



**MINUTES OF THE 20th PLENARY MEETING OF
THE SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS**
Held in Parma on 17 and 18 January 2006

AGENDA:

- 1 Opening, apologies for absence
- 2 Adoption of the agenda
- 3 Declarations of interest
- 4 Self tasking issues – Discussion
 - 4.1 Guidance document on antimicrobials for decontamination
 - 4.2 Avian influenza – food safety issues
- 5 Official requests to EFSA
 - 5.1 Presentation of new mandates received from the Commission
 - 5.2 Organization of Working Groups
- 6 Discussion and possible adoption of opinions
 - 6.1 The risk of feeding farmed animals with ready-to-use milk-based products and milk-derived products (ABP)
 - 6.2 Quantitative assessment of the human BSE risk posed by gelatine with respect to residual BSE risk
- 7 Progress reports and discussion on the following mandates
 - 7.1 Risk reduction options of *Salmonella* in pig production
 - 7.2 Base line survey study for *Salmonella* in pigs - Technical report
 - 7.3 Efficacy of decontamination for poultry carcasses: lactic acid and acidic calcium sulphate
 - 7.4 Microbiological testing, criteria and other objectives
 - 7.5 Opinion on the update of the GBR methodology
 - 7.6 Quantitative Risk Assessment for residual BSE risk. Progress reports on Vertebral Column, di-calcium phosphate (DCP) and tri-calcium phosphate (TCP)
 - 7.7 ABP - new procedure guideline
 - 7.8 Quantitative Risk Assessment for residual BSE risk in sheep
 - 7.9 Breeding and TSE resistance in small ruminants
 - 7.10 Welfare aspects of animal stunning and killing methods applied to commercially farmed deer, goats, rabbits, ostriches, ducks, geese and quail - Food safety aspects
 - 7.11 Farming systems for calves – Food safety aspects

- 7.12 Public and animal health risks associated with the adoption of a visual inspection system in veal calves
- 8 Feed-back by the Chairman on subjects discussed in the SC of interest to the Panel
- 9 Feed-back by the Panel members attending WG from other Panels
 - 9.1 Exposure Assessment
 - 9.2 Qualified Presumption of Safety
- 10 The 2004 Community Report on zoonoses: analysis about risk factors
- 11 EFSA evaluation report
- 12 Any other business
- 13 Closure of the meeting

PARTICIPANTS

Panel Members:

Herbert Budka, Sava Buncic, Pierre Colin, John D Collins, Christian Ducrot (18th), James Hope, Günter Klein, Hilde Kruse, Ernst Lücker (17th), Simone Magnino, Riitta Liisa Maijala (18th), Antonio Martínez López, Christophe Nguyen-The, Birgit Noerrung, Servé Notermans, George Nychas, Maurice Pensaert, Terence Roberts, Ivar Vågsholm, Emmanuel Vanopdenbosch

EFSA:

Marta Hugas, Bart Goossens, Eirini Tsigarida, Didier Verloo, Paolo Calistri, Fulvio Barizzone, Wolfgang Gelbmann, Pia Mäkelä (18th) (Scientific Staff); Angela Cohen (Administrative staff)

Commission:

DG Health and Consumer Protection: Rosella Brozzi

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone. The following apologies were received: Christian Ducrot (17th), Mac Johnston, Ernst Lücker (18th) and Riitta Maijala (17th).

Dr Paolo Calistri, whose background is in veterinary epidemiology and applied epidemiology, was introduced to the Panel. Dr Calistri joined the BIOHAZ unit at EFSA in January 2006.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST & MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS PLENARY

Two members mentioned on their declaration of interest that they were now appointed as members of The Food and Feed Safety Panel of the European Parliament.

The minutes of the Plenary of 14-15 December as adopted by written procedure were tabled. The Panel agreed to amend Minute 7.3 on the technical report of the baseline survey study for *Salmonella* in Pigs. The following sentence was deleted from the minutes: “The Panel agreed to use the bacteriology of lymph nodes at slaughter as the basis for the draft baseline study.”

