

**MINUTES OF THE 4th PLENARY MEETING
OF THE EFSA SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON PLANT HEALTH
HELD IN PARMA ON 21-22 FEBRUARY 2007**

(ADOPTED ON 23 MAY 2007)

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PARTICIPANTS

Members of the PLH Panel

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Apologies

David CAFFIER

Ad hocs

Pierre EHRET

European Commission (DG SANCO)

Marc VEREECKE, Michael WALSH

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Herman Koëter (Agenda #7), Elzbieta CEGLARSKA, Ann DE BLOCK, Anna CAMPANINI

1. WELCOME, APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Panel's Chair welcomed the panel members, the invited external expert and the Commission observers. Apologies were received from Mr. D. Caffier.

2. ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA, DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The agenda was adopted without changes.

Three of the Panel members declared their interest with regard to the question on EPPO PRAs. No other conflict of interests was reported.

3. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES OF 3RD PLENARY MEETING

The minutes were adopted with minor amendments.

4. DISCUSSION OF DRAFT OPINIONS ON TWO PRAS MADE BY THE EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN PLANT PROTECTION ORGANISATION (EPPO) FOR INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES (IAS) THAT POSE A THREAT TO PLANT HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY IN THE EPPO REGION, I.E. *LYSICHITON AMERICANUS* AND *HYDROCOTYLE RANUNCULOIDES*

EFSA PLH Panel was requested by the European Commission to provide a scientific opinion on two PRAs made by the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation (EPPO) on Invasive Alien Plants *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides* (floating pennywort) and *Lysichiton americanus* (American skunk cabbage or yellow skunk cabbage). The Panel was in particular asked: (a) whether these organisms can be considered as harmful organisms for the endangered area of the EC in the meaning of the definition in Article 2.1(e) of Council Directive 2000/29/EC and thus potentially eligible for addition to the list of harmful organisms in Directive 2000/29/EC; (b) whether the identified management options for reducing the risks identified at the pest risk assessment phase, are appropriate through an evaluation of their efficacy, feasibility and impact.

With regard to the question three Panel members declared conflict of interest and therefore were excluded from the adoption procedure.

The rapporteur presented a new version of the draft opinion. The discussion was focused on the definition of endangered area and factors contributing to invasiveness of a plant in a habitat. Overall the Panel found the evidence provided insufficient to conclude *Hydrocotyle* as harmful for the endangered area of the entire Community. The Commission noted that the conclusion should be formulated more precisely, e.g. if regionalisation can be considered feasible. Also it would be desirable if the Panel addressed the management options.

The opinion was adopted subject to the incorporation of the amendments agreed upon by the Panel.

Due to absence of the rapporteur for the opinion on *Lysichiton americanus* it was agreed to proceed with adoption in a written procedure after completion of the draft opinion. The current format of the opinion needs to be amended in order to provide more clarity in statements and conclusions.

5. INTRODUCTION TO THE BACKGROUND OF PRAS FOR DOM¹S

EFSA was requested to provide a scientific opinion on 30 PRAs made by France on organisms which are considered by France as harmful in 4 French overseas departments, i.e. Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique and Réunion, and in particular whether these organisms can be considered as harmful organisms for the endangered area of the above departments in the meaning of the definition mentioned in Art. 2.1. (e) of the Directive

¹ Départements d'outre mer

2000/29/EC and thus potentially eligible for addition to the list of harmful organisms in Directive 2000/29/EC.

The question was accepted for opinion at the Panel's plenary meeting in October 2006. The Panel was given 18 months period for elaboration on the question.

In order for the Panel to receive more detailed information on the issue of introduction and/or spread of harmful organisms in the DOMs and the Phytosanitary risks involved an ad hoc expert was invited.

The expert gave broad information on the following issues:

- Climatic, agronomic and economic conditions of the DOMs
- Reasons for the amendment of the list of harmful organisms in Directive 2000/29/EC

According to the principles of the SPS/WTO Agreement and IPPC transposed into Directive 2000/29/EC addition of new organisms to the quarantine list requires pest risk analysis. France therefore taking into account the local biodiversity of DOMs considered 300 organisms that may fall within the regulation. The process was started in 1994, resulting in 130 PRAs prepared so far and 30 selected for the EFSA consideration based on prioritisation set in 2006 and including emerging risks.

