, Thorhildur ISBERG, Agnieszka KABAŁA-JANECZEK, Ioannis KILITZIDIS, Vlasta KNOROVÁ, Andrea KUNOVA, Blanca B LANDA, Bruna LARATTA, Paola LOPEZ, Ines MACCHIAROLA, Marta MAGDOLENOVA, Emilia MARKELLOU, Elena MARROCCHINO, Emanuela MAURIZI, Conor MCGEE, Martin MEDVEĎ, Helene MENG, Daniela MURESAN, Pedro NAVES, Kudakwashe NYARUWATA, David OPATOWSKI, Vitantonio PANTALEO, Maria PAPPAS, Martin PASTIRČÁK, Diana PINTO, Stefano PRETI, Camelia RAICEA, Roberto RIZZO, Maria Chiara ROSACE, Giampaolo RUBINACCIO, Gianni SACCHETTI, Aurora SCARDUZIO, Marta SCHILLER, Angelo SCOTTI, Loredana SIGILLO, Valentina ŠOŠTARČIĆ, Damiana Natasha SPADAFORA, Junayed SUMAN, Wei Jian TAN, Tatyana TANKOVA, Kebede TEDILA, Laura TOMASSOLI, Luigia TRABACE, Mihaela TUDORACHE, Juha TUOMOLA, Peng ZENG.



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

The Panel Chair welcomed all participants and emphasised the importance of holding the Panel meeting open to observers to increase transparency and advertise the work done at EFSA and in Plant Health field. Housekeeping rules were set, including guidelines for cameras and microphones during discussions.

The panel's main focus was outlined, covering the risk assessment of specific plant pests through rapid categorisations, full quantitative pest risk assessments, and the evaluation of risks to EU plant health from specific plant commodities, particularly high-risk plants or those subject to derogation requests under EU Plant Health Law. Each panel member briefly introduced themselves, highlighting their expertise and involvement in various working groups.

Giuseppe Stancanelli (EFSA) presented the EFSA PLANTS unit activities and the Plant Health Risk Assessment team, highlighting the collaboration with other EFSA units and external entities. It was stressed that 90 registered observers representing 19 EU Member States and 16 non-EU countries were welcomed to this open panel meeting, underlining the importance of transparency and engagement with European citizens.

Apologies were received from Panagiotis Milonas related to the 31 January and 1 February.

## **II. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted without changes.

## **III. Declarations of Interest of Working Groups members**

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence<sup>[1]</sup> and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management,<sup>[2]</sup> EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group 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.

Certain interests were declared orally by the members before the beginning of the meeting. For further details on the outcome of the screening of the Oral Declaration of Interest made at the beginning of the meeting, please refer to the Annex I.

## **IV. Presentation on EFSA guidelines for observers**

Giuseppe Stancanelli (EFSA) presented the guidelines for observers, which were previously sent by email. Participants were reminded that a Q&A session would be held at the end of the plenary, and they may ask questions either in the chat (during the Q&A session) or by emailing the PLANTS functional mailbox.

## **V. Report on written procedure agreement of the minutes of the 118<sup>th</sup> Panel plenary meeting held on 15 December 2023**

Emanuela Tacci (EFSA) informed the Panel Members that the minutes of the 118th Panel plenary meeting will be sent by email to the Panel with deadline until next Monday 5 February 2024 for feedback and comments. After this date, the minutes are considered as agreed and will be published on EFSA website.

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## VI. Scientific topic(s) for discussion

