

PARMA, 15/06/2011

**Minutes of the
5th Meeting of the EFSA Network on
Microbiological Risk Assessment**

Parma, 15 June 2011

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11. EFSA's Information Exchange Platform
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Participants

Members States and other National representatives:

Austria (Monika Matt), Belgium (Isabel De Boosere), Bulgaria (Hristo Miladinov Naydenski), Czech Republic (Renáta Karpíšková), Cyprus (Georgios T. Papageorgiou), Finland (Pirkko Tuominen), France (Coralie Bultel), Greece (Vassilis Xanthopoulos), Hungary (László Mészáros), Ireland (Lisa O'Connor), Italy (Dario De Medici), the Netherlands (Benno ter Kuile), Norway (Danica Grahek-Ogden), Poland (Halina Ścieżyńska), Slovak Republic (Lubomir Valík), Sweden (Matts Lindblad), Switzerland (Richard S.J. Felleisen), United Kingdom (Paul Cook), Croatia (Brigita Hengl), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Biljana Chakovska), Montenegro (Ljubica Teric and Turkey (Fatma Nevra Özcan).

Hearing Expert

Truls Nesbakken (Norway)

EFSA

Marta Hugas (Chair), Ernesto Liebana, Maria Teresa da Silva Felício (Biological Hazards Unit) and Bernhard Berger (Advisory Forum & Scientific Cooperation).

Minutes

1. Opening, welcome and apologies for absence

The chair welcomed the participants. Apologies were received from Denmark (Bjarke Bak Christensen), Germany (Bernd Appel), Lithuania (Ruta Bubuliene/Jurgita Savickaite), Portugal (Alexandra Brandão da Veiga), Spain (Gonzalo Zurera, Andrés Otero-Caballeira) and from the European Commission.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The draft agenda was adopted.

3. Declaration of interest

None of the participants declared an interest related to the subjects of the meeting.

4. Current and recent MRA activities of Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ)

The Biological Hazards Unit presented current and recent MRA activities of the BIOHAZ Panel. The ongoing mandates presented were:

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- Public health hazards to be covered by inspection of meat
- Public health risks represented by certain composite products containing food of animal origin
- Proposed production method for smoked skin-on sheep meat
- Food-borne viruses
- Norovirus in oysters
- Safety and efficacy of lactic acid decontamination of beef carcasses
- Public health impact of setting a new target for the reduction of *Salmonella* in turkeys
- Hygiene criteria for clean seawater
- Decontamination of poultry: Cecure®
- Parasites in wild caught fish in Baltic Sea
- QPS (2011 update)
- Biogenic amines
- Resistance caused by bacterial strains producing ESBL and/or AmpC in food and food-producing animals

The Chair informed the MRA Network that the current mandate of the BIOHAZ Panel expires on June 2012. A call has been launched to select the new members for this Panel and applications are open until 17 June 2011.

5. *E. coli* (STEC O104:H4) outbreak in Germany

The Biological Hazards Unit gave a presentation on EFSA's activities related to the "Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) O104:H4 outbreak in Germany" and highlighted the major conclusions from the BIOHAZ report "Urgent advice on the public health risk of Shiga-toxin producing *Escherichia coli* in fresh vegetables¹". Some issues were raised during the discussion, namely the lessons to be learnt from this outbreak in particular regarding the importance of real-time data sharing in a crisis scenario. The limitations of the public health advice on prevention of infection in this outbreak were also noted, as although washing of vegetables may reduce the microbial load, the only effective method of eliminating STEC from foods is to introduce a bactericidal treatment, such as heating (e.g. cooking or pasteurization) or irradiation.

6. *Salmonella* Bareilly outbreak associated with bean sprouts in the UK

Paul Cook (UK) gave a presentation on a 2010 "*Salmonella* Bareilly outbreak in the UK linked to bean sprouts". Details on the epidemiological and microbiological outbreak investigation were given, as well as on the risk communication during the outbreak.

In general, Member States were aware of the relevance of sprouts as a vehicle of outbreaks and also recognised an increase in the occurrence of vegetable-related outbreaks, which poses new and specific questions for risk assessment, such as e.g.

¹ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/2274.htm>

growth of pathogens on sprouts during storage (shelf-life studies) and microbiological risk assessment in sprouts.

Some Member States have implemented specific risk mitigation procedures *e.g.* in Sweden heat-treatment of seeds at 80-85 °C for 30-40 seconds is used.

7. *Listeria monocytogenes* as an emerging hazard? Ongoing data collection exercises in EFSA and needs for future risk assessments

The BIOHAZ Unit gave a presentation on “*Listeria monocytogenes* as an emerging hazard? Ongoing data collection exercises in EFSA and needs for future risk assessments”. Results of the 2009 European Union Summary Report on Trends and sources of zoonoses, zoonotic agents and food-borne outbreaks were shown and the ongoing EU-wide baseline survey (BS) on *L. monocytogenes* in certain ready-to-eat (RTE) foods was presented. It was highlighted that the predictive data to be collected via *L. monocytogenes* BS may be relevant to study the behavior of other foodborne pathogens such as *Clostridium botulinum*. This BS was seen as an opportunity to trigger additional data collection *e.g.* on genome analysis from the different *L. monocytogenes* isolates that will have to be stored for two years as well as on food consumption habits/patterns.

