

MINUTES OF THE 41ST PLENARY MEETING OF THE SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS HELD IN PARMA ON 9-10 JULY 2008

AGENDA:

1. OPENING, APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
 2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA
 3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST
 4. NEW REQUESTS TO EFSA/BIOHAZ
 5. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ADOPTION OF OPINIONS
 - 5.1 Overview of source attribution methodology
 - 5.2 Foodborne antimicrobial resistance as a biological hazard.
 - 5.3 Assessment on the risk for human and animal health related to the revision of the BSE monitoring regime in some MS
 - 5.4 Further consideration of age-related parameters on the Risk for Human and Animal Health related to the revision of the BSE Monitoring regime in some Member States.
 6. PROGRESS REPORTS AND DISCUSSION ON THE FOLLOWING MANDATES
 - 6.1 Follow up of the QPS approach for assessing the safety of microorganisms intentionally added to the food chain
 - 6.2 Examination and selection of applications for TSE test suitable to enter into a formal evaluation programme.
 - 6.3 Technical guide for the scientific data collection on antimicrobial resistance within the frame work of the use of amts for the decontamination of poultry carcasses
 - 6.4 Public health significance of meticillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)
 - 6.5 Quantitative estimation of the public health impact of setting a new target for the reductions of salmonella in breeding hens.
 - 6.6 Technical assistance on the link between *Salmonella* criteria at different stages of the poultry production chain
 - 6.7 TSE infectivity in milk and milk products from small ruminants
 - 6.8 Special measures to reduce the risk for consumers through *Salmonella* in table eggs – e.g. Cooling of table eggs
 - 6.9 QMRA on *Salmonella* in slaughter and breeding pigs
 - 6.10 Food safety aspects from the welfare of dairy cows
 - 6.11 Food safety aspects from the welfare of farmed fish
 7. FEED BACK FROM THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE AND FROM OTHER WGs
 - 7.1 Risk benefit analysis
 - 7.2 Transparency in risk assessment - scientific aspects (SC 515_rev 11)
 8. STANDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA
 - 8.1 Food safety issues of Avian Influenza
 - 8.2 Emerging risks
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- 9. Any other business
- 9.1 Brainstorming session of upcoming issues
- 9.2 Expert Database – Info session -
- 9.3 Information from Data Collection and Exposure Unit on food consumption and exposure
- 9.4 Briefing note on the 3rd Meeting of the EFSA BSE-TSE Network
- 9.5 Summary report of the TSE community reference laboratory expert group on strains of 30 April 2008
- 9.6 Briefing note of the 2nd Meeting of the EFSA MRA Network
- 9.7 Activities on Antimicrobial Resistance at European and International level
- 10. Closure of the meeting

PARTICIPANTS

Panel Members:

Olivier Andreoletti, Herbert Budka, Sava Buncic, Pierre Colin, John D Collins, Aline De Koeijer (10th July), John Griffin, James Hope, Günter Klein, Hilde Kruse, Simone Magnino, Antonio Martínez López, James McLauchlin, Christophe Nguyen-The, Birgit Noerrung, Miguel Prieto Maradona, Terence Roberts, Ivar Vågsholm and Emmanuel Vanopdenbosch.

EFSA:

Marta Hugas, Fulvio Barizzzone, Ernesto Liebana Criado, Michaela Hempen, Tobin Robinson, Pietro Stella, Eirini Tsigarida, Luis Vivas-Alegre, Daniela Maurici (item 7.2), Sergio Potier-Rodeia (item 9.2) and Davide Arcella (item 9.3) (Scientific Staff), Bianca Bottoni (Administrative staff).

European Commission (EC):

DG Health and Consumer Protection: Kris de Smet (9th July), Joaquim Ordeig-Vila (10th July) and Marina Marini.

1. OPENING, APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone. Apologies were received from Karsten Noeckler, Arie Havelaar and Aline de Koeijer (2nd day).

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations of interest.

4. NEW REQUESTS TO EFSA/BIOHAZ

4.1. REQUEST FOR AN UPDATE AND QUANTIFICATION OF THE RISK POSED BY CAMPYLOBACTER IN BROILER MEAT PRODUCTION

The representative of the Commission presented the request for an update and quantification of the risk posed by *Campylobacter* in broiler meat and production. Regulation (EC) No 2160/2003 on the control of salmonella and other specified food-borne zoonotic agents as well as Regulation (EC) No 2073/2005 on microbiological criteria for foodstuffs provide the legal basis of this request. An *ad hoc* Working group will be established. Taking into account the data needs and the expected delivery time, the Panel recommended that an extension of the deadline be requested.

