SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON PLANT HEALTH
124th Panel Plenary meeting

18 & 19 June 2024
9:00-17:30 / 9:00-13:00
MINUTES - Agreed on 30 June 2024

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Location: EFSA Onsite and Teleconference

Attendees:

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

o   European Commission:
Maria MIRAZCHIYSKA, Panagiota MYLONA, Leonard SHUMBE

o   EFSA:
Federica BALDASSARRE, Melanie CAMILLERI, João Filipe CAVALHEIRO, Matteo CROTTA, Alicia CULOT, Ewelina CZWIENCZEK, Cristiana DO VALE CORREIA, Ciro GARDI, Alex GOBBI, Dejana GOLIC, Agata KACZMAREK, Tomasz KALUSKI, Virág KERTÉSZ, Andrea MAIORANO, Olaf MOSBACH-SCHULZ, Alexandre NOUGADERE, Marco PAUTASSO, Tobin ROBINSON, Giuseppe STANCANELLI, Franz STREISSL, RIBAYA MUNOZ Maria, Emanuela TACCI, Sara TRAMONTINI, Anastasia TERZIDOU, Sybren VOS.

o   Hearing Experts: Jean-Claude GREGOIRE (Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium), Matteo MARCHIORO (Università di Padova, Italy)

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants. Apologies were received from Stephen Parnell.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Declarations of Interest of Panel members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[1] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management,[2] 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.
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.

4. Agreement of the minutes of the 123rd Panel plenary meeting held on 22nd-23rd May 2024.

The Panel was informed that the minutes were published in time and were thanked for their contributions.

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

5.1 Scientific Opinion on pest categorisation on *Matsucoccus matsumurae* ([EFSA-Q-2022-00073](#))

The EFSA Panel on Plant Health performed a pest categorisation of *Matsucoccus matsumurae* (Hemiptera: Matsucoccidae), the Massonian pine bast scale, for the EU territory. This pest categorisation was initiated following the commodity risk assessment of artificially dwarfed plants from China consisting of *Pinus parviflora* (Japanese white pine) grafted on *P. thunbergii* (Japanese black pine) performed by EFSA, in which *M. matsumurae* was identified as a pest of possible concern. However, its identity is not firmly established due to uncertainty regarding its taxonomic relationship with *Matsucoccus pini* (Green), a species widespread in Europe. *M. matsumurae* occurs in western China and has been reported as a pest of *P. massoniana* (Chinese red pine) and *P. thunbergii*. These hosts occur in the EU as ornamental/amenity trees. Other scales in the *Matsucoccus* genus feed on a variety of *Pinus* species and the host range of *M. matsumurae* could be wider than is currently recorded. The scale has one or two generations per year. All stages occur on the branches and stems of hosts with developing nymphs and adult females feeding through the bark on host phloem vessels. Symptoms include the yellowing/browning of host needles, early needle drop, desiccation of shoots and bark necrosis. The most serious infestations occur in hosts that are 8–25 years old and there can be some host mortality. In principle, host plants for planting and plant products such as cut branches and wood with bark could provide entry pathways into the EU. However, prohibitions on the import of *Pinus* from non-European third countries regulate these pathways. In China, *M. matsumurae* occurs in regions with temperate humid conditions and hot summers. These conditions are also found in parts of southern EU. Were *M. matsumurae* to establish in the EU, it is conceivable that it could expand its host range; however, this remains uncertain. Some uncertainty exists over the magnitude of potential impacts. *M. matsumurae* satisfies the criteria that are within the remit of EFSA to assess for it to be regarded as a potential Union quarantine pest, assuming *M. pini* is not a synonym, which is a key uncertainty.

The scientific opinion was adopted on 19 June 2024.

