SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON PLANT HEALTH

139th Panel Plenary meeting

18 February 2026
9:00-13:00
MINUTES - Agreed on 13 March 2026

Location: Online

Attendees:

- Panel Members:

Paula BAPTISTA, Anna BERLIN, Elisavet CHATZIVASSILIOU, Antonio Vicent CIVERA, 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

- Hearing Experts[1]: PICARD Camille (EPPO),

Alex GOBBI and Chiara MORENA, (participated as Contractor (Art. 36 Tasking Grant, CREA, Italy, (GP/EFSA/PLANTS/2022/02), attendance was via teleconference,

Alzbeta MIKULOVA, participated as Contractor (Art. 36 Tasking Grant, Univ. Padova, Italy) (GP/EFSA/PLANTS/2022/11) attendance was via teleconference,

Oresteia SFYRA (Art. 36 Tasking Grant, Benaki Phytopathological Institute, Greece) (SA 03-2023-BPI under FPA GP/EFSA/PLANTS/2022/02) attendance was via teleconference,

- European Commission DG SANTE: MARQUEZ GARCIA Maria Belen, Wolfgang REINERT, Paul ROQUINY
- EFSA:

PLANTS: Efterpi ADAMOU, Etienne BABIN, Paula CALUSINSKA, Alessia CASU, Laura CAROTTI, Matteo CROTTA, Ewelina CZWIENCZEK, Alice DELBIANCO, Ciro GARDI, Catriona GILLAND, Oumayma JEMEI, Agata KACZMAREK, Tomasz KALUSKI, Virág KERTÉSZ, Florian KUNTZE, Andrea MAIORANO, Dora MIJIC, Alzbeta MIKULOVA, Alexandre NOUGADERE, Edith PADILLA SUAREZ, Marco PAUTASSO, Daria RZEPECKA, Tobin ROBINSON, Agnes RORTAIS,Francesca SALINARI, Magdalini SARNTARIDOU, Marica SCALA, Goda SIMONELYTE, Giuseppe STANCANELLI, Franz STREISSL, Emanuela TACCI, Anastasia TERZIDOU, Sara Tramontini, Rachel VAUGHN, Sybren VOS, Beatriz WINTER.

MESE: Olaf MOSBACH-SCHULZ.

COM: Filippo POSITANO.

RAL: Clara ASSELLO.

CORSER: Soheil SOLTANINEJAD.

OBSERVERS: AFONSO Maria Teresa Messias (National Authority), ALICANDRI Enrica (Regional Agency), AMMANNATI Roberta (National Authority), ANTHOINE Geraldine (National Authority), ARAR Katica (National Authority), BEHR Marc (EU Body), BENIKOVA Katarína (National Authority), BERTELLI Francesca (National Authority), BOBERG Johanna (University/Public Research Institute), BOGYA HU-Sandor (National Authority), BONSIGNORE Roberta (National Authority), BOSCIA Donato (University/Public Research Institute), BOSCO Domenico (EFSA Panel/WG/Network) BOTTIGLIERI Assunta (University/Public Research Institute), BOURKE Andy (National Authority), BULAJIC Aleksandra (University/Public Research Institute), CACIOLI Costanza (National Authority), CAMARDO LEGGIERI Marco (University/Public Research Institute), CANTATORE Marco (National Authority), CARA Magdalena (University/Public Research Institute), CASTRAT Cesar

