



Brussels, 6th July 2004

**MINUTES OF THE 7th PLENARY MEETING OF
THE SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS
Held in Dublin on 2nd and 3rd June 2004**

AGENDA:

1. Welcome, apologies for absence
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Declaration of interest
4. Matters arising from previous plenary meeting
5. Discussion and possible adoption of following opinions
 - a. Chronic Wasting Diseases
 - b. Biodiesel process as method for safe disposal of Animal By-Products of category 1
6. Discussion on the following draft opinions:
 - a. Antimicrobials to control *Salmonella*
 - b. Vaccines to control *Salmonella*
7. Progress reports of the following draft opinions
 - a. *Campylobacter* in animals and foodstuffs
 - b. Microbiological risks in infant foods
 - c. *Bacillus* in foodstuffs
 - d. *Clostridium* in foodstuffs
 - e. Revision of meat inspection for beef
 - f. Freezing methods for *Trichinella* and *Cysticercus*
 - g. Risk Assessment of *Trichinella*
 - h. Risk Assessment of *Cysticercus* in calves
 - i. Stunning of cattle and risk of BSE.
 - j. Quantitative Risk Assessment for residual BSE risk.
 - k. Animal By-products
 - i. Safety of vis-à-vis biological risk including TSE's of biogas and compost treatment standards of ABP. (update of the request).
8. New requests to EFSA
 - a. Organization of Working Groups
9. Self-tasking issues: Discussion on data needs for QMRA
10. Discussion on Emerging Risks (EMRISK)
11. Information and discussion of the report on the interface between risk assessment and risk management
12. Feed-back by the Chairman on subjects discussed in the SC of interest to the Panel
13. Feed-back from Panel members attending WG from other panels
14. AOB
15. Closure of the meeting

**MINUTES OF THE 7th PLENARY MEETING OF
THE SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS**
Held in Dublin on 2nd and 3rd June 2004

PARTICIPANTS

Panel Members:

Herbert Budka, Sava Buncic, Pierre Colin, John D. Collins, Christian Ducrot, James Hope, Mac Johnston, Günter Klein, Hilde Kruse, Ernst Lücker, Simone Magnino, Riitta Liisa Maijala, Antonio Martínez López, Christophe Nguyen-The, Birgit Noerrung, Servé Notermans, Maurice Pensaert, Terence Roberts Ivar Vågsholm, Emmanuel Vanopdenbosch

Apologies

George-John Nychas

EFSA

Bart Goossens, Marta Hugas, Pia Mäkela, Shamila Nair, (Scientific Staff)
Angela Cohen (Administrative staff)

Commission

Taina Sateri (DG Health and Consumer Protection)

1. WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everybody. Mr Alan Reilly, acting Chief Executive of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland welcomed the Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards at the meeting hosted by the FSAI.

Apologies were sent by Prof G-J. Nychas.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted. A new item was added on the agenda relating to a new mandate received from the Commission (COM) on Animal-by-Products (ABP) *amending an earlier received mandate*.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made. The chair reminded the panel members to sign the annual declaration of interest and confidentiality and to give these to the secretariat.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS PLENARY MEETINGS

The Panel noted the adoption of the minutes of the previous plenary meeting by written procedure. The chair briefly summarized the main outcome from the previous plenary meeting. The secretariat informed the panel that a new structure has now been established regarding the placement of the reports on TSE issues outside the responsibility of the BIOHAZ Panel.

The request for clarification on the question of “Washing of Eggs” was sent to the Commission. EFSA is awaiting the reply.

5. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ADOPTION OF THE FOLLOWING OPINIONS

5.1. Chronic Wasting Disease

The Working group assessment and the opinion for this mandate were presented. After a short discussion and some suggested changes, the opinion was adopted.

5.2. Request on Biodiesel process for Category 1 Animal By Products

The Working group assessment and the opinion for this mandate were presented. After a short discussion and some suggested changes, the opinion was adopted.

6. DISCUSSION ON DRAFT OPINIONS

6.1. Antimicrobials to control *Salmonella*

The Chairman of the working group briefed the panel on the progress made. The draft document including the draft conclusions were tabled and discussed. The draft opinion was not as yet ready for adoption.

Some discussion took place on the antimicrobial resistance issues. Generally, information on (i) the usefulness of antimicrobials in poultry pyramid production and (ii) whether vaccine strains develop antibiotic resistance appears to be lacking. Discussion took place on how far the risk assessment should go so as to avoid interfering with risk management. It was agreed to list advantages and disadvantages of antimicrobial usage without addressing economic implications.

6.2. Vaccines to control *Salmonella*

The Chairman of the working group briefed the panel on the progress made and the draft document including the draft conclusions were tabled and discussed. The draft opinion was not as yet ready for adoption.

The lack of clear scientific evidence to show that contamination in eggs decreases by vaccination, due *inter alia* to the high numbers of samples that needed to be analysed, was discussed.