5.2 Scientific Opinion on pest categorisation *Ceroplastes rubens* ([EFSA-Q-2024-00040](#))

The European Commission requested the EFSA Panel on Plant Health to conduct a pest categorisation of *Ceroplastes rubens* Maskell (Hemiptera: Coccidae), following the commodity risk assessments of *Acer palmatum* plants grafted on *A. davidii* and *Pinus parviflora* bonsai plants grafted on *P. thunbergii* from China, in which *C. rubens* was identified as a pest of possible concern to the European Union (EU). The pest, which is commonly known as the pink, red or ruby wax scale, originates in Africa and is highly polyphagous attacking plants from more than 193 genera in 84 families. It has been present in Germany since 2010 in a single tropical glasshouse. It is known to attack primarily tropical and sub-tropical plants, but also oter host plants commonly found in the EU, such as *Malus sylvestris*, *Prunus* spp*.*, *Pyrus* spp*.*, and ornamentals. It is considered an important pest of *Citrus* spp. The pink wax scale reproduces mainly parthenogenetically, and it has one or two generations per year. Fecundity ranges from 5 to 1178 eggs. Crawlers settle usually on young twigs and later stages are sessile. All life stages of *C. rubens* egest honeydew on which sooty mould grows. Plants for planting and cut branches provide the main pathways for entry. Host availability and climate suitability suggest that parts of the EU would be suitable for establishment. Crawlers could spread over short distances naturally through wind, animals, humans, or machinery. *C. rubens* could be dispersed more rapidly and over long-distances via infested plants for planting for trade. The introduction of *C. rubens* into the EU could lead to outbreaks causing damage to orchards, amenity ornamental trees and shrubs. Phytosanitary measures are available to inhibit the entry and spread of this species. *C. rubens* satisfies the criteria that are within the remit of EFSA to assess for it to be regarded as a potential Union quarantine pest.

The scientific opinion was adopted on 19 June 2024.

5.3 Scientific Opinion on pest categorisation on the non-EU Scolytinae of broadleaved trees ([EFSA-Q-2021-00710](#))

The EFSA Panel on Plant Health performed a group pest categorisation for the EU territory of non-EU Scolytinae (Coleoptera: Curculionidae) on non-coniferous hosts, which total 6495 known species. Most species attack apparently healthy, weakened or dead trees, either feeding on the phloem ("bark beetles" subgroup) or on fungi inoculated into the sapwood ("ambrosia beetles" subgroup). Smaller subgroups feed and reproduce in seeds and fruits, or in herbaceous plants. Some species are polygynous, the males initiate a gallery or a chamber on or in a new host and attract females. Others are monogamous, and the females initiate the new galleries. Many species respond to primary volatile attractants emitted by the hosts, and some produce aggregation pheromones that attract conspecifics of both sexes. The species attacking living hosts are often associated with fungi that contribute to weakening the host defenses and provide nutrients to the insects. Some are inbreeding; the males in the offspring mate with their sisters and rarely leave their natal tree. The larvae of all species develop and pupate within their hosts. Based on catalogues and other published data, a database was constructed providing information on hosts, feeding and reproductive habits, geographic distribution and the Köppen-Geiger climate types in countries where species occur. The Scolytinae were screened to exclude species in the following categories, e.g. (i) 708 species attacking conifers; (ii) 127 species present in at least four EU member states, and (iii) 440 species occurring in areas with climatic conditions not occurring in the EU. Among the remaining 5220 species, 88 species known for their mobility, occupying at least two landmasses separated by geographical barriers, and some of which had impact levels documented in literature, were extracted. They were grouped into four subcategories: (i) 12 species with high impact on plant health; (ii) 16 species with low or doubtful impact; (iii) 48 species with no impact; (iv) 12 species with no impact and which had never been recorded as "introduced" in the consulted catalogues but occurring on at least two landmasses. All 88 species could enter the EU with wood or wood products, or with plants for planting, and could establish because host plants are available, and climate is suitable in parts of the EU. Control measures to inhibit introduction are available. There is considerable uncertainty regarding the potential impact of many species. Methods for the reliable identification of many species are lacking. For some species of non-EU Scolytinae on non-coniferous hosts, all criteria assessed by EFSA for consideration as potential quarantine pest are met. Nevertheless, the Panel was not able to develop a method to discriminate confidently between species that clearly meet the criteria for potential quarantine pest status and those that do not.

The scientific opinion was adopted on 19 June 2024.

