

24-25 January 2024

09:00-17:30 / 09:00-12:15

MINUTES - Agreed on 8 February 2024

Location: Webconference

Attendees:

o Panel Members:

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

o Hearing Experts¹:

Ursula Gonzales-Barron (IPB), Pauline Kooh (ANSES) (item 9.3)

o European Commission and/or Member States representatives:

EC: Paolo Caricato, Patricia Herrero Sancho (item 6.6)

o EFSA:

Angela Botteon, Sandra Correia, Maria Teresa Da Silva Felicio, Sofia Fusco, Martin Goudjihounde, Beatriz Guerra, Michaela Hempen, Ernesto Liebana, Winy Messens, Angel Ortiz-Peláez, Valentina Rizzi, Mirko Rossi, Maria Sanz Zapata, Eleonora Sarno, Pietro Stella (BIOHAW Unit)

Fulvio Barizzone (MESE Unit) (items 6.1, 6.2, 9.1), Carolina Baptista (MESE Unit) (items 6.1, 6.2)

o Others:

None

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

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 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 166th Panel Plenary meeting held on 6-7 December 2023

The minutes of the 166th Panel plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 20 December 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

The last working group (WG) meeting took place on 22 January by web-meeting. The experts worked on the document and the discussed the contributions. Tasks were assigned for next meeting which will be on 22 March by web-meeting. The deadline for adoption of the Scientific Opinion is 31 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. 20: Suitability of taxonomic units notified to EFSA until March 2024 (EFSA-Q-2021-00772)⁵

The last WG meeting took place on 22 January by web-meeting. Thirty-two notifications were received between October and December 2023 (inclusive): 22 as feed additives, 4 as food enzymes, food additives and flavourings, 6 as novel foods and none as plant protection products. From these 32, 12 were not evaluated because belong to taxonomic units excluded from the QPS evaluation (6 filamentous fungi, 1 *Enterococcus faecium*, 4 *E. coli* and 1 *Streptomyces aureofaciens*), and 18 belong to taxonomic units that already have a QPS status. The remaining 2 notifications, corresponding to 2 TUs, are non-QPS but were just evaluated for a possible QPS status: *Serratia marcescens* and *Weizmannia faecalis*. The new ELS exercise will be launched soon. A revised assessment of the performance of the AI classifiers was presented by Fulvio Barizzone (MESE Unit) to the Panel, proposing to run it in parallel with an expert for this new ELS cycle which will be launched in the following days. The next meeting will be on 22 March by web-meeting. The draft Panel statement will be presented for possible adoption before 31 June 2024.

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>

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

⁶ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00073>

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

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

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



The last WG meeting took place on 10 and 11 January 2024. The WG Chair presented the approach favoured by the WG for the drafting of three sector-specific opinions (Fresh-whole FVHS, Fresh-cut FVHs and Frozen FVHs): the aim is to draft short opinions providing guidance to each sector separately only using information extracted from the results obtained in the experimental scenarios by the WASHTOP consortium as well as from modelling based on these results. The same table of contents will be followed for each sector-specific opinion. The Panel was made aware that there may not be relevant differences in the assessments made across sectors for some sections of the opinions. The Panel endorsed this approach to have a guidance opinion targeting separately the relevant audience of each sector and covering all assessment questions, plus the “Model” opinion. The WG Chair presented the current draft for the “Fresh-whole FVHs” opinion (up to section 3.4.), addressing the comments received from the Panel and Panel/WG member Panagiotis Skandamis presented the current draft of the “Model” opinion. The Chair also updated the Panel on the regular informal meetings which are taking place with WASHTOP to ensure that their modelling work is timely finalised in alignment with the WG. EFSA meetings are also ongoing to clarify minor inconsistencies that had been identified related to the final dataset that will be included in WASHTOP’s final deliverables expected on 4 March 2024. The next WG meeting will be a web-meeting on 19 February 2024. The deadline for the adoption of the three sector-specific scientific opinions (Fresh-whole, Fresh-cut and Frozen FVHs) and the “Model” scientific opinion is 31 December 2024.