In view of the common background and framework for both opinions (6.1 and 6.2), the Panel and the chairs of the working groups decided to produce a common background report which is harmonised. The report will include a common introduction to avoid repetition, followed by two separate chapters, one on antimicrobials and the other one on vaccines. The chairs and rapporteurs will put together this background report which will then serve both opinions.

From the common report, two opinions will be extracted which will address the terms of references and will include with conclusions and recommendations. The opinions will be tabled at the next plenary for further discussion and possible adoption.

Some discussion took place on the scope of both questions, it was agreed that the Terms of Reference (ToR) will be answered in the context of Public Health aspects and that this will be stated at the beginning of the report and the two Opinions.

7. PROGRESS REPORTS OF THE FOLLOWING DRAFT OPINIONS

7.1. *Campylobacter* in animals and foodstuffs

The 3rd Working Group (WG) meeting is scheduled for early July. The chair of the WG reported to the Panel that a draft opinion will be presented for discussion at the next plenary meeting. Distribution to the Panel members one week earlier to the meeting is planned.

7.2. Microbiological risks in infant foods

The last WG meeting took place at the end of May. The report is progressing satisfactorily; several documents published elsewhere are to be taken into account namely, WHO/FAO, CODEX etc. During the WG meeting some discussion took place on the recent definitions agreed in the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene (CCFH) on Food Safety Objectives, Performance Objectives and Performance Criterion. The draft opinion and report will be tabled for discussion at the next plenary meeting in July.

7.3. *Bacillus* in foodstuffs

After the last WG meeting, additional contributions were submitted to the secretariat. The next meeting is scheduled for the 30th of June. A first draft for discussion will be tabled for the September plenary.

7.4. *Clostridium* in foodstuffs

No meetings had been scheduled since the last plenary meeting. New contributions are being compiled for inclusion in the draft report. It is intended to present a first draft at the September plenary for discussion. The next WG meeting is scheduled for mid August.

7.5. Revision of meat inspection for Beef

The Panel was briefed on the outcome of the last meeting. The definition for “beef” and integrated systems specifically for beef were discussed. The “age limit” will be clarified by the WG. It was agreed that the report will not focus on aspects of the reproductive system. The next meeting will be held in August.

7.6. Freezing methods for *Trichinella* and *Cysticercus*

The acting chair briefed the panel on the outcome of the first meeting. Some data gaps were identified e.g. species and cold resistance. The opinion will focus on swine and bovines and not carnivores. An additional expert on cysticercosis was contacted and will participate in future WG meetings. The next meeting will be held in mid August. It is intended to have a first draft for discussion and possible adoption at the September plenary meeting in order to meet the September deadline.

7.7. Risk Assessment of *Cysticercus* in calves

The report is still at an early stage. The next WG meeting will be held at the beginning of September.

7.8. Risk Assessment of *Trichinella*

The chair reported that the WG has been set up; the first meeting is foreseen for mid June. The WG will focus on previous opinions. However, many questions still need to be addressed e.g. whether a change in *Trichinella* detection methods will impact on human health and, if so, in what way. An expert reported that the Commission (DG SANCO) already has a WG on the control of *Trichinella* and there were several questions regarding the degree of similarity of both mandates. The representative of the Interface Unit will identify the Terms of Reference of the DG SANCO mandate and will report back to the secretariat.

The WG will focus on the importance of exposure, on how to detect increases in exposure and will build on previous reports. The panel will not produce any Risk Assessment model but it will review published models.

7.9. Quantitative Assessment of the residual BSE risk

The Chairman of the working group briefed the panel on the follow up on the report containing the assumptions for the risk calculations. This report has been received by COM and was forwarded to Den Norske Veritas (DNV) to complete the calculations. DNV has in principle three months to finalize the calculations; it is anticipated that the calculations will be finalized earlier and therefore the planned WG meeting of 9th July is maintained for the time being. At this meeting of the WG the calculations as made by DNV will be discussed and a final report will be prepared containing both the assumptions and the calculations. Following this the work on the update of a number of Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) opinions will be initiated, i.e. SSC opinions on safety (in terms of residual BSE risk) of tallow, gelatine and di and tri calcium phosphate. This review is likely to start after the summer.

7.10. Working Group on Stunning and the risk for dissemination of nervous tissues in the blood and BSE risk

A Working group for this mandate was created and met for the first time on May 5th 2004. The chairman of the WG briefed the panel. A general discussion was held on the ToR as specified by COM. The outline of the draft report was prepared and different tasks distributed among members. The WG will be widened following the initial discussions in order to include additional experts in the field. The next meetings of this WG are scheduled for 14th June and 13th September 2004.

7.11. **Animal by-products**

Regarding the mandate concerning safety *vis-à-vis* biological risk, including TSEs, of biogas and compost treatment standards of Animal By-Products, an update of this mandate was received from COM. The renewed mandate does no longer includes reference to the potential contamination by TSEs in ABP of Category 2 and Category 3.

