EFSA PLANT PEST SURVEILLANCE NETWORK
Minutes of the 5th meeting

23-24 April 2025
09:00-17:00 / 09:00-18:00
Minutes agreed on 15 May 2025

Location: EFSA - Parma (Board Room 00/M14)

Attendees:

- Network Participants:

Country	Member State Organisation
Austria	Regional Plant Protection Service of Vorarlberg
Belgium	Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain
Croatia	Croatian Agency for Agriculture and Food
Czechia	Central Institute for Supervising and Testing in Agriculture
Estonia	Agriculture and Food Board
Finland	Finnish Food Authority
Germany	Julius Kühn-Institut (JKI)
Greece	Benaki Phytopathological Institute – Designated National Reference Laboratory on Plant Health
Latvia	State Plant Protection Service of Latvia, Plant Quarantine Department
Luxembourg	Administration of Technical Services of Agriculture - ASTA
Netherlands	The Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA)
Norway	NIBIO - Norwegian Food Safety Authority
Poland	Institute of Plant Protection - National Research Institute
Portugal	General Directorate for Food and Veterinary (DGAV)
Slovakia	Central Control and Testing Institute in Agriculture in Bratislava
Slovenia	Administration of the Republic of Slovenia for Food Safety, Veterinary Sector and Plant Protection
Spain	Sub-directorate General of Plant and Forestry Health and Hygiene
Sweden	Swedish Board of Agriculture (Jordbruksverket)

- Competent authority (IPA country):
  National Veterinary and Plant Protection Authority (Albania);
  Administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina for Plant Health Protection (Bosnia and Herzegovina);
  Agency of Food and Veterinary of Kosovo (Kosovo*);
  Administration for Food Safety, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Affairs

(Montenegro);
GDFC - Department of Plant Health and Quarantine (Turkey)

- Hearing Experts:
  Fabio Dorn; Elena Lázaro; Giulia Mattion; Juan Navas-Cortés; Hans-Hermann Thulke
- European Commission
  Maria Mirazchiyska
- International Organisations:
  European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO)
- EFSA:
  PLANTS Unit: Tomasz Kaluski (Chair); Laura Carotti; Naliny Feliu; Dorothea Pochlauer; Tobin Robinson; Agnès Rortais; Daria Rzepecka; Francesca Salinari; Marica Scala; Sybren Vos
  MESE Unit: José Cortiñas Abrahantes

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Tobin Robinson Head of Unit of the PLANTS unit in EFSA (Ecotoxicology, Environment and Plant Health) welcomed the participants and opened the meeting.
Apologies were received from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, and Romania.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was proposed by the Chair and was adopted without changes.

3. Agreement of the minutes of the 4th Network meeting held on 23-24 October 2024, in Parma

The minutes of the 4th Network meeting had been previously agreed by written procedure on 11 November 2024.

4. Introduction to Pest Survey Cards (PSCs) session

Francesca Salinari, Scientific Officer in EFSA Plant Health Monitoring Team, introduced the session of the meeting dedicated to discussing the Pest Survey Cards (PSCs) session aimed at collecting feedback from Member States (MSs) to ensure the PSCs respond to their needs in view of the upcoming update of these documents. Sybren Vos, team leader of the EFSA Plant Health Monitoring Team, provided an overview of the PSCs and their use in survey preparation. The harmonized structure of the PSCs was presented, i.e. pest biology, target population characterization, and detection and identification methods. The Network was informed that 111 PSCs have been published to date. Data from 2022-2024 on the frequency of the consultations of the PSCs by the users were shared, highlighting a high level of engagement with

overall in 2024 around 38,000 visits. Data on consultations of single PSCs were also shared, for example, the PSC on *Agrilus planipennis* recorded approximately 1,400 visits, making it one of the most accessed cards.