### 6.1. Draft opinion of pest categorisation on *Garella musculana* (EFSA-Q-2024-00018)

The European Commission requested the EFSA Panel on Plant Health to conduct a pest categorisation of *Garella musculana* (Erschov) (Lepidoptera: Nolidae), following a commodity risk assessment of *Juglans regia* plants for planting from Türkiye, in which *G. musculana* was identified as a pest of possible concern to the European Union (EU). Commonly known as the Asian walnut moth, this pest is native to Central Asia and develops on shoots, buds, and fruits of *Juglans* species such as the English walnut, *J. regia*, and the black walnut, *J. nigra*. Other reported host plants, such as *Prunus dulcis* and *Populus* spp., still require confirmation. The pest was first recorded in the EU (Bulgaria) in 2016 and was then reported in Romania in 2018 and Italy in 2021. This moth completes from one to four generations per year depending on environmental conditions (from valley to mountain forests and orchards up to an altitude of 2,100 m). Eggs are laid in groups of 2-3 on young nuts or on buds of one-year-old shoots. Neonate larvae usually enter the young nut through the peduncle. After fully exploiting one nut, the larva continues feeding in another one. Development takes 25–40 days. Larvae of the autumn generation do not enter the nuts, and so feed only in the pericarp. Larvae also often feed inside one-year-old shoots or leaf axils. Larvae develop within the host but exit to pupate under loose bark or in deep cracks of bark. The pest overwinters at the larval or pupal stages. Plants for planting, cut branches and infested nuts provide pathways for entry. Climatic conditions and availability of host plants in southern and central EU MSs have allowed this species to establish and spread in Bulgaria, Romania, and Italy. Adults can fly and the pest could spread naturally within the EU. Impact on *Juglans* spp. cultivated for fruit, timber, and ornamental purposes, is anticipated. Phytosanitary measures are available to reduce the likelihood of entry and further spread of *G. musculana*. This species meets the criteria that are within the remit of EFSA to assess for this species to be regarded as a potential Union quarantine pest.

The scientific opinion was adopted on 1 February.

### 6.2. Withdrawal and re-adoption of the pest categorisation on *Dendrolimus punctatus* (EFSA-Q-2023-00315), to include taxonomical information on subspecies.

The EFSA Panel on Plant Health performed a pest categorisation of *Dendrolimus punctatus* (Lepidoptera: Lasiocampidae), following a commodity risk assessment of bonsai *Pinus parviflora* grafted onto *P. thunbergii* from China, in which *D. punctatus* was identified as a pest of possible concern to the European Union (EU). *D. punctatus*, also known as the Masson pine caterpillar, is present in China, Taiwan, Vietnam, India, and has recently spread to Japanese islands close to Taiwan. Larval feeding on the needles of *Pinus elliotii*, *P. luchuensis*, *P. massoniana*, *P. merkusii*, and *P. tabulaeformis* causes important damage. *D. punctatus* larvae can also feed on *P. armandii*, *P. echinata*, *P. latteri*, *P. parviflora*, *P. sylvestris* var. *mongolica*, *P. taeda*, *P. taiwanensis*, and *P. thunbergii* but full development on these hosts is uncertain. The pest has three to five generations per year; winter is spent as larvae on branch tips, on tree trunks, and in the soil. The females lay egg clusters on pine needles. Pupation occurs in cocoons attached to branches or needles. *D. punctatus* could enter the EU, either as eggs, larvae, or pupae in the foliage of plants for planting or cut branches, as larvae on wood with bark, or as overwintering larvae in branches, crevices in the bark or in the litter of potted plants. However, Annex VI of 2019/2072 prohibits the introduction of *D. punctatus* hosts (*Pinus* spp.) from countries and areas where the pest occurs. There are climate zones where the pest occurs in Asia that also occur in the EU, though they are limited, which



constitutes an uncertainty regarding establishment. The pest's main hosts are not grown in the EU. However, the fact that it attacks the North American *Pinus echinata*, *P. elliottii*, and *P. taeda* in its Asian native area suggests a potential capacity to shift to pine species occurring in the EU territory. *D. punctatus* satisfies all the criteria that are within the remit of EFSA to assess for it to be regarded as a potential Union quarantine pest. Whether the *Pinus* commonly found in Europe could act as hosts is unknown but is fundamental, affecting the criteria of establishment, and magnitude of impact.

The scientific opinion was re-adopted on 1 February.

**6.3. Draft opinion on commodity risk assessment of plants of twelve selected *Prunus* species from Moldova (EFSA-Q-2020-00533, EFSA-Q-2020-00776, EFSA-Q-2020-00777, EFSA-Q-2020-00778, EFSA-Q-2020-00779, EFSA-Q-2023-00679, EFSA-Q-2023-00680, EFSA-Q-2023-00681, EFSA-Q-2023-00682, EFSA-Q-2023-00683, EFSA-Q-2023-00684, EFSA-Q-2023-00685)**

