



ANNOTATED AGENDA

Expert group on bee health

13 January 2017, 10.00-18.00

Conference Centre Albert Borschette – Rue Froissart 36 – Bruxelles, CCAB-2B

DRAFT AGENDA

Introduction, opening: SANTE Unit G2

Session 1: small hive beetle (SHB) situation in the EU

1. Information on SHB aspects of audit DG(SANTE)2016-8759: Italy and bee health (SANTE F2)
2. Information from Italy on SHB
3. Exchange of views, discussion and roundtable with MS

Lunch break

Session 2: Intra-EU trade and import EU rules for honey bees and bumble bees (and beyond)

4. Information on the context and details of future work under the EU Animal Health Law (SANTE G2)
5. Information on fact-finding bee health audits in Austria, Romania, Spain and Italy (SANTE F2)
6. Exchange of views, discussion and roundtable with MS on selected bee health issues

NOTES

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Aims of the working group meeting

The purpose of the meeting is to provide for a focused exchange of views, experience and good practices among officials of the Member States (MS) responsible for bee health policy development and implementation, on various aspects. Our objective is that the exchanges during the meeting will help the MS to learn together for the best implementation of existing rules (and beyond). It will provide also feedback to the Commission on the perceived state of art of the EU policy (and beyond). As such, it will facilitate its improvement via further dedicated work.

In particular, outcomes from the discussions may be channelled towards, and used later on, in the context of the animal health section of the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (PAFF)¹ and/or during further Commission work towards delegated acts under the EU Animal Health Law (AHL)². Nevertheless, this meeting is neither a working group of the Standing Committee on PAFF, nor a dedicated meeting on delegated acts for the AHL. It is simply meant to cater for more thorough and technical discussions by experienced bee health policy officials on a variety of issues, than could be done in either forum.

This meeting is based on two pillars:

1. Exchange of views on the EU's small hive beetle (*Aethina tumida*, SHB) situation and on the EU and national responses
2. A look on the current EU rules on trade and import of honey and bumblebees and see their fitness with the view to improve them in the future

These notes provide background information on the current situation, on what has been done or is planned at EU level concerning these two pillars and to ask relevant questions to explore their various aspects. MS delegates are asked to complement this effort by coming prepared and to scrutinise beforehand their rules, practices and experiences from these specific angles.

These notes frame the majority of the discussions during the meeting. They are not all-inclusive though. If MS delegates feel that important element(s) have been omitted, feel free to raise those either during the meeting, before or after. Should you have any relevant documents, data etc. feel free to bring them along. Similarly, if you have any questions or want to send written comments, either before or after the meeting, please e-mail to to laszlo.kuster@ec.europa.eu with copy to pierangelo.bernorio@ec.europa.eu (DG SANTE Unit G2, Animal health and welfare).

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/health/regulatory_committee/index_en.htm

² http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2016.084.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:L:2016:084:TOC

Session 1 SHB situation in the EU

SHB was a pest absent from the EU until it was detected in Calabria and Sicily regions, Italy, in 2014. While one outbreak also in Sicily was detected at an early stage, and surveillance failed to show any further infestation, the pest is still present in Calabria. The Italian competent authority employed an eradication plan based on the destruction of infected apiaries and extensive active surveillance efforts, including the use of sentinel hives both in the protection and surveillance zones and outside of those. They provide up-to-date information on the outbreaks on their home page³. Outbreaks in Calabria have been largely limited to the original protection zone, except for several recent clustered outbreaks ca. 100 km away, thought to be due to illegal movement of colonies by a non-registered beekeeper (official investigation still pending).

Information is provided also by the EURL for bee health on its page⁴. On the same page leaflets on SHB in all EU languages and guidelines for the surveillance of SHB is also provided, the latter developed under the umbrella of the EURL with the participation of the experts from several bee health NRLs. A dedicated workshop on 22-23 Sept 2014 at the EURL in Sophia-Antipolis on SHB recognition, control and surveillance also took place. During the last annual meeting of the EUR with NRLs on 3 October 2016 practical aspects of fight against SHB also featured on the agenda (e.g. traps, example of the USA). Several MS indicated development of national plans to fight SHB.

The SHB situation was subject of several presentations and subsequent discussions in the Standing Committee on PAFF⁵ on various aspects, (such as handling the outbreaks, considerations for surveillance, implementation of those etc.). Nevertheless these exchanges were limited due to constricting factors (available time, expertise etc.). In this context Commission Implementing Decision 2014/909/EU⁶ was adopted restricting intra-EU movement of live bees and other commodities from infected areas. Its application (as last amended) is due to cease on 31 March 2017.

The Commission has been advising the MSs and stakeholders to give priority to preventing spread of SHB, with any measure they deem feasible: e.g. enhanced import and movement controls, develop and implement national responses, private initiatives etc.. The importance of making aware stakeholders, especially beekeepers, to the risks of SHB in general, and risks of non-compliance with EU safeguard rules in particular, was also highlighted⁷. Unit F2 of DG SANTE conducted a fact-finding audit in Italy earlier this year (report 2016-8759⁸) with valuable lessons learned and be shared⁹.

