

MINUTES OF THE 2ND MEETING OF THE EFSA SCIENTIFIC NETWORK FOR RISK ASSESSMENT IN PLANT HEALTH

WARSAW, POLAND

20 – 21 OCTOBER 2011

(ADOPTED ON 19 MARCH 2012)

ITEM	AGENDA
1.	Welcome and opening of the meeting
2.	Adoption of the agenda
3.	Declarations of Interest
4.	Discussion 1: Items suggested by Member States
5.	Discussion 2: Synergies in Pest Risk Assessment Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>EFSA Scientific Panel on Plant Health – Accomplishments and Challenges</i> - <i>Outcome and follow up of the EFSA Colloquium on Emerging Risk</i> - <i>Risk Assessment Activities in Member States</i>
6.	Discussion 3: Exchange of Information and Data at EU Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Data collection and effective information exchange for pest risk assessment between EFSA and Member States</i> - <i>Trade of plants for planting; Data available and needs for pest risk assessment</i>
7.	Discussion 4: Harmonisation of pest risk assessment practices and methodologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>EFSA guidance on Environmental Risk Assessment</i> - <i>EFSA Article 36 Project: PRIMA PHACIE</i> - <i>EFSA Article 36 Project: PERSEUS</i>
8.	Miscellaneous (Questionnaire)
9.	Conclusions

PARTICIPANTS

Member States Representatives

Sylvia BLÜMEL (AT), Kristen BRAEKEN (BE), Rositsa DIMITROVA (BG), Jorgen Sogaard HANSEN (DK), Epp KÕIVA (EE), Matti PUOLIMATKA (FI), Nathalie FRANQUET (FR), Jens-Georg UNGER (DE), Gabor HOLLO (HU), Barry DELANY (IE), Danilo MORELLI (IT), Astra GARKAJE (LV), Vilma MIKELAITIEN (LT), Marcia GATT (MT), Elin THINGNAES LID (NO), Dirk-Jan VAN DER GAAG (NL), Witold KARNKOWSKI (PL), Paula CARVALHO (PT), Mirela CEAN (RO), Otakar KUDELA (SK), Kristof CAPIEAU (SW).

Observers

Guillermo CARDON (EUROPEAN COMMISSION – DG SANCO), Richard BAKER (EFSA PLH PANEL), Gianni GILIOLI (EFSA PLH PANEL), Mike JEGER (EFSA PLH PANEL), Alan MACLEOD (FERA).

EFSA

PLH Unit: Elzbieta CEGLARSKA, Virag KERTESZ, Svetla KOZELSKA, Doreen RUSSELL, Giuseppe STANCANELLI, Joanna SWARCEWICZ, Sara TRAMONTINI.

AFSCO : Saadia NOORANI

1. WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE MEETING

The Chair (Elzbieta Ceglarska - Head of EFSA Plant Health Unit) opened the meeting and welcomed the 21 network representatives to the second network meeting for risk assessment in plant health. Apologies were received from the absent network member states representatives namely: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Spain and United Kingdom.

Prior to a tour de table, a welcome letter to the Network from the Polish presidency was read to the meeting.

The action points from the previous network meeting were outlined. The status of all actions was completed.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair thanked those representatives who submitted their declarations of interest and asked the participants to declare any interests in relation to the items on the agenda. No further interests were declared.

4. DISCUSSION 1: ITEMS SUGGESTED BY MEMBER STATES

Sweden initiated a discussion on the importance of obtaining support for funding research projects in plant health. Contributions for enhancing the visibility of plant health included raising this issue with EFSA's Advisory Forum and to make a statement to the COPHS (Chief Officers of Plant Health Services) on the need for research funding.

The Commission representative advised that the next framework programme is currently undergoing an inter-service consultation within the Commission. Input would then be requested from Member States.

