

12-13 June 2024

09:00-17:15 / 09:00-15:00

MINUTES - Agreed on 28 June 2024

**Location:** Parma

**Attendees:**

○ Panel Members:

Ana Allende, Avelino Alvarez-Ordóñez (attending by Web-conference), Declan Bolton, Sara Bover-Cid, Marianne Chemaly, Alessandra De Cesare, Lieve Herman, Friederike Hilbert, Konstantinos Koutsoumanis, Roland Lindqvist, Maarten Nauta, Romolo Nonno, Giuseppe Ru, Luisa Peixe, Marion Simmons, Panagiotis Skandamis, Elisabetta Suffredini

○ Hearing Experts<sup>1</sup>:

None

○ European Commission and/or Member States representatives:

None

○ EFSA:

Angela Botteon, Sandra Correia, Maria Teresa Da Silva Felicio, Sofia Fusco, Martin Goudjihounde, Beatriz Guerra, Michaela Hempen, Ernesto Liebana, Winy Messens, Angel Ortiz-Peláez, Mirko Rossi, Eleonora Sarno, Pietro Stella, Frank Verdonck (BIOHAW Unit)

Laura Martino (MESE Unit) (item 5.3)

○ Others:

None

## 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

## 2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

## 3. Declarations of Interest

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence<sup>2</sup> and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management,<sup>3</sup> EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Panel members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

<sup>1</sup> As defined in Article 34 of the Decision of the Executive Director concerning the selection of members of the Scientific Committee, the Scientific Panels, and the selection of external experts to assist EFSA with its scientific work: <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/expertselection.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate\\_publications/files/policy\\_independence.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/policy_independence.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate\\_publications/files/competing\\_interest\\_management\\_17.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/competing_interest_management_17.pdf)



## 4. Agreement of the minutes of the 169<sup>th</sup> Panel Plenary meeting held on 29-30 April 2024

The minutes of the 169<sup>th</sup> Panel plenary meeting were agreed by written procedure on 16 May 2024.

## 5. Scientific output(s) submitted for adoption/endorsement

### 5.1 Statement on the update of the list of QPS-recommended biological agents intentionally added to food or feed as notified to EFSA. 20: Suitability of taxonomic units notified to EFSA until March 2024 ([EFSA-Q-2021-00772](#))

Last WG meeting on 7 May in Parma. Eight-four notifications were received between October and March 2023 (inclusive): 48 as feed additives, 25 as food enzymes, food additives and flavourings, 11 as novel foods and none as PPPs. From these 84, 27 were not evaluated because belong to taxonomic units excluded from the QPS evaluation (15 filamentous fungi, 1 *Enterococcus faecium*, 10 *E. coli* and 1 *Streptomyces aureofaciens*), and 49 belong to taxonomic units that already have a QPS status. From the remaining 8 notifications, 2 are non-QPS but were just evaluated for a possible QPS status: *Serratia marcescens* and *Weizmannia faecalis*. One was notified at genus level so cannot be assessed for the QPS status. The other 5 will be evaluated for a possible QPS status: *Akkermansia muciniphila*, *Microbacterium arborescens*, *Rhizobium radiobacter* (synonym *Agrobacterium radiobacter*), *Actinomadura roseirufa* and *Burkholderia stagnalis*. The nomenclature of bacteria, yeast, algae, protists, and viruses present in the QPS list were checked against their respective authoritative databases to verify the correctness of the names and completeness of synonyms. A few TUs names were corrected, some synonyms removed and many added. A chapter describing what was done and will be done was included in the Panel Statement. It was decided to add a table with all the TUs excluded from the QPS exercise until now. The WG considered the document ready. The Panel statement was adopted by BIOHAZ Panel.

