

23 May 2024

09:00-13:00

Minutes agreed on 10 June 2024

Location: Online (MS Teams platform)

Attendees:

- o Network Participants:

Country	Organisation
Austria	Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety
Belgium	Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain and Environment
Belgium	SPF Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment
Bulgaria	The Stephan Angeloff Institute of Microbiology
Croatia	Croatian Agency for Agriculture and Food
Cyprus	State General Laboratory
Czech Republic	National Institute of Public Health
Czech Republic	State Veterinary Administration of the Czech Republic
Denmark	National Food Institute
Estonia	Estonian University of Life Sciences
Finland	Finnish Food Authority
Finland	Finnis Food Safety Authority EVIRA
France	French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES)
Germany	Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR)
Greece	Hellenic Food Authority (EFET)
Greece	Ministry of Rural Development and Food
Hungary	National Food Chain Safety Office
Ireland	Food Safety Authority of Ireland
Italy	Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS)
Italy	Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale di Abruzzo e Molise "G. Caporale"
Latvia	Institute of Food Safety, Animal Health and Environment "BIOR"
Lithuania	National Food and Veterinary Risk Assessment Institute
Malta	Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights
Netherlands	Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA)
Netherlands	RIVM
Norway	Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food Safety
Portugal	Autoridade de Seguranca Alimentar e Economica
Slovak Republic	Food Safety Authority- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development



Slovenia	MAFF: Administration for Food Safety, Veterinary Sector and Plant Protection
Slovenia	National Institute of Public Health
Spain	University of Cordoba
Sweden	Swedish Food Agency
Switzerland	Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office FSVO

- Observers:
Food Safety and Veterinary Institute (FSVI) (Albania); Food Safety Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Food and Veterinary Laboratory (Kosovo*); Diagnostic Veterinary Laboratory (Montenegro); Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Turkey).
- EFSA:
Angela Botteon; Maria Teresa da Silvia Felicio; Sonagnon Martin Goudjihounde, Beatriz Guerra Roman; Michaela Hempen; Ernesto Liebana Criado; Winy Messens; Maria Sanz Zapata; Martina Benedetta Zanna.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants from 24 Member States and Norway and Switzerland as well as observers from Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Turkey. Apologies were received from Lithuania and Romania.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Agreement of the minutes of the 23rd Network meeting of the MRA Network held on 4-5 October 2024, in Parma and online

The minutes of the 23rd Network meeting had been previously agreed by written procedure on 24 October 2023 and published on the EFSA website on 27 October 2023.¹

4. Risk profile of *Toxocara* spp in wild boar meat (FR)

Following the presence of *Toxocara* sp. larvae in wild boar carcasses, Anses established the risk profile of *Toxocara* sp. and the wild boar meat and assessed the effectiveness of carcass sanitizing treatments on the viability of the *Toxocara* sp. parasites, specifically freezing and cooking whether these treatments are performed by food sectors establishments or directly by consumers. It reached the conclusion that *Toxocara* spp. infect a wide range of animals, including domestic, companion, and wild species serving as definitive or paratenic hosts. The pathogen spreads through various transmission routes, with long-lived larvae and eggs that are

¹ [XXth Working Group meeting on \(europa.eu\)](#)



resistant to environmental conditions. However, toxocariasis risk from consumption of wild boar meat is not considered the primary route of exposure. In comparison to other parasites, *Toxocara spp.* do not appear to have significant intrinsic resistance to treatments aimed at eliminating parasites from wild boar meat. Such treatments, under specific conditions include cooking, freezing and salting.