5. Questionnaire to gather feedback on the use of the PSCs

Giulia Mattion opened the session with an interactive Mentimeter survey aimed at engaging participants and collecting initial impressions from Member States (MSs) regarding their experience with the PSCs. Following this, she presented the structured questionnaire designed to collect detailed feedback from MSs on the usefulness, usability, and overall experience of using PSCs. MSs representatives were invited to complete the questionnaire to support the continuous improvement of the cards and ensure they meet user needs effectively. EFSA asked MSs to share the results of the questionnaire among their colleagues to reach all possible PSCs users.

6. Use of PSCs: Spain

The session on case studies started with a presentation by the Spanish representative, Roberto Sanz, who provided an overview of Spain's 2025 survey planning for *Anoplophora chinensis*. The presentation included the proposed sample size estimates, developed for eight distinct climatic zones and four epidemiological units, defined according to land use for the citrus longhorn beetle (CLB). The application of the PSC was contextualized to Spanish climatic conditions, with an explanation of how the card supported survey design and planning. Spain shared insights into the strengths and weaknesses encountered when applying the CLB PSC, highlighting key challenges such as setting confidence levels and design prevalence in the absence of sufficient expertise on the pest, limited host plant data, and the lack of EU-wide trade data. To enhance the PSCs, Spain proposed the development of EU-level consensus on survey parameters and the inclusion of a decision-support section with examples of common mistakes and their associated advantages and disadvantages.

7. Use of PSCs : Croatia

The Croatian representative, Dario Ivic, presented the case study on the application of the PSC for *Aleurocanthus spiniferus*, currently reported as present with restricted distribution in Croatia. The presentation included reflections on the use of the PSC to support national surveillance activities and highlighted considerations related to the interpretation of information on demarcated areas. Several suggestions were made to improve the PSCs, including the development of a shortened version tailored for use by inspectors in the field, more frequent updates of the cards, the integration of outbreak data reported by MSs, and stronger linkage between PSCs and pest management practices, with examples derived from actual monitoring and eradication activities carried out by MSs.

8. Overview of questionnaire results and discussion

The participants were split into three groups and were invited to take part to three round tables, each one dedicated to a main section of the PSCs (Section 1 – The pest and its biology; Section 2 – Target population; Section 3 - Detection and identification). At each round table 20-minute discussions were held for each group, so that everybody could provide feedback on all sections. The discussion focused at identifying strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and improvements of PSCs.

Following these discussions, EFSA reported in a plenary session the main points raised at the roundtables. Feedback from the participants was gathered via the surveys (both Mentimeter and the questionnaire on MS form that will remain open until 31 May 2025) and will be further analysed by EFSA. The feasibility of the suggested improvements will be assessed and a workplan drafted accordingly. The outcome of this exercise will be shared at the next network.

9. EFSA Surveillance Database

Juan Navas-Cortés, member of EFSA's WG on Pest surveillance Methods, provided an overview of the EFSA relational database developed to support pest surveys. He explained the structure and key functionalities, highlighting the database's capabilities for filtering, sorting, and aggregating data to facilitate tailored analysis. The database contains detailed information on hosts and pests, including inspection units, detection methods (field and laboratory, across three levels), survey timing, presence of asymptomatic periods, pest vectors, and associated risk factors. It is designed to both extract relevant information and to facilitate the use of the data prefilling the statistical tools of the Pest Survey Toolkit for the design of surveys for the EU priority pests.

A live demonstration of the R4EU database interface was conducted, showcasing practical examples of its application. Queries addressed included: identifying pests relevant to *Prunus* spp. in the context of insects and mites; selecting appropriate inspection units for *Anastrepha ludens*; and determining laboratory methods based on the pest and sample matrix. Juan Navas-Cortés noted that additional data on other priority pests will be made available shortly. Future developments will focus on improving user experience and enhancing integration with other EFSA tools to further support evidence-based surveillance planning.

