



# SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS

## MINUTES OF THE 139<sup>th</sup> PLENARY MEETING

**Held on 8-9 July 2020, web-conference  
(Agreed on 23 July 2020)**

### Participants

#### ■ Panel Members:

Ana Allende, Avelino Alvarez-Ordóñez, Declan Bolton, Sara Bover-Cid, Marianne Chemaly, Robert Davies, Alessandra De Cesare, Lieve Herman, Friederike Hilbert, Konstantinos Koutsoumanis, Roland Lindqvist, Maarten Nauta, Giuseppe Ru, Luisa Peixe, Marion Simmons, Panagiotis Skandamis, Elisabetta Suffredini

#### ■ Hearing Experts<sup>1</sup>:

Not applicable

#### ■ European Commission (EC) and/or Member States representatives:

Kris De Smet (EC, DG Health and Food Safety, Unit G4; for items 6.2, 6.3 and 7.1)

Patricia Herrero Sancho (EC, DG Health and Food Safety, Unit G4; for items 6.5 and 7.1)

Halvard Kvamsdal, Athanasios Raikos (EC, DG Health and Food Safety, Unit E1; for item 6.2)

Marina Marini (EC, DG Health and Food Safety, Unit D1)

#### ■ EFSA:

##### ■ BIOCONTAM Unit:

Sean Ashe, Katrin Bote, Maria Teresa da Silva Felício, Beatriz Guerra, Michaela Hemen, Ernesto Liébana, Winy Messens, Angel Ortiz-Peláez, Valentina Rizzi, Pietro Stella

##### ■ FIP Unit:

Carla Martino (for part of item 10)

##### ■ SCER Unit:

Ana Afonso, Raquel Garcia-Matas, Georgia Gkrintzali (for item 9.3), Daniela Maurici (for part of item 10)

##### ■ AHAW Panel:

Julio Alvarez, AHAW Panel member (for item 6.3)

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<sup>1</sup> As defined in Article 17 of the Decision of the Executive Director concerning the selection of members of the Scientific Committee, the Scientific Panels, and the selection of external experts to assist EFSA with its scientific work:  
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/expertselection.pdf>.



■ **Observers:**

Not applicable

## 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

## 2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

## 3. Declarations of Interest

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence<sup>2</sup> and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management<sup>3</sup>, EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Panel members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

## 4. Agreement of the minutes of the 138<sup>th</sup> Plenary meeting held on 3-4 June 2020, web-conference

The minutes of the 138<sup>th</sup> Plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 18 June 2020.

## 5. Scientific outputs submitted for possible adoption or endorsement

### 5.1. Application for the evaluation of the alternative method ECN tunnel composting<sup>4</sup>

The WG chair presented the draft opinion explaining how all comments received from the panel members during the preceding week had been dealt with. Some minor changes were made to the phraseology used in the conclusions of the document. Subsequent to a brief discussion it was decided that it was inappropriate for the opinion to contain a section containing recommendations in relation to the issue at hand. It was therefore decided to remove the recommendations section from the document, as well as, in general, for all opinions assessing applications. The opinion was presented to the panel and was duly adopted.

## 6. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion

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<sup>4</sup> <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2019-00583>



### **6.1. Scientific opinion on potential BSE risk posed by the use of ruminant collagen and gelatine in feed for non-ruminants farmed animals<sup>5</sup>**

The WG Chair presented the draft opinion for thorough reading. Firstly, the chair thanked the subgroup of Panel members that reviewed the probabilistic model, the basis to answer the ToRs after the previous Plenary and the comments received by other members as well. Some recommendations and corrections had been already actioned in the version presented during the Plenary. The new and final version of the model was well received by the Panel focusing on the uncertainties of the processes modelled. The layout and contents of the draft opinion were not reviewed because they had been thoroughly commented by the internal reviewers and other members of the Panel. The chair focused on the answers to the assessment questions and the answers to the ToRs. The Panel recommended to make additional explanations about the concept of the CoID50 in the context of the outputs of the model and the final risk estimation, the worst case scenario and the separation between outputs of the model and qualitative conclusions of the working group not based on the model. The sixth and last meeting has not been fixed yet, in such meeting the final revision of the opinion will be done prior to the submission for possible adoption to the Panel during the September plenary.

