European Food Safety Authority

Animal and Plant Health Unit (ALPHA UNIT)

Scientific Panel on PLANT HEALTH
Minutes of the 55th Plenary meeting
Held on 27-29 May 2015, Brussels, Belgium

Meeting open to observers

(Agreed on 8 April 2016)

Participants

- **Panel Members**

  Richard Baker, Claude Bragard, David Caffier, Thierry Candresse, Gianni Gilioli, Jean-Claude Gregoire, Michael John Jeger, Olia Evtimova Karadjova, Christer Sven Magnusson, Charles Manceau, David Makowski, Maria Navajas, Trond Rafoss, Vittorio Rossi, Jan Schans, Gritta Schrader, Gregor Urek, Irene Vloutoglou, Stephan Winter, Wopke Van Der Werf

- **Hearing Experts:**

  Bob Douma, Wageningen University (NL) (for item 9: presentation of the final results of the EFSA outsourced procurement project: Probabilistic Pathway Modeling for Pest Invasion Risk Assessment and Transparency in European bioSecurity - CT/EFSA/PLH/2011/04 - Lot 2 - non-edible plants or plant products)

- **European Commission and/or Member States representatives:**

  Not applicable

- **European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation (EPPO) representatives:**

  Françoise Petter

- **EFSA:**

  ALPHA Unit: Virag Kertesz, Marco Pautasso, Giuseppe Stancanelli, Sybren Vos and Emanuela Tacci. Ciro Gardi, Tomasz Oszako and Sara Tramontini participated via web conference.

  Communications & External Relations Department: Steve Pagani

European Food Safety Authority – Via Carlo Magno 1/a, 43126 Parma, ITALY
Tel: (+39) 0521 036 111 • Fax: (+39) 0521 036 110 • www.efsa.europa.eu

- **Observers: (In application of the guidelines for Observers[1])**

  Kristien Braeken and Cédric Hotchamps (Federal Public Service (FPS) Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment, BE), Martine Maes (Institut voor Landbouw- en Visserijonderzoek (ILVO), Institute for Agriculture and Fisheries, BE), David Michelante and Olivier Wilmart (Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain, AFSCA – FAVV, BE), John Mumford (Imperial College London, UK).

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants and the observers to the 55th plenary meeting of the EFSA Plant Health Panel.

Apologies were received from Imre Holb.

Wopke van der Werf did not participate in agenda point 9 due to a Conflict of Interest being identified for the agenda item.

2. Brief introduction of Panels /SC members and Observers

The Chair welcomed the participants and invited them to briefly introduce themselves

3. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

4. Declarations of Interest of Scientific Committee/Scientific Panel/ Members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence and Scientific Decision-Making Processes[2] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Declarations of Interest[3], EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest and the Specific Declarations of Interest filled in by the Panel Members invited for the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process. For further details on the outcome of the Oral Declarations of Interest made at the beginning of the meeting, please refer to the Annex.

5. Presentation of the Guidelines for Observers

The EFSA Guidelines for Observers were presented.

6. Agreement of the minutes of the 54th Plenary meeting held on 18-19 March 2015, Parma (Italy)

The minutes of the of the 54th Plenary meeting held on 18-19 March 2015 were agreed.[4]

[1] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/stakeholders/observers.html
[2] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/independencepolicy.pdf
[3] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/independencerules2014.pdf
[4] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/150318a-m.pdf

7. Presentation of overview of the EFSA Plant Health Panel activities 2012-2015

A presentation of the plant health activities of EFSA and the Scientific Panel on Plant Health in the period 2012-2015 was given by Giuseppe Stancanelli, including: the EFSA organisation and workflow for scientific advice; the international standards and regulatory framework for plant health risk assessment; the PLH Panel and it guidance documents;, the work completed and ongoing on risk assessment of pests of global relevance and emerging plant health threats, commodity risk assessments, plant health risk assessment of biological control agents of weeds, risk assessments and pest categorisations of listed pests in preparation for the new plant health regime. An overview was also presented of the EFSA funded scientific cooperation and public procurement projects in plant health and of the ongoing cooperation with Member States and with EPPO.

8. Presentation on plant health and pest risk assessment activities in Belgium

Kristien Braeken (Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment, Belgium) presented the structure of the National Plant Protection Organization in Belgium and its main tasks: She also gave an overview of the national and international Euphresco research projects in plant health, their outcomes and the communication of project results.

Olivier Wilmart (Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain, AFSCA – FAVV, BE) presented the plant health activities of the Scientific Committee of the Belgian Food Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain and of the Staff direction for risk assessment. He presented examples of scientific opinions, rapid pest risk assessments – Quick scans - based on questionnaires, complete/full pest risk assessments and the plant health barometer, which on the basis of a set indicators reflects the phytosanitary situation in the country.

