SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON PLANT HEALTH

126 Panel Plenary meeting

25 & 26 September 2024
9:00-18:00 / 9:00-13:00
MINUTES - Agreed on 17 October 2024

EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY

Location: EFSA Onsite and Teleconference

Attendees:

- Panel Members:

Paula BAPTISTA, Anna BERLIN, Elisavet CHATZIVASSILIOU, Jaime CUBERO, Nik CUNNIFFE, Eduardo DE LA PEÑA, Nicolas DESNEUX, Francesco DI SERIO, Anna FILIPIAK, Paolo GONTHIER, Beata Anna HASIÓW-JAROSZEWSKA, Hervé JACTEL, Blanca LANDA, Lara MAISTRELLO, David MAKOWSKI, Panagiotis MILONAS, Nikolaos PAPADOPOULOS, Roel POTTING, Hanna Sinikka SUSI, Dirk Jan VAN DER GAAG, Antonio Vicent CIVERA

- European Commission DG SANTE:

Leonard SHUMBE

- EFSA:

PLANTS: Federica BALDASSARRE, Chiara CIVITELLI, Matteo CROTTA, Alicia CULOT, Ewelina CZWIENCZEK, Cristiana DO VALE CORREIA, Ciro GARDI, Alex GOBBI, Agata KACZMAREK, Virág KERTÉSZ, Andrea MAIORANO, Alexandre NOUGADERE, Marco PAUTASSO, Maria RIBAYA MUNOZ, Tobin ROBINSON, Giuseppe STANCANELLI, Franz STREISSL, Emanuela TACCI, Anastasia TERZIDOU.

MESE: Olaf MOSBACH-SCHULZ

IDATA: Giuseppe Antonio TRIACCHINI

Hearing experts:
Marta LOPEZ SERRA (Conselleria de Agricultura, Pesca y Medio Natural del Gobierno de las Islas Baleares, Dirección General de Agricultura, Ganaderia y Desarrollo Rural, Servicio de Agricultura), Vicente DALMAU SORLÌ (Consejería de Agricultura, Ganadería y Pesca, Dirección general de producción agrícola y ganadera. Servicio de sanidad vegetal), Roberto SANZ DIEZ (Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación, Dirección General de Producción agroalimentaria y bienestar animal), Pauline DA JERPHANION and Wiem CHTIOUI (Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Souveraineté Alimentaire, Direction Générale de l'Alimentation, Bureau de la Santé des végétaux), Martin STRUGAREK (Unité Santé des végétaux), Denis FERRIEU (Pôle Mutualisation des Inspections Phytosantiaires), Estelle SENAC (Unité Santé et protection des végétaux), Salvatore INFANTINO, Anna PERCOCO and Claudio ZAZA (Dipartimento Agricoltura, Sviluppo Rurale ed Ambientale), Francesca BERTELLI, Emanuele MARCUCCI and Nicola TEDDE (Servizio Fitosanitario Regionale).

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Panel Chair welcomed the participants.

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.

4. Agreement of the minutes of the 125th Panel plenary meeting held on 2 to 4 July 2024.

The Panel was also informed that the minutes of the previous Plenary meeting were published in time and now available on EFSA website: 125th PLH plenary

5. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion and possible adoption

5.1 Commodity Risk assessment of *Petunia* and *Calibrachoa* unrooted cuttings from Costa Rica (EFSA-Q-2022-00771)

The European Commission requested the EFSA Panel on Plant Health to evaluate the probability of entry of pests (likelihood of pest freedom at entry), including both regulated and non-regulated pests, associated with unrooted cuttings of the genera *Petunia* and *Calibrachoa* produced under physical isolation in Costa Rica. The relevance of any pest for this opinion was based on evidence collected according to specific criteria, following the methodology used for High-Risk Plants adapted for the specificity of this assessment. Twenty-two EU regulated pests (beet curly top virus, *Bemisia tabaci, Chloridea virescens, Eotetranychus lewisi, Epitrix cucumeris, Epitrix tuberis,* euphorbia mosaic virus, *Helicoverpa zea, Liriomyza huidobrensis, Liriomyza sativae, Liriomyza trifolii,* pepper golden mosaic virus, potato spindle tuber viroid, *Ralstonia pseudosolanacearum, Ralstonia solanacearum, Spodoptera ornithogalli,* squash leaf curl virus, *Thrips palmi,* tomato golden mosaic virus, tomato leaf curl Sinaloa virus, tomato spotted wilt virus, tomato yellow leaf curl virus) and one pest that is not regulated in the EU (*Aleurodicus dispersus*) fulfilled all relevant criteria and were selected for further evaluation. For these pests, the risk mitigation measures proposed in the technical dossier from Costa Rica were evaluated taking into account possible factors limiting their efficacies. Additionally, 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 estimated degree of pest freedom varies among the pests evaluated, with tomato spotted wilt virus being the pest most frequently expected on the imported cuttings. The Expert Knowledge Elicitation indicated, with 95% certainty, that between 9927 and 10,000 bags containing unrooted cuttings of *Petunia* spp. and *Calibrachoa* spp. per 10,000 would be free of tomato spotted wilt virus.

The scientific opinion was adopted on 26 September 2024. It was noted that, to ensure consistency, the squash leaf curl virus should also be added to the actionable pests of the Scientific Opinion on Commodity Risk Assessment of Petunia and Calibrachoa unrooted cuttings from Guatemala.

5.2 Commodity risk assessment of *Betula pendula* and *Betula pubescens* from UK (EFSA-Q-2023-00508)

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 *Betula pendula* and *B. pubescens* imported from the United Kingdom (UK) taking into account the available scientific information, including the technical information provided by

[1] EFSA's Policy on Independence
[2] Decision of the EFSA's Executive Director on Competing Interest Management

the UK. The commodities were grouped in the risk assessment as a) bundles of 10–20 graftwood/budwood (up to 1 year old), b) bare root plants which include bundles of 25 or 50 seedlings or transplants (1–2 years old), bundles of 5, 10 or 15 whips (1-2 years old), and single bare root plants (1-7 years old), c) plants in pots which include bundles of 5 and 10 cell grown plants (1–2 years old) and rooted plants in pots (1-7 years old), and d) large specimen trees up to 15 years old. All pests associated with the commodities were evaluated against specific criteria for their relevance for this opinion. Two EU quarantine pests i.e., *Meloidogyne fallax* and *Phytophthora ramorum* (non-EU isolates) and two protected zone quarantine pests i.e., *Entoleuca mammata* and *Thaumetopoea processionea* fulfilled all relevant criteria and were selected for further evaluation. For the selected pests, the risk mitigation measures described in the technical dossier from the UK 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 the pest, including uncertainties associated with the assessment. In the assessment of risk, the age of the plants was considered, as larger trees are more likely to be infested mainly due to longer time grown in the field. In addition, larger canopies and root systems are more difficult to inspect, thereby making the detection of pests more challenging on large trees. The likelihood of pest freedom varies among the pests evaluated, with *M. fallax* being the pest most frequently expected on the imported plants. The Expert Knowledge Elicitation indicated with 95% certainty that between 9735 and 10,000 per 10,000 large specimen trees will be free from *M. fallax*.

The scientific opinion was adopted on 26 September 2024.

6. Introduction to PLH Panel Sharepoint: sharing, accessing, reviewing and editing Panel documents

Panel received a presentation of the 2024 PLH panel Sharepoint and Team channel. Some exercises were given to ensure that everyone had access and could work in the platform.

7. Feedback from EFSA, Scientific Committee and European Commission

7.1 Feedback from EFSA: Introduction to the mandate on update of *Xylella fastidiosa* pest risk assessment (EFSA-Q-2024-00322) and scope of the session

The new mandate to update the EFSA risk assessment on *Xylella fastidiosa* (published in 2019), taking into account the current EU outbreaks, was presented. The new mandate will focus on the different subspecies of *X. fastidiosa* found in the EU territory—namely, subspecies *pauca*, *fastidiosa*, and *multiplex*—as well as the plant species identified as susceptible within the EU since 2013.

