Scientific Network on Risk Assessment in Plant Health
Minutes of the 6th meeting
Held on 03-04 April 2014, Parma
(Agreed on 21 November 2014)

Participants

- Network Members:

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1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Franck BERTHE, Head of the Animal and Plant Health (ALPHA) Unit welcomed the participants, the Members of the Network and the Observers. He presented and explained the new structure of the EFSA Risk Assessment and Scientific Assistance (RASA) Department. The Department has two units coordinating Panels and Networks (the ALPHA Unit coordinating the Panels and Networks on Animal health and welfare and on Plant health; the BIOCONTAM Unit coordinating the Panels and Networks on Biological hazards and Contaminants in the food chain), one unit working on development and implementation of risk assessment methods (AMU Unit) and one unit on data collection and data management (DATA Unit).

Apologies were received from Network Members from Bulgaria, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania Luxembourg, Malta, Romania, and Slovakia, and Observers from Switzerland.
2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted with a minor change, to anticipate part of the discussion on item 5.6 to the first day to benefit from the participation of Françoise PETTER (EPPO).

3. Declarations of interest

In accordance with EFSA’s Policy on Independence and Scientific Decision-Making Processes regarding Declarations of Interests (DoIs)\(^1\) and the Decision of the Executive Director implementing this Policy\(^2\), members of networks, peer review meetings, networking meetings and their alternates shall be invited to complete and submit an Annual Declaration of interest (ADoI).

EFSA screened the ADoI filled in by the experts invited for the present meeting. No conflicts of interests related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process or at the Oral Declaration of interest (ODoI) at the beginning of this meeting.

The Chair thanked the representative(s) that has/have submitted an ADoI and/or has/have declared some interest at the beginning of this meeting in the ODoI.

4. Agreement of the minutes of the 5th meeting of the EFSA Scientific Network for Risk Assessment in Plant Health held on 17-18 October 2013, in Parma Italy.

The minutes of the 5\(^{th}\) Network meeting were agreed on 04 04 2014.

5. Topics for discussion

5.1 Items suggested by MSs

Cyprus, Spain and United Kingdom presented how pest risk assessment is performed within their Member state institutions.

The Cyprus representative of the Network (Anthemis MELIFRONIDOU-PANTELIDOU) provided a comprehensive presentation of the Pest Risk Analysis for *Seiridium cardinali*. In that context a detailed presentation of the risk assessment activity in Cyprus was provided discussing in addition the difficulties and problems encountered while performing the activity.

The UK representative of the Network (Richard MCINTOSH) presented how pest risk assessment activities are carried out in the UK, providing clarification on the roles of the different institutions in the process. DEFRA (Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs) decides on funding, policy and is in charge of the coordination and representation of UK PRA activity, FERA (The Food and Environment Research Agency) performs the PRAs and is in charge of the UK plant health risk register and the Forestry Commission (FC) produces some PRAs and participates in the decision making process. A Plant Health Risk Group [DEFRA with FERA, the Devolved Administrations (DAs) and FC) has been set up to coordinate the risk assessment activity. The risk register was recently developed to prioritise risk assessment activities and risk management actions. The risk register, with about 700 entries, was built up taking into account interceptions, new developments and expert judgement. Several Network members agreed that sharing of the risk register with other Member states could improve coordination of the European risk assessment activities.

The Spanish representative of the Network (Gerardo SÁNCHEZ PENA) presented the pest risk assessment process in Spain. Three different bodies are involved in the PRAs: (i)

MAGRAMA (Ministerio de Agricultura, Alimentación y Medio Ambiente) is the decision making body and provides funding, sets policy and interacts at international level; (ii) Tragsatec (Empresa de Transformación Agraria, filial Tecnologías y Servicios Agrarios), a public company that provides technical assistance in the fields of infrastructure for agriculture, rural development, forestry and environment, is coordinating an expert working group for PRAs; and; (iii) the Autonomous Regions that provide data for the PRAs and participate to the decision making process. The Express EPPO PRA and the EPPO PRA schemes are used in Spain.