The European Commission requested the EFSA Panel on Plant Health to prepare and deliver risk assessments for commodities listed in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/2019 as "High- risk plants, plant products and other objects". This Scientific Opinion covers plant health risks posed by defoliated one- or two -year old bare root plants for planting (grafted or not) of twelve *Prunus* species (*Prunus armeniaca*, *P. avium*, *P. canescens*, *P. cerasifera*, *P. cerasus*, *P. davidiana*, *P. domestica*, *P. dulcis*, *P. fontanesiana*, *P. persica*, *P. salicina*, *P. tomentosa*) imported from Moldova, taking into account the available scientific information, including the technical information provided by the applicant country. The evaluation identified three EU-quarantine pests, *Erwinia amylovora* (protected zone quarantine pest), *Xanthomonas arboricola* pv. *pruni* (protected zone quarantine pest) and *Xiphinema rivesi* non-EU populations, which were selected for further evaluation, based on defined criteria, including their presence in the applicant country. It should be noted that there is uncertainty regarding whether all relevant pests have been identified due to a limited number of scientific publications and pest surveys in Moldova. For the three selected pests, the risk mitigation measures proposed in the technical dossier from Moldova were evaluated considering the possible limiting factors. For these pests, an expert judgement is given on the likelihood of pest freedom taking into consideration the risk mitigation measures acting on it, including uncertainties associated with the assessment. The degree of pest freedom varies among the pests evaluated, with *Erwinia amylovora* being the pest most frequently expected on the imported plants. The Expert Knowledge Elicitation indicated, with 95% certainty, that between 9,823 and 10,000 bundles (comprising 10-20 plants per bundle) out of 10,000 bundles would be free from *E. amylovora*.

**6.4. Draft scientific opinion on commodity risk assessment of *Cornus alba* and *Cornus sanguinea* plants from UK (EFSA-Q-2023-00329, EFSA-Q-2023-00330)**

The European Commission requested the EFSA Panel on Plant Health to prepare and deliver risk assessments for commodities listed in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/2019 as 'High risk plants, plant products and other objects'. Considering the available scientific information, including the technical information provided by the applicant country, this Scientific Opinion covers the plant health risks posed by the following commodities: *Cornus alba* and *Cornus sanguinea* bare-root plants and rooted plants in pots up to seven years old imported into the EU from the UK. A list of pests potentially associated with the commodities was compiled. The relevance of any pest was assessed based on evidence following defined criteria. Four EU quarantine pests (*Meloidogyne fallax*, *Phytophthora ramorum* (non-EU isolates), tobacco ringspot virus, and tomato ringspot virus) and one pest



not regulated in the EU (*Discula destructiva*), were selected for further evaluation. For the selected pests, the risk mitigation measures implemented in the technical dossier from the UK were evaluated taking into account the possible limiting factors. For these pests, an expert judgement is given on the likelihood of pest freedom taking into consideration the risk mitigation measures acting on the pest, including uncertainties associated with the assessment. The degree of pest freedom varies among the pests evaluated, with *P. ramorum* being the pest most frequently expected on the imported *C. alba* and *C. sanguinea* plants. The Expert Knowledge Elicitation indicated, with 95% certainty, that between 9,823 and 10,000 bare-root *C. alba* and *C. sanguinea* plants per 10,000 will be free from *P. ramorum*.

The scientific opinion was adopted on 1 February.

#### **6.5. Draft scientific opinion on commodity risk assessment of *Ligustrum ovalifolium* and *Ligustrum vulgare* from UK (EFSA-Q-2023-00333, EFSA-Q-2023-00334)**

The European Commission requested the EFSA Panel on Plant Health to prepare and deliver risk assessments for commodities listed in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2018/2019 as 'High risk plants, plant products and other objects'. This Scientific Opinion covers plant health risks posed by plants of the evergreen *Ligustrum ovalifolium* and the semi-evergreen *L. vulgare* imported from the United Kingdom (UK) as: (a) bare root plants and (b) plants in pots, taking into account the available scientific information, including the technical information provided by the UK. The category (a) 'bare root plants' includes bundles of 1- to 3-year-old bare root whips or transplants and single 1- to 7-year-old bare root plants. The category (b) 'plants in pots' includes bundles of 1- to 2-year-old cell grown plants (only *L. vulgare*) and 1- to 5-year-old plants in pots. All pests associated with the commodities were evaluated against specific criteria for their relevance for this opinion. Two EU quarantine pests, *Bemisia tabaci* and *Scirtothrips dorsalis*, and one pest not regulated in the EU, *Diaprepes abbreviatus*, fulfilled all relevant criteria and were selected for further evaluation. For the selected pests, the risk mitigation measures proposed in the technical dossier from the UK were evaluated taking into account the possible limiting factors. For these pests an expert judgement is given on the likelihood of pest freedom considering the risk mitigation measures acting on the pest, including uncertainties associated with the assessment. In the assessment of risk, the age of the plants was considered, reasoning that older trees are more likely to be infested mainly due to longer exposure time and larger size. The degree of pest freedom varies among the pests evaluated, with *B. tabaci* being the pest most frequently expected on the imported plants. The Expert Knowledge Elicitation indicated with 95% certainty that between 9,915 and 10,000 per 10,000 bare root plants and plants in pots will be free from *B. tabaci*.