[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

(Private Sector), CEAN Romania Mirela (University/Public Research Institute), CESARI Michele (University/Public Research Institute), CINQUE Maria (University/Public Research Institute), COLASURDO Vittoria (University/Public Research Institute), COLOMBARI Fernanda (National Authority), COMPANT Stephane (University/Public Research Institute), CUPPONE Francesco (Regional Plant Protection Service), CUTINO Ilaria (University/Public Research Institute), DATO Hernández Laura (National Authority), DAUTBASIC Ajla (National Authority), Doležalová Radka (National Authority), EL BEAINO Toufic (International Organisation), ERTAŞ Hasenem (National Authority), EYRE Dominic (National Authority), FANTINATO Elena (National Authority), FEDERICO Roberto (National Authority), FERERES Alberto (University/Public Research Institute), FERREIRA Telma Maria de Carvalho (National Authority), FORNEFIELD Eva (University/Public Research Institute), FRANCHI Andrea (National Authority), GAFFURI Francesca (National Authority), GAGLIARDI Chiara (National Authority), GALARDI Lorenzo (National Authority), GAMA Laura Vidal (National Authority), GANASSI Sonia (University/Public Research Institute), GARCIA Eva (University/Public Research Institute), GARGANI Elisabetta (University/Public Research Institute), GATTI Fabio (University/Public Research Institute), GAWLAK Magdalena (University/Public Research Institute), GINER Marta (Private Sector), GIORGINI Massimo (University/Public Research Institute), GOGGIOLI Donatella (University/Public Research Institute), GORI Gianluca (University/Public Research Institute), GROSSI DE SA Maira (EU Body), GUIDI Silvia (University/Public Research Institute), HATCHER David (EU Body), IOPPOLO Antonino (National Authority), ISBERG Þórhildur (National Authority), IZHAK David (National Authority), JEGROVA Katerina (National Authority), KAMASA Joanna (University/Public Research Institute), KARAHAN Aynur (EFSA Panel/WG/Network), KOKICI Hysen (University/Public Research Institute), KOLOS Lórántfy (National Authority), KONJEVIC Aleksandra (University/Public Research Institute), LEVI Tami (National Authority), LORETI Stefania (University/Public Research Institute), MAGDOLENOVA Marta (National Authority), MALOSSINI Giorgio (National Authority), MARCUCCI Emanuele (National Authority), MARTINO Vincenzo (National Authority), MINCA Daniela (National Authority), MORETTI Christian (National Authority), MURPHY Tarla (EFSA Staff), NENCIONI Anita (University/Public Research Institute), NERI Lorenzo (National Authority), NICOLO Viola (National Authority), PACETTI Andrea (National Authority), PALMISANO Francesco (National Authority), PANZAVOLTA Tiziana (University/Public Research Institute), PELLEGRIN Clement (EU Body), PENCE Agita (National Authority), PIZZICHINI Laura (National Authority), POPOVIC Tamara (National Authority), PUCCI Nicoletta (University/Public Research Institute), RAGONE Gianvito (National Authority), RANNES Christine Gundelach (National Authority), RAUT Aleksandra (Regional Plant Protection Service), RICCI Emanuela (National Authority), RIPAMONTI Matteo (University/Public Research Institute), ROMANAZZI Gianfranco (University/Public Research Institute), ROSACE Maria Chiara (Freelancer), ROSELLI Maria (National Authority), ROT Mojca (University/Public Research Institute), SADOWSKA Katarzyna (University/Public Research Institute), SAHIN Taina (National Authority), SALVUCCI Alessia (National Authority), SANNA Francesco (University/Public Research Institute), SCACCINI Davide (University/Public Research Institute), SCALA Valeria (University/Public Research Institute), SCARPELLI Ilaria (University/Public Research Institute), SCHENK Martijn (National Authority), SERRA Maria Clara de Almeida (National Authority), SESTO Franc (National Authority), SHEYEN Mattei (National Authority), SOPRANZETTI Claudio (University/Public Research Institute), SPASOV Nikolay (EFSA Panel/WG/Network), STECCONI Lara (National Authority), STELLA Giuseppe (National Authority), STOICA Nicolae Bogdan (University/Public Research Institute), STORELLI Alan (University/Public Research Institute), STREITO Jean-Claude (University/Public Research Institute), TALEVI Simona (National Authority), TEDDE Nicola (National Authority), TORSI Luisa (University/Public Research Institute), TUOMOLA Juha (National Authority), VALENTINI Franco (International Organisations), VERDOLINI Elisa (National Authority), VILEŠ-BEKTAŠ Adela (National Authority), ZAZA Claudio (National Authority), ZUPANCIC Alenka (National Authority).

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Panel Chair welcomed the participants.

2. Presentation of EFSA PLH panel and guidelines for observers

Roles and responsibilities of the EFSA PLH Panel and the EFSA PLANTS Unit were presented. The PLH Panel provides independent scientific advice on plant health risks, including pest risk assessments and commodity risk assessments, upon request from the European Commission, the European Parliament or EU Member States. The PLANTS Unit supports the work of the PLH Panel and contributes to the development of methodologies and guidance, with specific reference to the Plant Health Risk Assessment (PLH RA) team.