### **6.2. Scientific opinions providing guidance on date marking and related food information<sup>6</sup>**

The WG Chair updated the Panel on the progress of work. The WG Chair presented the ToRs as well as the approaches and concluding remarks proposed by the WG to answer these and to do the uncertainty analysis. The Panel and the EC agreed with these approaches. The most important comments received from the Panel in written on the Part 1 Date Marking draft opinion were discussed to agree, when needed, on the approach that will be used by the WG to address these. The decision tree of the Part 1 opinion proposed to assist the choice between 'use by' and 'best before' dates was carefully presented and discussed. The Panel agreed with using a decision tree to answer ToR1d and gave important suggestions to simplify it. In particular suggestions were made to review Q6 and Q7 and these will be discussed at the next WG web meeting on 27 August. The Panel was informed that an internal meeting with EFSA's contractor from Communications will take place on 13 July to discuss and request a graphical improvement of the decision tree in the DM Part 1 as well as in the FI Part 2 draft opinions. The Panel asked for further clarification for not considering as a main hazard to be addressed in relation to decisions on use by date, the mycotoxin production due to growth of moulds during the shelf-life of pre-packaged temperature controlled foods. Although this point had been previously discussed with the EC/WG/Panel in the beginning of this mandate when clarifying the ToRs, the Panel suggested to clarify the text of the draft opinion on this topic. EFSA CONTAM Team will be also consulted on this topic. The EC asked to: (i) ensure that the following food categories are carefully considered when addressing ToR1b: dairy products, fruit juices, chilled meat and chilled fish; and (ii) only focus under ToR2c on providing guidance on the indicative limits for marketing or donation of foods past the best before date and therefore consider shortening the remaining information provided on general guidance related to marketing or donation of these foods. The deadline for adoption of the first opinion (ToRs 1 and 2) is October 2020. The Food Information Part 2 draft opinion wasn't discussed during this plenary meeting, as the working group is still working on the tasks allocated to them in this opinion and the deadline for adoption of this second opinion (ToRs 3 and 4) is March 2021.

<sup>5</sup> <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2019-00436>

<sup>6</sup> <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2019-00438> and <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2019-00439>



### **6.3. Scientific opinion on the evaluation of public and animal health risks in case of a delayed *post-mortem* inspection in ungulates<sup>7</sup>**

The last WG meeting on 22-24 June focussed on assessing and, if possible, quantifying the uncertainty about the estimated reduction in sensitivity of detecting *Salmonella*, *Trichinella*, and TSEs during *post-mortem* inspection after a 24-hour and 72-hour delay. The input variables for the model estimating the reduction in *Salmonella* detection were discussed in detail and the variables were agreed. Three variables required an expert knowledge elicitation, i.e. initial average *Salmonella* concentration on carcasses before chilling, the minimum number of *Salmonella* to produce a positive test after chilled storage and the effect of chilled storage on the viability of *Salmonella* and its ability to produce a positive test result. The overall uncertainties were discussed and included in the conclusions. A more detailed description of the Expert Knowledge Elicitation (EKE) process and results will be added to the draft opinion. The next WG meeting is planned for 25 August 2020. The CONTAM Panel endorsed its section on 7 July, while endorsement of their respective sections by AHAW and BIOHAZ Panel is foreseen for September/October 2020. The deadline for adoption of the opinion is December 2020.

### **6.4. Scientific opinion on specific maximum levels of cross-contamination for 24 antimicrobial active substances in non-target feed<sup>8</sup>**

The WG chair updated the Panel about the outcome of the last WG meeting hold on 26 June 2020 by web-conference. The Opinion had been presented to the EMA CVMP in their meeting in June (16-18). Comments collected from CVMP were discussed in the WG and subsequently by the Panel in the BIOHAZ Plenary meeting. The BIOHAZ Panel reviewed and discussed the updated scientific opinion. A public consultation on the methodology, including one example of its application, will be launched by EFSA in the last quarter of the year, after endorsement by the BIOHAZ Panel. The next meeting of the sub-WG-AMR will be web-conference on 25 August. The deadline for adoption of the opinion(s) is 30 September 2021.