The scientific opinion was adopted on 1 February.

## **VII. Feedback from EFSA, Working Groups, SC, EC DG SANTE**

### **7.1 The recent outbreak of the fire ant *Solenopsis invicta* in Italy: an insight of invasive ants in Europe**

Cristina Castracani (University of Parma) presented an overview of the global spread and invasion capacity of alien ant species, particularly the five most invasive ants worldwide and the recent outbreak of *Solenopsis invicta* in Italy. A study on the spread of invasive ant species was highlighted, revealing that out of 15,000 ant species worldwide, 520 are considered alien species, with 309 successfully establishing outdoors. The impacts of these invasive ants were discussed, including the disruption of ecosystems by the yellow crazy ant on Christmas Island



and the effects of the little fire ant on plant survival and human health. Shared characteristics among these invasive species, such as generalized nesting habits and rapid colony growth, were also mentioned. The discovery of *S. invicta* nests in Italy, near Syracuse, was discussed, highlighting the role of citizen science in early detection. Citizen reports helped expand knowledge of the species' presence beyond the initial discovery point.

## **7.2 An update on climate suitability of the EU territory for *Solenopsis invicta***

Alex Gobbi (EFSA) presented an update on the climate suitability of *Solenopsis invicta* within the EU territory starting from summarizing the conclusion of the Pest Categorisation done in March 2023 and guiding the audience through an overview of the most recent papers published on the topic. At the end of the presentation, several questions were made by the Panel Members, mostly regarding the the climate-suitability papers selected for this overview. The conclusions were that the current climate suitability, published in the Pest Categorisation of *Solenopsis invicta*, is still valid for its scope and encompasses the area highlighted in the most up-to-date publications on the topic.

## **7.3 Scolytinae database in support of pest group categorisation: an update**

Matteo Marchioro (University of Padova) provided an introduction and overview of the ongoing work, conducted within an EFSA art 36 grant project supporting the pest categorisation, focusing on Scolytinae beetles of non-coniferous (broadleaved) trees. The importance of this group due to the damage they cause in forests and the threats they pose to various areas, including ecology and economics was emphasized. The project aims to support PLH Panel pest categorisation for this group of insects. The criteria used for categorisation were highlighted, including taxonomy, distribution, host plants, feeding habits, reproductive characteristics, and scholarly citations. The decision tree proposed to prioritise species for their plant health risk based on these criteria was presented and explained.

Over 6,400 Scolytinae species have been collected and categorised into different tables based on their occurrence in Europe, climate suitability, and invasive status. An online database has been developed to facilitate data collection and analysis on these species. An example of the database output, showing the distribution of Scolytinae species native to the United States and Central America, was presented. Additionally, an overview of Scolytinae species already present in Europe and an analysis of their origins and characteristics were provided.

## **7.4 Update on the ongoing pest categorisation on non-EU Scolytinae of non-coniferous (broadleaved) hosts**

Alan MacLeod, Chair of the WG on arthropods pest categorisation, provided an update on the ongoing pest categorisation of non-EU Scolytinae beetles that infest non-coniferous (broadleaved) hosts. A decision tree was presented that filtered 5,219 insect species respect the criteria for potential EU quarantine tests, focusing on the species affecting non-coniferous hosts, not occurring in the EU or having a limited distribution in EU. The presentation detailed the distribution of these species and their potential impact.

The group used criteria such as taxonomy, distribution, breeding habits, and feeding habits for categorisation. It was also discussed how to use Google Scholar citations for indication of economic and environmental impact. A scoring system was developed to rank species based on their traits (reproduction, feeding habits, and host range) and invasion history. A timeline was presented for finalising the draft opinion, incorporating Panel's feedback, and potential adoption by the Panel.