### 5.2 Scientific opinion on the public health aspects of *Vibrio* spp. related to the consumption of seafood in the EU ([EFSA-Q-2022-00826](#))

The last WG meeting was held on 16 and 21 May by web-conference. The comments from the BIOHAZ Panel were discussed during this last WG meeting and the scientific opinion was finalised. The revised draft scientific opinion was shared with the BIOHAZ Panel for possible adoption. The WG Chair went through the various comments requiring a discussion with the BIOHAZ panel, and the presented answers to the terms of reference (ToRs), recommendations and abstract. The scientific opinion was adopted by the BIOHAZ Panel.

### 5.3 Scientific report of EFSA on the impact of the proposed revised Australia's microbiological monitoring programme for beef and sheep meat exported to the EU ([EFSA-Q-2023-00058](#))

The WG chair presented the changes to the draft report addressing the comments from the Panel members. A conclusion was added on the total number of alerts for APC/*E. coli* and *Salmonella* in the proposed compared to the current monitoring programme. Abstract and Summary were modified accordingly. The scientific report was endorsed by the BIOHAZ Pnel.

### 5.4 Scientific opinion on the potential BSE risk posed by ruminant collagen and gelatine other than derived from hides and skins ([EFSA-Q-2023-00105](#))

The WG Chair presented the draft opinion for possible adoption. The WG Chair went through the comments submitted to the opinion before the plenary. Some paragraphs of the answers to the ToR had been amended prior to the plenary taking on board the comments received,



mainly on the wording of uncertainty in the conclusions. Some additional comments were addressed during the plenary. The scientific opinion was adopted by the BIOHAZ Panel.

## 6. Scientific Output submitted for discussion

### 6.1 Scientific opinion on the update of the list of QPS-recommended biological agents intentionally added to food or feeds as notified to EFSA ([EFSA-Q-2023-00054](#))

Last meeting was held on 7 May in Parma. During such WG meeting, the chapters on taxonomy, safety concerns and postbiotics were discussed by the experts. The other chapters were not discussed as there were no substantial changes since the previous meeting. They will be further developed and discussed during the next WG meeting on 2 September. The WG Chair presented the chapter on postbiotics to the Panel. Further request for clarification and suggestions were added to the WG. The deadline for adoption of the Scientific Opinion is 31 December 2025.

### 6.2 Scientific opinion on microbiological hazards associated with the use of water in postharvest handling and processing operations of fresh and frozen fruits, vegetables and herbs – parts 2-5 ([EFSA-Q-2023-00073](#), [EFSA-Q-2023-00074](#), [EFSA-Q-2023-00075](#) and [EFSA-Q-2023-00076](#)), including associated outsourcing activities (OC/EFSA/BIOCONTAM/2021/02)

The last WG meeting took place on 21-22 May 2024. The WG Chair presented the preliminary drafts of the “Fresh-cut FVHs sector-specific” and the “Frozen FVHs sector-specific” opinions, addressing only the most important comments received from the Panel on the current drafts. The WG Chair informed the Panel that the final deliverables from the WASHTOP tender are still undergoing various rounds of review between EFSA and WASHTOP in order to achieve the final approval of all files by 3 July. This means that thereafter all the graphs included in the opinions based on WASHTOP data need to be generated again with the final updated dataset. The simulation modeling for all relevant scenario groups across the opinions also needs to be rerun with the updated model R code. The Panel was also informed that EFSA Staff from MESE Unit agreed to try to develop a multivariate logistic regression model (using the whole WASHTOP dataset) as an alternative which differs from the current univariate ODDs ratio approach. The aim is to explore a statistically more accurate approach, which would reduce the risk of reaching conclusions that are biased. The next WG meeting will be in Parma on 3 July. The deadline for the adoption of the three sector-specific scientific opinions (Fresh-whole, Fresh-cut and Frozen FVHs) and the “Model” scientific opinion is 31 December 2024.