The updated assessment will incorporate data related to EU outbreaks, including information on the pathogen, ST type (sequence type), vectors, host plants, disease spread, and measures taken for eradication or containment. These efforts and their effectiveness will also be considered. Additionally, the assessment will evaluate the probability of *X. fastidiosa* spreading and becoming established in other parts of the EU.

The assessment will also update the analysis of the potential impact of the disease, factoring in the ongoing socio-economic impact assessment of Union quarantine priority pests.

The deadline for completing this mandate is November 2026.

7.2 Presentations on current outbreaks of *Xylella fastidiosa* in the EU

The current and historical outbreaks in the EU were presented by different representatives of Member States, from France, Italy, Portugal, Spain.

7.2.1 Presentation of current outbreaks of *Xylella fastidiosa* in Portugal

Since 2014, the surveillance efforts for *X. fastidiosa* in Portugal's pest-free areas have intensified, with an increasing number of samples collected over time. The detection of positive cases has led to the designation of several demarcated areas starting in 2019 across various zones. Following the 2023 surveys in both infected and buffer zones, which employed the Ribess+ statistical tool, monitoring has extended to urban, agricultural, forestry, and semi-natural areas. The subspecies of *X. fastidiosa* detected in the Portuguese outbreaks are: subspecies *fastidiosa*, *multiplex* and some undetermined in the **North region**; subspecies *fastidiosa*, *multiplex* and some undetermined in the **Centro region**. It was noted that the majority of host plants found infected were wild plant species belonging to the natural flora. Since 2021, the WebGIS Platform for *X. fastidiosa* has been in use in Portugal, allowing sampling effort and results to be registered in real time using tablets in the field.

7.2.2 Presentation of current outbreaks of *Xylella fastidiosa* in Spain (Balearic islands, Alicante and Estremadura)

The current status and progression of the harmful organism *X. fastidiosa* in the **Balearic Islands** was outlined, highlighting the recent emergence of the subspecies *pauca* ST53 in central Mallorca. Photographic evidence of the latest symptoms observed in the Balearic Islands was presented to the EFSA PLH Panel. The first detection occurred in October 2016, involving three cherry trees at a 'Garden Center', followed by a second detection in December 2016 in *Polygala myrtifolia* at the same location. Since 2017, the outbreak in the Balearic Islands was declared under containment. Ongoing sampling campaigns are being conducted across the islands of Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza, and Formentera, with the percentage of positive samples and a list of affected plant species provided. Notable species include *Prunus dulcis* (22% of samples resulted positive), *Lavandula angustifolia* (18%), *P. myrtifolia* (14%), among others. The subspecies and sequence types (ST) identified so far in the Balearic Islands are in Mallorca: subspecies *multiplex* ST81 and ST7, subspecies *fastidiosa* ST1 and subspecies *pauca* ST53; in Menorca: subspecies *multiplex* ST81, and in Ibiza subspecies *pauca* ST80. Special attention was given to the *pauca* ST53 subspecies found in *Olea europaea sylvestris* in Mallorca, as this outbreak appears to be localized in the Sencelles area and has similar epidemiological characteristics as the one in Apulia (Italy). A specific action plan has been developed to address it.

A map of *X. fastidiosa* outbreaks in the EU was presented, with particular focus on the outbreak in **Alicante**. The first detection of *X. fastidiosa* subspecies *multiplex* ST6 in the region occurred in June 2017, and currently, 82 municipalities are included in the demarcated area. A list of 26 plant species that tested positive was shared with the EFSA PLH Panel. To date, only one sequence type (ST6) has been identified. Certain plant species, including *Olea europaea* (olive), *Ficus carica* (fig), *Citrus* spp., *Vitis* sp. (grapevine), *Nerium oleander*, *Quercus* sp. (oak), and *Persea americana* (avocado), showed 0% infection rates during sampling campaigns conducted from 2017 to 2023 in the Alicante demarcated area. The plant species found more frequently infected were *P. dulcis* (almond), *P. myrtifolia*, and *Calicotome spinosa*, with infection rates exceeding 10% during the same period. A risk-based survey, designed to reduce the number of samples while maintaining detection accuracy (in line with EFSA guidelines and the RIBES+ tool), is ongoing in three land-use categories: agricultural areas, natural environments (forests), and urban areas. In Alicante, surveys for *X. fastidiosa* vectors have also been conducted, with three species testing positive: *Philaenus spumarius*, *Neophilaenus campestris*, and *Neophilaenus lineatus*. The phytosanitary treatments carried out before plant removal were detailed, including the use of pesticides authorized for almonds, olives, vines, stone fruits, and non-cultivated areas. Pictures documenting the eradication process and equipment were presented, emphasizing the complexity of the eradication tasks. Additional phytosanitary measures were discussed, along with the importance of raising awareness about *X. fastidiosa.*