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### **7.5 Update on the ongoing quantitative pest risk assessment of *Retithrips syriacus***

Antonio Vicent Civera, Chair of the WG on Quantitative Pest Risk Assessment (QPRA) section 2, provided an update on the ongoing risk assessment of *Retithrips syriacus* a tropical/sub-tropical pest occurring in South America, India, different African countries and also in Cyprus in the EU. The WG is considering cut roses, persimmons, table grapes, and specific genera of plants for planting as potential entry pathways. The risk assessment steps of entry and establishment are complete, whereas the WG is collecting the evidence to characterise the spread capacity of the thrips and progressing with a careful and critical revision of the evidence for the impact.

### **7.6 Update on Update on the ongoing quantitative pest risk assessment of *Phlyctinus callosus***

Matteo Crotta (EFSA) provided an update on the ongoing risk assessment of *Phlyctinus callosus* a weevil with a distribution currently limited to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The WG is considering the import of table grapes, apples and cut flowers as potential entry pathways. The pathway model for table grapes and apples is complete and ongoing for the cut flowers. The WG has consulted different hearing experts and is currently integrating the additional information provided, including distribution data, in the assessment. In parallel, the WG is collecting the evidence to characterise the spread capacity of the *P. callosus* and the literature to inform the assessment of the impact, including the impact on ornamental plants.

### **7.7 Update on the ongoing quantitative pest risk assessment of *Leucinodes* species from Africa**

Wopke van der Werf, Chair of the WG on Quantitative Pest Risk Assessment (QPRA) section 2, provided an update on the ongoing risk assessment of the *Leucinodes* sp. complex species in Africa. The taxonomy of *Leucinodes* spp. in Africa was recently revised by Mally et al. 2015. Eight species are known to occur in Africa currently: *L. africensis*, *L. rimavallis*, *L. pseudorbonalis*, *L. kenyensis*, *L. malawiensis*, *L. laisalis*, *L. ethiopica*, and *L. ugandensis*. There is no confirmed presence of *L. orbonalis* in Africa in the literature (but the research in this topic is very dynamic) and multiple hearing experts were consulted regarding that matter from Taiwan, Nigeria and Uganda. There is relatively little information on the biology and geographic distribution of African species of *Leucinodes*, contrary to the Asian species *Leucinodes orbonalis*. *Solanum aethiopicum* is the mostly frequently reported host of *Leucinodes* spp. from Africa. Only one species of *Leucinodes* has been found north of the Sahara desert: *L. laisalis*. *L. laisalis* has been present in Spain since 1958 and has spread slowly and there are no reports of significant damage. It is not under official control in the EU. The WG therefore focuses on species that occur south of the Sahara desert, excluding *L. laisalis* from the analysis.

### **7.8 A proposed approach and timeline for standard protocols for recurrent scientific questions in plant health** (following EFSA Scientific Committee Guidance on protocol development for EFSA generic scientific assessments <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/8312>)

Giuseppe Stancanelli (EFSA) and Hans-Herman Thulke (PLH Panel) presented an approach for establishing standard protocols for recurrent plant health scientific assessments, following



the EFSA Scientific Committee's guidance. The key principles, as outlined also in the EFSA Strategy 2027, include upfront problem formulation and upfront specification of evidence needs and methods. There was an emphasis on the necessity of developing fit-for-purpose protocols for EFSA generic scientific assessments (not applications), i.e., pest categorisation, quantitative pest risk assessment, and commodity risk assessment. An example of APRIO protocol was presented, highlighting the integration of a generic protocol approach with established procedures. This integration involved tiering questions, formulating expected outputs per tiered question, proposing possible methods during planning, and formulating valid questions for expert knowledge elicitation (EKEs). Following the above-mentioned guidance, a standard protocol could be developed for each type of recurrent scientific assessments in plant health, i.e pest categorisation, quantitative pest risk assessment and commodity risk assessment, also including data collection and climate suitability assessment. This could be obtained by drafting a Panel statement (with specific appendices e.g. for QPRA, CRA, Pest Categorisation, Data Collection, and Climate Suitability), which could be updated when necessary. The timeline for preparing it was proposed, starting with the review of the draft by WG chairs, followed by the first commenting phase and Panel discussion in May 2024, and second commenting phase by the Panel followed by discussion of the draft Panel statement for potential adoption at the June 2024 Plenary meeting.