10. Digital Information System Quarantine Pests (DISQS)

Fabio Dorn, expert from the German Julius Kühn-Institut (JKI) presented the Digital Information System Quarantine Pests (DISQS), which is being developed by the JKI to support the planning and implementation of surveys on Union Quarantine Pests (UQPs) in Germany. The system consists of two interconnected components: (i) a reference database to assist in survey preparation and provide pest-related information, and (ii) a universal monitoring tool for survey execution, documentation, and data storage.

An update was provided on the project's status, with progress noted on the development of the reference database, its user interface on desktop and mobile applications as well as its interface with the existing universal monitoring tool. The database provides inspectors with relevant guidance materials such as filter-based survey plans and factsheets to inform field-level decision-making.

A live demonstration of the universal monitoring tool was carried out by Fabian Schuppan from the plant protection service of the Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen. Features such as registration of inspection sites, documentation of survey activities, and entry of data on pests and host plants were highlighted. The user-friendly and intuitive design of the tool was noted as a key strength in facilitating its application by field inspectors.

Fabio Dorn concluded by outlining the similarities and differences between the DISQS system and EFSA's Pest Survey Toolkit, emphasising the potential for collaboration and interoperability between the two systems.

11. Topics presented by MSs : Statistically sound and risk-based surveys in greenhouses

Aino-Maija Alanko Finnish representative of the Network presented a set of challenges encountered when planning statistically sound and risk-based surveys in greenhouses, particularly for pests such as *Xylella fastidiosa*, Brown Rugose Fruit Virus, *Anthonomus eugenii*, and *Thaumatotibia leucotreta*. A key difficulty was the limited availability of information to clearly identify the pathways for introduction of the pests and to define risk factors, especially in controlled environments like greenhouses where vectors may be absent and pest establishment outside is unlikely.

Several scenarios were presented, leading to specific questions:

1. **Multiple Crops per Year**: When multiple crop cycles occur annually in the same greenhouse, how should the number of crops be considered into statistical survey calculations?
2. **Grafted Plants**: In cases where grafted plants are used, should both parts of the plants be considered separately in the survey design?
3. **Asymptomatic Pathogens**: For pathogens such as *X. fastidiosa* in seedling production, how can MSs determine which host plants to focus on, and how should random sampling be effectively organized?
4. **Use of Pheromone Traps**: In greenhouse surveys using pheromone traps, how should the target population be defined—between different greenhouses and/or within a single greenhouse? What risk factors should be considered, and is a two- or three-step approach appropriate?

The participants discussed various approaches and considerations for answering the questions. For the first question, it was clarified that the target population should be considered as the crop(s) present in the greenhouse at the time of the survey. For the second, a grafted plant should be treated as a single inspection unit comprising two sampling matrices. For the third, it was noted that Annex A: Host plant selection tool, integrated on the *X. fastidiosa* Pest Survey Card, could assist MSs in selecting

and prioritizing host plant species to include in detection surveys. Regarding random sampling, the theoretical approach is to address all species present in the greenhouse proportionally to their representation. The proportions can be adjusted accordingly to the likelihood of infestation or susceptibility of the species. This approach allows for weighted random sampling, focusing efforts on those species more likely to be infested. The fourth question was not addressed due to time constraints, as the meeting had to be closed.

12. Survey Optimisation - OptiPest

Hans-Hermann Thulke, Expert member of EFSA's WG on Pest surveillance Methods provided an overview of the OptiPest tool, focusing on the functionality and purpose of the optimisation algorithm. OptiPest is designed to support the planning and implementation of annual surveys for multiple pests targeting the same crop. The tool facilitates optimisation by reducing the number of months for field visits and inspection units required, thereby improving the cost effectiveness of inspections without compromising the survey quality and robustness. The tool can use outputs generated by RiPEST, such as the required number of inspection units as input for the optimisation process as well as data added manually. This integration enables a more streamlined survey design, optimising resource allocation while maintaining statistical robustness.

