Risk Assessment in Plant Health Network
Minutes of the 21st meeting

28-29-30 October 2024
14:00-18:00 / 09:00-17:00 / 09:00-12:00
Minutes agreed on 15 January 2025

Location: EFSA – Parma /Web conference

Attendees:

- Network Participants:

Country	Member State Organisation
Austria	AGES
Belgium	Federal Public Services - Health, Food Chain Safety, Environment Belgian Food Safety Agency
Bulgaria	Risk assessment centre on food chain
Croatia	Croatian Agency for Agriculture and Food
Cyprus	Department of Agriculture
Czech Republic	Central Institute for Supervision and Testing in Agriculture
Denmark	Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries - The Danish Agricultural Agency Department for Plants & Biosecurity
Estonia	Agriculture and Food Board
Finland	Finnish Food Authority
France	ANSES
Germany	Julius Kühn Institut
Hungary	National Food Chain Safety Office
Ireland	DAFM- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Italy	Ministry of Agriculture (MASAF) - Central Plant Health Service
Latvia	State Plant Protection Service
Lithuania	The State Plant Service under the Ministry of Agriculture
Luxembourg	Ministère de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et de la Viticulture Administration des services techniques de l'agriculture
Netherlands	Netherlands Food & Product Safety Authority (NVWA)
Norway	The Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food and Environment
Poland	Institute of Plant Protection - National Research Institute
Portugal	DGAV
Slovak Republic	National Agricultural and Food Centre
Slovenia	Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Food Safety, Veterinary Sector and Plant Protection
Spain	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Sweden	Jordbruksverket (Swedish Board of Agriculture)

- Observers:
  Albania: Tirana Agriculture University; National Veterinary and Plant Protection Authority
  Bosnia and Herzegovina: Food Safety Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina
  Kosovo: Food and Veterinary Agency of Kosovo
  Montenegro: Directorate for Food safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary affairs
  North Macedonia: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, Phytosanitary Directorate
  Serbia: Institute of Phytomedicine, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Belgrade; Faculty of Agriculture, University of Belgrade
  Switzerland: Federal Office for Agriculture General Directorate of Food and Control, Department of Plant Health and Quarantine
  Türkiye: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

- Hearing Experts:
  Valérie Grimault (EPPO); Giacomo Santolemma, Davide Rassati and Matteo Marchioro (Università di Padova, Italy); Antonio Vicent Civera (IVIA, Spain); Valerio Mazzoni (Fondazione Edmund Mach, Italy).

- European Commission/Other EU Agencies representatives: Reinert Wolfgang, European Commission DG SANTE Plant health Unit.

- EFSA:
  PLANTS Unit: Chiara Civitelli, Matteo Crotta, Ewelina Czwienczek, Naliny Feliu, Ciro Gardi, Gemma Germoglio, Alex Gobbi, Agata Kaczmarek, Virag Kertesz, Monia Lombardo, Andrea Mariorano, Marco Pautasso, Dorothea Pochlauer, Maria Ribaya Munoz, Tobin Robinson, Marica Scala, Franz Streissl, Giuseppe Stancanelli, Emanuela Tacci, Anastasia Terzidou and Sara Tramontini.

  IDATA Unit: Giuseppe Antonio Triacchini.

  MESE Unit: Olaf Mosbach Schulz.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Agreement of the minutes of the 20th Network meeting held on 5-6-7 December 2024, in Parma and via web-conference

The minutes of the 20th Network meeting were previously agreed by written procedure and published on the EFSA website.

4. Session on forestry plant health

This session included presentations on forestry plant health by EFSA, Member States and EFSA funded research projects.

The recently published pest categorisation of non-EU Scolytinae of broadleaved trees (https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2024.8889) was presented by Virag Kertesz (EFSA PLANTS Unit) to the Network. The development of this pest categorisation, covering a large taxonomic group of ca. 6500 insect species, was supported by the creation by University of Padova (IT) of a global database of non-EU Scolytinae (https://www.scolytinaehostsdatabase.eu/site/it/home/?non-autorizzati=1). The structure and content of the database was presented by Matteo Marchioro (Università di Padova). This database will be mantained, merged with the dataset on non-EU Scolytinae of coniferous species and updated with information on invasiveness, impact and diagnostics.

The intermediate results of the EFSA funded Art. 36 project SAPTREES were presented by Giacomo Santolemma and Davide Rassati (Università di Padova) to the Network. The SAPTREES project is conducted by Università di Padova and CNR IPSP (Italy) together with Natural Resources Canada and aims investigating the susceptibility of European trees to the American Elm Borer Saperda tridentata. The uncertainty on whether European elm species and other European trees could be hosts of S. tridentata was highlighted in an EFSA pest categorisation (https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2020.5940). The intermediate results suggest that S. tridentata is able to feed and develop on elm trees commonly present in EU countries, whereas Populus spp. and Acer spp. appear to be unsuitable hosts. The SAPTRES project will conclude by 2026 and its result will be published in an External Scientific Report on EFSA Journal Supporting Publications.