### **7.9 Artificial intelligence for EFSA evidence management**

Ermanno Cavalli (EFSA KNOW Unit) presented the application of AI in EFSA, focusing on the SPIDO 2020 project timeline. The vision for 2027 aligns with Commission goals and emphasizes a human-centric approach. Collaboration with organizations such as JRC, OECD, and EMA was noted, along with a roadmap for AI actions in evidence management for risk assessment, ensuring alignment with the EU AI Act.

Three scenarios were presented, with a focus on the first. A project on ontology is near completion. Automation in systematic reviews, including methodology and scenarios for abstract screening, was detailed. The use of AI in EFSA's scientific outputs was highlighted with relevant statistics. The critical appraisal addressed the risk of bias in text, seeking a tool for bias identification. Results of iteration 1, including a 95% confidence in fact extraction and overall user satisfaction, were emphasized.

### **7.10 Feedback from the 20th meeting of the EFSA Scientific Network on Plant Health Risk Assessment, Parma (IT), 5-7 December 2023, including mini-workshop with breakout sessions for feedback and suggestions to EFSA on plant health risk assessment:**

Giuseppe Stancanelli (EFSA) reported on the feedback received from the 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EFSA Scientific Network on Plant Health Risk Assessment, describing the rationale for the breakout sessions planned and the way they were conducted.

Alex Gobbi (EFSA) reported on the feedback from the breakout session 1 about the "Integration of artificial intelligence and citizen science in plant health risk assessment" describing pros and cons emerged from the discussion with the MS and EFSA Staff. Overall EFSA received a positive feedback regarding both subjects, while the main concern was directed towards the need of testing, evaluating and measuring the quality of the results obtained through these approaches.

Giuseppe Stancanelli reported on the feedback from breakout session 2 "Fitness for Purpose of Conclusions and Interaction with Member States in Plant Health Risk Assessment." Feedback received focused on Pest categorisation. Regarding impact, it was suggested to provide more quantified/detailed description of the impact and its uncertainties, as well to include a weight of evidence approach. For pest occurrence, when a pest is already reported





in some EU MS, it was suggested to contact Member States at beginning of a mandate, with an appropriate timeframe to gather more data from (national) scientists or regional authorities (who in some cases may even conduct limited surveys on particular pests). Concerning pest identity, consultation/collaboration with the EURLs on criteria for diagnostic methods and in difficult taxonomic cases was suggested. On climate suitability, the need for more detailed climate suitability in the categorisation process was expressed, as pest categorisation can result in quarantine status for new pests and support MS decision on whether a survey should be conducted in their territory. A two-step approach, i.e., an in-depth analysis of climate suitability once the quarantine status is decided, was also discussed. The possibility of consultation on draft opinions with Member States was discussed. It was noted that this could require a longer timeline, hence it should be reserved for complex issues.

The panel was informed about the next network meeting scheduled for the 6th to the 8th of May 2024 in Parma.

### **7.11 Feedback from EFSA Scientific Committee**

The PLH panel chair presented a summary of the last meeting of the EFSA Scientific committee, including:

- Draft guidance on Risk Benefit Assessment
- Update on ongoing work on biomarkers
- BIOHAZ and CONTAM panels ongoing work programs
- Overview of EFSA's guidances portfolio
- Next steps on uncertainty guidance
- Draft guidance on appraising and integrating evidence from epidemiological studies (for discussion and possible endorsement for public consultation)
- Reflection paper on strategic advisory role of the Scientific Committee
- Update on the art. 36 Grant on Microbiome Lot 1 (Evaluating the impact on/by gastrointestinal (GI) tract microbiomes (human and domestic animal)) and Lot 2 (Evaluating the impact on/by environmental microbiomes (plants, wildlife, soil))

### **7.12 Feedback from EC DG SANTE**

EC DG SANTE representative

An update was provided by the EC DG SANTE representative, including regulation for Malus plants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, following the scientific opinion that was published by EFSA in 2023.