4. SELF-TASKING ISSUES - UPDATE

4.1. GUIDANCE DOCUMENT ON ANTIMICROBIALS FOR DECONTAMINATION

Formal endorsement by EFSA had been requested on the proposed Terms of Reference (ToR) on the development of a guidance document. The objective is to assist in the evaluation of the efficacy of substances other than potable water to be used to decontaminate the surface of foods of animal origin. The deadline of September 2006 was proposed.

4.2. AVIAN INFLUENZA - FOOD SAFETY ISSUES

There were no new food safety issues on avian influenza to report.

5. OFFICIAL REQUESTS TO EFSA

5.1. PRESENTATIONS OF NEW MANDATES RECEIVED FROM THE COMMISSION

5.1.1. SRM Back calculations mandate

Following the conclusions of the EFSA opinion of 28 April 2005¹ the European Commission proposed an increase in the age limit for the removal of the vertebral column of bovines to 24 months. This proposal was supported by the Member States. EFSA stated in the opinion of 28 April 2005 that in order to provide a better estimate of BSE-infected cattle per age group, it is necessary to make a back calculation. Based on this recommendation, the Commission prepared this new mandate which requests the Panel to provide a back calculation model on BSE-infected cattle and thus to give an opinion on the assessment of the likelihood of infectivity in specified risk materials (SRM) derived from infected cattle in different age groups.

¹ www.efsa.eu.int/science/biohaz/biohaz_opinions/938/biohaz_opinion_ej220_srmremove_en1.pdf

5.2. ORGANIZATION OF WORKING GROUPS

A working group (WG) was formed to deal with the mandate on SRM back calculation.

6. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ADOPTION OF OPINIONS

6.1. THE RISK OF FEEDING FARMED ANIMALS WITH READY-TO-USE MILK-BASED PRODUCTS AND MILK-DERIVED PRODUCTS (ABP)

This mandate covers two aspects, namely the risks caused by the use of the dairy by-products of concern to animal health and to public health. Therefore two different opinions will be produced, one by the Animal Health and Animal Welfare Panel (AHAW) and one by the Panel for Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ). Although they are independent opinions, they share a common basis framing the context of the ToR. Chapters 2 and 3 are hence common to both of the opinions and therefore require adoption by both Panels.

The Chair of the WG presented chapters 2-3 of the draft opinion, which concerned the part of the mandate under the remit of BIOHAZ. Following discussion several points of clarification and editorial changes were requested by the Panel. The opinion will be tabled for possible adoption in March.

6.2. QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE HUMAN BSE RISK POSED BY GELATINE WITH RESPECT TO RESIDUAL BSE RISK

The Chair announced that the general QRA working document was published in December 2005.² The Chair of the WG presented a revised draft of the opinion on gelatine. The main change was that the general approach was now made in a similar way to that in the meat and bone meal (MBM) and tallow opinions. Some further changes were made following discussion with the Panel. The Panel adopted the opinion. The Chairman thanked the Chair, Secretariat and the Working Group for their work on this opinion, upon which further opinions will follow.

7. PROGRESS REPORTS AND DISCUSSION ON THE FOLLOWING MANDATES:

7.1. RISK REDUCTION OPTIONS OF *SALMONELLA* IN PIG PRODUCTION

The Chair of the WG presented an updated draft opinion, which took into consideration comments made at the previous Plenary. It was envisaged that the opinion could be ready to be put to the Panel for possible adoption at the Plenary of 15-16 March. The Secretariat requested that the draft opinion be ready in time for the next BIOHAZ Plenary. The Chair of the WG reported that the next meeting would be held on 18 and 19 January.

² www.efsa.eu.int/science/biohaz/biohaz_documents/1280/efsaqrareport2004_final20dec051.pdf

7.2. BASELINE SURVEY STUDY FOR *Salmonella* IN PIGS - TECHNICAL REPORT

This baseline survey study is to be included as an annex in the opinion under Item 7.1. The latest draft document was discussed. However, a more detailed breakdown of the data on the type of slaughtered pigs per year was requested from the European Commission.