5.4 Scientific Opinion on pest categorisation on *Coniella castaneicola* ([EFSA-Q-2024-00193](#))

The European Commission requested the EFSA Panel on Plant Health to conduct a pest categorisation of *Coniella castaneicola* (Ellis & Everh) Sutton, following commodity risk assessments of *Acer campestre, A. palmatum*, *A. platanoides, A. pseudoplatanus*, *Quercus petraea*, and *Q. robur* plants from the UK, in which *C. castaneicola* was identified as a pest of possible concern to the EU. When first described, *Coniella castaneicola* was a clearly defined fungus of the family Schizoparmaceae, but due to lack of a curated type-derived DNA sequence, current identification based only on DNA sequence is uncertain and taxa previously reported to be this fungus based on molecular identification must be confirmed. The uncertainty on the reported identification of this species translates into uncertainty on all the sections of this categorisation. The fungus has been reported on several plant species associated with leaf spots, leaf blights and fruit rots, and as an endophyte in asymptomatic plants. The species is reported from North and South America, Africa, Asia, non-EU Europe, and Oceania. *Coniella castaneicola* is not known to

occur in the EU. However, there is a key uncertainty on its presence and geographical distribution worldwide and in the EU due to its endophytic nature, the lack of systematic surveys, and possible misidentifications. *Coniella castaneicola* is not included in Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/2072 and there are no interceptions in the EU. Plants for planting, fresh fruits and soil and other growing media associated with infected plant debris are the main pathways for its entry into the EU. Host availability and climate suitability in parts of the EU are favourable for the establishment and spread of the fungus. Based on the scarce information available, the introduction and spread of *C. castaneicola* in the EU is not expected to cause substantial impacts, with a key uncertainty. Phytosanitary measures are available to prevent its introduction and spread in the EU. Because of lack of documented impacts, *Coniella castaneicola* does not satisfy all the criteria that are within the remit of EFSA to assess for this species to be regarded as potential Union quarantine pest.

The opinion was adopted on 19 June 2024.

5.5 Panel statement on standard protocol for recurrent Plant Health Risk Assessments (Pest Categorisation, Quantitative Pest Risk assessment, Commodity Risk Assessment) (EFSA-Q-2024-00399)

In accordance with the EFSA Strategy 2027 outlining the need for fit-for-purpose protocols for EFSA generic scientific assessments, the EFSA Panel on Plant Health (PLH Panel) developed standard protocols to harmonise the problem formulation process and outputs for mandates addressing recurrent scientific questions. Three types of recurring EFSA plant health mandates require generic scientific assessments: (i) pest categorisation; (ii) commodity risk assessment for the purpose of derogation to provisions of the EU plant health law and (iii) quantitative pest risk assessment. The three protocols are tailored to the appropriate level of detail and build on the existing guidance documents laying out the methods for conducting risk assessment in the plant health domain. To develop a standard protocol for pest categorisation, the PLH Panel adapted the latest version of the standard template reporting the evidence needs and the assessment questions to conclude whether a pest fulfils the criteria for being considered a potential quarantine pest for the EU. To develop a standard protocol for commodity risk assessment, the PLH Panel adapted the procedure and standard templates used for commodity risk assessment of high risk plants. To develop a standard protocol for quantitative pest risk assessments (qPRA), the Panel reviewed the existing guidance document on qPRA and the qPRAs published by the PLH Panel. The hierarchy of assessment questions and sub-questions used were identified and extracted. Based on this, a hierarchically organized IT-tool was formulated as protocol for the planning and documentation of future qPRAs.

The opinion was adopted on 19 June 2024.

5.6 Scientific Opinion on Commodity risk assessment of *Prunus spinosa* from UK (EFSA-Q-2023-00511)

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 potted plants and bundles of bare root plants or rooted cell grown young plants or graftwood/budwood of *Prunus spinosa* imported from the United Kingdom (UK), taking into account the available scientific information, including the technical information provided by the UK. All pests associated with the commodities were evaluated against specific criteria for their relevance for this opinion. One quarantine pest, *Scirtothrips dorsalis*, one protected zone quarantine pest *Bemisia tabaci* (European population), and one non-regulated pest, the scale *Eulecanium excrescens*, that fulfilled all relevant criteria were selected for further evaluation. The risk mitigation measures proposed in the technical Dossier from the UK were evaluated, taking into account the possible limiting factors. For these pests, expert judgment 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 *E. excrescens* being the pest most frequently expected on the imported potted plants. The Expert Knowledge Elicitation indicated with 95% certainty that between 9,981 and 10,000 plants per 10,000 would be free from the above-mentioned scale.

The opinion was adopted on 19 June 2024.