Austria added that other projects are endeavouring to draft proposals. The challenge of identifying innovation in plant health research means that a discussion on future projects in the plant health field is timely and that the discussion should not be limited to climate change. Germany added that the subject has been raised at the COPHS meeting and that a statement on this issue is likely to be produced. Sweden thanked the representatives for their contributions and suggested that EFSA make a reference to the COPHS statement to the EFSA Advisory Forum.

5. DISCUSSION 2: SYNERGIES IN PEST RISK ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Svetla Kozelska (EFSA PLH Unit) introduced the discussion on this central objective of the network.

Mike Jeger (Chair of the EFSA PLH Panel) presented the accomplishments and challenges faced by EFSA PLH in its short history. He provided an overview of the Panel composition and expertise, its main tasks, workload, support provided by the PLH Unit and outsourcing. Using examples of outputs adopted by the Panel, he explained how pest risk assessments are conducted. He provided an overview of the guidance documents developed by the Panel and a summary of the new mandates in preparation.

Richard Baker (PLH Panel member) provided a report from the EFSA Colloquium on Emerging Risks in Plant Health. He explained how PLH adapted the definition of emerging risk to complement plant health and outlined the priorities and signals for emerging risks, data sources, needs and challenges. The outcomes from the four discussion groups at the Colloquium were presented namely: the problem of outdated datasets, the need to focus not only on what organisms are absent in the EU but also those already present; anticipating the changes and implications of change on managing risk, consideration of more generic risk assessments and rapid risk assessment including decision supporting schemes and reviewing information on past invasions. The overall conclusions of the Colloquium were presented.

Six Member States presented an overview of risk assessment activities in their respective countries.

Austria explained plant risk assessment activities in AGES, the holistic approach (from stable to table) and their core functions and capabilities in Plant Health. An outline of the current work plan and pest risk assessment activities was given and the main problems with respect to data requirements, pest risk assessment schemes and the lack of short comprehensive scheme were

mentioned. Communication activities were also outlined. Belgium presented the structure of the NPPO, current and future pest risk assessment activities and full and short pest risk assessments. Bulgarian activities and current work was presented as well as an overview of data used in pest risk assessments. The main issues of concern specified by Bulgaria were problems with communication, lack of information from producers and a general lack of awareness of PLH issues. Denmark remarked that plant health issues in Denmark are addressed by a small number of staff but added that more emphasis has been placed on public involvement to support surveillance. He gave an overview of the structure and responsibilities in plant health as well as emerging risks in Denmark. France explained that it undertakes short pest risk assessments and gave an overview of the work plans and main problems encountered. The new organisation in Germany was presented together with information on how pest risk assessment is conducted and their involvement in projects such as the EFSA Article 36 project Prima Phacie.

6. DISCUSSION 3: EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND DATA AT EU LEVEL

Giuseppe Stancanelli (PLH Unit) introduced the objective of the PLH network in relation to data exchange.

Saadia Noorani (EFSA AFSCO Unit) explained the main functionality of the EFSA IEP (Information Exchange Platform) and gave a practical demonstration of the application. The IEP was created to exchange information about risk assessments either completed or in progress in the EU Member States rather than for the exchange of data.

Sweden asked if any quality controls are in place. EFSA explained that only the Focal Points in each member state can upload documents and they are given guidance as to the type of document that should be uploaded: EFSA can check that documents are loaded correctly. Austria suggested that further criteria should be added to indicate if the pest risk assessment is a short or full one. Germany asked if monthly subscriptions are possible and the simplicity of use of the IEP as they frequently need to be able to find information quickly.

Sara Tramontini (EFSA PLH Unit) presented an overview of what is available on PLH in the EFSA website and the PLH network area on the EFSA extranet. Network representatives were advised to contact the EFSA secretariat if they have any problems using the network extranet workspace.

