

28 January 2026

09:00-16:30

MINUTES - Agreed on 12 February 2026

Location: Teleconference

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 Pérez-Rodríguez, Panagiotis Skandamis

- Hearing Experts¹:

Not Applicable

- Applicants participating in a technical hearing²:

Not Applicable

- European Commission and/or Member States representatives:

Not applicable

- EFSA:

BIOHAW Unit: Sean Ashe, Laura Cabral, Sandra Correia, Beatriz Guerra, Ernesto Liebana, Winy Messens, Valentina Rizzi, Eleonora Sarno, Pietro Stella, Megan Tumulty, Natisha Vatwani, Frank Verdonck, Anna Zdanowicz

CSO: Marta Bisaschi, Konstantinos Paraskevopoulos

FEEDCO Unit: Sofie Schryvers

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants. No apologies were received.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes (changes to be listed).

3. Declarations of Interest of Panel members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence³ and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management⁴, 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 Panel members at the beginning of this meeting.

¹ As defined in Article 34 of the document "Implementing Rule of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority laying down the rules on the selection, appointment and operations of the Scientific Committee, Scientific Panels and of their Working Groups":
<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/paneloperation.pdf>

² As defined in the "EFSA's Catalogue of support initiatives during the life cycle of applications for regulated products":
<https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/sp.efsa.2021.EN-6472>

³ https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/independence-policy-2024.pdf

⁴ https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/decision-ed-on-competing-interest-management-2024.pdf



4. Agreement of the minutes of the 182nd BIOHAZ Panel Plenary meeting held on 3-4 December 2025, via teleconference

The minutes of the 182nd Panel plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 18 December 2025.

5. Scientific outputs submitted for adoption/endorsement

No scientific outputs submitted for adoption.

6. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion

6.1 Statement on the update of the list of QPS-recommended biological agents intentionally added to food or feed as notified to EFSA. 24: Suitability of taxonomic units notified to EFSA until March 2026 (EFSA-Q-2025-00686)

Last WG meeting was held on 14 January. The next WG meeting will be held on 13 April. A total of 53 notifications were received between October and December 2025 (inclusive), of which 128 were proposed for use in feed, 21 as food enzymes, food additives and flavourings, 5 as novel foods and 15 as plant protection products. 21 notifications were related to microorganisms generally excluded from QPS evaluation (including 17 were notifications of filamentous fungi, 3 of *Escherichia coli*, 1 *Streptomyces*) and 23 have the QPS status. Of the remaining 9 notifications, 8 taxonomic units (TUs) were identified: *Hyphomicrobium denitrificans*, *Ensifer adhaerens*, *Bacillus thuringiensis*, *Papiliotrema terrestris*, *Enterococcus lactis* which have already been evaluated for a possible QPS status in previous Panel Statements of the previous QPS 3-years cycle and therefore, will be assessed now. The other 3 TUs included: bacteriophages against *Clavibacter michiganensis* subsp. *michiganensis* (BACMM), bacteriophages against *Erwinia amylovora* (BAEA) and *Pseudomonas protegens* which were never assessed before and will be assessed for a possible QPS status in this Panel Statement. An additional TU, *Lactococcus cremoris*, a new species that was previously a subspecies of a QPS status species (*Lactococcus lactis*), was also included in response to an external request. A new ELS cycle will be launched for this statement after checking the correct names of the QPS status TUs. The Panel was informed that the WG also revised the search strategy (keywords) for the new ELS cycle. The deadline for this statement is 30 June 2026.

6.2 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-2025-00689)

Last WG meeting was held on 14 January by web meeting. The next WG meeting will be held on 13 April by web meeting. The chair explained that the WG Chair proposed possible new challenges for this new 3-years cycle and discussed them with the Panel. The deadline for this Opinion is 31 December 2028.

6.3 Scientific opinion(s) on the current status of the occurrence and spread of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales in the food chain in the EU/EFTA

No additional meeting of the WG has taken place since the last plenary. The WG continues supervising the outcomes of the FPA Carba-R-ales project providing advice, and addressing any emerging issue related to the topic. The duration of the activities of the whole mandate is up to the end of 2027, where an updated scientific opinion will be released.