Information on observer participation was provided. The Open PLH Plenary was attended by **192 observers**, representing **10 EU Member States** and **23 non-EU countries**. Observers were affiliated mainly with **national authorities (43.8%)** and **academia (32.8%)**, followed by **other organisations (16.7%)**, **EFSA Panels/Working Groups/Networks (4.2%)**, **EU institutions (2.6%)**, **private sector (2.1%)**, **international organisations (1.6%)** and **EFSA staff (1.0%)**.

Guidelines for observers were outlined. Observers were invited to submit questions in writing due to the online format and number of participants. Questions should be sent to the PLANTS mailbox during the PLH Open Plenary Q&A session. It was emphasised that all questions are welcome and will be replied to. Responses are provided during the meeting where possible, with priority given to those related to the agenda items, or subsequently in writing. After the meeting, further questions may be submitted through the official EFSA channel: ASK EFSA.

3. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

4. Declarations of Interest of Panel members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[2] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[3], EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group members invited to the present meeting.

No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in these meetings have been identified during the screening process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

5. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion and possible adoption

5.1 Scientific Opinion on *Xylella fastidiosa* direct vector control

The Panel discussed a draft scientific opinion on direct control of vectors of *Xylella fastidiosa*. Following a discussion of the comments provided by Panel members during their review, the opinion was endorsed by the Panel. The endorsed draft scientific opinion will then be published for public consultation before its final adoption by the Panel. The abstract of the endorsed opinion is presented below:

Xylella fastidiosa, since its first detection in Europe in 2013, has been reported in several Mediterranean regions, where it poses a major phytosanitary threat. The meadow spittlebug *Philaenus spumarius* is currently considered the primary vector of *X. fastidiosa* in the EU, although other vector species have been identified. In this opinion, EFSA focuses on direct vector control strategies through a comprehensive systematic literature review, critical appraisal and meta-

[2] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/policy_independence.pdf
[3] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/competing_interest_management_17.pdf

analysis. The search was global in scope and encompassed all known xylem-feeding insect species, and every type of vector control measure reported in the literature. The systematic review covered publications up to January 2026. Among the initial set of 1253 papers, 77 met eligibility criteria for critical appraisal, and 57 met eligibility criteria to be included in a meta-analysis estimating vector survival reduction rates for different categories of vector control strategies. The synthetic substances approved in the EU (on date of 10th December 2025) show the greatest levels of insect survival reduction. Among these substances, the highest efficacies are achieved with cyantraniliprole, deltamethrin, acetamiprid, and lambda-cyhalothrin. However, the ranking of the above substances is uncertain because of the limited number of data available. The synthetic substances non-approved in the EU show lower efficacy than the approved ones. Other categories such as entomopathogenic fungi (EPF), entomopathogenic nematodes (EPNs), non-synthetic substances, and predators show also lower efficacy. Several knowledge gaps and limitations identified in the reviewed literature, and recommendations were formulated for future experimental studies.

5.2 Update on in planta control measures and other risk reduction options for *Xylella fastidiosa*

The Panel discussed a draft scientific opinion on the update on *in planta* control measures and other risk reduction options for *Xylella fastidiosa*. Following a discussion of the comments provided by Panel members during their review, the opinion was endorsed by the Panel. The endorsed draft scientific opinion will be published for public consultation before its final adoption by the Panel. The abstract of the endorsed opinion is presented below:

This scientific opinion updates the information included in the previous EFSA Scientific Opinions published in 2019 concerning *in planta* control measures and other risk reduction options for *Xylella fastidiosa.* In this opinion, *in planta* control measures against *X. fastidiosa* were retrieved via systematic literature search, described and critically appraised. This opinion focuses on chemical or biological treatments applied to living plants (model and crop plants under controlled conditions and field-scale experiments). *In vitro* studies testing antibacterial substances and other disease management options including agronomic practices like weed and cover crop management and pruning, are also included. This review does not include resistant/tolerant varieties, direct vector control and the use of antibiotics. The efficacy of treatments with bacterial isolates (e.g. *Paraburkholderia phytofirmans*), antimicrobial peptides, bacteriocins, fosetyl-Al nanocrystals, N-acetylcysteine, menadione, benzethonium chloride, zinc oxide-and other mineral-based formulations, and plant derived extracts were assessed by their effect on reduction of disease symptoms and bacterial populations. Results show that some treatments reduce disease symptoms; however, this effect was rarely associated with a substantial reduction of bacterial populations in living plants. The Panel concludes that there is currently no *in planta* control measure available to eliminate the bacteria from an infected plant under open field conditions in the EU.