³ <http://www.izsvenezie.it/aethina-tumida-in-italia/>

⁴ <https://sites.anses.fr/en/minisite/abeilles/free-access-documents-0>

⁵ 19 Sept, 6-7 Oct, 3-4 and 13 Nov 2014, 16-17 April, 6 May 2015, 7 Oct 2015, 3-4 May, 13 Sept 2016

⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1478511614111&uri=CELEX:02014D0909-20151029>

⁷ According to EFSA the natural spread of SHB is slow hence man-mediated movements (e.g. via infected colonies) are key

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/audit_reports/details.cfm?rep_id=3700

⁹ Other recent DG SANTE audits on bee health:

Spain (2014-7053): http://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/audit_reports/details.cfm?rep_id=3394 ,

Romania (2015-7566): http://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/audit_reports/details.cfm?rep_id=3489

As a robust scientific basis for all, EFSA produced first a scientific report¹⁰ and later a more comprehensive scientific opinion¹¹. As there are no EU rules on the eradication and control of SHB, the role of the Commission is limited essentially to ensure regionalisation of infected areas and to ensure safe trade. But it also includes technical support and collection and distribution of information, such as best practices. Member States, including Italy, are relatively free to decide their course of action. It can happen that even within one MS several stakeholder opinions exist on the best handling of various aspects of SHB. The Commission runs a Better Training for Safer Food training module on bee health since 2010, with increased emphasis on SHB, since it appeared in the EU:

Overall, the Italian measures to the outbreaks represented first of their kind (even on global level) in many aspects, i.e. when a veterinary authority makes significant efforts to eradicate SHB. There is only limited amount of validated and comprehensive information or benchmark available on the most effective methods and the best course of action, while the Italian authorities acquired valuable knowledge and experience throughout the last two years. There may even also be limiting factors from other EU and national rules on the area of biocides legislation¹² (availability of disinfectants for use in soil, chemicals for traps etc.) and veterinary medicines¹³ (availability thereof against SHB, cascade use etc.) or residue rules.

SHB has the potential to become established in Italy, despite of the significant efforts to eradicate it. If so, it also becomes a more imminent threat for the other MS. In this context it is a common interest to try to learn from the Italian example as much as possible while Italy should be given due assistance by expert peer review and advice by other Member States.

Potential questions to be discussed:

- Has any national response been considered to prevent the spread of SHB in case of introduction? What?
- If so, has any formal or informal surveillance, movement control, and/or contingency plan been developed and/or implemented?
- How do you include stakeholders (especially beekeepers) into preparation, decisions, implementation? How confident would you be of their adherence to the plan?
- To what extent do your plans follow EURL guidelines on surveillance?
- To what extent do your actions follow EFSA report and opinion?
- Would your country attempt eradicate SHB if it occurred? Do you have a suitable legal and financial framework that would cover it?
- What are the thresholds or criteria to decide so (especially if not attempted)?
- To what extent your actions would be comparable to those of Italy?
- Do you need further explanation and clarification of Italian measures?
- Do you see ways to improve Italian measures?
- What is the radius of your foreseen SHB protection zone (20 km, 10, other)?
- What is the radius of your foreseen SHB surveillance zone (100 km, other) ?
- Did you include an analysis of the consequences of a prolonged restriction in a protection zone on the sustainability of beekeeping activities (transhumance, need for pollination,...)

¹⁰ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/4048>

¹¹ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/4328>

¹² Regulation (EU) No 528/2012

¹³ Directive 2001/82/EC, chiefly Art 11

- Would you have different approaches within the same country, depending on epidemiological circumstances (e.g. protection zones with different radius, etc.)?
- Would you have different approaches between apiaries with colonies and others (e.g. queen breeders)?
- Did you develop specific conditions for movement of equipment or apiculture products? If so, and how do you foresee their control and the implementation/enforcement of those rules?
- Would you have an exit strategy after seemingly successful eradication attempts by destruction of infected apiaries (e.g. length of time to sustain restrictions, eligibility for freedom)?
- Would you have an exit strategy from eradication attempts in case SHB becomes endemic?
- Do you have a specific strategy to address non-compliances and/or illegal activities?
- Have EU support actions been useful (EURL, guidelines, leaflets, EFSA, BTSF, etc.)?
- Was your contingency etc. plan subject to external review? Do you think this would be useful? On what aspects?

Session 2

Intra-EU trade and import EU rules for honey bees and bumble bees (and beyond)

Current rules for trade on honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) and bumble bees (*Bombus* spp.) are laid down in Directive 92/65/EEC while import rules are contained in Regulation (EC) No 206/2010. Both are being reviewed and will be repealed as of 20 April 2021 due to the new Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council. This EU Animal Health Law is a streamlined single text replacing many current EU rules. It was adopted earlier this year, published, and entered into force on 20 April. It will become applicable on 21 April 2021. In the meantime delegated Commission acts to supplement it with practical details will have to be adopted by 20 April 2019. Implementing Commission acts (e.g. for certificates, lists, forms etc.) will also complement the basic rule and the delegated acts.