An update on recent outputs and ongoing work of EFSA forestry commodity risk assessment was presented to the Network by Alzbeta Mikulova (EFSA art. 36 Tasking Grant with Università di Padova). A special focus was on the commodity risk assessments conducted by EFSA following derogation requests to provisions of EU plant health law on maple veneer sheets from Canada (https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2024.8892), conifer woodchips and walnut and oak logs from the US. For each of the mandates an explanation of the background, the terms of references and the evaluation approaches taken were presented. In addition, an update was given on recently published commodity risk assessments on plants for planting from UK of *Ligustrum vulgare* and *L. ovalifolium* (https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2024.8648), *Tilia platyphyllos* and *T. cordata* (https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2024.8803), and *Betula pendula* and *B. pubescens* (in publication).

An overview of the recent and current issues on forest pests and diseases in France was presented by Philippe Reignault (ANSES, France). France has a great diversity of forest ecosystems, with unique features at the EU level, ranging from temperate, mountain and mediterranean climates on the European continent to tropical climate in the French overseas departments in the Caribbeans (Antilles), South America (French Guiana) and Indian Ocean (La Réunion Island). The economic impact of emerging forest pests in France was discussed, with examples of main pests (*Xylella fastidiosa*, pine wood nematode, *Phytophthora ramorum*). The case of stinging hair caterpillars importance demonstrates the relevance of plant health for One Health. The mission of ANSES, its partecipation to research projects and the contribution of ANSES research to forest tree health were discussed.

Key issues and risk for forest plant health in Sweden were presented by Sofia Windstam (Swedish Board of Agriculture). Forest covers 68% of Swedish land area, with main tree species constituted by spruce, lodgepole pine, birch, oak and beech. Key issues for Sweden forest health are climate change, non-native pests and damage from browsing mammals. The large number of forest pests poses challenges to forest plant health surveillance and highlights the need for risk ranking of regulated and new pests. A large number of forest pests categorisations was produced by EFSA on new pests identified by horizon scanning and PeMOScoring, however these are fast assessments and are sometimes challenging for risk managers to evaluate.

Effects of climate change on boreal forests (https://vkm.no/english/riskassessments/allpublications/climatechangeandeffectsontheforestecosystem.4.3ab0c18c17889d7716c94c99.html) were presented by Daniel Flo (VKM, Norway).

Climate change is expected to cause unprecedented changes in boreal forests, in particular by rising temperatures and increased precipitation, increased frequency of extreme weather events such as droughts, storms, and wildfires. Moderate ecological changes are expected until 2050. Rising temperatures and increased precipitation may have some positive effects on forest growth. However, increased frequency of extreme weather events like droughts, storms, wildfires, pest outbreaks and diseases will offset the positive effects. More profound and negative impacts are expected by 2100. Extreme weather events will lead to significant negative effects on forest ecosystems.

5. Session on commodity risk assessment

Ciro Gardi (EFSA PLANTS Unit) presented an update on the commodity risk assessment for High Risk ornamental plants and on the commodity risk assessments for derogation requests, with specific focus on the activities on Petunia and Calibrachoa.
Agata Kaczmarek (EFSA PLANTS Unit) presented a general update on the published and ongiong High Risk plant risk assessments.
Olaf Mosbach Schulz (MESE Unit) described how the data presente in the commodity risk assessment should be read and interpreded, introducing also the practical excercise that that have been done by the network members divided in small groups, during the second half of the morning session.
The group excercise, supported by the High Risk Plants team, was focused on the following aspects :

- How to handle missing information (eg clarifications, meetings with applicants, additional literatures searches by EFSA)?
- How to handle conflicting information (eg differences between official pest status, citizen science and literature)?
- How to interpret level of pest freedom in view of trade volumes?
- How specific should be the risk assessment in relation to the description of the commodity?

The morning of the second day ended with a wrap-up and plenary discussion on commodity risk assessment, with report back from group exercises focusing on the questions

6. Session on agriculture plant health

An update on the activities of Horizon Scanning for Plant Health was presented by Sara Tramontini (EFSA PLANTS Unit).

Ewelina Czwienczek and Andrea Maiorano (EFSA PLANTS Unit) presented the EFSA quantitative pest risk assessments of Leucinodes species from Africa, including climate change for the climate suitability assessment.

Matteo Crotta (EFSA PLANTS Unit) presented the new mandate to update the 2019 EFSA pest risk assessment for *Xylella fastidiosa*, in particular focusing on the terms of reference, the workplan and the public consultations. Dedicated consultations with Member States on the draft opinions wil be conducted through the Plant Health Risk Assessment Network.

Valerio Mazzoni (FEM, Italy) presented an introduction to Biotremology and its applications to control and/or monitor invasive insects, with examples on *Scaphoideus titanus* and other Auchennorryncha.

Antonio Vicent Civera (IVIA, Spain) presented the ongoing research on Citrus Black Spot (CBS) epidemiology and control in Tunisia, funded by an EFSA art. 36 project. This research aims at gaining understanding of CBS epidemiology and control in Mediterranean citrus growing areas. The CBS outbreak in Tunisia is the only outbreak of this disease caused by the fungus *Phyllosticta citricarpa* in a Mediterranean citrus growing area. This reasearch is conducted by a consortiun of Art. 36 organisations, including NIB (Slovenia), IVIA and UPV (Spain) and ANSES (France), together with Institut Supérieur Agronomique de Chott-Mariem (Tunisia).