### **6.5. Scientific opinion on the use of the so-called “superchilling” technique for the transport of fresh fishery products<sup>9</sup>**

The WG chair updated the Panel about the outcome of the last WG meeting on 26 June 2020 by web-conference. The hearing expert Mr Mike Turenhout (Dutch Fish Importers Association) gave an overview of superchilling of fish in general and its benefits and presented the study in the report “Superchilling Fish Products - Nile perch (*Lates niloticus*). The hearing experts Mr Vincenzo Di Leva and Mr Antonio Solimeo (FIORITAL) provided an overview of the superchilling technique used in the Nile perch value chain. For ToR 1, the first results of the heat balance model were presented. It calculates under which initial configurations the two compared conditions (conventionally chilled versus superchilled fresh fishery products; or CFFP versus SFFP) are equivalent in their capability to keep the fish temperature under control, when exposed to the same external storage/transport conditions. If the equivalence is met, the SFFP temperatures will be lower than those of CFFP. The use of a tool was proposed and agreed with the panel, based on the conservative heat transfer balance model, for the food business operators to calculate such equivalences as part of ‘safety-by-design’. Experimental data will be used to supplement the heat balance model. For ToR 2, the markers will be categorized into biochemical methods (incl. the Hydroxyacyl-coenzyme A dehydrogenase (HADH) enzymatic test) and physicochemical methods. Tables were presented to summarize the various studies.

<sup>7</sup> <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2019-00124>

<sup>8</sup> <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2019-00221>

<sup>9</sup> <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2019-00437>



The next WG meeting will take place on 30 July 2020. The deadline for adoption is December 2020.

**6.6. Statement on the update of the list of QPS-recommended biological agents intentionally added to food or feed as notified to EFSA. 13: Suitability of taxonomic units notified to EFSA until September 2020<sup>10</sup>**

The WG chair informed the panel that the next Extensive Literature Search (ELS) is starting. The taxonomic units searched in groups during ELS will be described independently. Since April, new taxonomic units were notified and the following three are included for QPS assessment: *Aureobasidium pullulans*, *Bacillus circulans* and *Methylobacterium extorquens*. The Statement Part 13 will be presented to the BIOHAZ Panel for possible adoption in December 2020.

**6.7. Scientific opinion on the role played by the environment in the emergence and spread of antimicrobial resistance through the food chain<sup>11</sup>**

The WG chair updated the Panel about the outcome of the last WG meeting hold on 7 July 2020 by web-conference. For the purpose of this mandate, food-producing environments are defined as all environments where food of animal or non-animal origin is produced or processed, at both primary level (e.g. animal farms, fruits and vegetables cultivation fields etc.) and post-harvest level (e.g. slaughterhouses, processing plants etc.). The WG meeting focused on the assessment done so far for the “resistance bacteria and genetic determinants identified in these food-producing environments, and their relative importance for contaminating food through the routes identified in the draft opinion” for the three food production sectors identified: terrestrial animals, plants (vegetables, fruits, etc.) and aquaculture. The assessment of the ranking of importance of the resistance bacteria/genetic determinants linked to the different sources identified, will be done in a qualitative way. For some of the sectors, the WG is facing the lack of data to support the source attribution. The deadline for the adoption of the opinion is December 2020.

**6.8. Scientific opinion on the update of the list of QPS-recommended biological agents intentionally added to food or feed as notified to EFSA<sup>12</sup>**

The WG chair informed the panel that the draft opinion will include a description on the differentiation between yeasts and filamentous fungi and a brief discussion on microbiological safety in relation to opportunistic infections. The deadline for the next QPS opinion is December 2022.

**6.9. Scientific opinion on the efficacy and safety of high pressure processing of food<sup>13</sup>**

The EFSA secretariat gave an update on the further administrative steps taken. The *ad hoc* WG has been established for this mandate (pending approval of one declaration of interests). The first WG meeting will be held on 15-16 September 2020. The deadline for adoption is 31 January 2022.