Two types of PRAs were prepared:

- (1) Detailed based on the EPPO scheme [PM 5/3(1)] only for harmful organisms for which the probability of introduction into the DOMs is high with economic important crops and,
- (2) Simplified for organisms for which the probability of introduction is extremely low.

The PRAs contain only the pest risk assessment part of the EPPO scheme as France decided to separate the risk assessment from the risk management.

- Current phytosanitary regulatory situation

The DOMs currently have their own regulations. The trade of plants and plant products requires phytosanitary certificate. Phytosanitary service is in place and efforts are made to establish surveys for interceptions. Currently the pathway of introduction does not exist but might open with the change of regulations. For banana total ban of import of planting material is in place.

The panel asked for any information on changes in the pest situation in DOMs, including interceptions. The French phytosanitary services reported that no changes have occurred.

The Panel enquired on the implications of the organisms under evaluation being included in the quarantine list. The Commission responded that the EU has a legal obligation to include DOMs into plant health regime through Directive 2000/29/EC. The DOMs due to

their remote location currently have a different phytosanitary situation. Balance in phytosanitary measures is desirable to create free trade and assure protection of plant health.

6. DISCUSSION ON PROGRESS ON PRAS FOR DOMS

WGs on Arthropods, Bacteria and Fungi devoted one meeting each to discussion and evaluation of the PRAs. The Panel focused on the issues arising from these discussions. The overall quality of the documents varies. References are missing which makes it difficult to check the statements formulated. In some cases the identification of the harmful organism is confusing. Some information occurs as unidentifiable cross-references, complicating the review. The main issue observed in the majority of the PRAs evaluated so far is lack of proper identification of pathways and exposure. Another significant difficulty relates to the simplified PRAs where the information provided is insufficient to allow any conclusions to be made although certain organisms could be considered harmful. It was therefore questioned if the Panel task was to review a PRA or rather a problem.

Commenting on the preliminary findings the Commission stressed that the Panel was not asked to do the PRAs.

The Panel agreed that the WGs should continue reviewing the PRAs and record in a systematic way any problematic elements. Also the proposed check-list for peer-review circulated earlier can be tested.

7. DISCUSSION ON PROCEDURE FOR PEER-REVIEW OF PRAS

In introduction to the discussion the Panel Chair stressed that both the PRA and peer-review should be fit for purpose. Review of PRAs requires careful reading and checking the information as well as checking the references. The Panel needs to elaborate its way of quality control of the documents reviewed.

A checklist created by a Panel member for the purpose of review of PRAs was presented. The list is suited for reviewing PRAs structured upon the EPPO scheme while – the Panel argued – it could be more appropriate to reflect the ISPM 11. The task for the reviewer is two-fold: to evaluate the quality of the PRA and if it answers the question asked by the Commission. Methodological issues should also be tackled.

EFSA Director of Science supported the Panel's pursuance to produce a useful tool making possible dealing with a load of PRAs. He emphasised that a practical internal tool helps to frame the opinion. He suggested that the Panel in order to develop guidance for peer-review should present a topic for self-tasking. The Panel should also involve external experts.

The Chair will carry out the preparatory work and present the formal documents for self-tasking on protocol for peer-review at the next plenary meeting.

8. DISCUSSION ON EFSA PLH PANEL'S CONCEPT FOR PEST RISK ASSESSMENT

For the purpose of discussion on this agenda item the Panel Chair provided a discussion paper on economic impact. Initiating the discussion the Panel Chair presented his ideas about the Panel role in the risk assessment process. The Panel has an ambition to become a reference body for issues related to pest risk assessment at the EU level. Besides involvement into review and assessment of PRAs prepared at national level the Panel should play proactive role towards emerging issues. Activity in response to requests from the Commission should be completed by self-tasking. As data is of paramount importance for the opinions the Panel should identify the requirements and explore sources of availability. The Panel was of the opinion that economic consequences and management options should be tackled.