X. fastidiosa was first reported in **Valencia de Alcántara (Extremadura)** in early 2024. Initially, the Portuguese border was not considered a specific risk area in Spain's survey plan. However, due to two detections, a targeted survey plan was developed and implemented in Extremadura to detect *X. fastidiosa*. Two high-risk zones were identified within a 2.5 km buffer zone from the border with the Portuguese demarcated areas, in the Valverde del Fresno and Valencia de Alcántara regions. In these areas, the following actions were taken: intensive sampling was conducted with an 80% confidence level and a 1% design prevalence, with samples collected from all host plants in the designated area. *X. fastidiosa* subspecies *fastidiosa* ST1 was detected in *Cytisus scoparius* (broom), *Cytisus villosus*, and species of *Lavandula* sp. (lavender). The origin of the Valencia de Alcántara outbreak remains unknown. Surveys and eradication measures were outlined, alongside a public awareness campaign. Photographs of infected plants were presented to the EFSA PLH Panel.

7.2.3 Presentation of current outbreaks of *Xylella fastidiosa* in France (Corsica, PACA and Aquitaine)

Details were provided on the historical and current situation regarding *X. fastidiosa* outbreaks in Corsica, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA), and Occitania. The presentation began with a brief introduction of the competent authorities and organizational structure in France, including the role of the NPPO-General Directorate for Food (DGAL), regional phytosanitary authorities (DRAAF-SRAL), and delegated bodies such as FREDON.

The outbreak in **Corsica** has been ongoing since 2015, primarily involving *X. fastidiosa* subspecies *multiplex* ST6 and ST7, and has been under containment since 2018. The historical findings and ongoing research in Corsica were discussed, with a focus on olive tree surveillance. Since 2015, nearly 50 different plant species have tested positive for the bacterium in Corsica. The action plan, including its regulatory requirements, local risk analysis, and supplementary actions, was outlined in detail. A map was presented showing the precise distribution of *X. fastidiosa* subspecies *multiplex* ST6 and ST7 in both plants and vectors since 2020.

In **PACA**, the *X. fastidiosa* subspecies *pauca* ST53 (found in Menton) was eradicated, identified as a single introduction event. Official surveys are ongoing, and positive samples (ST6 and ST7) have been detected exclusively in peri-urban coastal residential areas. Positive vectors include *P. spumarius* and *Neophilaenus* sp. The ongoing challenges of managing the outbreak were emphasized. The primary infected plant species in PACA include *P. myrtifolia*, *Spartium junceum*, *Dimorphotheca*, *Coronilla glauca*, *Euryops pectinatus*, *Euryops chrysanthemoides*, *Lavandula x intermedia*, and *Santolina chamaecyparissus*. Two new sequence types, ST88 and ST89, have also been detected.

In **Occitania**, since 2020, the two sequence types ST6 and ST7 have been identified. The main infected plants include *S. junceum* and wild almond trees (*P. dulcis*), found in uncultivated areas and a few alfalfa plots. Official monitoring of plants is ongoing in demarcated areas, and a comparison of the outbreak's evolution in the Aude between 2022 and 2024 was presented, showing a westward increase. The eradication strategy in peripheral sectors, along with an adapted approach for the most affected areas, was explained, including the challenges faced. The list of frequently infected plant species since 2022 includes *S. junceum*, *P. dulcis*, *Lavandula*, *Rosa canina*, *Medicago sativa*, and *Coronilla valentina*.