Some MRA Network members considered that the shelf-life studies for *L. monocytogenes* in RTE foods (as requested by Commission Regulation (EC) No. 2073/2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs) could benefit from further harmonisation in particular for small food business operators in smaller Member States.

Some MRA Network members also considered that their national surveillance systems are capable to detect sporadic human listeriosis cases efficiently and the UK informed that last year a decrease in human listeriosis cases was observed after increase of cases in the previous years.

8. Possible control options to prevent the selection for antibiotic resistance in the agricultural sector

Benno ter Kuile (NL) presented a draft document on “Possible control options to prevent the selection for antibiotic resistance in the agricultural sector”. This document triggered a lively discussion.

It was suggested that the document will be converted into a reflection paper to be presented to the BIOHAZ Panel. The chair agreed to present it to the BIOHAZ chair for consideration.

9. Overview of ongoing EFSA work on the meat inspection mandate

The BIOHAZ Unit gave a presentation on an “Overview of ongoing EFSA work on the meat inspection mandate”. This mandate involves different Panels in EFSA (AHAW, BIOHAZ, and CONTAM) and a joint opinion will be published with appendices regarding the unit-specific outputs. The terms of reference, timelines of the ongoing mandates as well as the progress in the development of the inherent scientific opinions were mentioned. It was also underlined that BIOHAZ is seeking to use a consistent approach for all evaluated animal species and has developed a universal risk ranking decision tree.

The MRA Network members were informed that outsourcing activities will be launched to do hazard identification and ranking in meat inspection. The procurement call will have four lots (one lot per group of animal species) and the MRA Network will be informed as soon as the call is launched.

10. Occurrence of yersiniosis in Norway

Truls Nesbakken (NO) gave a presentation on “Occurrence of yersiniosis in Norway”. ‘*Yersinia enterocolitica* in pigs and pork and yersiniosis’ was described as a case-study underlining the need for a risk-based meat inspection in Europe..

11. EFSA’s Information Exchange Platform

The Advisory Forum and Scientific Cooperation Unit (AFSCO) presented the Information Exchange Platform (IEP) which resulted from EFSA’s strategy for cooperation and networking to share information. EFSA Networks have access to the IEP. Users may view and download documents of interest and subscribe to receive an EFSA Monthly IEP report. The IEP is recognised as a useful tool for risk assessors, as it has a specific section with Risk Assessment outputs. The IEP user guide was provided to the MRA Network members.

12. General discussion

The MRA Network members agreed that the agenda of this meeting was very interesting and a roundtable discussion identified the following topics that could be addressed at the next MRA Network meetings:

- *Campylobacter* quantitative microbiological risk assessment in the broiler chain
- Norovirus and other foodborne viruses
- Fresh produce as new emerging source for foodborne outbreaks
- *L. monocytogenes* shelf-life studies in RTE food products
- Improvement of methodologies for detection of foodborne pathogens
- Antimicrobial resistance in Lactic acid bacteria (LAB)
- Extended-Spectrum- β -lactamases (ESBLs)
- Biogenic amines

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- Changes in consumer behavior
- Waste management

Some ongoing national activities which have led or will lead to scientific outputs were also mentioned:

- France: evaluation of national guides to good hygiene practices, two *E. coli* opinions, microbiological contamination of meat in slaughterhouses, datasheets on foodborne pathogenic microorganisms, *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* in seafood
- Ireland: *Campylobacter* control options
- Norway: change of manure legislation, human pathogens in marine mammals and guidelines for producers on safety assessment for human probiotics
- Sweden: *L. monocytogenes* baseline survey in certain RTE food products (national report) and ESBLs survey
- Switzerland: evaluation of *Campylobacter* risk management options, *Legionella* detection methods in drinking water, *L. monocytogenes* monitoring report of the past 5 years, ESBLs
- United Kingdom: risk assessment of *Mycobacterium bovis* in raw milk, update of a previous document on infectious intestinal diseases in humans, Advisory Committee document on toxoplasmosis, foodborne viruses.

Members of the MRA Network expressed their will to increase information sharing using the IEP as well as email exchange.

13. Date and venue for next meeting and AOB

Many MRA Network members proposed to meet twice per year. The Chair agreed with this proposal and suggested that BIOHAZ could organise an autumn meeting in Parma and a spring meeting in another location, *e.g.* Brussels. The dates and venues for the next meetings will be communicated in September 2011.

14. Closure of the meeting

The meeting was closed at 17 h.