## **VIII. Final results of the Horizon 2020 project "FF IPM Fruit Flies In-silico Prevention and Management"**

Nikolaos Papadopoulos, University of Thessaly (Greece)

Nikolaos Papadopoulos (University of Thessaly) presented the results of the FF-IPM project, which aimed to address invasive fruit flies in Europe. The project involved 21 partners and lasted 4.5 years. It was highlighted the impact of fruit flies on trade of fresh fruits and the costly control operations involved. The presentation was structured into three parts, first providing an overview of fruit flies, their life cycle, and the impact. The second part focused on the detection of invasive fruit flies in Europe, highlighting the detection of different species and the influence of climate change. The third part was focused on the FF-IPM project's results, in particular, the development of detection tools, predictive modelling for climatic suitability, and off-season IPM strategies, including the use of biological control and mass

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trapping tools. The project followed a holistic approach to address invasive fruit flies, emphasizing the need for stakeholder involvement, data sharing, and training to effectively manage and eradicate these pests. It was highlighted the project partners contribution and stressed the importance of disseminating the project's findings among stakeholders.

## **IX. Calendar of next Panel plenary meetings**

The 2024 PLH plenary meeting calendar was presented to the panel members.  
Next Plenary is on 22 February from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.



## Annex I

### Interests and actions resulting from the screening of Annual Declarations of Interest (ADoI)

With regard to this meeting, **Dr. Francesco Di Serio** declared the following interest with regard to the draft Scientific opinions on:

- 6.3 Draft opinion on commodity risk assessment of plants of twelve selected *Prunus* species from Moldova (EFSA-Q-2020-00533, EFSA-Q-2020-00776, EFSA-Q-2020-00777, EFSA-Q-2020-00778, EFSA-Q-2020-00779, EFSA-Q-2023-00679, EFSA-Q-2023-00680, EFSA-Q-2023-00681, EFSA-Q-2023-00682, EFSA-Q-2023-00683, EFSA-Q-2023-00684, EFSA-Q-2023-00685)

He informed the Panel that he participates to the work on these opinions as coordinator of EFSA Art. 36 Tasking Grant Specific Contracts. In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence<sup>[1]</sup> and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management<sup>[2]</sup>, and taking into account the specific matters discussed at the meeting in question, the interest above was deemed to represent a Conflict of Interest (CoI).

This results in the exclusion of the expert from discussion or voting as PLH Panel Member of items 6.3, however, he can participate to this agenda meeting to present the work he conducted as coordinator of the related EFSA Art 36 Tasking Grant Specific Contracts.



## Annex II

### Q&A session

#### Question from observer related to 6.3

"From my experience with EFSA's work on HRPs, the exporting country is required to provide pest lists and, thereafter, EFSA may return to the exporting country with further questions.

If there is a question regarding the presence of a certain pest, such as *Erwinia amylovora*, should not EFSA require the exporting country to provide feedback on such references, before publication is made? It could also shed light on the possible distribution within the exporting country."

#### Answer

The NPPOs are generally contacted for clarifications regarding pest presence. In addition, the scientific opinions are pre-notified before publication.

#### Question from observer related to 6.4 and 6.5

Expressed "concern that the PRA mixes between actual risk and technical information provided by specific nurseries regarding the commodity they are exporting at that specific time. This refers in particular to the size and age which are, thereafter, included in the description of the commodity in the EU regulations and become, *de facto*, a requirement".

#### Answer

The assessment conduct by EFSA focuses on the characteristics of the commodity as provided by the applicant. This means that the age and size of the commodity play a role, and the evaluation/assessment is based on this information.

#### Question from observer related to 6.5

"*Bemisia tabaci* is a pest widespread in the EU. It's regulation in the EU is due to the regulated viruses it might vector – it is not clear what these viruses are in reference to *Bemisia tabaci* on Ligustrum plants from the UK?"

#### Answer

*B. tabaci*, as a non-European population, is considered a quarantine pest. However, the European populations of *B. tabaci* (including those present in the UK) are still classified as a protected zone quarantine pest for Ireland and Sweden.

#### Question from observer related to 7.2

"Is the DAFNAE database available now? Or will be in future?"

#### Answer

The database is currently not available to the public. It is an online tool developed to support the EFSA PLH Panel pest categorisation. At the moment the focus is on completing the database and the pest categorisation. The possibility of making it accessible to the public is being explored for the future.

#### Question from observer related to 7.3

"The score for proposed species is 9 for each? Would not be safer to include also those with a score 8? How many species have a score 8?"

#### Answer

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It was explained that 57 species scored 9 and 560 species scored 8. The scoring follows the decision tree (ABCD). The D identifies 5,200 species to be scored (0-9). There are 57 species scoring 9, those scoring 8 will present more uncertainty, but still potentially quarantine effects. Those with score 7 have some traits. However, setting a threshold may fall into risk managers decision.