9. Presentation of the final results of the EFSA outsourced procurement project: Probabilistic Pathway Modelling for Pest Invasion Risk Assessment and Transparency in European biosecurity (CT/EFSA/PLH/2011/04 - Lot 2 - non-edible plants or plant products: roundwood, sawnwood, cut flowers, plants for planting and seeds)

Bob Douma (Wageningen University, NL) presented the final report of the EFSA funded public procurement project “Development of probabilistic models for quantitative pathway analysis of plant pest introduction for the EU territory” on behalf of the project team. First a general overview was given on the concepts of pathway models and the methodology applied. This was illustrated with a pathway model for tomato seeds and the bacterial plant pathogen *Clavibacter michiganensis* subsp. *michiganensis*. A second example was given on a pathway model that predicts the introduction of the pine wood nematode with coniferous wood from China.

The aim of this project was to develop probabilistic models for quantitative pathway analysis of plant pest introduction for the EU territory through non-edible plant products or plants. A conceptualization of two types of pathway model (PM) was provided: individual consignment and flow based models. The individual based PM simulates an individual consignment (or a population of such a consignment) by describing the stochastic change in the state of the individual consignment over time and space. The flow-based PM simulates the flow of the infested product over time and space, without distinguishing individual consignments. These two conceptualisations were shown to be mathematically related, and both models were presented, as a case study, for cut flowers.

PMs for five product groups: round wood, sawn wood, cut flowers, plants for planting and seeds were developed. For each product group a case-study (combination of product, origin and pest) has been developed to illustrate the use of the pathway models: (1) oak wood from the USA and *Ceratocystis fagacearum*, (2) Coniferous sawn wood from China and

Bursaphelenchus xylophilus, (3) Cut orchids from Thailand and *Thrips palmi*, (4) Pot orchids from Thailand and *Thrips palmi*, and (5) Tomato seeds and *Clavibacter michiganensis* subsp. *michiganensis* from outside the European Union. An uncertainty analysis of the models showed the sensitivity of the models to the pest species-specific parameters.

A practical guidance to users was also presented on: i) how to develop a PM, ii) the application of PMs in @Risk (a plugin for MS Excel), and iii) application in R. The speaker closed the presentation with a general discussion on the usefulness of pathway models for plant health. Poor data availability constrains the level of detail with which the pathway model can be used. However, pathway models may increase transparency and consistency in risk assessment by systematically combining all pathway elements. In addition, they may serve as a useful tool for exploring risk reduction options.

Finally, future research topics were discussed. Further work is needed on an interpretation of results, linking quantitative outcomes of pathway modelling to pest risk assessment guidance, and evaluation of risk reduction options using pathway models.

10. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion and/or possible adoption

10.1 Draft Scientific opinion on the risk to plant health of soil and growing media (EFSA-Q-2013-00405)

Following a request from the European Commission, EFSA was requested to provide a scientific opinion on the risks to plant health posed by soil or growing medium attached to plants for planting, as commodities and as a contaminant on imported consignments as well as to identify risk management options and to evaluate their effectiveness in reducing the risk to plant health posed by the introduction of soil and growing medium. The draft opinion was presented by the Working Group for discussion at the 54th PLH Panel Plenary in March 2015 and was then circulated to the Panel for comments. All comments received were considered and the scientific opinion was amended accordingly.

The final version was presented to the Panel for discussion and possible adoption. The risk of entry into the European Union of harmful organisms associated with soil or growing medium attached to plants for planting, as commodities, and as contaminants on imported consignments was discussed. The Panel compared several definitions of soil and growing media and used, in this opinion, the current definition for growing media of the International Plant Protection Convention. In Council Directive 2000/29/EC, no specific definition of soil and growing media is provided but growing media are described in two different ways. From the soil and growing media and/or components thereof identified through extensive literature searches, the Panel distinguished eight groups of soil and growing media and assessed the probability of association of these groups with harmful organisms. A total of 207 scientific publications were reviewed by the Panel in order to identify and rate the effectiveness of options that could reduce the risk of entry of pests posed by the import of soil and growing media. A detailed description and evaluation of the requirements for soil and growing media laid down in current EU legislation on plant health and in a few other regions of the world was provided. The Panel found that the 'prohibition of import' is the only phytosanitary measure with a very high effectiveness and a low uncertainty. The effectiveness of the phytosanitary measures 'pest free production site" and "preparation of consignment' was rated as moderate to high with an uncertainty rated as medium to high.

Needs for editorial changes and comments were discussed by the Panel. The Working Group provided clarifications on: the distinction between the Panel's output and the results of the outsourced project on extensive literature searches to develop inventories of soil and growing media; the literature review performed by the working group to list the indicative soil and growing media and the associated pests, in addition to the results of the outsourced project.