A practical example was presented for five plant pests on *Prunus* spp. as the host. The demonstration illustrated the outcomes before and after applying OptiPest, considering inspection capacity limits and survey time windows. The optimisation results showed a notable reduction in both the number of months for visits and inspection units required. It was highlighted that this reduction in effort does not compromise the quality of the survey results, maintaining the required confidence levels and design prevalence.

13. Survey Optimisation – Group Exercise

Elena Lázaro, Expert member of EFSA's WG on Pest surveillance Methods, introduced a practical group exercise on survey optimisation using the OptiPest tool. The scenario focused on multi-pest detection surveys for citrus crops in the Valencian Community (Spain). Participants were divided into three groups, each group tasked with planning a survey for a different epidemiological unit. The objective was to design an optimised detection survey targeting twelve UQPs present in agricultural areas.

Three different exercises were performed. Participants were provided with the necessary input data to run the optimisation process in OptiPest, including pest-specific parameters, host information, time windows, and resource constraints.

14. Survey Optimisation – Group reporting and discussion

The three groups presented the outcomes of their survey optimisation exercises, outlining how input data were structured, simulations executed, and optimised exercises developed. Each group reported a substantial reduction in both the number of inspection visits and inspection units required. Participants shared insights into the challenges encountered, particularly those related to monthly capacity constraints, and explained how they modified parameters or considered alternative approaches to produce feasible survey strategies.

The Chair concluded by highlighting potential future developments for the OptiPest tool. These may include enabling simultaneous optimisation across multiple epidemiological units and integrating visit duration as an additional constraint in the optimisation process.

15. Topics presented by MSs : Designing a statistically based survey in Sweden for *Anoplophora chinensis*

Sofia Windstam, Swedish representative, presented the general approach followed in Sweden for the design of a statistically based survey for *Anoplophora chinensis*. The process begins by evaluating whether legal obligations apply within the national context and whether the pest is relevant for surveillance in Sweden.

To support this assessment, ongoing risk ranking efforts by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences were introduced. The tool 'Finnprio' was used to generate risk scores for selected pests, identifying *A. chinensis* as a lower-risk pest in the Swedish context. Based on this classification, EFSA guidelines are used to identify knowledge gaps, define the survey parameters, and propose assumptions where data are unavailable.

Once the survey parameters are established, they are used in RiPEST to generate a suggested survey design. This plan is then integrated into the national survey framework. The process includes documenting the rationale, assumptions, and methodological choices, which serve as references for future updates or changes based on new evidence.

Moving forward to setting the scope. The geographical scope of the survey was defined as southern Sweden, the only region deemed suitable for the establishment of *A. chinensis*. Epidemiological units were defined according to land use, including agricultural production, forest, urban, and other areas. It was assumed that the pest would behave similarly within each land use category. As risk activity, pathways for movement (Level 4) were considered, and risk locations and risk areas were mapped.

Survey methods considered included visual examination, the use of sniffer dogs, and pheromone traps. The most relevant host plants for the survey in Sweden—*Acer*, *Betula*, and *Corylus* were selected based on EFSA's (2021) Pest Survey Card. Method sensitivity values were assumed as follows: 30% for visual examination, 10% for trapping, and 90% for sniffer dogs. Based on confidence level calculations, the survey was primarily based on visual inspection. However, trapping and sniffer dogs continue as part of a pragmatic approach to build contingency preparedness and anticipate future reliance on these methods.

To estimate the extent and size of the target population in the survey area, the data sources consulted included the Swedish Forestry Inventory, NoBa land cover app, and Swedish Forestry Agency raster maps. Information on host trees density per hectare was obtained by consulting experts working with the Swedish Forestry Inventory. For urban areas, where host density data are scarce, city-level tree inventories were used, assuming approximately 250 host trees per hectare. Risk locations were assumed to overlap with host plant presence, especially in broadleaf and mixed forests located in urban areas. Relative risk levels were estimated with a High:Medium:Low (5:2:1) ratio, based on Finland's experience with *A. glabripennis*.