5.2 Update on EFSA plant health activities (November 2013 - March 2014) and work plan 2014-2015

EFSA provided an update on the EFSA Plant Health activities since the last Network meeting of November 2013. The scientific opinions and the associated public consultation and external scientific reports that were published by EFSA were briefly presented:

(i) Statement of EFSA on host plants, entry and spread pathways and risk reduction options for Xylella fastidiosa,

(ii) Scientific Opinion on the risk to plant health of Xanthomonas citri pv. citri and Xanthomonas citri pv. aurantifolii (citrus canker) for the EU territory

(iii) Outcome of the public consultation on the draft Scientific Opinion on the risk to plant health of Xanthomonas citri pv. citri and Xanthomonas citri pv. aurantifolii for the EU territory

(iv) Scientific Opinion on the risk of Phyllosticta citricarpa (Guignardia citricarpa) (citrus black spot) for the EU territory with identification and evaluation of risk reduction options.

(v) Outcome of the public consultation on the draft Scientific Opinion on the risk of Phyllosticta citricarpa (Guignardia citricarpa) for the EU territory with identification and evaluation of risk reduction options

(vi) External scientific report on splash dispersal of Phyllosticta citricarpa conidia from infected citrus fruit

(vii) Scientific Opinion on the risks to plant health posed by Phytophthora fragariae Hickman var. fragariae in the EU territory, with the identification and evaluation of risk reduction options

(viii) Scientific Opinion on the risk to plant health posed by Strawberry mild yellow edge virus to the EU territory with the identification and evaluation of risk reduction options

(ix) Scientific Opinion on the assessment of the potential establishment of the apple snail in the EU

The ongoing pest risk assessment activities in EFSA were summarised:

(i) Strawberry crinkle virus,

(ii) Daktulosphaira vitifoliae,

(iii) Soil and growing media,

(iv) Environmental risk assessment of the apple snail for the EU,

(v) The pest categorisation of Clavibacter michiganensis spp. michiganensis

(vi) The pest categorisation of Xanthomonas campestris pv. vesicatoria, and
(vii) The categorisation of EU apples pests to support agreements with Third Countries.

The new requests received by EFSA from the European Commission were presented:

(i) The risk to plant health posed by the voluntary release of the bud-galling wasp *Trichilogaster acaciaelongifoliae* Frogatt in the Union territory for the biological control of the invasive alien plant *Acacia longifolia* (Andrews) Willd.

(ii) The risk assessment of 38 harmful organisms currently listed in the Annexes of the Council Directive 2000/29/EC. A two steps approach agreed with DG SANCO for this request (step1: pest categorisation; Step 2: Pest risk assessment and evaluation of current phytosanitary measures) was presented and discussed. In this context a questionnaire to the Member States National Plant Protection Organisations (NPPO) is being prepared by EFSA to update the presence/absence status of these 38 plant pests in the Member States. The Network members are kindly requested to assist in this data collection procedure.

Ongoing EFSA outsourced cooperation and procurement projects were also introduced:

(i) Systematic review and inventory of quantitative models for spread of plant pests for use in pest risk assessment for the EU territory

(ii) Development of probabilistic models for quantitative pathway analysis of plant pests introduction for the EU territory

(iii) Media monitoring for emerging plant health risk

(iv) Plant health surveys for the EU territory: an analysis of data quality and methodologies and the resulting uncertainties for pest risk assessment (see item 5.6 below).

5.3 EFSA outsourcing and cooperation projects: Perseus project on: “Plant health surveys for the EU territory: an analysis of data quality and methodologies and the resulting uncertainties for pest risk assessment”

Andrea Battisti from the University of Padova, Italy, presented the EFSA Article 36 project PERSEUS. The systematic review process, the interaction with the Member states and the associated questionnaires to gather data and information were presented. The strengths and limitations of the different survey methodologies, the project conclusions and recommendations were discussed.

The following outputs of the PERSEUS project will be made publically available on EFSA website:

(i) The final report of the project including
   a. Literature review on survey methods for regulated pests
   b. Case Studies
   c. Identification of the strengths and weaknesses associated with surveying regulated pests
   d. Conclusions
   e. Recommendations
(ii) Individual surveying data sheets for all the regulated pest in the council directive 2000/29/EC

The PERSEUS project conclusions are:

(i) Survey methods for the majority of plant quarantine pests are poorly documented (in particular sampling methods)
(ii) Typically (though not always) positives are reported without number of plants tested or area examined
(iii) Diagnostic tests are generally well described
(iv) Research and survey efforts are disproportionate for some species
(v) No common reporting procedure on survey results
(vi) Key information for quantitative assessment of uncertainty not reported/available

The project recommendations are:

(i) A common structure for the reporting of survey results should be developed
(ii) Consideration should be given to emerging plant pests
(iii) A central repository of methods used and data collected should be considered

The Network members discussed the results of the PERSEUS project. They indicated that EFSA could play an important role in the future to further develop and harmonise the surveillance methodologies at EU level. The Network members also requested to be notified when the PERSEUS project outputs will be published on EFSA website.