The Panel adopted the scientific opinion on the risks to plant health posed by EU import of soil or growing media and is now published at http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/4132.htm.

10.2 Statement on the assessment of the risk posed to plant health in the EU territory by the intentional release of biological control agents of invasive alien plant species (EFSA-Q-2015-00341)

The draft statement was presented to the Panel. Classical biological control has been successfully used in various continents to manage many invasive alien plants originating from Europe, but this approach is still not widely adopted in Europe, despite its advantages (sustainable, effective, efficacious, good safety record) compared to chemical and manual control of weeds. Following the publication in April 2015 of the EFSA PLH Scientific Opinion on the risk posed to plant health in the EU by the intentional release of the bud-galling wasp *Trichilogaster acaciaelongifoliae* for the control of the invasive alien plant *Acacia longifolia*, the EFSA PLH Panel prepared a statement on the procedure to follow should similar requests be made in future. Ideally what is required for an EFSA Scientific Opinion on a risk assessment of a biological control agent release is: (i) host specificity tests of a plant list agreed in advance by an appropriate body; (ii) a risk assessment for plant health produced using a standardized

template for the whole of the EU or at least for an appropriate bio-climatic area within the EU; and (iii) consideration of benefits. This process could be facilitated by an expert working group that would be available to advise the applicant at regular intervals. The role of EFSA was considered as best suited to providing a peer review of a weed biological control agent risk assessment for the EU considering that the peer review of applications prepared by researchers specialized in a particular biological control agent is the procedure already adopted for biological control agents risk assessment in the countries that have greater experience with using exotic biological control agents of weeds. Following the appropriate international standards will help the releasing authority to manage the process and put in place appropriate safety procedures.

After discussion the statement was adopted and is now published at http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/4134.htm.

11 New Mandates

11.1 Request from the European Commission to complete the pest risk assessment (step 2) of 7 regulated pests, following the analysis and exchange of views with Member States of the pest categorisations delivered

This request regards the risk assessment and evaluation of risk reducing options for 7 organisms for which the Panel has already delivered a pest categorization, with deadline May 2016:

Ceratocystis platani (EFSA-Q-2015-00265)

Cryphonectria parasitica (EFSA-Q-2015-00266)

Diaporthe vaccinia (EFSA-Q-2015-00267)

Eotetranychus lewisi (EFSA-Q-2015-00270)

Ditylenchus destructor (EFSA-Q-2015-00268)

Radopholus similis (EFSA-Q-2015-00269)

Grapevine Flavescence dorée (EFSA-Q-2015-00271)

11.2 Requests from the European Commission regarding technical assistance on *Xylella fastidiosa* (EFSA-Q-2015-00206; EFSA-Q-2015-00103)

A new urgent request received from the European Commission for scientific and technical assistance (according to Art. 31 of Reg. 178/2002) was presented to the Panel, requesting EFSA to comment on the scientific and technical information provided by an Italian NGO on *Xylella fastidiosa*. It was explained to the participants that the requests for scientific and technical assistance according to Art. 31 of Reg. 178/2002 are dealt with by EFSA and delivered as EFSA Statements, EFSA Scientific reports or EFSA Technical reports, whereas the requests for scientific advice according to art. 29 of Reg. 178/2002 are addressed by the Panel and delivered as the Panel's Scientific Opinions or the Panel's Statements. The EFSA Statement, produced to reply to this question and published in April 2015 at http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/4082, was presented. Following the publication in January 2015 of the Scientific Opinion by EFSA's PLH Panel which assessed the risk to plant health posed by *Xylella fastidiosa* in the EU territory and evaluated risk reduction options, EFSA received a request for an urgent response to scientific and technical information provided by an Italian non-governmental organisation (NGO). The NGO claimed that *X. fastidiosa* is not the cause of olive tree decline in Lecce Province in Southern Italy, but only an endogenous element present in the trees that is not active or aggressive unless a

series of fungi infect the plants and create the right conditions for the development of *X. fastidiosa*. The NGO also claimed that treatment possibilities do exist to treat such fungi including pruning of infected plants and soil treatment. EFSA reviewed the documentation submitted and held a hearing with an expert on tracheomycotic fungi associated with olive decline in Apulia. EFSA concluded that currently there is no scientific evidence that tracheomycotic fungi are the primary causal agents of olive quick decline syndrome. EFSA recommended further research – based on pest biology and using replicated and well-designed field experiments – to provide further insights into the sustainable management of this complex problem.