Using RiPEST the survey sample was estimated, and the number of inspection units was adjusted through a risk management decision to increase sampling in high-risk areas (convenience sampling). As a result, the confidence level in high-risk areas was enhanced and the confidence level was reduced in other land use categories. The final plan included 655 inspection units with an overall confidence level of 99.53%, setting the design prevalence at 1% and the confidence level at 95%.

Regarding implementation, the survey plan for *A. chinensis* include nurseries and garden centres, urban green areas, urban risk areas, and mixed forests. Inspectors received instructions accordingly. Follow up and updates of the survey designs are regularly performed to allow data from inspections to be re-integrated into RiPEST, enabling recalculation of achieved confidence levels. Inspectors are required to complete checklists during fieldwork, including items such as the number of visually inspected host plants.

Challenges in implementation include extensive land cover, limited availability of inspectors, and a short survey period. These constraints necessitate multi-pest surveys and create logistical difficulties, especially during extreme weather or overlapping with hunting season.

During the discussion, the Network participants raised questions regarding the sample representativeness in forest inspections, the performance and training of sniffer dogs, inspectors' education and practical resource management including team organization, and the reliability of the survey parameters. It was suggested to enhance and reinforce the exchanges between inspectors of different MSs to gain experience and improve the preparedness in the event of pest outbreaks.

16. Topics presented by MSs : Design of a survey for *Agrilus planipennis* in the Benelux ecoclimatic region – continued

Wim Jennes, the representative of Belgium, provided an update on the collaborative work between Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg on the design of a common statistically based survey for *Agrilus planipennis*. This joint effort builds on the initial results presented at the previous Network meeting, and the current update aimed to highlight the benefits of cross-border collaboration in planning survey designs reducing sampling efforts, especially when addressing large target populations.

To operationalize the concept of ecoclimatic regions, the three countries are designing a unified survey for *A. planipennis* covering the ecoclimatic zone that spans

their territories. The pest was selected due to the upcoming regulatory requirement for statistically sound and risk-based surveys under EU legislation, which will become mandatory from 2027. This timeline offers the opportunity to collectively plan, exchange feedback, and iteratively refine the survey design through successive rounds of discussion and agreement.

At present, the three countries conduct surveys using multi-funnel traps, as recommended in the Pest Survey Card, while Luxembourg employs more survey methods. Although traps are already deployed in high-risk locations, the criteria for identifying and defining such locations are not yet harmonised. This collaboration also aims to facilitate alignment on this aspect.

Consensus has been reached on several methodological parameters: green multi-funnel traps with 3Z lactone and Z3 hexenol lures will be used, with a survey window from June to August. Traps will be equipped with collection cups containing a killing and preserving solution. An equal number of traps will be placed in ash trees located near import sites and in large urban areas, with no traps planned for low-risk zones.

The survey design foresees a confidence level of 95%, a design prevalence of 2%, and a method sensitivity of 75%. The target population is defined as the number of hectares with at least one ash tree. Import sites were designated as high-risk areas, and large urban centres as medium risk, applying a single risk factor with three levels in a ratio of 5:2.5:1 (High:Medium:Low). High-risk sites were identified using TRACES data, and the respective risk levels were translated into population size estimates and proportional distribution within the target population.

Survey designs were calculated both on a national level and jointly using RiBESS+ and RiPEST. The individual country designs yielded estimates of 74 traps for Belgium, 74 for the Netherlands, and 90 for Luxembourg. Under the ecoclimatic region approach, theoretical trap numbers to reach the target confidence level were 34 for Belgium, 45 for the Netherlands, and 7 for Luxembourg. However, this resulted in a relatively low confidence level for Luxembourg (~25%). To address this, a revised allocation was agreed: 15 traps for Luxembourg, 30 for Belgium, and 40 for the Netherlands. Recalculations using RiBESS+ showed updated confidence levels of 70% for Belgium, 80% for the Netherlands, and 40% for Luxembourg. The overall survey, with a design prevalence of 2%, achieved a total confidence level of 97%.