5. Elaboration of a list of 'bacterial species/antibiotic resistance phenotype' combinations of priority interest in the control of the spread of antibiotic resistance from animals to humans (FR)

The three thematic questions were to establish a priority list of bacteria/antibiotic class combinations requiring priority monitoring in animals (livestock and pets), to describe of each bacteria/antibiotic class combination on the basis of available scientific knowledge (risk profiles) and to suggest control measures in the animal sector to reduce the transmission of AMR to humans. The bacteria/antibiotic class combination has led to the classification as high priority, priority and non-priority combinations. Enterobacterales/carbapenems was ranked as the highest priority combination. Regarding the risk profile, in France, animal exposure to antibiotics decreased by 52% between 2011 and 2022 and resistance of Enterobacterales to carbapenems remains sporadic in France, restricted to the presence of OXA-48-type carbapenemases in pets. Livestock and companion animals do not represent a major source for AMR transmission to humans. AMR dissemination occurs primarily via the human - human interface. Therefore, there is a need to adapt control measures to the specific situations, interests, and constraints of the various stakeholders.

6. A model to prioritise risk based sampling of imported foods at the border control post (NL)

This model uses data on import volumes of food, consumption data and burden of disease estimates (DALYs) to rank risk of pathogens in foods imported from countries outside the EU, to help inform sampling plans for imported foods. While the traditional inspection of imported foods focuses on a narrow list of pathogens (*STEC*, *Salmonella*, *Listeria*), and is incident driven, the proposed model has the advantages of ranking the burden of disease (Daly per year) for multiple pathogen-product-country combinations imported into the Netherlands, with a broad scope in pathogens, in food products, considering import from all countries and the disease burden from sporadic cases.

7. Salmonella in the Dutch egg chain: two recent outbreaks (*S. Virchow* and *S. Enteritidis*) (NL)

There were two notable *Salmonella* outbreaks involving the poultry sector. The first case is a *Salmonella* Virchow outbreak linked to poultry meat which has started in 2020, with the cluster linked to a feed producer. The second case is *Salmonella* Enteritidis outbreak linked to eggs in 2023, with contaminated eggshells for feed as main source. The outbreak investigation started in July 2023 and ended in February



2024 with no link found from patients to positive farms. These two outbreaks showed that the distribution of Salmonella via feed can increase Salmonella pressure sufficiently to lead to an active outbreak among humans (despite Salmonella legislation downstream). In addition, each step in the poultry chain has/can have significant effect on lowering outbreak risk. Early contact/cooperation between teams within authorities working on different phases of the feed/food chain can speed up outbreak investigation.

8. Field study regarding verification sampling in the egg chain as part of the Salmonella National Control Plan (NL)

Before 2020, the Dutch Competent Authority (NVWA) routinely conducted verification sampling in the SNCP. With sometimes negative results (no Salmonella detected) as the outcome. This raised the question whether the sampling conducted in the routine monitoring (conducted by the FBO) was false-positive, or that the sampling protocol as previously performed for verification purposes is not sufficiently sensitive to detect all Salmonella infections at flock level. To safeguard public health, but at the same time limit the consequences of false-positive results (including unnecessary culling of animals), the Netherlands started a field study (with approval of the EC) in August 2023 to validate positive results from samplings performed by the FBO in order to determine the true Salmonella status of flocks for which the FBO samplings were reported positive for the presence of Salmonella. Preliminary results of data collected from a 9-months period (1/7/2023 – 1/4/2024) are available.

9. Microbiological quality of bottled water used for preparation of infant formula (DE)

Infants are extremely vulnerable regarding (foodborne) infections. BfR recommends using boiled water for the preparation of powdered infant formula for children during their first months of life. Mineral water is not mentioned in the recommendations. Microbiological requirements for bottled water according to national law were presented. In Germany, water labelled as "suitable for the preparation of infant formula" is marketed. The participants were asked whether they could provide information about recommendations in other countries on: 1) which water (mineral, table or tap water) is recommended for preparing infant formula?, 2) Is boiling water recommended for preparation? If yes: for which water (any water, mineral water, table water, tap water)? And 3) Is there water on the market that is labelled "suitable for preparing infant formula"? If yes: are there legal requirements for such labelling (containing microbiological criteria)? Several countries provided information following this request.

