

Parma, 22 May 2012

## EFSA Task Force of Zoonoses Data Collection, specific meeting on Food-borne Outbreaks Held in Parma on 26-27 April 2012

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### **PARTICIPANTS:**

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#### **Members and other national, ECDC or Commission representatives:**

Nadine Botteldoorn (Belgium), Georgi Chobanov (Bulgaria), Lone Jannok Porsbo (Denmark), Kay Raska (Estonia), Elina Toyryla (Finland), Laurent Montaut (France), Annette Reinecke (Germany), Tunde Nagy (Hungary), Tzani Myrsini (Greece), Sara Jackson (Ireland), Simona Iannetti (Italy), Pantaleo De Pinto (Italy), Asta Pereckiene (Lithuania), Joseph Schon (Luxembourg), Berit Heier Tafjord (Norway), Attila Tarpai (Norway), Ben Wit (the Netherlands), Magdalena Trandafir (Romania), Marta Bedriova (Slovakia), Eva Grilc (Slovenia), Christoffer Sjolund (Sweden), Hans Schmid (Switzerland), John Cowden (the United Kingdom), Johanna Takkinen (ECDC), Klaus Kostenzer (EC).

## **EFSA:**

Frank Boelaert (Chair), Pia Mäkelä, Valentina Rizzi, Giusi Amore, Elena Mazzolini, Anca Stoicescu, Minerva Laranjo González, Marios Georgiadis, Kenneth Mulligan, Miriam Grasselli and Simona Fusar Poli (Administration), Ernesto Liebana, Maria Teresa da Silva Felício (BIOHAZ).

## **MINUTES:**

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### **1. Opening and welcome**

The chair welcomed the participants.

### **2. Declaration of interests**

None of the participants declared an additional interest related to the subjects of the meeting.

### **3. Minutes from the last food-borne outbreak meeting on 3-4 May 2011**

No comments on the minutes from the previous Task Force (TF) meeting on food-borne outbreaks (FBO) held on 3-4 May 2011 were received by email from the members or observers. No further comments were given at the meeting and the minutes were adopted; they have been already published on the EFSA website.

### **4. Analysis of 2010 data on food-borne outbreaks (FBOs) in EU and the impact of the new reporting specifications**

Pia Mäkelä gave an overview on the impact of the current FBO reporting system on the data received on FBOs for 2010.

The main changes implemented in the new European Union Food-borne Outbreak Reporting System (EU-FORS) were summarised; a new outbreak categorisation was introduced based on the strength of evidence implicating a particular food vehicle.

The main results for 2010 FBO data were presented, including the total number of outbreaks and their breakdown by causative agent and reporting country as well as trends over time. The comparison with 2009 data (collected by the old reporting system) highlighted a slight decrease in the number of total outbreaks reported; a reduction was observed in case of outbreaks with detailed dataset (strong evidence outbreaks in 2010 compared to 2009 verified outbreaks). Around one third (189) of the strong evidence outbreaks were supported only by the new evidence types (descriptive epidemiological evidence and detection in food chain). The 2010 data confirmed eggs and egg products as the most important food vehicle, and showed an increase in vegetable outbreaks in comparison with the previous year. It appeared that the new reporting system influenced the reporting of 2010 data and many Member States (MSs) changed the way to report their data. However, the impact of EU-FORS needs to be further examined once the 2011 FBO data are available and analyzed, since not all MSs were fully able to implement the EU-FORS for 2010 data.

## **5. Recommendations from the joint ECDC-EFSA network meeting on 27 October 2011 regarding food-borne outbreaks reporting – additional classification table – for discussion**

The chair summarised the recommendations from the joint network meeting of ECDC and EFSA held on 27 October 2011 in Rome. According to the recommendations, more information could be reported from FBOs with weak evidence or no suspected food vehicle as well as for international outbreaks. Moreover additional decision trees, classification tables and examples could be included in the technical specifications to guide the classification of the outbreaks. The Finnish classification table was briefly introduced by the Finnish TF member as a possible guide for outbreak categorisation. As a feed back on these recommendations, most of MSs informed that they did not have major problems with the implementation of the new reporting specifications. Few countries would like to have more details to be reported for weak outbreaks.