Following a request from the European Commission, EFSA was also asked to provide urgent technical assistance in the field of plant health as regards the list of host plants of *X. fastidiosa* reported in Appendix B of the recently published EFSA PLH Panel (2015) Scientific Opinion on *X. fastidiosa*. A technical report was delivered where the list of host plants is categorised focusing on plant species traded as plants for planting and taking into account available data and information on the trade and cultivation of host plants and on the infection with *X. fastidiosa*. Based on this categorization, a list of the host plants of *X. fastidiosa* which were both (1) naturally infected and (2) confirmed by at least two different testing methods was provided, together with an indication when experimental vector transmission had been confirmed by two testing methods. An electronic dataset was published on 20 March 2015 together with the scientific report (http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/doc/4061.pdf), providing a searchable list of host plant species for this pathogen. It is planned to update this database periodically with new reports of host plants from literature.

The Panel reviewed the past and ongoing work on the emerging plant health risk caused by *X. fastidiosa* and discussed in detail how the Panel could contribute in the future with its scientific advice on the risk and control of this pathogen. The need was expressed to hold a meeting soon with European scientists to discuss knowledge gaps and identify priorities for research on the European outbreaks[5]. Among the topics discussed were: modelling spread and impact on the reported hosts across Europe; time needed to conduct research to fulfill Koch postulates for such pathogens versus the timely reaction to the outbreak, possible influence of cropping practices in olive orchards on vector populations and pathogen spread, consideration of mechanisms of human assisted spread in contingency plans, the need to understand better the building up of bacteria populations and the link between the density of population and symptom expression, opportunity to develop EU host maps, the need to map the ongoing research activities by questionnaire and/or meetings with scientists/stakeholders.

12 Feedback from the Scientific Committee/the Scientific Panel, EFSA, the European Commission

12.1 Scientific Committee and/or other Scientific Panel(s)

An update was provided by the Panel Chair on the activities of the EFSA Scientific Committee and its working groups.

12.2 PLH Panel Working Groups

An update was provided on the activities of the PLH Panel Working Group on Methods. The aim of this Working Group is to develop fit for purpose risk assessment methodologies and process to update EU listing of regulated plant pests (EFSA-Q-2014-00351).

In the first instance, a template was developed for the step 1, pest categorization, of the risk assessment process, which was applied in 2014 for 40 plant pests. Following a tiered approach, only the pests that fulfilled the ISPM 11 criteria of potential quarantine pests in step 1 would then undergo the following step 2 – pest risk assessment (see also item 11.1 above).The proposal for a more quantitative approach for step 2 – pest risk assessment and

[5] The Workshop on "*Xylella fastidiosa*: knowledge gaps and research priorities for the EU" was held in Bruxelles on 12-13 November 2015 (http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/151112a)

evaluation of risk reduction options – was presented and discussed. As next steps, it was proposed to work further on the main document and the template to be presented at the PLH Panel plenary meeting in July 2015.

12.3 EFSA including its Working Groups/ Task Forces

An update was provided by EFSA on the ongoing EFSA outsourced projects in plant health.

12.4 European Commission

Not applicable

13 Other scientific topics for information and/or discussion

14 Questions from and answers to Observers (In application of the guidelines for Observers)

The observers did not ask specific questions to the Panel in this Questions and Answers agenda item. They expressed their satisfaction with the opportunity to attend the plenary meeting and for receiving clarifications when needed during the discussion of the specific scientific items.

15 Any Other Business

This plenary meeting was the last meeting of the EFSA Scientific Panel on Plant health for the three years mandate 2012-2015. The inaugural plenary meeting of the new PLH Panel for the forthcoming three years period 2015-2018 will be held at EFSA in Parma (IT) on 1st July 2015. The Chair of the Panel and EFSA thanked the PLH Panel members for their commitment over the last three years to serve the European Community in providing high value and timely scientific advice on plant health issues. Particular thanks were given by the Panel and by EFSA to Richard Baker, Olia Evtimova Karadjova, Christer Sven Magnusson, Charles Manceau, David Makowski, Jan Schans, Gritta Schrader and Irene Vloutoglou, who served in the EFSA PLH Panel for many years. The Panel Chair and EFSA thanked the Belgian authorities AFSCA-FAVV and FPS for hosting the meeting and the observers for their participation and interest in EFSA work.

Annex I

Interests and actions resulting from the Oral Declarations of Interest done at the beginning of the meeting

With regard to this meeting Prof. Wopke van der Werf declared the following interest: **PARTICIPATION TO THE EFSA FUNDED PROCUREMENT PROJECT CT/EFSA/PLH/2011/04 - LOT 2 - NON-EDIBLE PLANTS OR PLANT PRODUCTS, DISCUSSED IN ITEM 9 OF THE AGENDA OF THIS PLENARY MEETING.** . In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence and Scientific Decision-Making Processes[6] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Declarations of Interest[7], and taking into account the specific matters discussed at the meeting in question, the interest above was deemed to represent a Conflict of Interest.

This results in exclusion of the expert from any discussion, voting or other processing of item 9 by the concerned scientific group.

[6] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/independencepolicy.pdf
[7] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/independencerules2014.pdf