7.3. EFFICACY OF DECONTAMINATION FOR POULTRY CARCASSES: LACTIC ACID AND ACIDIC CALCIUM SULPHATE

The Secretariat explained that a Standing Working Group on the efficacy of substances intended to be used for decontamination of the surface of foods of animal origin had been formed and will probably be expanded. The Standing Group is currently evaluating the efficacy of lactic acid and acidic calcium sulphate. The Panel agreed that priority should be given to finalising the guidance document to assist the evaluation the efficacy of such substances. Following the suggestion from the Secretariat, the Panel agreed that there would be a public consultation on the guidance document. The next WG meeting is scheduled for 18/19 January.

7.4. MICROBIOLOGICAL TESTING, CRITERIA AND OTHER OBJECTIVES.

The Chair of the WG updated the Panel on the progress of the opinion, which incorporated examples and advantages/disadvantage of food safety concepts such as ALOP, FSO, PO and PC. The next WG meeting is scheduled for 14 March.

7.5. OPINION ON THE UPDATE OF THE GBR METHODOLOGY

The WG is to meet on 20 January 2006.

7.6. QUANTITATIVE RISK ASSESSMENT FOR RESIDUAL BSE RISK. PROGRESS REPORTS ON VERTEBRAL COLUMN, DI-CALCIUM PHOSPHATE (DCP) AND TRI-CALCIUM PHOSPHATE (TCP)

The Chair of the WG reported that the draft opinion on DCP and TCP was in the process of being re-drafted in a more concise form for consideration at the BIOHAZ Plenary in March. The work on the QRA vertebral column is also in progress.

7.7. ABP - NEW PROCEDURE GUIDELINE

A new WG will be formed and deal with new applications for process approval following the new guidelines. Two mandates have been received to-date. The Commission foresees the submission of a further six mandates early this year.

7.8. RISK OF BSE IN SKINS AND HIDES FROM COHORT ANIMALS

A Working Group was formed to discuss the BSE risk of hides and skins from cohort cattle and will meet on 10 February and 22 March

7.9. QUANTITATIVE RISK ASSESSMENT FOR RESIDUAL BSE RISK IN SHEEP

A draft report had been prepared by a member of the group. Basic calculations on BSE prevalence in small ruminants were provided by EFSA. The scope of the mandate will be clarified at the first meeting of the WG on 19 January and a next WG meeting is foreseen on 23 March.

7.10. BREEDING AND TSE RESISTANCE IN SMALL RUMINANTS

The first meeting of the new working group is scheduled for 20 January.

7.11. WELFARE ASPECTS OF ANIMAL STUNNING AND KILLING METHODS APPLIED TO COMMERCIALLY FARMED DEER, GOATS, RABBITS, OSTRICHES, DUCKS, GEESE AND QUAIL - FOOD SAFETY ASPECTS

A member of the Panel presented draft text on the food safety issues dealt with within the remit of BIOHAZ. Most of the mandate was addressed to the AHAW Panel. A discussion on the BIOHAZ-related text followed and some clarifications were requested which were tabled in a revised draft. The Panel adopted the chapter related to the food safety implications of the stunning methods.

7.12. FARMING SYSTEMS FOR CALVES – FOOD SAFETY ASPECTS

There was no new information to report to the Panel from this AHAW WG.

7.13. PUBLIC AND ANIMAL HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ADOPTION OF A VISUAL INSPECTION SYSTEM IN VEAL CALVES

A working group has been set up and discussions have already started electronically within the WG and with the European Commission in order to clarify the mandate. A WG meeting will be held in February.

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

As no Scientific Committee (SC) meeting had taken place since the last BIOHAZ Plenary in December, there was no new information to report.

9. FEED-BACK BY THE PANEL MEMBERS ATTENDING WG FROM OTHER PANELS

9.1. EXPOSURE ASSESSMENT

There was nothing further to report.

9.2. QUALIFIED PRESUMPTION OF SAFETY

The member of the Panel on a sub-group on *Bacillus* indicated that there was nothing further to report.