The European Commission (EC) informed the TF on the progress made with its call for tender regarding training on FBO investigation and management. The aim is to select a contractor this year and to start with the trainings in 2013, in the framework of Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF). The aim is to bring together national authorities both from the public health and food safety sectors.

## **6. ECDC: International outbreaks investigation in EU**

Johanna Takkinen from ECDC presented how international outbreaks are investigated at European Union (EU) level. Different threat detection channels are in place in the EU, including surveillance through The European Surveillance System (TESSy), event monitoring, the Early Warning and Response System (EWRS), the Food and Waterborne Disease (FWD) network in Epidemic Intelligence Information System (EPIS) and the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF). Within this context, the main role of ECDC is to provide background information, produce risk assessments, coordinate and support collaboration between MSs. Examples of multinational outbreaks investigated and facilitated through these systems were given.

It was concluded that good information exchange should be in place between different channels in order to identify outbreaks with EU dimension. In addition good collaboration between public health experts, food safety experts and veterinarians is essential as well as between international stakeholders. Results from molecular typing of the isolates from the human cases would be needed to detect early dispersed clusters and outbreaks.

It was suggested that summaries from the international outbreaks investigated or coordinated by ECDC or reference to them should be included in the European Union Summary Reports (EUSRs).

## **7. EFSA's Biological Hazard (BIOHAZ) panel's opinion on STEC and other pathogens in sprouts**

Maria Teresa da Silva Felício from the BIOHAZ Unit presented the main conclusions from the BIOHAZ opinion on risk posed by STEC and other pathogenic bacteria in seeds and sprouted seeds. A brief description of the EU sprouted seeds sector and production processes was given, including the differentiation between the types of sprouted seeds (sprouts, cress and shoots). The conclusions and recommendations for the Terms of Reference were presented, covering the assessment of the

public health risk caused by pathogenic bacteria in sprouted seeds, the identification of risk factors, possible specific mitigation options and potential microbiological criteria for seeds and sprouted seeds.

EC informed that it is considering some legislative proposals for these types of food, which could include possible microbiological criteria, requirements for establishment approval, rules for traceability of seeds and import conditions.

#### **8. EFSA's BIOHAZ panel's opinions on foodborne viruses**

Ernesto Liebana from the BIOHAZ Unit presented two BIOHAZ opinions on food-borne viruses. The first opinion covered a review of the available information in the scientific literature with regard to the biology, epidemiology, diagnosis and public health importance of food- and waterborne viruses; the identification of possible control options; and the establishment of food safety criteria for viruses for certain food categories. The second one addressed noroviruses in oysters, with particular attention for the use of real-time PCR as a means of detection and quantification; acceptable limits to consumers for noroviruses genogroups GI and GII; and post-harvest interventions able to reduce the contamination. Conclusions and recommendations for each Terms of Reference of the two opinions were summarised.

#### **9. Reporting guidelines for food-borne outbreak reporting for 2011 year data**

Valentina Rizzi explained briefly the changes implemented in the reporting of FBO data from year 2011 in comparison with 2010 data: in the "Food vehicle" pick list the term "Mixed and buffet meals" was split into two separated entries "Buffet meals" and "Mixed food". In addition, the field "Place of origin (of problem)" became a multiple choice field.

#### **10. EFSA's discussion forum for food-borne outbreak data reporting**

The chair informed about the available discussion forum tool on EFSA's Sciencenet. The MSs were invited to use it for discussing the interpretation of the FBO reporting rules, particularly related to the strength of evidence linking an outbreak to a particular food vehicle.

#### **11. Zoonoses Data Collection Framework (DCF) data models for electronic data transmissions of foodborne outbreak data**

Valentina Rizzi and Frank Boelaert explained the available ways of data submission to EFSA. Data can be submitted through the online zoonoses web application (manual data entry) and through the Data Collection Framework (DCF) (electronic transmission). The data models for electronic data submission were presented with regard to their structure, standard terminology, business rules and data submission formats supported (XML, CSV and Excel). Specific examples for FBO reporting were also given. The support provided by EFSA to the MSs for data submission through DCF includes training sessions, training videos, guidelines for using the data models, mapping tools and grants. In the mid-term future the zoonoses web application will not be supported anymore; therefore the reporting countries will have to move to DCF data transmission in the coming years.