7.2.4 Presentation of current outbreaks of *Xylella fastidiosa* in Italy (Apulia and Toscana)

The outbreak of *X. fastidiosa* subspecies *pauca* ST53 in olive trees was the first detected outdoors in the EU, occurring in **Apulia** in 2013. Over a decade of surveillance and sampling efforts have

since led to the recent discovery of two additional outbreaks of *X. fastidiosa* subspecies: *multiplex* and *fastidiosa*. The first part of the presentation focused on the most recent outbreak of *X. fastidiosa* subspecies *fastidiosa* near Triggiano, where insect vectors tested positive. Reinforced surveillance measures were applied to each hectare of almond, vine, fruit trees, and fields with specified plant species, starting from the outer areas of the buffer zone. The National Research Council confirmed the subspecies of each infected plant using the Dupas et al. (2019) method. The delimiting survey in the Triggiano area identified positive cases of *X. fastidiosa* subspecies *fastidiosa* ST1 (affecting almond, grapevine, cherry, and *Polygala*), *X. fastidiosa* subspecies *multiplex* ST26 (affecting almond), and *X. fastidiosa* subspecies *pauca* ST53 (affecting olive and almond). Photographic documentation of ST1 infections in grapevine and almonds was also presented. Ongoing research aims to understand the molecular clock and potential introduction date of ST1 in Apulia. Despite the detection of several new positive samples in the Triggiano area, field observations suggest that the impact of *X. fastidiosa* subspecies *fastidiosa* in the region is not severe, with minimal desiccation observed in vineyards. One hypothesis is that almond trees could play a key role in the epidemiology of *X. fastidiosa* subspecies *multiplex* and *fastidiosa* in the Triggiano area. The second part of the presentation covered the spread of ST53 in the Apulian region since 2013. The most recent finding, in May 2024, was of ST53 in almond and olive trees near Bari. Detailed monitoring procedures were explained, and the use of the "App Xylella" smart device was mentioned. The presentation also highlighted the impact and management strategies in the demarcated area affected by *X. fastidiosa* subspecies *pauca*, covering all relevant aspects.

* Dupas E, Briand M, Jacques MA, Cesbron S. 2019. Novel tetraplex quantitative PCR assays for simultaneous detection and identification of *Xylella fastidiosa subspecies* in plant tissues. Front. Plant Sci. 2019, 10, 1732.

Monte Argentario promontory in Tuscany is the second area in Italy which was found to be affected by *X. fastidiosa*. The geographical location of the outbreak was described in detail, highlighting features such as the protected pine woodland (inaccessible by vehicles), urban areas, public gardens connected to the promontory, significant coastal access points, and some areas of spontaneous arable vegetation. The topography of the outbreak site was illustrated through photos and maps. Until 2018, no positive cases of *X. fastidiosa* had been recorded in the area. However, an intensive survey conducted from November to December 2018 confirmed the presence of *X. fastidiosa* subspecies *multiplex* ST-87 in several plants. At the same time, the vector *Neophilaenus campestris* was also found to be positive. Yearly changes in the demarcated area were presented, showing the infected zone expanding from 135 hectares in 2018 to 262 hectares by 2024. The sample size for the survey was calculated using the EFSA RIBES+ tool. A detailed list of positive plant species was provided, with the highest positivity rate in 2023 (over 10% of sampled plants in the infected zone) found in species like *Spartium junceum* and *Rhamnus alaternus*. Positive insect vectors identified included *Philaenus* sp. and *Neophilaenus* sp.

8. Feedback from EFSA Scientific Committee

Panel Chair updated the panel with the ongoing activities of the SC.

8.1 Feedback from European Commission DG SANTE

DG SANTE informed the Panel that they have been working on the "Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2004 - http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2024/2004/oj

8.2 Feedback from EFSA: 1) PLH panel published outputs; 2) Grants and procurement; 3) next PLH Panel plenaries

The Panel Coordinator informed the Panel about the scientific outputs published during the summer and updated them with the current and future Art. 36 grants. The 2024 and 2025 PLH plenary calendars were shown.

9. AOB

Not applicable