



SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS

MINUTES OF THE 137th PLENARY MEETING

**Held on 4 May 2020, web-conference
(Agreed on 15 May 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 Experts¹:**

Not applicable

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

No attendees

■ **EFSA:**

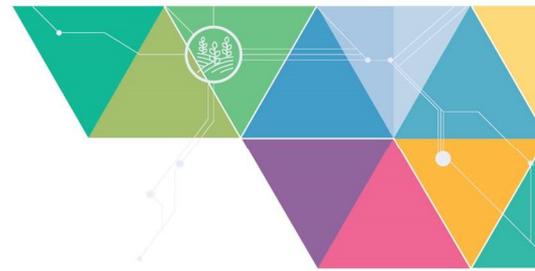
■ **BIOCONTAM Unit:**

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

■ **Observers:**

Not applicable

¹ 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>.



1. Welcome and apologies for absence

No apologies were received. This meeting, originally scheduled as a physical meeting, was converted into a teleconference to avoid traveling to EFSA in line with the measures established to reduce the risk of coronavirus infection.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes. Given the short delay between the 136th and 137th Plenary meetings, the minutes of the 136th Plenary meeting are still in preparation and will be agreed by written procedure.

3. Declarations of Interest

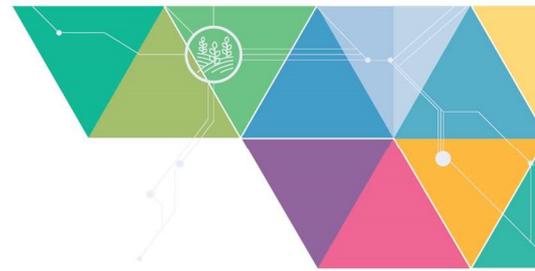
In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence² and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management³, EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Panel members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in 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. Implementation of the guidance on uncertainty analysis in scientific assessments

The Panel discussed the state of play concerning the implementation of EFSA uncertainty guidance within BIOHAZ scientific opinions, focusing especially on the lessons learnt from recent experiences with the opinions on *Campylobacter* in broilers, *Listeria monocytogenes* in frozen fruit, vegetables and herbs and the use of tubs for transporting and storing fresh fishery products. The Panel also reflected on future implementation of the uncertainty guidance, in particular with regard to two topics: i) use of expert judgement, including expert knowledge elicitations (EKEs), to assess, quantify and express the impact of overall uncertainty in conclusions, ii) use of uncertainty tables in opinions to report uncertainties and their impact on the answer to terms of reference.

The Panel agreed that in principle simpler approaches can be applied to qualitative assessments, where uncertainties can be reported in uncertainty tables, and their overall impact reflected in conclusions after discussion and consensus in the WG/Panel, if possible using probabilities, if not qualitatively with a narrative text (e.g. using descriptive methods and ordinal scales).

For quantitative assessments, the Panel agreed that the use of EKEs (formal or semi-formal) to assess and quantify the impact of overall uncertainty in conclusions is not always needed, and should be reserved for specific situations upon proposal of the WG, and subject to availability of expertise in the WG and resources. Criteria for when performing EKEs are to be discussed further within the Panel. The Panel proposed that within the WG, specific experts will be tasked to propose the methodology to be followed for the uncertainty analysis and to draft the assessment of the impact of overall uncertainty on conclusions. This would be finalised after discussion within the WG



and presented to the Panel. If the use of EKEs would be needed, specific support may be requested to the EFSA cross-cutting WG on Uncertainty and/or AMU unit.

It was agreed that uncertainty tables are a useful tool to report uncertainties in opinions. A separate table is to be drafted for each assessment done in the opinion. Tables should include three columns, indicating the uncertainties, their nature/causes and their impact on the final outcome of the assessment. Whenever possible, the direction of the impact is to be expressed, without indication of its magnitude. Adaptations to specific assessments may be needed and would be agreed with the Panel on a case-by-case basis. Preparation of the uncertainty tables would be tasked to experts in preparation to meetings, and time devoted to their discussion in meetings will be allocated in advance.

The Panel Chair will report back the discussions of the BIOHAZ Panel to the EFSA cross-cutting WG on Uncertainty. He will report about added values and challenges encountered in implementing the guidance, ask feedback and possible advice with regards to the points discussed above, and clarify how support would be provided in case the need for EKEs are identified.

The Panel Chair stressed the fact that this was a first discussion and reflection with the Panel after recent experiences of the implementation of the uncertainty analysis in BIOHAZ, and that this item will remain on the agenda of BIOHAZ Plenary meetings for further discussion and improvement.

5. Any other business

No additional topics were discussed.