## **12. EFSA's Grants in 2012 for XML, Excel and CSV data submissions and historical data update**

Valentina Rizzi and Frank Boelaert presented the new grant call under Article 36 was launched on 30 March 2012 to support MSs in submitting data compliant with EFSA data models and terminologies by XML, Excel or CSV formats, and in updating historical data. The call is available on EFSA website (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/art36grants/article36/gpefsabiomo201201.htm>). The deadline for application is 29 June 2012 and the grants are expected to start in September/October 2012.

## **13. On-hands Excel mapping exercise for electronic transmissions of food-borne outbreak data**

Kenneth Mulligan chaired an on-hands training session on mapping needed for electronic transmissions of FBO data by XML, Excel or CSV formats.

## **14. Discussion groups**

The participants were divided into two groups to discuss the following questions:

1. Possible problems encountered with the new food-borne outbreak reporting specification in reporting countries.
2. Possible relevant information lost regarding the outbreaks with weak evidence or no suspected food vehicle at EU level.
3. How to revise the food-borne outbreak reporting specifications?
4. Further classification of the outbreaks (Finnish example).
5. How to report international outbreak data?
6. Comments on the results of 2010 foodborne outbreak data and the type of analyses carried out (the slides).

The outcomes of the discussion groups were presented at the plenary meeting.

The Group 1 concluded that no major problems were encountered in the implementation of the new reporting system, even though the interpretation at national level might yet not already be fully aligned with EFSA specifications. To offer a wider range of choices, the term “sandwiches” could be added to the pick list “food vehicle”. In addition, more microbiological information (e.g. *Salmonella* serovars and phage types) on human clusters would be useful for weak evidence outbreaks. It was also pointed out that classification tables for the outbreaks (as the example provided by the Finnish representative) could be useful, but should be aligned with the EFSA specifications. The group agreed that better information for international outbreaks could be reported in free text field or using tick boxes; then it could be summarised in the EUSRs in specific text boxes where the collaboration between countries should be highlighted and references to ECDC related work included.

Group 2 reported back that the implementation of the new reporting system did not cause major problems at national level. Little information could be missed by the EU-FORS, but it could be captured through other systems: the first indication of a new possible vehicle could be collected in

EPIS; information on agent subtypes for human cases could be captured by ECDC's TESSy data collection. It would be useful to report whether more detailed information is available at national level and in which repository. It was also emphasised that more examples of "weak" or "strong" evidence outbreaks in the guidelines would be beneficial to guide the reporting. As for the Finnish table or similar categorisation tables, the group agreed that they could be a valid guide at national level, but only the final decision should be reported to EFSA. Regarding multinational outbreaks, it was suggested that information be reported in the field "Type of outbreak" using the new term "international". The group strongly supported the idea of information of international outbreaks to be summarised in the EUSRs with more reference to related information (ECDC's related work). Analysis suggested to be covered in future EUSRs include trends over time for variables other than pathogen (e.g. food vehicle and setting) and trends over time of number of cases per causative agent.

The general conclusion was that the new (since 2010) reporting system (EU-FORS) works generally well and that there would be no need for a major adjustment. However, some fine-tuning of the reporting specifications in light of the comments received would be welcome. The inclusion of more examples of "weak" or "strong" evidence outbreaks in the guidelines was supported by both discussion groups. The proposed amendments to the current FBO reporting specifications will be considered in autumn when 2011 data are analysed. EFSA plans to reconvene the previous WG on FBOs to discuss these issues.

Possible requests of support by the reporting countries in the 2011 data reporting should be addressed to the mailbox [zoonoses\\_support@efsa.europa.eu](mailto:zoonoses_support@efsa.europa.eu).

### **15. Any other business**

There was no other business.