Discussion, following both sessions on forestry and agriculture plant health, included several points, with a focus on the challenges of MSs monitoring and eradication, particularly when dealing with large numbers of quarantine plant pests. Member States supported a thorough analysis of impact of potential quarantine pests by EFSA, also highliting the limited resources and the advantages of applying risk based and commodity based approaches. In the case of exotic pests already present in part of the EU, a priori exclusion from risk assessment was considered dangerous; however. in cases where no impact was reported in the EU and no official control measures were taken, after having consulted the MSs, the assessment could stop befire conducting a full PRA. The importance of focusing on preventing the importation of plant pests into the EU was also raised, given the difficulties and costs of eradicating outbreaks.

7. Session on protocols for emergency authorizations of pesticides

Franz Streissl (EFSA PLANTS Unit) provided an overview on the mandate, deliverables, timelines for the development of protocols for emergency authorizations. First results on the analysis of past emergency authorisations and the methodology for identification of alternative methods were presented. Furthermore, a summary from a workshop with MSs on the evaluation criteria for alternative methods and MSs needs for the evaluation of emergency authorisations were presented.

Barbara Colucci (Federal Office for Agriculture, Switzerland) presented an NPPO view on the Emergency authorizations of plant protection products. This is the last option for controlling an outbreak of a quarantine plant pest when there is a lack of authorized products. The current procedure applied in Switzerland in such cases was shown, with the example of *Popilia japonica*.

Results of Network online flash survey on use of emergency authorizations of pesticides in plant quarantine outbreaks were presented by Monia Lombardo (EFSA PLANTS Unit).

In the following discussion, the participants pointed out that the exchange of information on existing alternatives and emergency authorisations for outbreaks of quarantine pests among MSs would be very useful. Measures against quarantine pests need to be very efficient as they should aim for eradication. This should also be accounted for, in the Protocols development, in the evaluation criteria of alternative methods, perhaps by adding a category "very high efficacy allowing eradication of the pest". It was also remarked that a fast decision making is required in case of an outbreak of a quarantine pest, hence it was suggested to consider having a separate "fast track" evaluation of an emergency authorisation for quarantine pests.

8. Any Other Business

The Network was informed by Giuseppe Stancanelli (EFSA PLANTS Unit) of the need to review and update the Network Terms of Reference: A draft updated Terms of Reference, following consultation with Advisory Forum and Focal Points, will be shared with Network for their review and comments (with one month deadline).

Aikaterini Vlachou (EFSA KNOW Unit) presented an analysis on the enrichment of the list of MSs competent organisations cooperating with EFSA in the area of plant health. EFSA's Art. 36 List analysis aim is to promote a broader collaborative ecosystem with the Member States (MSs). A list including current art 36 lists organizations in plant health and new potential ones identified by EFSA will be shared with Network members for suggestion of additional competent organisations in their country for enriching the EFSA art. 36 list in the area of plant health. This consultation will be run together with other consultations of the Network.

Ciro Gardi (EFSA PLANTS Unit) presented a draft version of an online survey on Network members activities. The scope of this survey was discussed, and the agreement was to circulate the draft version for possible integrations of the questions by the Network members (with one month deadline). The final version of the survey will then be launched in the beginning of 2025.

Agata Kaczmarek (EFSA PLANTS Unit) presented a brief update on PlantHealth4Life campaign

Dates for next meetings were discussed with the Network. Given the challenges already experienced in finding dates suitable to all participants agendas, it was agreed to fix the dates for next year meeting in advance. **A Network meeting at EFSA in Parma (Italy) has been scheduled for 4-6 November 2025;** this meeting will be on a hybrid format but participation in person of Network members or their alternates is welcome and recommended. An additional shorter online Network meeting will be scheduled for half day in May-June 2025.

9. Conclusions

This Network meeting provided a valuable forum for open discussion and interaction among participants on plant health risk assessment topics. The feedback provided by Network members on EFSA pest and commodity risk assessment will help EFSA to improve and update its approaches and methodologies. For pest risk assessment, it was highlighted the importance of a thorough impact assessment and of consulting with MSs when pests are already occurring in part of the EU. The role of the Network as first contact point with MSs in plant health risk assessment is considered crucial by EFSA, including conducting consultation with MSs on important plant health topics via the Network. Consultations with the Network are currently being initiated on the review of the Network Terms of Reference and on a draft survey on MSs plant health activities. Network consultations will also be conducted in 2025 and 2026 on: the Protocols for emergency authorisations, focusing on the plant quarantine aspects; the draft outputs of the updated pest risk assessment for *Xylella fastidiosa*.

10. Closure of the meeting

The Chair concluded the meeting and thanked: the Network Members and Observers for their active participation; all the speakers for their presentation; the EFSA colleagues for the successful organization and the interactive approach of the meeting.