Differently from the traditional approach in current Directive 92/65/EEC (i.e. regulating commodities, based on agreed ad-hoc scientific input or international standards), the AHL foresees first to establish the list of diseases eligible for EU intervention ("listed diseases"). Currently there is already a list in its Annex II, based on a political agreement between the European Parliament and Council, that the Commission must review until April 2019. There are no bee diseases on that list. As a second step the AHL foresees that appropriate disease control measures are assigned to listed diseases (categorisation) and in the third step relevant species of animals are added (e.g. susceptible).

In practice a thorough assessment is planned for many diseases currently appearing in EU rules, also beyond the ones in Annex II of the AHL. This assessment is done either fully internally by the Commission or with the help of EFSA and/or the relevant EURLs. The assessment follows a set of criteria laid down in Article 5(3) of the AHL, using the assessment parameters in Article 7 and the assignment of control measures will follow the criteria in Annex IV. Details of the assessments will be shared with MS at a later stage. In this context the Commission is currently assessing SHB, *Tropilaelaps* spp, varroasis and American foulbrood as priority. Results of those assessments cannot be speculated yet, these diseases may or may not be added to the list in Annex II of the AHL.

The Commission currently does not plan to assess European foulbrood and acariasis as a priority. It means that these will not be proposed to be added to the list of diseases in Annex II of the AHL in the first round. Consequently these will not feature in the relevant delegated and implementing rules to be proposed for the trade of honey bees and bumble bees either. This is mainly due to the no or limited use of the possibilities for the relevant additional guarantees until now. Prioritisation of work is also necessary due to the limited resources of the Commission, also in line with President Juncker's political priorities for EU jobs and growth. Of course, either of these (or others) can be assessed at a later stage. Indeed, the list of Annex II of AHL is meant to be dynamic and changed, according to changing needs and circumstances.

Pending the results of this exercise, in addition, implementation of the current EU rules for trade and import of honey bees and bumble bees brought up several issues which merit further consideration. Parallel to that possible developments of the honey bee and the bumble bee sector may also necessitate a fine-tuning of the rules so those would remain fit, also for future challenges (e.g. the continuing presence of SHB in the EU).

Potential topics to be considered and discussed may be:

Bumble bees:

- Bumblebees are not susceptible to American foulbrood (ref. OIE Code), still the AFB requirements apply also to them in the certificate of Part 2 of Annex E of Directive 92/65/EEC and in Regulation (EC) No 206/2010 (Model QUE in Annex IV). Do you have a comment on that?
- Are current EU rules in general fit for the industrial production and trade of bumblebees?

American foulbrood:

- Most EU MS seem to destroy affected hives, not necessarily the whole apiary after AFB outbreaks. What is the situation in your country?
- What are the deadlines for restrictions after AFB outbreaks in your country?
- Are you aware of AFB outbreaks associated with previous cross-border movements of honey bee colonies? If so, please share details.
- What are your experiences with implementing and certifying measures around the restricted apiary? Do you consider that your system for identification and movement of hives and apiaries provides with a robust enough basis for such certification?
- What are your experiences with compliance by beekeepers with restrictions, notification obligation, etc.?
- Experienced beekeepers may suspect the disease based on clinical signs, and destroy affected hives without reporting. To what extent do you think the AFB rules affect the compliance with notification requirements?

SHB:

- In the intra-EU trade certificate 100 km in radius is required for absence of SHB and *Tropilaelaps* spp. This corresponds to the expected area of surveillance. Do you consider that fit for purpose?
- How do you see the feasibility of the above 100 km rule in case of multiple outbreaks on SHB in several locations, possibly countries?

- EFSA assessed that while honey bee queen breeding establishments cannot be considered differently from a normal apiary from SHB risk point of view, tighter veterinary controls could be considered for the sending of queen honey bees, even from SHB infected areas. Do you have a comment and/or suggestion on that?
- Do you have any experience with the queen market in the EU? How do you handle its specificities? E.g. are you aware of and how do you control packages sent via post?
- Should the requirements on visual inspection of consignments be more specific?
- What practical experience do you have in the application of the post-import control rules in Article 13 of Regulation (EC) No 206/2010? Do you consider these current rules fit for purpose?

Development of the bee sector and bees related trade:

- Are you importing bee species other than *Apis mellifera* and *Bombus* spp. under national rules (e.g *Apis cerana*, solitary bees, Africanized bees etc.)? If so, please share details (requirements, volume other characteristics, etc.).
- Do you foresee increase of temporary cross-border movements of honeybee colonies (transhumance either for honey production or to provide pollination services)?
- If so, what do you think of the fitness and applicability of current rules, and what are your considerations on possible special rules for such movements?
- What are your experiences and views on cross-border movements of apiculture by-products (covered by Reg (EC) No 142/2011)?
- What are your experiences and views on cross-border movements of potential novel commodities such as bee semen, eggs, larvae etc.?
- What are your experiences and views on movements for specific reasons, such as for scientific purposes?