6.4 Scientific opinion on the public health aspects of *Vibrio* spp. related to the consumption of seafood in the EU (EFSA-Q-2022-00826)¹⁰

The last WG meeting was held on 10 January 2024 by web-conference. The WG chair presented various sections of the draft opinion to the BIOHAZ Panel. The following parts of the assessment are at an advanced stage and were presented for careful review: (i) Analytical methods for the detection, enumeration and characterisation of the relevant *Vibrio* spp. in seafood (SQ1.3); (ii) Pathogenicity to humans and virulence factors of the relevant *Vibrio* spp. (SQ1.5); (iii) Antimicrobial resistance in the relevant *Vibrio* spp. isolated from seafood and from seafood-borne infections (SQ1.6-1.7) and (iv) Risk assessment modelling options for the health impact of relevant *Vibrio* spp. in seafood in the EU. These sections will be presented for possible endorsement at the next plenary meeting. The next WG meeting will be held on 13 February 2024 by web-conference. The deadline for adoption of this Scientific Opinion is 30 June 2024.

6.5 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)¹¹

The WG Chair presented the output of the models for comparison of the probability of acceptance between the current and the proposed programs for Aerobic Plate Count (APC) in cattle for two indicative standard deviations (0.5, and 1.0 log CFU). The simulation models were based on different assumptions regarding the level of microbial contamination between carcasses and bulk meat, primal and offal. The OC curves were generated considering different scenarios: a) APC of carcass, bulk meat, primal and offal are equal, b) APC of bulk meat, primal and offal are 1.5 log₁₀ higher compared to carcasses, and the impact of proposed discontinuation of Salmonella monitoring. All models are still under preparation and the next WG meeting will be the occasion to validate the model which will be used for the assessment of the proposed program. The next WG meeting is scheduled on 26th February 2024. The deadline for this mandate is extended to 30 June 2024.

¹⁰ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2022-00826>

¹¹ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00058>



6.6 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)¹²

The last WG meeting took place on 11-12 January (web-conference). The draft scientific opinion was presented for thorough reading. The Chair of the WG presented the developments since the last plenary with regards to ToR1: main EU/EFTA aquaculture finfish species, parasites of public health importance, and data on the occurrence of those parasites in the finfish species considered; ToR2: update on the diagnostic/detection methods since 2010; and ToR3: update on the methods/treatments available or under development for the inactivation or removal of those parasites. Draft conclusions, uncertainties and recommendations were presented, and comments received from the Panel members were discussed. It was agreed that there were no uncertainties associated to the occurrence data as presented in the draft conclusions to answer ToR1. The next WG meeting will take place on 15 February. The draft opinion will be presented for possible adoption at the next BIOHAZ Panel Plenary meeting on 13-14 March. The outputs to address the mandate will be two scientific opinions of the BIOHAZ Panel. The deadline for the adoption of the second one is December 2024.

6.7 Scientific opinion on the potential BSE risk posed by ruminant collagen and gelatine other than derived from hides and skins (EFSA-Q-2023-00105)¹³

The Chair of the WG presented the draft protocol for approval and the structure of the model for the quantitative risk assessment. The draft protocol received very few comments and minor changes were made in the text accordingly. The draft protocol was then approved by the BIOHAZ Panel. The WG Chair explained the structure of the probabilistic model and showed its parameterization. There were no comments by the Panel, but a further review was proposed by the Chair of the Panel for the next plenary, in which the draft opinion will be submitted for first reading. The sixth meeting of the working group is scheduled on Friday 9 February 2024 and the seventh on Thursday 29 February pm and 1 March. Both meetings will take place before the next plenary on 13-14 March 2024.

6.8 Application alternative method ECN tunnel composting (EFSA-Q-2023-00448)¹⁴

The WG Chair presented the draft opinion for thorough reading. The state of the opinion is quite advanced. Most of the comments made by Panel member during their review before the plenary had already been addressed. The WG chair selected a few of the sections of the assessment of the BIOHAZ Panel for further discussion. Some changes in the wording of the section of 'the level of risk reduction by the BIOHAZ Panel' was agreed during the meeting. A few other minor editorial changes were left as actions like the transfer of a major table to the Appendix. The draft contained the conclusions of the assessment. The chair read them, and the Panel agreed with the content. The draft opinion will be submitted for adoption to the plenary of 13-14 March 2024. No more working group meetings are scheduled.

6.9 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)¹⁵

EFSA staff from the BIOHAW Unit informed that following the request for additional information (on 17 November 2023), the applicant has asked to extend the deadline with one year (that

¹² <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00090>

¹³ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00105>

¹⁴ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2023-00448>

¹⁵ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2022-00626>



is until 17 May 2025). This was granted considering that the applicant has decided to engage in new studies. The initial deadline to deliver the Scientific Opinion of 11 September 2024 will be extended accordingly.