### 6.3 Guidance on the submission of data for the evaluation of the safety and efficacy of substances for the removal of microbial surface contamination of foods of animal origin ([EFSA-Q-2024-00020](#))

The BIOHAZ Panel was informed that WG meetings were held on 15 and 28 May to discuss the work related to the self-tasking mandate for a revision of the Guidance document on the submission of data for the evaluation of the safety and efficacy of substances for the removal of microbial surface contamination of foods of animal origin intended for human consumption<sup>4</sup>. The WG vice-chair introduced the sections dealing with biological agents, presented the revisions made in the section dealing with the efficacy of the substance in removing microbial surface contamination of foods and in the section dealing with the potential occurrence of acquired reduced susceptibility to biocides and/or resistance to therapeutic antimicrobials

<sup>4</sup> <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2024-00020>



induced by the substance. The next WG meetings will be held on 6 September 2024 by web-conference. The current deadline for adoption by the CEP Panel is end of March 2025.

**6.4 Scientific opinion on a 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 – addressing term of reference 4 ([EFSA-Q-2023-00172](#))**

The WG presented the approaches to answer the term of reference 4 by identifying the relevant fish species, parasites of public health importance and the fishing grounds (marine, brackish, and fresh water). The suggested approach consists of screening literature on all FAO fishing grounds for an agreed list of zoonotic parasites and then link it to the most consumed fish species in the EU. The next WG meeting will take place on 15 July 2024. The deadline for the adoption of this second Part is 31 December 2024.

**6.5 Request for a scientific opinion on the equivalence of an alternative heat treatment process of feathers and down ([EFSA-Q-2024-00169](#))**

The first WG meeting was held on 13 May. The WG chair presented the mandate and its background to the Panel: the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) asked the EC to assess an alternative method for the export of treated feathers to the EU. In the sequence of this request, the EC requested EFSA to provide a scientific opinion concerning the equivalence of the heat treatment process of feathers and down consisting of dry heat to a temperature of 100°C or higher for at least thirty (30) minutes, with the treatment set up in Chapter VII, Point C of Annex XIII to Regulation (EU) No 142/2011, in terms of inactivation of relevant pathogens. The latter defines an end point for feathers and down which have been factory-washed and treated with hot steam at 100°C for at least 30 minutes. The WG chair also presented the proposed approach/draft protocol to tackle the ToR: an ELS will be launched with focus on dry heat treatment. Experts will then analyse the evidence retrieved, assess the level of reduction achieved for each of the relevant pathogens and conclude on the equivalence between the proposed and standard methods. Comments and suggestions were received by the Panel to the WG. After revising the draft protocol, a new version will be shared with the Panel to be approved by written procedure [*the protocol was approved by written procedure by the Panel on 28 June 2024*]. The deadline for this opinion is 31 January 2025.

**6.6 Self-task mandate of the BIOHAZ panel on the current status of the occurrence and spread of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales in the food chain in the EU/EFTA ([EFSA-Q-2024-00149](#))**

The EFSA BIOHAW Unit updated the Panel on the establishment of the WG dealing with this mandate. The first scientific opinion presenting the state of the art on the topic is expected by March 2025. A Monopole Framework Partnership Agreement with EU and National Reference Laboratories on antimicrobial resistance will be in place for the production of data related to the definition of testing protocols, for the performance of epidemiological investigations and for the performance of genetic analyses of relevant resistant isolates (2024-2026). One or more additional scientific opinions reviewing and analysing the results of the studies performed are expected by June 2027.

**6.7 Request for a scientific opinion on the presence of biological and chemical hazards in ash from Category 1 material after incineration, co-incineration, and combustion ([EFSA-Q-2024-00278](#))**

EFSA informed the Panel about the composition of the working group that will be addressing this mandate. In consultation with the Panel Chair, and as an update since the previous plenary meeting, it was decided that Romolo Nonno, new member of the EFSA WG on



applications for alternative methods of use or disposal of animal by-products or derived products, will be chairing the meetings related to this WG. The first meeting of the working group will take place in early July. The deadline for the delivery of the first scientific opinion is 30 April 2025.