5.4 Pest reporting in the EU (Food and Veterinary Office/DG SANCO/EC)

Steven Jones from the Food and Veterinary office in Grange, Ireland presented the pest reporting in the EU. Three different areas of reporting were distinguished: interceptions; pest presence and surveys.

(i) Interceptions

a. The notification of findings of harmful organism in terms of non compliance is required by Article 13(c)8 of Council Directive 2000/29/EC in line with FAO-IPPC Standard ISPM 13 that provides guidelines for the notification of non-compliance and emergency actions;

b. The procedure for reporting is established in the Commission Directive 94/3/EC, defining 'interception', indicating the legal deadlines and the format for reports, and defining the role of the European Commission. This is the legal basis for the EU Notification System for Plant Health Interceptions - EUROPHYT


Article 16 of Council Directive 2000/29/EC requires that Member States immediately notify in writing the European Commission and the other Member States of:

a. the presence in its territory of any harmful organism listed in Section I of Annex I and II or the appearance in a part of its territory where it was previously unknown, of an organism listed in Section II of those Annexes;
b. the actual or suspected appearance of any harmful organism not listed in those Annexes whose presence was previously unknown in its territory

In the context of the DG SANCO Working Group on Harmful Organism Notifications, the concerns of MSs and disagreements of reporting deadlines were raised and are in discussion at the Standing Committee on Plant Health.

A new template for notifications and an electronic reporting system are to be developed.

(iii) Surveys

Currently, EU surveys are mandatory for 13 harmful organisms that are subject to EU emergency measures and three key pests of potatoes that are subject of Control Directives.

The NPPOs are responsible for carrying out the surveys based on sound scientific principles and on the biology of the pest. They must notify the European Commission of the outcome of the surveys ensuring the reporting requirements are fulfilled without prejudice to those of Article 16 of Council Directive 2000/29/EC.

The reporting templates provided by the FVO have proved to be effective ensuring that the minimum information required is provided. However there is an increasing demand to better shape the surveys for the MS.

In view of the new PLH regime there will be a considerable increase of general surveillance activities in the EU MSs with possibility of co-financing up to 50%. As a consequence, many more reports will be generated and need to be managed properly. In this context an EU system for pest reporting is being developed, and an Expert Working Group identified priorities for the Commission work programme.

Regarding the emerging risks and the associated surveillance activities, a questionnaire was circulated by the European Commission to the MSs to understand how MSs plan their PRAs and related activities. Once concluded, a report on this desk study could be presented to the Network.

Discussion

Following the presentation, the MSs raised questions and discussed the need for improving the surveillance methodologies in the next future.

Considering the cooperation of EFSA and the Member States in data collection activities in other areas and the results of the Perseus project, it was suggested that EFSA could contribute with its scientific advice to plant health surveys in cooperation with DG SANCO, EPPO and the Member States. It was commented that the surveillance protocols need to be scientifically sound, consistent, and fit for purpose and that the sampling methods used need to be based on statistical significance.

5.5 Cooperation in data collection for pest risk assessment: follow up from the EFSA EPPO workshop

EFSA and EPPO provided a summary of the discussion and conclusions of the Joint EFSA/EPPO Workshop (1-3 April 2014) on “Data collection and information sharing in plant health”. The main objectives of the event were to share experiences on plant health data collection and to reflect together on how to collect, store, share and disseminate information on plant health at national, regional and global levels.

This was the first scientific conference organised by EFSA together with the EPPO. It included 5 sessions and the main conclusions were the following:
(i) Session 1 - Advanced methods and strategies for surveillance and data collection
   a. There is a need for harmonisation and guidelines on surveillance (random/targeting, general/monitoring). Comprehensive survey methods inventory for quarantine pests are available.
   b. Considering the limited resources there is a need to increase surveys efficiency. Optimising the survey designs could contribute to maximise the survey performance and minimize the costs.
   c. The development of advanced methods for surveillance and reporting can increase efficiency (e.g. web-based traps and automated spore trapping).
   d. Existing surveillance networks for pesticides and unregulated or common plant pests are examples that may be used for quarantine pests.
   e. Interaction between databases is challenging.
   f. Possible role of mobile tools.