Mehdi Bisbis, the representative of Luxembourg, presented the GIS-based approach for identifying and allocating traps to risk locations, particularly in Luxembourg. It was noted that a high number of risk sites were generated based on assumptions derived from existing TRACES data, some of which included outdated or inactive exporters. GIS was used to map risk areas as 2 km buffers, resulting in a total area of 32.007 Ha. Overlapping zones in southern regions were identified and removed, reducing the total area by approximately 2.000 Ha.

Additional data layers from the Nature and Forest Administration were used to identify zones populated with *Fraxinus* species within the defined risk areas, allowing for further refinement. This process yielded the result of 2.537 Ha in the estimated survey area.

Conclusions from the second exercise highlighted that aiming for a design prevalence of 2% remains a decision for the risk manager, which may be considered appropriate as long as *A. planipennis* has not been detected in Western Europe. Furthermore, it is the choice of Luxembourg to increase its trap density and confidence level, thereby

allowing Belgium and the Netherlands to reduce their respective trap numbers. Next steps in the collaboration will include the Netherlands beginning the estimation of high-risk import sites and identifying large urban centres, while Belgium and the Netherlands will work on gaining access to *Fraxinus* cover data to further improve their survey planning.

The Network raised several points during the discussion. Questions were asked regarding the interpretation of the 2% design prevalence across different countries, and how this links to the feasibility of controlling a potential infestation. The Benelux representatives acknowledged the limitations of the 2% threshold but clarified that it reflects the current capacity available. It was emphasised that this information is critical to present to risk managers, encouraging consideration of whether additional resources could be made available to increase survey coverage. Also, the assumption on the homogeneity of the epidemiological units for the survey design was questioned as the choice for the survey design was to match the epidemiological unit with the country without considering the climate and ecological variations within them (i.e. Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxemburg).

The survey design was developed with sampling only in higher risk areas. The discussion addressed the need to also take samples in the baseline areas and not only to focus on the higher risk areas. The Benelux highlighted that once a pest is detected in neighbouring countries, the risk and potential pathways will change. Until then, sampling only in higher risk areas is the most resource effective approach.

Participants reflected on the evolution from 'blind' surveys—carried out without methodological justification—to today's evidence-based frameworks. While EFSA does not prescribe fixed design prevalence or confidence levels, tools like RiPEST enable users to quantify what is being achieved with available resources. The importance of communicating these results to senior management which provides a meaningful statement on surveillance outcomes and resource needs.

17. Topics presented by MSs : Survey design of *Popillia japonica* in MSs – discussion

Lea Neuhauser, representative of Austria, presented the draft survey design for *Popillia japonica* in Austria. The presentation focused on the current development of the surveillance plan and included a request to MSs to share their experiences on how they assess the target population and determine key survey parameters.

Pheromone traps are the primary survey method and are deployed based on the assessed regional risk. For defining the target population, data sources include the Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS) for meadows, and OpenStreetMap for golf courses and sports fields. The proposed survey design uses a 95% confidence level, a design prevalence of 2%, and a method sensitivity of 95%. Two main risk factors were identified: the likelihood of spread through transportation and the risk of permanent establishment.

Lea Neuhauser initiated the discussion by asking MSs about their progress in assessing the target population, the availability of data, how to allocate traps, and about the use and integration of risk factors in their national surveillance planning.

The Network shared various national experiences with *P. japonica* surveys. One of the main points raised concerned the highly polyphagous nature of *P. japonica*, prompting the question of whether any hectares within MSs could be considered free from host plants. Slovenia mentioned that detections were made the previous year and that preparations were ongoing for multiple scenarios in the current survey season. Key questions raised by Slovenia were how to combine visual examination and trapping, particularly for the calculation of the sample size, for assessing the trap efficiency when traps are moved, and for estimating the effective range of the trap coverage.