## 7. New mandates

### 7.1 Application for alternative processing method for animal by-products: alkaline hydrolysis under atmospheric pressure ([EFSA-Q-2024-00286](#))

EFSA described briefly the characteristics of the proposed alternative method: material to be treated, intended use and main parameters. After informing the Panel and in consultation with the BIOHAZ Panel Chair, it was decided that Avelino Alvarez-Ordóñez, chair of the EFSA WG on applications for alternative methods of use or disposal of animal by-products or derived products, will be chairing the meetings related to this mandate. Then EFSA informed the Panel about the composition of the working group, in agreement with the WG Chair, and of the EFSA decision to offer a service agreement to the contractor for the support in the production of this scientific opinion. The application is still undergoing the completeness check and the six-month evaluation period has not started yet. The applicant will be contacted by 17 June for a request for additional information. The dossier is not expected to be accepted before end of July.

## 8. Feedback from the Scientific Committee, other Scientific Panels, EFSA and the European Commission

### 8.1 Scientific Committee

The BIOHAZ Panel Chair indicated that no items of specific relevance for the BIOHAZ Panel were discussed at the last meeting of the Scientific Committee, which took place on 29-30 May 2024<sup>5</sup>.

### 8.2 European Commission

EFSA Staff from the BIOHAW Unit updated the Panel on the last updated information received from the European Commission (DG SANTE) about upcoming mandates in the area of biological hazards. Possible mandates are expected in the next months in the fields of food hygiene and animal-by products.

### 8.3 Rapid Outbreak Assessments and related activities

EFSA staff from the BIOHAW Unit presented the latest published report on the assessment of a prolonged multi-country outbreak of *Listeria monocytogenes* ST1607 linked to smoked salmon products. The event background was followed by the description of the food investigation and the joint EFSA-ECDC assessment<sup>6</sup>.

### 8.4 EFSA Guidance on the risk assessment of microorganisms used in the food chain ([EFSA-Q-2022-00249](#))

The Chair of the QPS WG Lieve Herman presented the main changes made in the guidance in response to the comments received from the BIOHAZ Panel/QPS WG, during the last FEED

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/it/events/119th-plenary-meeting-scientific-committee>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/supporting/pub/en-8810>



Micro WG hold on 13 May 2024. The guidance will be endorsed by the different and relevant ASSESS Panels before the final endorsement by the Scientific Committee before the public consultation foreseen in the last quarter of 2024.

### **8.5 Update on the activities of the EFSA Scientific Network on MRA**

The last MRA network meeting was held on 23 May 2024, with participants from 24 Member States, Norway and Switzerland as well as observers from Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Turkey. The agenda items were presented to the panel were introduced to the panel.<sup>7</sup> The next meeting of the MRA network is planned for 8/9 October 2024.

## **9. Other topics for information and/or discussion**

### **9.1 Implementation of the guidance on uncertainty analysis in scientific assessments**

BIOHAZ Panel member Maarten Nauta presented to the Panel a revised version of the draft BIOHAZ-specific practical guide to the implementation of uncertainty analysis in BIOHAZ assessments. The document provides some background and tools that aim to support the 2024-2029 BIOHAZ Panel in the implementation of EFSA's uncertainty guidance, based on the experience in the 2018-2024 BIOHAZ Panel and the typical terms of reference of mandates in the area of biological hazards. It should be regarded as a practical internal working guide to be used on voluntary basis and a BIOHAZ Panel-specific complement to the EFSA uncertainty guidances, not as a modification or replacement of these guidelines. The Panel discussed the document and agreed on its final version.

### **9.2 Topics of scientific concern in the area of biological hazards and preparedness**

No specific topics were raised by BIOHAZ Panel members or EFSA staff.

## **10. Any other business**

EFSA Staff informed the Panel about the recent nomination of Bernhard Url as EFSA Acting Executive Director, effective from 1 June 2024, while the recruitment process for EFSA's next Executive Director, due to be completed in 2025, moves forward.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/24th-meeting-efsa-network-microbiological-risk-assessment>