4.2. REQUEST FOR A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RELATING TO THE USE AND MODE OF ACTION OF BACTERIOPHAGES IN FOOD PRODUCTION

This request was received from EC. EFSA is asked to provide technical assistance in relation to the use and mode of action of bacteriophages of animal origin. The Unit on Biological Hazards is drafting a report on which the panel will base its advice. The report will be presented at the next Plenary meeting. The need to establish an *ad hoc* working group will be discussed in order to give further guidance and to advise on the second term of reference. A deadline extension up to January 2009 will be requested.

5. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ADOPTION OF OPINIONS

5.1. OVERVIEW OF SOURCE ATTRIBUTION METHODOLOGY

The Chair of the WG on drafting the opinion “Overview of source attribution methodology” presented the opinion. The conclusions and recommendations were considered by the panel. The opinion was adopted.

5.2. FOODBORNE ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE AS A BIOLOGICAL HAZARD

The Vice-Chair of the Panel chaired this session. The WG took into consideration the comments received from the public consultation and the Chair of the WG presented the revised document. The opinion was adopted.

5.3. ASSESSMENT ON THE RISK FOR HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH RELATED TO THE REVISION OF THE BSE MONITORING REGIME IN SOME MS

The Chairman of the WG dealing with the mandate presented the draft opinion to the Panel members. No major issues were raised during the discussion on the document. The opinion was adopted. It was decided to publish it together with an electronic spreadsheet showing the calculations used when performing the assessment.

5.4. FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF AGE-RELATED PARAMETERS ON THE RISK FOR HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH RELATED TO THE REVISION OF THE BSE MONITORING REGIME IN SOME MEMBER STATES

The Chairman of the WG dealing with the mandate presented the draft opinion to the Panel members. No major issues were raised during the discussion on the document. The opinion was adopted.

6. PROGRESS REPORTS AND DISCUSSION ON THE FOLLOWING MANDATES

6.1. FOLLOW-UP OF THE QPS¹ APPROACH FOR ASSESSING THE SAFETY OF MICROORGANISMS INTENTIONALLY ADDED TO THE FOOD CHAIN

The next meeting of the WG will be on 28 August.

¹ Qualified Presumption of Safety

6.2. EXAMINATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS FOR TSE TEST SUITABLE TO ENTER INTO A FORMAL EVALUATION PROGRAMME

A meeting for clarifying the mandate from the Commission was held recently. An *ad hoc* working group was formed and its first meeting will be held on 28-29 August. In accordance to the request of the Commission, confidentiality will be respected until the end of the test selection procedure.

6.3. TECHNICAL GUIDE FOR THE SCIENTIFIC DATA COLLECTION ON ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE USE OF AMTS² FOR THE DECONTAMINATION OF POULTRY CARCASSES

A request for this technical guide was received from the European Commission. EFSA asked EC for clarification on the scope of the document and on the deadline.

6.4. PUBLIC HEALTH SIGNIFICANCE OF METICILLIN RESISTANT STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS (MRSA)

The next meeting is scheduled on 28 August.

6.5. QUANTITATIVE ESTIMATION OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT OF SETTING A NEW TARGET FOR THE REDUCTION OF *SALMONELLA* IN CERTAIN POULTRY PRODUCTIONS: BREEDING HENS, LAYING HENS AND BROILERS

An *ad hoc* working group was established and a meeting will be scheduled for late September or early October.

6.6. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ON THE LINK BETWEEN *SALMONELLA* CRITERIA AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE POULTRY PRODUCTION CHAIN

Preliminary meetings with the Commission were held early in June and in July in order to discuss and clarify the Terms of Reference, to explore data needs as well as data availability, to assess and analyse the current available data and to further identify the subsequent steps. It was agreed that it is essential to identify the effect of cross-contamination during processing (cutting and/or deboning) on *Salmonella* contamination in order to be able to establish any correlation on the link between *Salmonella* process hygiene criteria at the slaughterhouse and food safety criteria at the processing plant. An extension of the deadline was also suggested up to March 2010. A call for data related to process hygiene criteria of *Salmonella* in broiler carcasses is being considered. EFSA is drafting a project to be outsourced so to provide data on the effect of cutting/deboning on *Salmonella* contamination of fresh meat products.

² Antimicrobial treatments

6.7. TSE INFECTIVITY IN MILK AND MILK PRODUCTS FROM SMALL RUMINANTS

The first WG meeting will be held following the plenary meeting. The WG will aim to finalise the opinion on time so as to allow the Panel to consider the adoption of the opinion by the short deadline given by the EC (October 2008).