Two approaches were suggested by the Network:

- splitting the epidemiological unit into two, each subdivision using a distinct detection method resulting in the design of 2 independent surveys;
- combining the 2 detection methods within the same epidemiological unit, using trapping as the primary method and reinforcing coverage through visual examination (designing combined surveys).

EFSA informed the Network that ongoing work is being conducted to elicit values on trapping methods effectiveness for the priority pests.

18. Presentation of developer version of RiPEST, OptiPest and Database

Tomasz Kaluski, Scientific Officer in the Plant Health Monitoring Team of EFSA, also chair of the Network meeting, presented the status and updates of the developer versions of EFSA's surveillance tools: RiPEST, OptiPest, and the Pest Surveillance Database. It was announced that the last RiPEST developer version (DEV) was moved to production and made openly available. A Yenotable enhancement includes the addition of all 185 contracting parties of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) to the list of selectable countries. While non-European countries are listed without regional subdivisions, European Union MSs and candidate countries have full access to NUTS regional layers for survey design purposes. Furthermore, an artificial country named 'Surveyland' has been created within the tool to support demonstrations, training, and webinars. This feature provides a neutral option to avoid political sensitivities and may also be used by MSs. In terms of future functionalities, a 'method builder' is under development to allow users to structure and combine multiple detection methods within a single inspection unit in one survey design. Additionally, a new feature will enable users to indicate the geographical locations of positive finding(s) in a dedicated template. The use of this template allows the geographical coordinates of the findings to be uploaded into the delimiting survey module, streamlining the transition from the design and implementation of detection surveys to the design and implementation of delimiting surveys.

For OptiPest, the new version under preparation will allow to optimise survey efforts for different pests covering different epidemiological units. In addition, users will be able to save their OptiPest sessions and reload them at a later stage. Integration between RiPEST and OptiPest is also planned to be implemented later this year, users will be able to import saved sessions from RiPEST, including epidemiological unit

definitions, and sample sizes for the survey optimisation using OptiPest. A new function to remove monthly restrictions has been introduced.

Regarding the database, a new version is under development with a simplified structure. A pest-focused visualisation interface is also being developed to allow users to view all data associated with a specific pest, including direct links to the PSCs and host list. Upon selecting a pest-host combination, users will be able to access associated survey parameters, spread capacity, risk factors, and field and laboratory detection methods. These improvements are expected to be fully available by the end of the year.

19. Update on Surveillance Project in EFSA

Sybren Vos provided an overview of the progress and future direction of EFSA's Surveillance Project, reflecting on the methodological framework initiated in 2017, which included the development of PSCs, the surveillance database, the creation of RiPEST, and subsequently OptiPest, as well as the infrastructure to support the MSs and provide trainings on the Pest survey toolkit. To date, approximately the available PSCs address about 250 pests out of the total 395 Union Quarantine Pests.

In the next phase the work will focus on updating existing PSCs as well as developing PSC for new quarantine pests. Updates are also required to integrate new data that becomes available, particularly information on pest taxonomy, pest distribution, pest spread capacity and survey parameters for priority pests. The need for a structured management of the information was also highlighted to ensure consistency and traceability of updates over time.

Sybren Vos clearly noted the request from the MSs during this meeting for EFSA to further explore the integration of advanced detection methods in the EU pest surveys such as:

- The remote sensing for characterising the target population and its subdivisions allowing as well for the identification of pre-visual symptoms
- The use of eDNA analysis to support the pest detection activities
- The trapping methods given the over representation of insect pests in the UQP, providing support to the MSs in the choice of the traps considering the available ones, their performance and the consequent potential trapping strategies.

He also noted the MSs recurrent suggestions for integrating analysis on trade flows of commodities and the interception data on plant pests for better identifying the relevant pathways for supporting the MSs in designing evidence-based risk-based surveys. He mentioned that such topics could be addressed by EFSA in support to MSs on survey design only in the context of explicit mandates from the European Commission.

