

12-13 March 2025

09:00-18:00 / 09:00-13:00

MINUTES - Agreed on 27 March 2025

**Location:** Parma (Italy) and Web-Conference

**Attendees:**

- Panel Members:

Ana Allende, Avelino Alvarez-Ordóñez, Valeria Bortolaia, Sara Bover-Cid, Alessandra De Cesare, Wietske Dohmen, Laurent Guillier, Lieve Herman, Liesbeth Jacxsens, Maarten Nauta, Lapo Mughini-Gras, Jakob Ottoson, Luisa Peixe, Fernando Perez-Rodriguez, Panagiotis Skandamis, Elisabetta Suffredini

- Hearing Experts<sup>1</sup>:

Romolo Nonno (item 6.5)

- European Commission and/or Member States representatives:

Sandrine Amsler, Paolo Caricato, Luca Chiappini Carpena, Kris De Smet, Gunilla Eklund, Patricia Herrero Sancho, Matjaz Klemencic, Laszlo Kuster, Martial Plantady, Carlos Rebelo, Anne-Catherine Richard-McGillivray, Koen Van Dyck (EC DG SANTE)

- EFSA:

Simone Baldassa, Sandra Correia, Maria Teresa Da Silva Felicio, Nadya Doyle, Nuria Ferrer, Raquel Garcia-Fierro, Andrea Gervelmeyer, Beatriz Guerra, Michaela Hempen, Kamela Kryemadhi, Ernesto Liebana, Winy Messens, Angel Ortiz-Peláez, Hanne Rabbas, Valentina Rizzi, Eleonora Sarno, Pietro Stella, Frank Verdonck (BIOHAW Unit)

Bernhard Url, Carlos Das Neves (Executive Director Office) (item 8.3)

- 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 Independence<sup>2</sup> and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management,<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> As defined in Article 34 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>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate\\_publications/files/policy\\_independence.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/policy_independence.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate\\_publications/files/competing\\_interest\\_management\\_17.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/competing_interest_management_17.pdf)



## 4. Agreement of the minutes of the 175<sup>th</sup> Panel Plenary meeting held on 29-30 January 2025

The minutes of the 175<sup>th</sup> Panel plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 13<sup>rd</sup> February 2025.

## 5. Scientific outputs submitted for adoption/endorsement

### 5.1 Application for fluidized catalytic cracking co-processing for the production of renewable fuels ([EFSA-Q-2024-00539](#))

The WG Chair presented the draft opinion for possible adoption. He went through the comments provided in advance by the Panel members, some of them already addressed before the plenary. There were no major issues, and the Panel agreed with the conclusions of the opinion. The public consultation of the non-confidential version of the dossier was finalised so the output can be approved and published. The draft opinion was adopted.

### 5.2 Scientific opinion(s) on the current status of the occurrence and spread of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales in the food chain in the EU/EFTA ([EFSA-Q-2024-00149](#))

The WG Chair presented the opinion for adoption. Minor comments received from the Panel had been addressed before the meeting. The conclusions, recommendations, abstract and summary were presented and agreed. The draft opinion (Part 1, covering ToR1 and ToR3, update as of 2025) was adopted. To generate new data (ToR2), a Monopole Framework Partnership Agreement was signed with the EU and National Reference Laboratories on antimicrobial resistance (2024-2027). Planned studies will focus on isolation and characterization protocols, epidemiological investigations, in-depth genetic analyses of isolates, and genomic comparison of isolates from different sources. The duration of the activities of the whole mandate is up to the end of 2027, where a new scientific opinion will be released.

## 6. Scientific outputs 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](#))

Last WG meeting was held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025. The next WG meeting is scheduled on 2<sup>nd</sup> April. No meetings took place since last plenary and no changes to the draft opinion since then. The deadline for adoption of this opinion is 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025.

### 6.2 Statement on the update of the list of QPS-recommended biological agents intentionally added to food or feeds as notified to EFSA. 22: Suitability of taxonomic units notified to EFSA until March 2025 ([EFSA-Q-2023-00052](#))

Last WG meeting was held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025. The next WG meeting is scheduled on 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Fourteen notifications were received between October 2024 and February 2025 (inclusive): 23 as feed additives, 4 as food enzymes, food additives and flavourings, 4 as novel foods and 8 as PPPs. From these, 35 were excluded from the current QPS evaluation for the following reasons: 15 were not evaluated because belong to taxonomic units excluded from the QPS evaluation (10 filamentous fungi, 4 *E. coli* and 1 *Streptomyces* spp.), and 21 belong to taxonomic units that already have a QPS status. Two of the other 4 notifications were already evaluated for a possible QPS status in previous Panel Statements: *Bacillus*