5.7 Scientific Opinion on Commodity risk assessment of maple veneer sheets from Canada (**EFSA-Q-2023-00206**)

The European Commission requested the EFSA Panel on Plant Health to deliver a risk assessment on the likelihood of pest freedom from Union quarantine pests and pests subject to measures adopted pursuant to Article 30 of Regulation (EU) No 2016/2031 for the maple veneer sheets manufactured according to the process set out by Canada, with emphasis on the freedom from *Davidsoniella virescens* and *Phytophthora ramorum* (non-EU isolates). The assessment was conducted for veneer sheets of up to 0.7 mm and up to 6 mm thickness, taking into account the different phases in the veneer production in a systems approach. Some of those phases, taken alone, including the heat treatment of logs in a water bath, the cutting into thin veneer sheets and the final high heat drying of veneer sheets are expected to be effective against some of the pests, without uncertainties, making the system approach fully effective. The panel considers that no insects would survive cutting of logs into thin veneer sheets of 0.7 mm and that *Xylella fastidiosa* will not survive the temperatures in the water bath and final drying of veneers. The degree of pest freedom for the different groups of organisms is generally very high with slightly lower degree of pest freedom for veneer sheets of 6 mm thickness because of lower temperatures reached in the final drying of veneer sheets compared to thinner sheets. *P. ramorum* is not expected to survive the high heat drying of thin veneer sheets but it may survive the lower temperatures inside thicker veneer sheets. The Expert Knowledge Elicitation (EKE) indicated, with 95% certainty, that between 9,989 and 10,000 veneer sheets (thickness 6 mm) per 10,000 will be free from living *P. ramorum.* For *D. virescens,* the EKE indicated, with 95% certainty, that between 9,984 and 10,000 veneer sheets (0.7 mm) per 10,000 and that between 9,954 and 10,000 veneer sheets (6 mm) per 10,000 will be free from living inoculum. For other relevant groups of pests the greatest likelihood of pest presence was observed for wood decay fungi. The EKE indicated, with 95% certainty, that between 9,967 and 10,000 veneer sheets (0.7 mm) per 10,000 and that between 9,911 and 10,000 veneer sheets (6 mm) per 10,000 will be free from living wood decay fungi.

The opinion was adopted on 19 June 2024.

6. Feedback from EFSA, SC and EC DG SANTE

6.1 World café discussion: feedback from Panel on plant health risk assessment activities

Online survey to collect Panel feedback was created before the plenary, to collect the panel members opinions, lesson learnt, strength and weaknesses of all the Plant Health risk assessment activities to further enhance the processes. A World Café type discussion was then organised at the plenary meetings by creating four discussion corners to facilitate the collection of feedback and insights from the Panel members on current workflows, methods, and potential areas for improvement in pest categorization, commodity risk assessment, climate suitability (including literature search), and quantitative pest risk assessment. Following the group discussions, a designated EFSA staff member from each group reported the key discussion points back to all the Panel members.

6.2 Activities of PLH monitoring team: General introduction

An outline of the progress report on the activities carried out by the Plant Health Monitoring team was presented i.e. Horizon scanning, Priority pests, Pest surveillance. Special gratitude was expressed to the Panel experts who contributed to these activities through working group activities or partnerships established through grant agreements.

6.2.1 Horizon Scanning: Achievements, perspectives, Q&A

The project's main accomplishments were shared, including the delivery of over 120 newsletters in partnership with ANSES (Grant agreement), the creation of the PHORIS tool to assist with the PeMo scoring of new emerging pests, and the DASHBOARD for interactive tracking of new threats flagged to EU risk Managers each month. As part of our partnership with ANSES, we're transitioning from the JRC-managed MEDISYS platform to the WHO-managed EIOS platform. This involves a series of four workshops, with the first one held in April 2024. The goal of these workshops is to create the first Plant Health community within EIOS, identify its needs, and enhance and strengthen horizon scanning, promoting interaction with other communities, such as Animal Health and Climate Change.

