SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON PLANT HEALTH

141st Panel Plenary meeting

29 & 30 April 2026
9:00-17:30 / 9:00-13:00
MINUTES - Agreed on 8 June 2026

EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY

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]: Rob TANNER (EPPO)

Alex GOBBI participated as Cooperator (Art. 36 Tasking Grant, CREA, Italy - GP/EFSA/PLANTS/2022/02),

Alzbeta MIKULOVA participated – via teleconference - as Cooperator (Art. 36 Tasking Grant, Univ. Padova, Italy - GP/EFSA/PLANTS/2022/11.

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

- European Commission DG SANTE: Sylvain GIRAUD, Karin NIENSTEDT, Wolfgang REINERT, Maria MIRAZCHIYSKA

- EFSA:

PLANTS: Efterpi ADAMOU, Alessia CASU, Matteo CROTTA, Ewelina CZWIENCZEK, Alice DELBIANCO, Ciro GARDI, Catriona GILLAND, Oumayma JEMEI, Agata KACZMAREK, Virág KERTÉSZ, Florian KUNTZE, Andrea MAIORANO, Dora MIJIC, Alzbeta MIKULOVA, Chiara MORENA, Alexandre NOUGADERE, Marco PAUTASSO, Marica SCALA, Francesca SALINARI, Goda SIMONELYTE, Giuseppe STANCANELLI, Franz STREISSL, Anastasia TERZIDOU, Rachel VAUGHN, Beatriz WINTER.

MESE: Olaf MOSBACH-SCHULZ

COM: Filippo POSITANO

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Panel Chair welcomed the participants.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Declarations of Interest of Panel members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[1] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[2], EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group members invited to the present meeting.

Certain interests were declared orally by the members before the beginning of the meeting. For further details on the outcome of the screening of the Oral Declaration of Interest made at the beginning of the meeting, please refer to the Annex I.

4. Report on the written approval procedure of the 140th PLH Panel plenary meeting

The Panel was informed that the minutes were published on time.

5. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion and possible adoption

5.1 Update of the Scientific Opinion on the latency and incubation periods of *Xylella fastidiosa*

The PLH Panel agreed with the WG proposal for a staged endorsement of the Scientific Opinion. The Panel endorsed the current literature-based sections on latency and incubation periods of *Xylella fastidiosa*. These sections are based on the analysis of evidence extracted from experimental studies and describe the currently available evidence on latency and incubation periods. The abstract of the endorsed sections is reported below.
"This Scientific Opinion updates the 2019 EFSA assessment of the risks posed by *Xylella fastidiosa* in the EU, focusing on two time intervals relevant to surveillance and control: the latency period, defined as the time from infection to the onset of infectiousness; and the incubation period, defined as the time from infection to first symptom expression. The assessment was based on the EFSA Xylella Host Plant Database updated to June 2025 complemented by a dedicated EFSA call for data. Evidence for the latency period was limited and highly heterogeneous. Because no study directly measured the onset of infectiousness, the assessment used the earliest detection and quantification of the bacterium in tissues distal to the inoculation point as operational proxy. Under this approach, systemic movement was reported within weeks after inoculation in grapevine and almond infected by subsp. fastidiosa, extending to several months generally reported for olive infected by subsp. *multiplex* or *pauca*, and for citrus infected by subsp. *pauca*. For the incubation period, survival analysis indicates marked variation across the subspecies-host combinations. Considering the scenario including only plants with confirmed infection, the shortest median times to symptom development were observed for tobacco and grapevine infected with subsp. *fastidiosa* (1.5 to 2 months), followed by blueberry infected with subsp. *multiplex* and almond with subsp. *fastidiosa*. Longer median incubation periods were estimated for orange infected with subsp. *pauca* while the longest values were observed for olive infected with subsp. *pauca* (> 2.5 years). From a surveillance perspective, it is confirmed that infected plants may remain asymptomatic over extended periods, e.g. olive and orange infected with subsp. *pauca.* However, for other host-pathogen combinations with shorter incubation periods e.g. grapevine infected with subsp. *fastidiosa*, regular inspections may contribute more effectively to detection."

The Panel agreed that the EKE-derived parameters related to infectiousness and detectability should be integrated into the same Scientific Opinion, to ensure that the overall logic of the Opinion is clear and consistent. The integrated component, including the rationale, methodology, elicitation questions and results of the EKE, will be presented for endorsement at a subsequent plenary meeting, without reopening the literature-based sections.

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

5.2 Presentation of an EFSA self-task mandate to respond to a NVWA BuRO report on "Evaluation of three assessments from the EFSA Panel on Plant Health quantifying the probability of introduction of plant pests into the European Union" https://www.nvwa.nl/documenten/organisatie/buro/publicatie/evaluation-three-assessments-efsa-plant-health-probability-introduction-pest-eu

The Panel Chair presented the self-task mandate to respond to a NVWA (BuRO) report on three published EFSA PLH Panel quantitative pest risk assessments. The background, terms of reference (ToR), interpretation of the ToR, the three EFSA PLH Panel opinions, the structure and main conclusions of the BuRO report, as well as the methodology, conclusions and recommendations of the EFSA PLH Panel statement in reply to the BuRO report were presented.