*thuringiensis* and *Ensifer adhaerens*. The other 2 TUs were *Vibrio natriegens* (notified for the first time) and *Papiliotrema terrestris* (already assessed in 2022) which will be assessed for a possible QPS status in this Panel Statement. Two TUs were assessed for a possible QPS status in response to an internal request: *Bacillus sonorensis* and *Corynebacterium stationis* (already assessed in 2022), which will also be assessed for a possible QPS status in this Panel Statement. The deadline is 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

**6.3 Guidance 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 ([EFSA-Q-2024-00020](#))**

The public consultation on the draft guidance closed on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2025<sup>4</sup>. In total 13 comments have been received of which 7 comments (containing several sub-questions) are in the remit of the BIOHAZ panel. The WG discussed the outcome of the public consultation on the draft guidance at their WG meeting on 20 February 2025. Most of the comments received were discussed and answered, and the guidance revised accordingly when considered needed. Three sub-questions were transferred to the WG dealing with the revision of the draft guidance on the characterisation and risk assessment of microorganisms used in the food chain (see item 6.8).

**6.4 Update of the scientific opinion 'Evaluation of the safety and efficacy of Listex™ P100 for reduction of pathogens on different ready-to-eat (RTE) food products' ([EFSA-Q-2024-00551](#))**

The WG vice-Chair informed the Panel that a first request for additional information (ADR-1) was sent to the applicant on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025. The applicant has responded to this request and to the first clarification request by 23 February 2025 and the information was discussed during the WG meeting on 27 February. Another clarification request was sent to the applicant on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2025 with a deadline of 24<sup>th</sup> March 2025. The next WG meeting will be held on 25 March 2025. The original deadline for adoption of the scientific opinion (10<sup>th</sup> December 2025) will be extended accordingly.

**6.5 Scientific opinion on the presence of biological and chemical hazards in ash from Category 1 material after incineration, co-incineration, and combustion ([EFSA-Q-2024-00278](#))**

The WG Chair presented the draft opinion for thorough reading. The WG Chair explained the changes in the structure and content of the opinion, and how the different sections contribute to answer the assessment questions as defined in the protocol. Then, he went section by section addressing the comments of Panel members and answering any questions that they had. There were several suggestions by Panel members to rename sections and make a more logical flow of how the assessment questions have been addressed to reach the final answer. Some of these suggestions were taken on board immediately in the text. The Panel considered that the section addressing assessment question (AQ) 4 and the answer to the ToR was not comprehensive enough in bringing the answers of the other AQ leading to the conclusion. Two options were proposed: separate the answer to AQ4 and the answer to the ToR and grouping them as general conclusions. The final answer to the ToR was not contested by the Panel. The draft opinion will be submitted for adoption to the next plenary on 23-24 April 2025. The deadline for delivery of the opinion as agreed with the requestor is 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

<sup>4</sup> <https://connect.efsa.europa.eu/RM/s/consultations/publicconsultation2/a0ITk000003F74H/pc1253>



**6.6 Scientific opinion on the microbiological safety of ungulates meat intended to be frozen ([EFSA-Q-2024-00663](#)) and on frozen meat of ungulates: defrosting ([EFSA-Q-2024-00711](#))**

The WG coordinator informed the Panel of the recent agreement with the European Commission (EC) that one single scientific opinion will be produced to answer both mandates. The WG chair presented the single protocol that the WG drafted to provide the assessments requested in both mandates. Clarifications were provided to most comments received from the Panel and only a few minor comments were left to be discussed with the WG. The Panel approved the protocol, and the EC had no comments on the approaches proposed to answer all ToRs. The Panel was also informed about the agreed updated workplan until the end of the mandate. The deadline for delivery of the single scientific opinion is 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025.

**6.7 Request for a scientific opinion on the risk of infection with highly pathogenic avian influenza virus affecting dairy cows in the United States of America ([EFSA-Q-2024-00712](#))**

The WG vice-chair informed the Panel about the WG members that have joined the existing AHAW Working Group on avian influenza and will deal with the Terms of Reference 2e (ToR 2e) of the mandate. ToR 2e concerns the risk assessment regarding the levels of viable virus at the point of consumption in raw milk, colostrum, dairy products and colostrum-based products produced and consumed in the EU, the risk for humans due to the exposure to those assessed levels of viable virus via the foodborne route, and the available measures to mitigate the estimated risk; all considering a hypothetical scenario that bulk milk or bulk colostrum is found to be contaminated with this virus in the EU. A first WG meeting was held by web-conference on 25 February 2025. The problem formulation (step 1) of the protocol to deal with TOR 2e was presented. The BIOHAZ panel agreed with the interpretation of the ToR 2e of the mandate and the problem formulation, i.e. the translation of the ToR 2e into assessment questions and sub-questions and their relationship as presented through a conceptual model. The next WG meeting will be held by web-conference on 17 March 2025. The deadline for delivery of the scientific opinion is 30 November 2025.