**6.10. Scientific opinion on the capacity of certain specific processing transformation methods of animal by-products used in the production of**

<sup>10</sup> <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2020-00078>

<sup>11</sup> <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2019-00343>

<sup>12</sup> <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2020-00083>

<sup>13</sup> <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2020-00380>



## **organic fertilisers and soil improvers in view of determining the endpoints in the manufacturing chain of certain derived products<sup>14</sup>**

The WG Chair reported to the Panel that the *ad hoc* WG responsible for drafting this scientific opinion is currently being set up. The deadline for adoption of the opinion is 31 October 2021.

## **7. New Mandates**

### **7.1. Request for a scientific opinion on the microbiological safety of aged meat**

The EFSA secretariat presented to the Panel the background and terms of reference of this mandate, received on 11 June 2020. A discussion was held to clarify those terms of reference. An *ad hoc* WG which will be established for this mandate. The WG chair will be nominated at one of the next plenary meetings as the work will be initiated later. The deadline for adoption of this opinion is 31 December 2022.

## **8. Feedback from the Scientific Committee/Scientific Panels, EFSA, the European Commission**

### **8.1. Scientific Committee**

The 99<sup>th</sup> Plenary meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC) took place on 23-24 June 2020. The BIOHAZ Chair reported that no issues of specific relevance for the BIOHAZ Panel were discussed at the meeting. For further details refer to the minutes of the SC Plenary meeting<sup>15</sup>.

### **8.2. European Commission**

European Commission reminded the BIOHAZ Panel about the recent publication at EU level of the Communication on “*A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system*”.

## **9. Other scientific topics for information and/or discussion**

### **9.1. Implementation of the guidance on uncertainty analysis in scientific assessments**

The BIOHAZ Panel Chair reported to the Panel that further discussions, and possibly a mandate, will be held in the SC and its EFSA cross cutting Working Group on Uncertainty<sup>16</sup> in relation to the development of guidance on simplified procedures for expert knowledge elicitations (EKE) / expert consensus. The BIOHAZ Panel briefly discussed the possibility that in the future the Panel would be more independent in carrying out EKEs within its working groups.

### **9.2. Update on the EMA expert group on the designation of antimicrobials or groups of antimicrobials reserved for treatment of certain infections in humans**

<sup>14</sup> <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2020-00401>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/99th-plenary-meeting-scientific-committee-open-observers>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/wqs/cross-cutting-science/wg-uncertainty.pdf>



BIOHAZ Panel member Luisa Peixe, who is representing EFSA in the EMA expert group, briefly reported the progress made in the EMA expert group meetings and the plan for future meetings, which has been impacted by the COVID-19 emergency with some delays.

### **9.3. Topics of scientific concern in the area of biological hazards and BIOHAZ self-tasks**

EFSA Secretariat (Unit on Scientific Committee and Emerging Risks – SCER) presented to the Panel the procedure to identify emerging risks, as well as examples of biological hazard-related issues arising from discussions in EFSA Emerging Risks Exchange Network (EREN) and Stakeholder Discussion Group on Emerging Risks (StaDG-ER). It was agreed that SCER unit will give regular updates to the Panel (e.g. twice/year) on relevant topics arising from SCER Networks and that the Panel would provide views and additional information, if available, on those topics. BIOHAZ Secretariat would also update SCER on the BIOHAZ Panel discussions on relevant topics for possible self-tasks.

### **9.4. FAO/WHO Draft Guidance of Microbiological Risk Assessment for Food**

The Panel collected comments to the ongoing public consultation from FAO/WHO on a draft guidance of microbiological risk assessment for food. The Panel agreed to provide collective feedback to the consultation.

## **10. Any other business**

The BIOHAZ Panel endorsed the revised version of the scientific opinion on a “*Revision of the joint AFC/BIOHAZ guidance document on the submission of data for the evaluation of the safety and efficacy of substances for the removal of microbial surface contamination of foods of animal origin intended for human consumption*”<sup>17</sup>, adopted in 2010. The revision will update the administrative procedures for the submission of applications due to the new provisions of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 (‘GFL Regulation’), as amended by Regulation (EU) 2019/1381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain.

Preliminary dates for 2021 BIOHAZ Plenary meetings were agreed by Panel.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/1544>