8. NEW REQUESTS TO EFSA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORKING GROUPS

No new requests were submitted to EFSA and assigned to the BIOHAZ Panel.

9. SELF-TASKING ISSUES, DISCUSSION ON DATA NEEDS FOR QMRA.

A draft paper for discussion on data needs for Quantitative Microbiological Risk Assessment (QMRA) was presented. As the panel is at present working to full capacity, there is a need to identify new resources to deal with additional tasks. It was hoped that these new resources could probably come from the Scientific Expert Services in EFSA.

Discussion centred upon the different parts of QMRA. Hazard identification and characterization are areas where the Panel could focus more in the future e.g. to include vulnerable groups. Several suggestions were discussed and one possibility could be to produce an annual report on emerging issues on Biological Hazards in order to direct the attention of the European Union (EU) to these risks.

The Panel agreed that it does not have the resources necessary to produce QMRA at present. However, the Panel could act as an editorial board to review risks assessments produced elsewhere.

The Panel agreed to continue discussion on the item in the next plenary meeting after a new draft, with comments, is distributed. Conclusions, recommendations and priorities will be included in the new draft. After adoption, the paper will be submitted to the Scientific Committee.

10. DISCUSSION ON EMERGING RISKS (EMRISK)

The Panel discussed their role in identifying risks. Definitions for “risks” are needed. Discussion took place on whether several agents could be regarded as emerging risks or not, and on the scope of the risks. There was a general agreement that the Panel should not be limited to issues involving food borne zoonoses but should also deal with any other microbiological hazards related to food.

In so far as the panel is concerned, the objective is to identify and deal with microbial agents that have not been a matter of public health concern in Europe in the past and which may become so in the future. The novelty is the extent of exposure in the enlarged Europe. Emerging risks could include many such agents, some of which may not have been identified or characterised previously, and may reflect climate change, social change, crowding, changes in eating habits and globalization of food trade, etc. Bioterrorism is also important in relation to food safety in the enlarged EU, especially as it may involve the zoonoses. The

challenges facing the panel were discussed. In particular, emerging risks related to new and emerging technologies in food production, processing and preservation, many of which had not yet been validated as “a safe process”, were given special mention.

11. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE REPORT ON THE INTERFACE BETWEEN RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Some discussion took place on the conclusions and recommendation of the report, as tabled. It was agreed to revisit the subject at the next plenary meeting in order to prepare several statements reflecting the Panel views, for the information of the Scientific Committee.

12. FEED-BACK BY THE CHAIRMAN ON SUBJECTS DISCUSSED IN THE SC OF INTEREST TO THE PANEL

The chair gave some feedback on items of interest and discussed during the 7th plenary of the Scientific committee:

The time frames for Scientific Opinions with clear public health concerns are to be given priority over other requests for Opinions.

The Scientific Committee has set up a WG on “benchmark doses”. This WG will deal more with chemicals; however, members of the Biohazards panel may be invited to participate in a meeting on this topic later this year.

13. FEED-BACK FROM PANEL MEMBERS ATTENDING WG FROM OTHER PANELS

The member of the Panel assisting the Exposure Assessment Working Group briefed the panel on the outcome of the last meeting. Discussion then took place on whether or not there is a need for the panel to self-task work on exposure assessment, taking into account the particular facets of microbiological exposure assessment. The panel acknowledged that this issue in general is being addressed by the Scientific Committee. However the member of the WG stated that there is a need for assistance from other panel members in order to identify the specific data needs and data collection systems relevant to the topic. The Panel agreed to provide some initial data on the uncertainties.

The Panel member enrolled in the Animal Health and Animal Welfare (AHAW) Working Group on laying hens briefed the Panel on the issue. The WG is looking at microbiological hazards in egg production and on egg safety/quality as a function of the incubation systems and types of cages used. The final draft is intended to be presented to the AHAW panel for discussion by the end of June.

Feed back was provided on the ongoing work of the Geographical BSE Risk (GBR) expert group, in which two Panel members are involved.

Regarding the Scientific Committee’s WG on food supplements including products of vegetable origin, which is looking at chemicals and mycotoxin contaminants, it was agreed to nominate a member of the panel to this WG, as microbiological agents of concern may also be associated with such products.

14. AOB

The Panel appointed two members to take part in the Working Groups dealing with the production of the annual European report on Zoonoses.

The secretariat tabled the new definitions agreed at the CCFH on Food Safety Objectives (FSO), Performance Objectives (PO) and Performance Criterion (PC). Following discussion it was agreed in principle to endorse the use of the new concepts and to apply them in future selected opinions, dealing with control options and microbiological testing on some microbiological hazards, on a trial basis in the first instance.

Items for inclusion on the Agenda for the July meeting were discussed. The role of stakeholders is to be considered at this, or at a later, meeting. The secretariat informed the Panel that EFSA was putting together a database on stakeholders and that each panel is to be asked to contribute to this database.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chair thanked the Food Safety of Ireland for hosting the meeting.

15. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

The meeting was closed at 14.00.