**6.8 EFSA Guidance on the risk assessment of microorganisms used in the food chain ([EFSA-Q-2022-00249](#))**

The Public Consultation (PC) on the "Draft guidance on the characterisation and risk assessment of microorganisms used in the food chain" closed on 7 February. The internal procedure to evaluate and reply to each of the comments received through the PC was explained to the BIOHAZ Panel. A Report will be prepared with all comments received from interested parties together with EFSA responses and explanations how the comments were considered in the final Opinion.

## **7. Update on new mandates**

EFSA informed the Panel of a new ABP application received from the Danish competent authority. It is under completeness check. An update or the presentation of the application will be done in the next plenary.



## 8. Feedback from the Scientific Committee, other Scientific Panels, EFSA and the European Commission

### 8.1 Scientific Committee

The Panel Chair briefly reported to the BIOHAZ Panel the main topics discussed within the 123<sup>rd</sup> Plenary meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC), taking place on 19-20th February 2025<sup>5</sup>. In particular, she briefly updated the Panel on SC discussions on the proposals for topics to be included in the SC work-programme 2026-2027 and on the updated 2027 roadmap on social sciences at EFSA. The Panel suggested to consider inviting EFSA and/or SC colleagues in charge of social science to deliver a presentation on the topic in one of the next plenaries.

### 8.2 European Commission

EC representatives Koen Van Dyck, Matjaz Klemencic and Gunilla Eklund updated the Panel on the ongoing EC activities related to BIOHAZ topics, legislative initiatives taken as a follow-up of past opinions of the BIOHAZ Panel, and future EC work priorities, in particular in relation to food hygiene, microbiological food safety, animal-by products (ABPs) and antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Some possible upcoming requests for scientific advice by EFSA and the BIOHAZ Panel in this area include: a possible request to assess the use of tubs for the transport of fishery products made of different materials compared to the ones assessed in a past EFSA opinion; a possible request related to the impact of the implementation of food safety culture within food business operators in different sectors; a possible request in the area of food of non-animal origin concerning *Listeria monocytogenes* and/or other pathogens; possible requests in relation to the impact of the use of certain animal-by products as fertilisers or feed for animals and/or insects; possible requests in relation to the use of cultured meat as feed; possible applications – through Member States – for new alternative methods for processing ABPs; a possible request related to the update of the past statement on the format for applications for new alternative methods for ABPs. EFSA staff presented to the EC the process followed within the BIOHAZ Panel in the past to gather and prioritise BIOHAZ topics of relevance that could have an impact on food safety, including the ones that were then tackled as self-task mandates by the Panel, such as the scientific opinions on the role played by environment on AMR, on *Vibrio* spp. in seafood, on the use of water in the processing of fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables and herbs, and on carbapenemase-producing bacteria in the food chain. The EC indicated that such scientific opinions have been of high relevance and benefit for the risk manager activities to support their discussions with Member States and international partners and support their legislative initiatives, and expressed interest in receiving in the future any thoughts and considerations from the Panel on relevant food safety topics and emerging threats in the BIOHAZ area.

### 8.3 Exchange of views with EFSA Acting Executive Director

EFSA Acting Executive Director Bernhard Url thanked the Panel for their work. He reminded the Panel about EFSA initiatives to enhance the speed in delivering risk assessments and about the need for a regulatory institution to define an appropriate limit in the level of detail in the assessments delivered. EFSA Chief Scientist Carlos Das Neves addressed the Panel, reminding the importance of risk assessments delivered being fit-for-purpose to address the needs of risk managers, and indicating that new or revised EFSA cross-cutting and sectorial guidance documents should be developed only when strictly needed. He also invited the Panel to reflect on the possible future challenges and food safety threats in the area of biological hazards, and to share them regularly with EFSA to ensure preparedness for the future.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/123rd-plenary-meeting-scientific-committee>



#### **8.4 Rapid Outbreak Assessments and related activities**

Discussion on this agenda item was postponed to the next plenary meeting.

### **9. Other topics for information and/or discussion**

#### **9.1 Topics of scientific concern in the area of biological hazards**

This agenda item was covered within item 8.2.

### **10. AOB**

No additional discussions took place under this agenda item.