The BIOHAZ panel was informed that the self-tasking mandate for a revision of the Guidance document on the submission of data for the evaluation of the safety and efficacy of substances for the removal of microbial surface contamination of foods of animal origin intended for human consumption¹⁶ has been accepted. The deadline for adoption by the CEP Panel is end of March 2025.

7. New mandates

No new mandates were received since the previous Plenary meetings.

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 since the previous BIOHAZ Plenary meeting.

8.2 European Commission

EFSA Secretariat updated the Panel on preliminary information received from the European Commission about upcoming mandates. Possible mandates in the area of biological hazards might be sent to EFSA during the first months of 2024 in the fields of animal-by products and food hygiene.

8.3 Update on Rapid Outbreak Assessments and related activities

The agenda item was postponed to a future plenary meeting due to lack of time.

9. Other topics for information and/or discussion

9.1 Implementation of the guidance on uncertainty analysis in scientific assessments

BIOHAZ Panel member Maarten Nauta reminded the Panel about the agreed plan for the development of an internal decision tree/guidance for use by the Panel to guide the selection of the most appropriate option for carrying out uncertainty analysis in BIOHAZ assessments. A questionnaire to gather information will be shared with BIOHAZ experts and staff and the results will be presented during the next Plenary meeting.

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

EFSA staff informed about the status of the draft self-task mandate of the BIOHAZ Panel on the "Current status of the occurrence and spread of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales in the food chain in the EU/EFTA", which was presented to the Panel for agreement. The mandate would aim at collecting information from European countries on

¹⁶ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2024-00020>



recent and planned scientific investigations on the topic, at designing and carrying out a number of additional studies to produce relevant data in addition to the ones already being collected through the EU Summary Report on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), and at drawing conclusions from such new data and from the scientific literature. The work is expected to be carried out in close collaboration with the European and National Reference Laboratories for AMR and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), informing also the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the European Environment Agency (EEA). After the last Plenary in December, consultations with ECDC and EC took place, and amendments were implemented accordingly. Comments on the agreed version were gathered from the BIOHAZ Panel and discussed at the Plenary. The text of the draft mandate was agreed and EFSA staff will proceed with the next steps for the approval by the Executive Director. Deadline for the last outputs of the mandate would be June 2027.

9.3 Update on the *Pathogens-in-Foods* Database

The hearing experts Ursula Gonzales-Barron and Pauline Kooh presented the Pathogens-in-Foods (PIF)¹⁷ Database. PIF is a freely accessible database of systematically formatted occurrence (prevalence and enumeration) data of the most important biological hazards (bacteria, parasites and viruses) in foods randomly surveyed across Europe. Data are extracted from peer-reviewed articles retrieved through systematic literature searches. The PIF spans data published from year 2000 onwards. Since 2022, EFSA supports the initiative through two grant agreements. The first grant (GP/EFSA/BIOHAW/2022/01) has resulted in (i) a protocol for the literature review in line with the systematic review guidelines¹⁸, (ii) the use of Distiller^{SR} and artificial intelligence (AI) for the literature screening, (iii) an alignment of the terminology used in the PIF database with those employed by EFSA. Since 2023, under the second grant (GP/EFSA/BIOHAW/2023/05), PIF was extended with data on the occurrence of parasites of public health importance (amongst which members of the Anisakidae family (Anisakids) such as *Anisakis*, *Pseudoterranova* and *Contracaecum*) in fishery products and *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, *Vibrio vulnificus* and non-O1, non-O139 *Vibrio cholerae* in seafood. For the upcoming years, PIF will be sustained and updated with more data, and with EFSA support until September 2026.

9.4 Presentation on the EU One Health 2022 Zoonoses Report

The agenda item was postponed to a future plenary meeting due to lack of time.

9.5 Presentation on the EU Summary Report on surveillance for the presence of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in 2022

The agenda item was postponed to a future plenary meeting due to lack of time.

10. Any other business

EFSA Secretariat reminded that the March and June Plenaries will take place physically in Parma and that the April Plenary will take place by webconference.

¹⁷ Accessible through the website <https://pif.esa.ipb.pt/>

¹⁸ Accessible through the website <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7850017>