6. Feedback from EFSA, Scientific Committee and European Commission

6.1 Last update of the *Xylella* host plant database

The last update of the *Xylella* host plants database was presented.

6.2 Introduction to the 5th European Conference on *Xylella fastidiosa* Conference Bari

The 5th European Conference on *Xylella fastidiosa* will be held in Bari (Apulia, Italy) from 22 to 26 June 2026. It is a key event organised by EFSA in 2026 in cooperation with major EU research projects and institutions working on Xylella. The conference will bring together scientists, risk assessors, phytosanitary authorities and stakeholders to discuss progress in research, detection,

epidemiology and sustainable management, with the aim of supporting risk management and policy. The programme will include side events (final meeting of the BeXyl research project and workshop on Italian research projects on 22 June; the European conference from 23 to25 June; a phytosanitary round table on lessons learned from management of EU outbreaks on 25 June; a technical field visit on 26 June. The event will also serve as the dissemination platform for major EU- and Italy-funded research projects. The registration and abstract submission are open until 13 March 2026.

Annex

Q&A Session with observers

Questions received during registration by the observers

Question 1: Regarding the new mandate on Asparagus as a pathway for *Spodoptera frugiperda*: will the PLH Panel's assessment explicitly consider the probability of establishment linked to the life stages actually intercepted on fresh spears, as well as the long trade history (>35 years) with Peru and Mexico of green asparagus to the EU without evidence of establishment via this pathway?

Reply 1: EFSA has received a mandate from the European Commission DG SANTE for a commodity risk assessment for fresh green asparagus import, focusing on the trade from main exporting countries to the EU and on plant pests more frequently intercepted during inspections at the EU borders. *Spodoptera frugiperda* (fall army worm) is a pest frequently intercepted, but also other plant pests associated with the commodity can be considered. For each selected pest, the assessment will conclude on the probability of introduction with the import of green asparagus, following EFSA methods of commodity risk assessment and quantitative pest risk assessment. This work has started recently and will be concluded in 2027.

Question 2: Regarding the new mandate on Asparagus as a pathway for *Spodoptera frugiperda*: from an EFSA perspective, what types of data or analyses from trade and research stakeholders (e.g. supply-chain descriptions, post-harvest survival studies, seasonality and destination patterns) would be most useful to inform your conclusion on whether asparagus green should be considered a pathway warranting specific measures?

Reply 2: Based on the standard methodology for such commodity risk assessment, it is important to obtain detailed information on the production systems in the exporting countries, treatments and processing along the trade pathway, as well as trade patterns.

Question 3: In the evaluation of in planta control measures and other risk reduction options for *Xylella fastidiosa*, are the experiences gained so far from their application taken into account, especially regarding their effectiveness in reducing spread and their economic and environmental sustainability?

Reply 3: The effectiveness of control measures targeting the bacterium and its vectors is assessed based on the published scientific literature. The evaluation of phytosanitary measures to reduce spread of *Xylella fastidiosa* will be addressed in another scientific opinion on the "Update of the pest risk assessment for *X. fastidiosa*", planned for discussion in June 2026 at PLH Panel plenary. Also, this opinion will be then subjected to public consultation.

Question 4: Given the distribution of *X. fastidiosa* subspecies *multiplex* and its vectors in the EU: are eradication or containment measures feasible within the wider EU context for preventing spread?

Reply 4: The mandate received from EC DG SANTE asks EFSA to specifically address risk and risk reduction measures (such as eradication and containment) keeping into account the subspecies of *X. fastidiosa* currently found in the EU and the knowledge from the current EU outbreaks. Such question will be addressed in another scientific opinion on the "Update of the pest risk assessment for *X. fastidiosa*", planned for discussion in June 2026 at PLH Panel plenary. Also, this opinion will be then subjected to public consultation.

Question 5: In areas with a high pressure of vectors: Is the incidence level of *X. fastidiosa* always higher? Does this lead to more impact?

Reply 5: Also, such question will be addressed in another scientific opinion on the "Update of the pest risk assessment for *X. fastidiosa*", planned for June 2026 for discussion for endorsement at PLH Panel plenary followed by a public consultation. In general, for vector-borne plant disease, vector abundance and transmission efficiency are key drivers of epidemic development (Jeger et al., 2004). This was observed also for epidemics of *X. fastidiosa* in different pathosystems (Hill and Purcell, 1997, Almeida & Purcell, 2003, Krugner et al., 2014; Saponari et al., 2014, Bodino et al. 2023, Farigoule et al. 2022).