6.2.2   Priority pests: Shortlist and EKEs, ERA, Q&A

An update on the EFSA Priority Pests project's progress was provided by EFSA (A. Nougadère). The terms of reference of the EFSA mandate M-2022-00070 (European Commission's request) were reminded, with a special focus on the assessment of the spread and impact of 47 shortlisted union quarantine pests by conducting fully-fledged expert knowledge elicitations (EKE) to support the European Commission (Joint Research Center-Sevilla) in the assessment for their potential inclusion in the list of Priority Pests under Regulation (EU) No 2019/1702. The method and first achievements were presented, together with the workplan and remaining tasks. The Panel members noted the added value of introducing initial steps (tasks A and B) to select the 47 pests to be studied, based on an analysis by EFSA of their observed impact and potential spread.

In addition, for supporting the JRC Sevilla, environmental indicators for each pest should be provided. Their relative weight in the overall ranking were showcased. A particular focus was given to the methodology developed for assessing for each pest the reduction of ecosystem services for each ecosystem type it could affect. This innovative approach is fully compatible with the quantitative pest risk assessment concepts and approaches and is systematically applied for the 47 shortlisted pests.

6.2.3   Surveillance: Intro, Pest survey cards, Database, Ripest and Optipest, What is next, Q&A

The EFSA pest surveillance project was introduced by showcasing the EFSA toolkit for pest surveys. The presenter showed how the different tools address the survey process (initiation-preparation-design-implementation- conclusion) and how they are interconnected.

In the context the EC request to support the MSs in the preparation of pest surveys for the Union Quarantine Pests, an update on the development of the EFSA pest survey cards was provided, with currently 232 pests in the pipeline, showing the importance of the partnerships with EU Member States Art 36 organisations in this activity. In addition, in collaboration with EFSA's Grant holders, crop characterisation reports are being prepared for the main crops in the EU and these were briefly presented, and these documents provide a comprehensive overview of the information required to plan pest surveys in the different crops.

The objectives and development of the relational database for pest surveillance were presented, showing how the key information of the pest survey cards is standardised and structured to prefill the tool for pest survey design (RiPEST) and the tool for optimisation of survey efforts at crop level (Optipest). Currently the data were extracted and prepared for the 20 Priority pests and need to be validated before the database will be made publicly available.

The functionalities of the RiPEST tool were briefly presented. RiPEST was developed as an expert system to guide non expert users in the survey design. It includes the design of detection surveys, delimiting surveys and buffer zone surveys. It allows to automatically generate the annual survey reports in line with the requirements of the EU regulation i.e. EUROPHYT.

The multipest survey tool was presented showing how the survey efforts can be optimised when planning the survey activities at crop level. This tool will help reducing the survey sample without affecting the robustness of the surveys designed using RiPEST. The results of the optimisation process are reported through the generation of graphical outputs showing how the survey efforts can be combined with common survey samples obtained by grouping pests in different time

windows. Also, other constrains can be included in the tool to obtain results with realistic implementation (e.g. availability of inspectors per month or laboratory capacity per month). A series of dedicated workshops will be held from September 2024 onwards piloting the tool for pests of citrus, pests of potatoes and pests of broadleaved trees.

The session was concluded by briefly mentioning the training activities, their diversity and importance related to the use of the pest survey toolkit. The start of the development of the methodology for monitoring surveys in plant health was announced and the current open grants on preparation of pest survey cards and on development of experimental and statistical protocols for estimation of the survey parameters were highlighted.

6.3   Feedback from EFSA and EC DG SANTE

DG Sante thanked the Panel for their commitment to ensure the timely delivery of high quality outputs, that supported the implementation of the new EU Plant health law.

7. Wrap up and meeting closure

Panel chair closed the meeting and gave the floor to EFSA, Panel coordinator expressed EFSA gratitude to the Panel members for their contributions, dedication and hard work done during this mandate 2018-2024.

Any other business

This was the last plenary session of this panel mandate.

Annex I

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

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

5.3 Scientific Opinion on pest categorisation *Ceroplastes rubens* EFSA-Q-2024-00040

5.6 Scientific Opinion on Commodity risk assessment of *Prunus spinosa* from UK EFSA-Q-2023-00511

They informed the Panel that they participate in the work on these opinions as coordinators of EFSA Art. 36 Tasking Grant Specific Contracts. In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[1] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[2], 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 experts from discussion or voting as PLH Panel Member of items 5.3 and 5.6, however, they can participate to this agenda meeting to present the work they conducted as coordinators of the related EFSA Art 36 Tasking Grant Specific Contracts.