In terms of network development, it was noted that the Pest Surveillance Network meetings, now held biannually, have adopted a more interactive format to allow for greater discussion and exchange. Regarding training activities, the webinar series on EU priority pests is expected to include around 10 sessions per year. Additionally, an e-learning module is in development and is scheduled for delivery by the end of

2026. The e-learning course will consist of 10 modules, consolidating content from webinars, guidelines, and PSCs to provide a comprehensive overview of the EFSA Pest Survey Toolkit. The planning of BTSF courses for 2025–2026 is currently under discussion.

On the ongoing work on prevalence monitoring, two specific case studies should be developed to test and showcase the new methodology or monitoring surveys as well as testing and tailoring to Plant Health the pest prevalence estimation surveys using the statistical tool Sampelator. The MSs have been invited to provide relevant data for running both simulations. The analysis is expected to be finalised by the end of 2025. Based on the outcomes and feedback from the Network, together with the European Commission, EFSA will assess whether a dedicated tool for monitoring surveys should be developed and integrated into the Pest Survey Toolkit.

Building on the optimisation algorithm developed for OptiPest, EFSA is exploring the possibility of developing a multi-annual planning tool to support MSs in organising the pest surveys over the 5 to 10 years period. This tool could help organise survey plans per crop, pest type, and available resources. Here again the expression for the need for such tool by the MSs is important to initiate and prioritise the activity or not.

EFSA is also evaluating the possibility to improve the accessibility of the survey toolkit by using a different platform, facilitating easier navigation, data exchange, and usability. Internal discussions are ongoing to define platform requirements and select a suitable technological solution.

Several upcoming opportunities for collaboration were announced:

- **Article 36 Grant**: EFSA will launch in May 2025 an Article 36 Grant on the preparation of Pest Survey Cards for 12 pests, mainly affecting cereals. The project will run for 18 months 150.000€ in funding.
- **Article 36 Grant**: Another Article 36 Grant is expected between May and June 2025, focusing on experimental protocols to better define detection survey parameters. EFSA encouraged Article 36 Organisations to form consortium representing different pest expertise considering the need as well to validate the proposed protocols in field conditions on outbreaks in the EU. The project will run for 4 years with 500.000€ in funding.
- **Framework Contract (September 2025)**: A new four-year framework contract will be launched, supporting specific contracts across the following areas:
    - Characterisation and inventory of trapping methods, including performance estimation for attractiveness and coverage.
    - Use of remote sensing for both characterising target populations through satellite imagery and as a potential early detection tool by identifying pre-visual symptoms and risk areas.
    - Further exploration of eDNA-based detection methods as a promising innovation for early detection in plant health surveillance.

EFSA also informed the Network about upcoming opportunities for **Seconded National Experts (SNEs)** to gain hands-on experience and enhance their professional development within EFSA.

The Network acknowledged the value of these updates and suggested that relevant information be shared. EFSA committed to keeping the Network's SharePoint page updated and notifying participants when new materials or opportunities become available.

20. Training needs and MSs actions

Participants from several MSs, including Poland, Sweden, Spain, the Netherlands, Portugal, Germany, Finland, Estonia, Belgium, Austria, and Greece shared their experiences in organising training sessions and workshops aimed at building capacity in pest survey planning and supporting the practical application of the EFSA pest survey tools.

The interventions highlighted the importance of national-level training activities to familiarise stakeholders with the methodological framework and functionalities of the tools. These efforts are particularly valuable for improving the consistency and quality of survey implementation across the EU.

MSs emphasized the need for collaborative efforts and knowledge sharing to address common challenges in pest monitoring and control. Also, the need for engaging participants through webinars and training sessions to enhance their knowledge and skills in pest monitoring.

21. Any Other Business

Network members were informed about the date for the next 2025 meeting: 29 October afternoon – 30 October full day – 31 October morning. The dates for next year meetings will be announced later as must be agreed with EFSA.

22. Closure of the meeting