The Commission comment was that the Panel's task is limited – as stated in the Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 – to the provision of scientific opinions.

The Panel agreed to initiate a self-task on the concept for PRA. The Chair and the Panel Secretariat will make the necessary preparations.

9. TRAINING ON EXTRANET

EFSA IT services provided further training on the new application for scientific exchange called Science Extranet (accessible from <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/afextranet>).

10. PRESENTATION OF 7TH R&D FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

The invited Commission officer was not able to attend the meeting. Short information on calls for a R&D projects related to plant health was given by a Panel member. Full information package and guide for proposers can be obtained from:

http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP7DetailsCallPage&call_id=16).

So far, EFSA has been invited to participate in external advisory committees of two projects financed under FP6: EUPHRESCO (<http://www.euphresco.org/>) and ENDURE (no freely accessible website available yet). The Panel secretariat will closely follow the project developments as soon as resources become operational.

11. MISCELLANEOUS

- Opinions on *Ambrosia* spp.

With regard to the opinions on *Ambrosia* spp. the Panel felt that the current draft opinions needed more work in particular with regard to impacts. The Panel

commented that *Ambrosia* is an emerging issue in the EU and impacts other than agricultural should not be omitted. The EFSA internal review considered the discussion on economic impacts as incompatible with the EFSA risk assessment concept. The Panel argued that according to the internationally accepted standards economic impact is a decisive element in qualifying an organism as quarantine. A new version of the opinion will be produced and presented to the panel.

- Declaration of interests

The Panel Chair announced that the annual DoIs will have to be up-dated due to EFSA policy (under development) that aims at safeguarding the experts.

- Report on meeting with COPHS

By the initiative of the Council Working Party of the Chief Officers of Plant Health Services (COPHS) a meeting with the EFSA scientific management and representatives of PLH Panel took place on 13 October 2006 at EFSA premises in Parma. Delegation of COPHS included representatives from Austria, France, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The discussion regarded the remit of PLH Panel and its role in RA process. The participants agreed that a close dialog with the stakeholders is needed. Minutes of this meeting were circulated to the Panel. The Panel concluded that it would be useful to follow-up the meeting and so the Panel Chair will contact the Chair of the WP COPHS for feedback.

- Report on meetings with EPPO

Two meetings with the secretariat of the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation took place in November 2006.

J. C. van Lenteren reported on an informal meeting with the EPPO Director-General Mr. Nico van Opstal. The meeting was devoted to exchange of information with regard to the tasks and roles of the both organisations in the field of plant health. A note on this meeting was circulated to the Panel.

The Panel Scientific Coordinator gave a brief feed-back on the formal meeting with EPPO which was requested by EPPO and took place at EFSA headquarters in Parma on 9 November. Both parties exchanged information on their activities in general and on their approach to the pest risk analysis process.

Currently there is no cooperation between the two organisations. The Panel Coordinator was invited to participate in EPPO meetings as an observer. However, due to lack of resources more actions cannot be currently undertaken.

The Commission services repeatedly expressed their concerns in relation to the panel's independence.

The Panel decided that a document for the panel discussion will be prepared later in the year.

- Request from Norwegian FSA

The document submitted to the EFSA SC by the Norwegian FSA was considered relevant to the PLH concept of risk assessment and will be taken into consideration for preparation of the discussion paper.

- Art. 36

The Panel Secretariat briefly presented the Art. 36 (Reg. 178/2002) as a tool for cooperation with the Member States.

- AOB

- Calendar for PLH Plenary meetings was agreed until the end of 2007. Update will be introduced by the Sc. Coord. on the extranet.
- Next WGs for DOM PRAs will convene in March (Arthropods – 15-16/03, Bacteria – 12-13/03; Fungi – 13-14/03) and April (Arthropods – 18-19/04; Bacteria – 24-25/04 and Fungi – 25-26/04). WG Viruses needs further preparation.
- The **next plenary meeting** will be held in **Parma** on **23-24 May 2007**.