6.4 Scientific opinion on the implementation of point 2 of Annex V of Regulation (EU) 2025/40 on Packaging and Packaging Waste (EFSA-Q-2025-00456)

At the WG meeting on 9 December 2025, the call for data was further revised and finalised. The list of unprocessed fresh fruit, vegetable and herbs (FVHs) to be prefilled in the questionnaire was agreed. The call for data "Unprocessed fresh produce packaging" was launched on 16 December 2025⁵ to offer interested parties (e.g., food business operators, national food authorities, research institutions, academia) and/or other stakeholders, the opportunity to submit documented information relevant to the mandate. Another WG meeting was held on 15 January 2026. The WG chair provided an update of the ongoing work. Most importantly, he informed about the draft list of unprocessed fresh FVH commodities to be assessed in this mandate (subquestion (SQ) 1.1.) that may be further revised based on the call for data. On SQ 1.2., the Panel agreed with the proposal to have a common list of most relevant foodborne pathogens for public health to be applied across FVH commodities. The methodology to deal with SQ 1.6. (answering to the question "*How likely is it that the bulk (non-packaging) or alternative packaging versus plastic packaging will have a non-negligible impact on growth/survival of selected pathogens and spoilage microorganisms or cross-contamination for the selected unprocessed fresh FVHs or their groups*") was presented and discussed. The deadline for delivery of the scientific opinion is end of November 2026.

6.5 Scientific opinion on Food Safety Culture and its microbiological food safety impact in the EU (EFSA-Q-2025-00553 and EFSA-Q-2025-00554)

The WG chair and coordinator updated the Panel on the progress in the preparatory work for the mandate and contacts with other organisations working on similar topics. Two scientific opinions are expected as output; the deadlines for their adoption are end of December 2026 and end of April 2027. The need for a third opinion (part 3 of the mandate) will be agreed with the European Commission at later stage, depending on the findings of the first two.

6.6 Request for the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to issue a scientific opinion on the health risks posed by microplastics in food, water and air (EFSA-Q-2025-00702)

EFSA Staff and the Chair of the SubWG-BIOHAZ briefly updated the Panel on the mandate from the European Parliament on the health risks posed by microplastics (including nanoplastics) in food, water and air. The mandate is allocated to the CONTAM Panel, with the contribution of the BIOHAZ Panel. The BIOHAZ Panel covers the role of micro- and nano-plastics as vectors for human foodborne microbiological hazards in food of plant and animal origin. The SubWG-BIOHAZ will develop the related sections that will need to be endorsed by the BIOHAZ Panel. The first WG plenary meeting (including the experts of the different SubWGs) took place on 26 January, and the kick-off of the SubWG-BIOHAZ will be on 5 March. Deadline of the Mandate is end of December 2027.

7.Update on new Mandates

7.1. Request for a scientific opinion on the microbiological status of fishery products following the stiffening process with focus on smoked salmon (EFSA-Q-2026-00032)

EFSA staff from the BIOHAW Unit informed the Panel that a new request for a scientific opinion on the microbiological status of fishery products following the stiffening process with focus on

⁵ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/call/call-data-unprocessed-fresh-produce-packaging>



smoked salmon was received in EFSA from the European Commission. The background to the mandate and the terms of reference were presented and discussed with the Panel. The WG coordinator informed the Panel about the decision, taken in consultation with the BIOHAZ Panel Chair, that the mandate has been assigned to the existing WG "Ungulates meat intended to be frozen and defrosting"; renamed to WG "fish storage predictive modelling", reviewed and updated in its composition. After informing the Panel and in consultation with the BIOHAZ Panel Chair, Laurent Guillier was nominated Chair of the Working Group. The first meeting will take place end of February/beginning of March 2026. The deadline for delivery of the scientific opinion is end of December 2026.

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

8.1. Scientific Committee

No discussion took place under this agenda item. No meetings of the Scientific Committee have taken place since the previous BIOHAZ Plenary meeting.

8.2. European Commission

No discussion took place under this agenda item.

8.3. Microbiome Science in Food Safety: EFSA's Strategic Approach and Emerging Applications

EFSA Staff Konstantinos Paraskevopoulos presented to the Panel an update on EFSA's activities and future plans in relation to the integration of microbiome methods and data in risk assessment. In particular, two areas for future work were highlighted: assessing safety of microbiome-based products (e.g. competitive exclusion products as feed additives) and assessing the effects of xenobiotics on microbiomes and related possible host health consequences. EFSA's actions to tackle these work themes were reported, including upcoming EFSA projects calls, to be published during the first semester of 2026.

9. Other topics for information and/or discussion

9.1. Topics of scientific concern in the area of biological hazards

A brief discussion took place in relation to the recent multi-country recalls of infant formula products due to the detection of cereulide toxin. EFSA Staff informed the Panel that the European Commission has asked EFSA to deliver urgent scientific advice to support risk management decisions across the EU, to be published on 2 February 2026. In addition, Panel members referred to the recent ECDC communication following the detection of avian influenza antibodies in dairy cows in the Netherlands, highlighting that, despite the novel findings, the current risk assessment for the general population remains low, and underscoring the importance of timely scientific advice to inform risk management decisions.



10. AOB

The agreed schedule of 2026 plenary meetings was rediscussed: the next BIOHAZ plenary meeting (12 and/or 13 March 2026) will take place by teleconference instead of physically. Further changes of location of the meetings (physical vs web-conference) may take place later on for the plenary meetings scheduled in September, October and December 2026.

11. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 12 and/or 13 March 2026, via teleconference.