Question 6: Are there other known vectors in Europe besides *Philaenus* and *Neophilaenus* species?

Reply 6: All the xylem sap feeder are competent vectors. However, their epidemiological importance in spreading *Xylella* depends on several factors (vector biology, ecology, preference, etc). The only species for which the epidemiological role has been thoroughly investigated so far in Europe are *Philaenus spumarius* (olive, ST53) and *Philaenus spumarius-Neophilaenus campestris* (grapevine ST1).

Question 7: Are there interactions between vegetation types (agricultural areas, forests, uncultivated land, etc.) and the ability of vectors to transmit the bacterium?

Reply 7: Spittlebugs favour certain landscape and vegetation assemblages that permit them to build up high population densities, thus increasing the likelihood of transmission and bacterium spread.

Question 8: Possibility to use the outcomes of the meeting in the materials for students?

Reply 8: It is not possible to use video, audio or written recording of this meeting outside of the meeting. However the minutes of the meeting will be published, and we will be happy when requested to provide links to material that could be used for students teaching.

Question 9: Is it possible to evaluate a modulation of eradication measures to be applied taking into account several epidemiological aspects (i.e. how long the bacterium is insediated in the affected territory)?

Reply 9: As a general reply, knowing the date of introduction would help to interpret the epidemiological situation and the likely level of establishment. However, rather than modulating eradication measures based on the time since introduction per se, the practical objective would be to use epidemiological information to assess whether eradication is still achievable in the affected territory. In this sense, time since introduction is only one factor and is often uncertain, while the decision should be guided by indicators that reflect feasibility, such as the spatial extent and fragmentation of detections, estimated prevalence from structured surveys, evidence of ongoing spread and repeated detections over time, and the effectiveness of implemented measures. Also such question will be addressed in another scientific opinion on the "Update of the pest risk assessment for *X. fastidiosa*", planned for June 2026 for discussion for endorsement at PLH Panel plenary followed by a public consultation.

Question 10: Is it now possible to think about the application of control measures that without eliminating the bacterium in the plant, may permit a coexistence with the disease? A different concept with respect the cure of the plant?

Reply 10: From the opinion presented today, it was shown that no measure is currently available to eliminate *X. fastidiosa* from a diseased plant in open field conditions or cure the diseased plant. Certain control measures may contribute to reduce symptom expression. However, reduction in bacterial population inside the plant is not always observed in a way that would have a meaningful impact on controlling the disease or preventing insect vector transmission if the initial bacterial load was high. This question will be also addressed in the upcoming scientific opinion on the "Update of the pest risk assessment for *X. fastidiosa*" (planned

for June 2026 PLH Panel plenary followed by a public consultation), where the role of resistant or tolerant varieties will be discussed.

Questions received in written during the plenary

Question 1: Are nematodes considered as predators of the vectors? Why are nematodes not included in the Predators group?

Reply 1: Nematodes are not included in the Predator group because ecologically and functionally they are entomopathogens/ entomoparasites rather than true predators (which actively hunt, feed externally on prey). The nematodes tested in all the papers are entomopathogenic nematodes (EPN). As a true predator we considered 'lacewings and spiders'. Hence, we preferred to keep Entomopathogenic nematodes (EPN) as a separated group.

Question 2: Did you standardize how you assessed mortality? Was it the initial mortality of treatments assessed within hours or one day of treatments? Did you also consider the length of impact of the treatments? E.g. some persistent treatments may have an impact for weeks whereas for others it may be for days so for the same level of control multiple applications may be necessary.

Reply 2: The modalities of treatment application were highly variable across trials, in terms of doses, timing, and frequency. This is one reason why the effect sizes were so variable. When the mortality was measured at different times after the treatment date, we used the last date.

Question 3: Is there any plan to use the results to develop treatment recommendations that will be applicable to: different crops, different levels of vector infestation and different weather [for example nematodes work best when humidity is high], organic vs non-organic, eradication vs control.

Reply 3: There is not such a plan by EFSA to develop detailed treatment guidelines because this is a task very linked to the agroecosystems of the Member States or their regions, however the information collected will be utilized in the "Update of the pest risk assessment", when dealing with different *X. fastidiosa* subspecies and agro-ecosystems and can be a valid tool for implementation by Member States.