10. THE 2004 COMMUNITY REPORT ON ZOONOSES: ANALYSIS ABOUT RISK FACTORS

In December 2005, EFSA published “The Community Summary Report on Trends and Sources of Zoonoses, Zoonotic Agents and Antimicrobial Resistance in the European Union in 2004”.³ The Secretariat explained that the BIOHAZ and AHAW Panels are to be asked to consider the report and present their conclusions and recommendations together with analyses of risk factors to EFSA, as invited by the Council conclusions of 6-7 December 2004 on Emerging Zoonotic Diseases. This task is to be undertaken in collaboration with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC).⁴ The Panel commented on the draft mandate, which will be further elaborated by the Secretariat. This task is to be addressed by both Panels answering to specific Terms of Reference as soon as the formal request from the EFSA Executive Director is received.

11. EFSA EVALUATION REPORT

A consultancy company has conducted an evaluation of EFSA. The basis for the evaluation of EFSA is set out in its founding Regulation. The report is published on EFSA’s website for public consultation⁵. Any comments were welcome, the deadline for comments being 28 February 2006.

³ www.efsa.eu.int/science/monitoring_zoonoses/reports/1277_en.html

⁴ www.ecdc.eu.int

⁵ www.efsa.eu.int/mboard/mb_meetings/1276_en.html

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12.1. NEXT BIOHAZ PLENARY MEETINGS

The dates of the next BIOHAZ Plenary meetings were set as follows:

15-16 March 2006	- confirmed
19-20 April 2006	- to be confirmed at March Plenary
17-18 May 2006	- confirmed

12.2. TENTATIVE BIOHAZ PLENARY MEETING DATES

The following tentative Plenary dates were proposed and are subject to modification:

21-22 June	- to be confirmed
12-13 July	- to be confirmed
6-7 September	- to be confirmed
25-26 October	- to be confirmed
13-14 December	- to be confirmed

12.3. SRM AGE REVIEW – REPLY RECEIVED FROM GERMAN RISK ASSESSMENT BODY

The letter which was approved by the Panel in the last Plenary meeting has been sent to the German Risk Assessment body. A reply was received from the German Risk Assessment body requesting that their data be considered. The Panel agreed to acknowledge the letter, taking into account some of their points (infectivity found at 24 months) and to invite the scientist concerned to be a member of the new working group on WG SRM Back Calculation (see item 5.1.1).

The Secretariat will ask the Executive Director to request the 24 month data to be made available to EFSA, as the information has an impact on the work of the WG, and hence policy making in Europe. EFSA had not received the data from the German Ministry to date.

12.4. TRANSPARENCY ISSUES

The Panel discussed how access by EFSA to information and research findings with an impact on public health, including as yet unpublished findings, could be made. In such cases confidentiality is clearly a factor, although the data may not have undergone peer review.

On a related issue, the Panel suggested that a policy statement by EFSA, directed towards EFSA stakeholders, and providing guidance on what new information they should provide EFSA could usefully be considered by the Executive Director. The Chair suggested that cases where public health may be compromised through withholding of information could be brought to the attention of the Transparency WG so that such situations could be remedied.

12.5. CHANGE IN THE EC OFFICIAL ATTACHED TO THE BIOHAZ PANEL

The Chair thanked Mrs R. Brozzi for her assistance as the EC Representative to the BIOHAZ Panel over the past months. Her predecessor, Mrs. T. Sateri will now return to assist the BIOHAZ Panel, as before.

12.6. WEB SURVEY

The Secretariat tabled a copy of the EFSA website survey for completion by members. The aim is to gather feedback on how best to improve the EFSA website for users.⁶

12.7. SELF-TASKING ISSUE ON ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

This will be discussed at the next Plenary.

12.8. EXPERT INDEMNITIES

A member of the Panel asked if any changes were foreseen in the indemnities for experts. The Secretariat replied that expert indemnities are under review by the Management Board and further details are expected soon.

13. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

The meeting closed at 13.00.

⁶ www.efsa.eu.int/press_room/web_survey/1310_en.html