Abstract: A report commenting on three quantitative pest risk assessments of the EFSA PLH Panel was published in November 2025 by the Office for Risk Assessment & Research (BuRO) of the Netherlands Food and Product Safety Authority. In that report, the approaches applied by the EFSA PLH Panel in three quantitative pest risk assessments were narratively scrutinised against an unpublished protocol. According to the conclusions of the BuRO's report, all three EFSA PLH Panel approaches were methodologically valid and appropriate in substance. However, several assumptions made by the EFSA PLH Panel in its assessments were debated and individual values of model parameters were questioned and/or replaced by BuRO calculations. This Panel statement responds to the specific comments, mathematically reviews the calculations in the BuRO's report and highlights how quantitative assessments under uncertainty may slightly differ in their output values when different risk assessors find different consensus interpretations of available background evidence. Some quantitative recalculations by BuRO required mathematical correction. Other recalculations depended on alternative ad hoc assumptions or parameter interpretations that the Panel does not consider sufficiently substantiated to replace those used in the assessments. Therefore, the conclusions of the three quantitative pest risk assessments by the EFSA PLH Panel remain unchanged. The Panel proposes recommendations to facilitate future commenting by external assessors on the EFSA PLH Panel outputs.

The statement of the Panel was adopted on 30 April 2026.

5.3 PWN risk assessment - an update on the assessment of young plants for afforestation

The Working Group Chair presented the proposal on whether young pine plants (seedlings) should be considered a pathway for the spread of Pine Wood Nematode outside nurseries. The scientific reasoning and the assessment were introduced in detail to the Panel members.

6. Feedback from EFSA, Scientific Committee and European Commission

6.1 Update from the working groups

An update was given on the progress of the draft PRA protocol. The pest identity section of the document is under consultation with the EURLs in order to review and update the methodology if necessary. The WG is progressing with the section on continuation of the risk assessment. Endorsement of the protocol is planned during the september plenary meeting which will be followed by a consultation with the MS via the PLH Network meeting.

Update on the activieties on High Risk Plants Working Groups was given.
For HRP1, on Ornamental plants, Ciro Gardi indicated that with the publication of the two opinions on *Hamamelis mollis* and *Robinia pseudoacacia* from UK, there are not at the moment further dossiers to be evaluated.

Regarding the Forestry Working Group, Franz Streissl has presented an ongoing work on a derogation request from Canada for systemic treatment of birchwood against *Agrilus anxius*.
Regarding the Agricultural Working Group Agata Kaczmarek has presesented the ongoing work on the assessement of *Malus domestica*' budwood from Canada.
Ciro Gardi presented an update on the activities of the WG on Asparagus spears commodity RA, focusing especially on the methodology and on the result of the selection of the relevant pests.

6.2 Presentation of the final report of the SAPTREES project

The final report of the SAPTREES project was presented.

6.3 Risk assessment of Xylella fastidiosa - update of WP3: spread model

An update on the risk assessment of Xylella fastidiosa (WP3: a spread model) was presented. The modelling work aims to support the update of the 2019 Scientific Opinion by accounting for different epidemiological situations across Europe. An individual-based, spatial model has been developed to simulate disease spread and compare potential control strategies at landscape scale. The model incorporates both short- and long-distance spread mechanisms and is calibrated using survey data and expert knowledge. A high-level overview of the methodology and preliminary insights was provided, with detailed results to be presented at a later stage.

6.4 2027 Plenary dates

The 2027 PLH Plenary dates were agreed on.

6.5 Feedback from the Scientific Committee

The Panel Chair informed the Panel about key highlights from the Scientific Committee meeting. Points relevant for the PLH Panel were presented.

6.6 Feedback from European Commission

DG SANTE representatives acknowledged EFSA's ongoing efforts and stressed the importance of timely scientific outputs for plant health regulatory processes. Key priorities such as surveillance, preparedness, and harmonization across Member States were highlighted. They also underlined the importance of clearly communicating uncertainties and providing actionable conclusions for risk managers.

6.7 Update on the situation with Citrus yellow vein clearing virus (CYVCV)

An update on the situation with Citrus yellow vein clearing virus (CYVCV) was provided. Recent detections in Europe and ongoing work on genome characterisation were presented. The discussion highlighted uncertainties regarding the distribution, transmission, and impact of the virus, as well as significant data gaps, particularly in relation to yield losses and its occurrence in asymptomatic hosts. Limited surveillance and the absence of systematic monitoring were noted. The need for further data collection, improved surveillance, and enhanced collaboration, including sequencing support, was emphasised.

7. AOB

Franz Streissl gave an overview on the conference "Safeguarding Forests in Europe: Emerging Risks of Agrilus Wood Borers (Buprestidae)" which was organised by EPPO, FAO-REUFIS and BFW. EFSA's contribution, the main topics of the conference and outcomes of the discussions were presented.

Annex I

Interests and actions resulting from the screening of Annual Declarations of Interest (ADoI)

With regard to this meeting, **Dr. VAN DER GAAG Dirk Jan** declared the following interest with regard to one draft Scientific opinion:

5.2 Presentation of an EFSA self-task mandate to respond to a NVWA BuRO report on the "Evaluation of three assessments from the EFSA Panel on Plant Health quantifying the probability of introduction of plant pests into the European Union" M-2026-00031 - EFSA-Q-2026-00161

He informed the Panel that he participated in the work on this report.

This results in the exclusion of the expert from discussion or voting as PLH Panel Member of items 5.2.