10. One Health approach to investigate BoNT-producing bacteria contamination levels from farm to fork (Tailor-made activity)(FR/IT)



This project proposes the first monitoring at the EU level to get data on the prevalence of BoNT-producing organisms, using the One Health approach. This project aims to generate data and scientific evidence on the prevalence of BoNT-producing bacteria; to improve scientific collaboration among Member States regarding human and animal botulism; to provide data on the microbiological quality of food of animal and vegetable origin, especially for risk assessment regarding RTE foods and REPFEDs. The consortium includes 13 partners from 9 Member States and 2 IPA countries. The project duration is 24 months and tasks to be carried out include protocol establishment and dissemination, sample collection and analysis, evaluation of Shotgun metagenomics, data processing and project management and dissemination.

11. *E. coli* in plant based milk alternatives – examples from official food control (AT)

Plant-based milk alternatives are getting popularity because of the changes in consumer preferences. On the market, there are different types of ready-to-eat products: e.g. 'milk-', 'cheese-', 'yoghurt'-alternatives, which are made from various raw materials (e.g. grain, legumes, nuts, ...), mainly by small-scale producers. The official food control of cashew-based drinks (type 'mango lassi' and type 'buttermilk') revealed the presence of *E. coli* and Enterobacteriaceae above the acceptable threshold.

12. Update on Tailor-Made Activity on Plant based dairy and meat substitute (IE)

The objectives of this project are to determine the microbiological quality of ready-to-eat plant-based dairy and meat substitutes at the end of the foods labelled shelf-life duration; to generate relevant prevalence data that can be used for future microbial risk assessment of these products; to collaborate with other Member States in order to generate relevant scientific evidence; and to raise awareness regarding the possible food safety risks for consumers of RTE plant-based dairy and meat substitutes. The project duration is 12 months, and it is expected to start in January 2025 if funded. Ireland is leading the project along with 14 participating Member States.

13. Update on BIOHAZ Panel activities

The EFSA BIOHAZ Team presented ongoing and completed activities.

Ongoing activities:

- Carbapenemase-producers in food-producing animals (EFSA-Q-2024-00149)
Deadline: 30 June 2027 (1st opinion Dec. 2024, 2nd June 2027)
- Request for scientific and technical assistance regarding the impact of the proposed revised Australia's microbiological monitoring programme for beef



- and sheep meat exported to the EU (EFSA-Q-2023-00058), **Deadline:** 30 June 2024
- Request for a re-evaluation of EFSA Scientific Opinion of April 2010 on risk assessment of parasites in fishery products based on new scientific data – addressing terms of reference 4 (EFSA-Q-2023-00172), **Deadline:** 31 December 2024
 - Self-task mandate of the BIOHAZ panel on the public health aspects of *Vibrio spp.* related to the consumption of seafood in the EU (EFSA-Q-2022-00826), **Deadline:** 30 June 2024
 - Request for a scientific opinion on the potential BSE risk posed by ruminant collagen and gelatine other than derived from hides and skins (EFSA-Q-2023-00105), **Deadline:** 30 September 2024
 - Self-task mandate on microbial hazards associated with the use of water in the handling and processing operations of fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables and herbs (ffFVHs). **Deadline:** 31 December 2024

Completed activities:

- Re-evaluation of certain aspects of the EFSA Scientific Opinion of April 2010 on risk assessment of parasites in fishery products, based on new scientific data. Part 1: ToRs1–3 (EFSA-Q-2023-00090) <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2024.8719>
- Persistence of microbiological hazards in food and feed production and processing environments (EFSA-Q-2022-00217) <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2024.8521>
- Microbiological hazards associated with the use of water in the post-harvest handling and processing operations of fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables and herbs (ffFVHs). Part 1 (outbreak data analysis, literature review and stakeholder questionnaire) (EFSA-Q-2021-00374) <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2023.8332>
- Update of the list of qualified presumption of safety (QPS) recommended microbiological agents intentionally added to food or feed as notified to EFSA 19: Suitability of taxonomic units notified to EFSA until September 2023 (EFSA-Q-2021-00771) <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2024.8517>

Any Other Business

The next MRA network meeting is planned for 8/9 October 2024 in Parma.