(ii) Session 2 - Modelling tools to forecast pest distributions, emergence and invasion patterns
   a. Pathway modelling on pest entry teach also “what we don’t know”.
   b. An increased insight on pest biology can result in control cost savings.
   c. Open databases on climate, crops and pest distribution (eg crop and yield forecasting system) need to be further developed.
   d. There is a need for common geo-referenced database for plant pests modelling considering the limited access to quality geo-referenced pest occurrence data.
   e. A comprehensive review of quantitative models for spread of plant pests can provide a decision support system for PRA modelling.
   f. The pest risk assessment methodology needs to stronger links to basic ecology.

(iii) Session 3 - Data collection and information sharing for PRA

As PRAs aim to provide evidence to risk managers to better protect the territory, they should be fit for purpose.
   a. The communication of PRA outcomes is important.
   b. Research is needed to back up PRAs.
   c. Evidence and uncertainties should be evaluated carefully.
   d. Possibility and probability should be differentiated.
   e. PRA is interdisciplinary and different impacts need to be evaluated (economic, environmental, social).
   f. Prioritization needs to involve the stakeholders.

(iv) Session 4 - Early warning tools in plant health
   a. Early warning is essential in plant health and is currently mainly based on data mining done by plant health experts.
   b. News tools for data collection such as citizen science and media monitoring are available and should continue to be explored.
   c. It is essential to keep a critical eye on data collected i.e. quality of data; value of the analysis of data; presentation of data.
d. The data collection for early warning helps in identifying the needs for PRAs and in fine tuning the phytosanitary actions.

(v) Session 5 - Pest reporting, databases and information exchange systems

a. The information can be sensitive and may be “owned” preventing its public access

b. What is found (and confidence in negative results) depends partly on the effort spent in searching and the ease of finding

c. The use of International or Regional Standards for data elements should be enforced where possible (e.g. pest status in ISPM8, EPPO Codes)

d. How the people connect is crucial in making action happen

e. Information needs to flow in both directions, feedback needed

f. Start with simple systems and then evolve them

g. Clarity needed on: reporting responsibilities

h. What does global mean? How many single portals? Possible interactions?

The Network members congratulated for the successful and interesting scientific event and expressed their appreciation for the EFSA EPPO cooperation.

5.6 Summary of the EFSA-PLH Network activity 2011-2013

An overview of the EFSA PLH Network activities in the period 2011-2013 was provided.

5.7 Terms of reference and activities plan of EFSA Scientific Network for risk assessment in plant health 2014-2017

The new terms of reference of the EFSA Scientific Network for risk assessment in plant health for the term 2014-2017 were presented. The specific objectives of the Network are to facilitate harmonisation of risk assessment practices and methodologies, to enhance exchange of information and data between EFSA and Member States, as well as to achieve synergies in pest risk assessment activities. Respect to the previous Network mandate, more focus is now given to enhance cooperation in data collection and data sharing for pest risk assessment and to analyse risk assessment needs for the implementation of the new Plant Health legislation.

In relation to data collection, it was also anticipated that, for a new mandate on risk assessments for 38 organisms from the Annexes of Council Directive 2000/29/EC, EFSA ALPHA Unit would request by email the National Plant Protection Organisations to confirm or update for each pest the current pest status from the EPPO PQR database, to indicate a contact person and to provide information on national PRA and on existing reports on current impact.

Discussion

An initial brief discussion was held on the work plan of the Network for the period 2014 2017. It was agreed the need for the Network to meet twice a year. Cooperation in data collection and risk assessment preparedness in view of the upcoming new plant health legislation were considered as key areas of activities of the Network, on which to focus in this new term.

In addition to these activities, it was suggested to also address the identification of emerging risks in the field of plant health: in particular Network members suggested to be consulted to identify organisms to run media monitoring case studies in the EFSA funded media
monitoring project. EFSA informed the Network that EPPO would also be invited to cooperate to this project. It was also mentioned during the discussion that a task force is being established by the European Commission and the MSs to list emerging risks and priorities in the EU, based on evaluation of interception reports, thus providing recommendations of action to the European Commission and the MSs.

7. Next meeting(s)
A suitable date for next Network meeting in October 2014 is to be identified by an electronic poll.

8. Action Points
EFSA to send:
1/ Notification of the publication of the Perseus outputs
2/ Notification of the publication of the EFSA/EPPO workshop minutes and report
3/ send a Doodle poll for scheduling the autumn 2014 Network meeting