6.8. SPECIAL MEASURES TO REDUCE THE RISK FOR CONSUMERS THROUGH *SALMONELLA* IN TABLE EGGS – E.G. COOLING OF TABLE EGGS

The Chair of the WG presented a draft table of contents which was developed after discussions at the first meeting of the WG on 19 June. An observer from the requestor (BfR³) of this mandate was invited to the meeting. The next meeting is scheduled on 24 September.

6.9. QMRA ON *SALMONELLA* IN SLAUGHTER AND BREEDING PIGS

The first six-monthly report of the project funded under Article 36 is undergoing evaluation.

6.10. FOOD SAFETY ASPECTS FROM THE WELFARE OF DAIRY COWS

The WG met on 13 June. The risk factors for animal welfare will be identified by the AHAW Panel and then the WG from the BIOHAZ Panel will assess their relevance from a food safety perspective.

6.11. FOOD SAFETY ASPECTS FROM THE WELFARE OF FARMED FISH

The Animal Health and Welfare Panel (AHAW) will address the animal welfare aspects of aquaculture production systems for atlantic salmon⁴, gilthead sea bream/sea bass, rainbow trout, carp and European eel into five separate scientific opinions. A draft opinion of the BIOHAZ Panel on the general food safety aspects of fish welfare was presented. This opinion focuses on the food safety relevance of pre-harvest factors relating to fish welfare, incorporating all husbandry aspects identified by the AHAW. Adoption of the opinion is foreseen in October.

7. FEED BACK FROM THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE AND FROM OTHER WGS

The 31st Plenary meeting of the Scientific Committee will be held on 15-16 July⁵.

³ BfR - Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung (German Risk Assessment group)

⁴ Scientific Opinion of the Panel on Animal Health and Welfare on animal welfare aspects of husbandry systems for farmed Atlantic salmon. Adopted on 19 June 2008. http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1211902014109.htm

⁵ http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1178718510757.htm

7.1. RISK BENEFIT ANALYSIS

The WG is working on the draft opinion and as soon as the first version is developed, it will be presented at the following BIOHAZ Plenary meeting.

7.2. TRANSPARENCY IN RISK ASSESSMENT - SCIENTIFIC ASPECTS (SC 515_REV 11)

The Secretariat of the Scientific Committee presented the essential elements of transparency in risk assessment. The terms ‘uncertainty’ and ‘variability’ should be well-defined in the document in order to show the difference in their meaning. The Panel members were asked to send their comments on the draft document to the Secretariat by the end of July.

8. STANDING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA:

8.1. FOOD SAFETY ISSUES OF AVIAN INFLUENZA

There had been no indications of food safety concerns.

8.2. EMERGING RISKS

The Chair gave a progress report on the ESCO⁶ WG on Emerging Risks.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1. BRAINSTORMING SESSION OF UPCOMING ISSUES

Discussion was held on what to look forward to at EFSA BIOHAZ plenaries in the course of the next 10 years. The context of the Biological Hazards Panel’s work is changing and the concerns raised by members of the BIOHAZ panel reflected the fact that we live in a global village. In the context of increasing scarcity of resources, one major challenge identified will be to balance food safety and the costs thereof, against food security. An information note reflecting the position of the Panel will be forwarded to the Executive Director of EFSA.

9.2. EXPERT DATABASE – INFO SESSION

EFSA’s expert database, which was launched on 5 June 2008, was presented. The objective of the database is to support the activities of EFSA’s Scientific Committee and Panels, networks and working groups, to improve the transparency of the process for selecting experts that participate in EFSA’s scientific activities, and to develop a tool to be used by EFSA and Member States (via Advisory Forum Members). The Panel members were invited to register in the database and to communicate this information to their colleagues.

⁶ ESCO - EFSA Scientific Cooperation

9.3. INFORMATION FROM DATA COLLECTION AND EXPOSURE UNIT (DATEX) ON FOOD CONSUMPTION AND EXPOSURE

A member of the DATEX Unit presented an outline of the Unit's current activities. The Panel welcomed the presentation and noted that factors such as processing, preparation and cooking patterns are important for the exposure assessment of biological hazards. A WG on Food Consumption and Exposure has already been established and one of its objectives is to identify and outline the requirements and needs on food consumption studies with respect to exposure assessment, both to chemical and biological hazards. The DATEX Unit is seeking expertise on food consumption surveys related to exposure assessment to biological hazards.