Austria gave a presentation on plants for planting. The main sources of data are from customs, and the accessibility of data and the methodologies used was also discussed. AGES (Austria) has developed a questionnaire for producers in order to obtain data and explained how the data is used to devise sampling plans based on the presence and risk of different harmful organisms. The Netherlands presented trade data as many imports into the EU arrive via the Netherlands. This increases the potential risk and official measures on trade and emerging risk are consequently affected. Sources of data used by the Dutch authorities were given such as Eurostat, national statistics, auction statistics, the Netherlands NPPO database and other emerging risk data sources. Germany advised the network that EPPO is undertaking a survey on plants for planting and that traces for plants for planting are likely to be addressed in the revision of the plant health regime.

Poland added that with non quarantine pests it is possible to undertake a quick short pest risk assessment.

7. DISCUSSION 4: HARMONISATION OF PEST RISK ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AND METHODOLOGIES

Virag Kertesz (EFSA PLH Unit) introduced the discussion on harmonisation of pest risk assessment practices and methodologies and how the network can work together towards this objective.

Gianni Gilioli (PLH Panel member) presented the PLH Panel's draft guidance for environmental risk assessment including the challenges encountered in the development of the guidance such as how to define environment, how to address limited knowledge and how to frame an environmental risk assessment based on ecosystem services and biodiversity. He provided a summary of the main outcomes and recommendations and also encouraged the network to use the scheme in order to test it; to provide feedback so that the scheme in the guidance document can be improved.

Sweden asked if there would be attempts to look at economic values following the introduction of an invasive species as it would enable the Member State to make clearer the impact of an invasive species. EFSA explained that the term currency is used to convert the value of nature into economic terms. Germany congratulated the Panel on this exciting piece of work but added that it is complex and needs some simplicity if it is going to be used especially if a fast track environmental risk assessment is to be undertaken. Latvia agreed and added that methodology must be as simple as possible and Austria asked about the summary report of the public consultation carried out on this document. EFSA added that the scheme used in the document is a transparent one as it is needed to state assumptions and that the complexity was perhaps overstated as there are very few questions in the scheme.

Alan Macleod (FERA) presented an outline of the Article 36 projects Prima Phacie – an assessment of different pest risk assessment methods using specific organisms – and Perseus – (Plant health surveys for the EU territory: an analysis of data quality and methodologies and the resulting uncertainties for pest risk assessment). He advised that considerable input is needed from Member States; especially NPPOs.

Latvia asked EFSA if there is any information available in relation to the Perseus interim report, Austria expressed concerns about the questionnaire used in Perseus particularly the difficulty in obtaining clarifications on the questions asked. The Netherlands also expressed concerns about obtaining the information for answering the questions in the questionnaire but that it would be completed soon and Poland asked about different survey approaches. Sweden asked about collection of information and the quality of surveys and Alan Macleod emphasised that the project only addresses quarantine organisms or emergency measures.

8. MISCELLANEOUS (QUESTIONNAIRE)

The participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire concerning the organisation and the scientific programme of the network meeting, The Chair explained the importance of the questionnaire on the network for future meetings and encouraged all participants to complete it.

9. CONCLUSIONS

The Chair gave an overview of the preliminary conclusions of this network meeting to the participants. The Member States were thanked for their participation and special gratitude expressed to those representatives who gave presentations to the network. It was highlighted as a positive outcome that synergies would bring added value, that fast track risk assessments are considered as essential to all network representatives and that the issue of data availability and access is a common issue encountered in all Member States. The Chair emphasised the importance of information and data exchange, and commented on the resourcefulness of certain Member States' discovery of innovative ways of carrying out surveys. The Chair advised that EFSA does not routinely collect data except for some opinions, so the need for cooperation in data exchange is essential. In addition the importance in the use of traces in the future was encouraged. The Chair advised the network that EFSA would like to involve EPPO in future network meetings.

The Chair described how collaboration and harmonisation of methodologies have been sought in the guidance produced and in development by the Panel but added that it can sometimes be a complex process and therefore requires the input of the network.

Minutes and a report of the network will be produced.

The next meeting will be on 19 March 2012

Venue to be confirmed in Parma.