9.4. BRIEFING NOTE ON THE 3RD MEETING OF THE EFSA BSE-TSE NETWORK

The third meeting of the EFSA BSE-TSE Network was held on the 26 and 27 of June in Limassol, Cyprus. This network is currently integrated through contact point members representing 22 EU Member States, and 12 observer members from 2 European Free Trade Association Countries, 3 EU Pre-Accession Countries, 3 European Commission Directorates-General (DG-SANCO, DG-RTD, the IRMM from DG-JRC) and 4 International Organisations (WHO, FAO, OIE and NeuroPrion). A series of presentations on particular BSE-TSE subjects were delivered, including their country's BSE-TSE Risk Analysis frameworks by the new members. Future cooperation activities were discussed and agreed by the members of the BSE Network. The 4th Networking meeting will be held in 2009 in Parma.

9.5. SUMMARY REPORT OF THE TSE COMMUNITY REFERENCE LABORATORY EXPERT GROUP ON STRAINS OF 30 APRIL 2008 ON UNUSUAL SMALL RUMINANT TSE CASES

A Panel Member briefed the Panel on a recent update report issued by the Strain Typing Expert Group (STEG) of the EU Community Reference Laboratory (CRL) for TSEs. The STEG report (http://www.defra.gov.uk/vla/science/docs/sci_tse_rl_steg.pdf) provides details on unusual small ruminant TSE cases that have been or are currently under the scrutiny of the group.

One of the cases is a UK (Scottish) goat BSE suspect case born in 1987 before the first ruminant feed ban was implemented in the UK. The animal was culled in 1990 after showing neurological signs compatible with TSE, and routine examination of stained sections of brain stem showed typical neuropil vacuolation. The case was confirmed at the time as goat TSE and only much later, during an immunohistochemical study of goat TSEs⁷, did it come under suspicion as BSE. This BSE suspect case has been further characterised with bioassay and the results are in agreement with the initial differential immunohistochemistry, strengthening its classification as a BSE suspect.

⁷ Jeffrey, M., Martin, S., Gonzalez, L., Foster, J., Langeveld, J.P., van Zijderveld, F.G., Grassi, J., and Hunter, N. 2006. Immunohistochemical Features of PrPD Accumulation in Natural and Experimental Goat Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies. *Journal of Comparative Pathology*, 134, 171-81.

The BIOHAZ Panel concluded that, following the BSE case in a French goat reported in 2004, the occurrence of this historical UK BSE suspect case in a goat does not require amendment of previous BIOHAZ Scientific Opinions or Statements on the subject.

9.6. BRIEFING NOTE OF THE 2ND MEETING OF THE EFSA MRA NETWORK

The second meeting of the EFSA MRA Network was held on the 18th of June in Parma. Representatives from 14 MS were present, 10 apologies were received. Presentations were given by EFSA's Scientific Cooperation Unit on the Expert Database and Focal Points. The BIOHAZ Unit described the current and upcoming MRA activities of the Panel. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 17 June 2009 in Parma.

9.7. ACTIVITIES ON ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE AT EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

The Panel members were informed of the following public consultations launched by other European and International Scientific Committees:

- European Medicine Agency, Committee for Medicinal Products for veterinary use: Reflection paper on the use of 3rd and 4th generation cephalosporins in food-producing animals in the European Union: development of resistance and impact on human and animal health⁸.
- Codex Alimentarius Commission, *ad hoc* Codex Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance: Proposed draft guidance to contain food borne antimicrobial resistant microorganisms (at Step 3).
- Codex Alimentarius Commission, *ad hoc* Codex Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance: Proposed draft risk assessment guidance regarding food borne antimicrobial resistant organisms (at Step 3).
- Codex Alimentarius Commission, *ad hoc* Codex Intergovernmental Task Force on Antimicrobial Resistance: Proposed draft guidance on creating risk profiles for antimicrobial resistant food borne microorganisms for setting risk assessment and management priorities.

The Panel was asked to provide comments to the documents to be sent back to EMEA and to the EC.

9.8. SCIENTIFIC COLLOQUIUM ON *CAMPYLOBACTER*

The 12th Scientific Colloquium on assessing the health benefits of controlling *Campylobacter* in the food chain will be organised by EFSA on 4-5 December 2008 in Rome. The Colloquium will be structured in a way to provide for an in-depth discussion in break-out groups, alternated by short plenary sessions, with a view to making recommendations for risk assessment in *Campylobacter*.

⁸ <http://www.emea.europa.eu/pdfs/vet/sagam/8173006en.pdf>

10. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

The meeting closed at 13.30.