European Union Reference laboratory for monitoring bacteriological and viral contamination of bivalve molluscs

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Resolutions of the 12th workshop of NRLs for bacteriological and viral contamination of bivalve molluscs, 7-9th May 2013.

Official Controls – Microbiological monitoring

1. NRLs supported the application of the Codex criterion applied over time (i.e. 80% of results ≤230 *E. coli* MPN/100g with no results >700 *E. coli* MPN/100g) to Class A classification. NRLs supported the approach to classification described in Community Guidance. NRLs agreed to communicate with their Member State Competent Authority with regard to this issue.

2. NRLs expressed continued support to the principle of development of production area stability assessments for inclusion in the good practice guide to enable reduced monitoring frequency of stable areas. NRLs agreed to provide additional datasets to enable further analysis. The EURL would provide instructions to NRLs detailing criteria for these datasets.

3. Further to the above, as an interim measure, the minimum criterion for assessing the variability of *E. coli* results over the previous 3 years (Section 3.11, item iii, of the Good Practice Guide Technical Application) was; for Class A areas - no result more than 230 *E. coli* MPN/100g; for Class B areas – no result more than 4,600 *E. coli* MPN/100g.

4. NRLs provided information on practices regarding excluding monitoring results from classification assessments (Section 7.3.7 of the Good Practice Guide - Technical Application). The EURL agreed to summarise the information and place on the EURL website.

5. NRLs agreed that the introduction of prohibition (buffer) zones around significant point source human faecal discharges (e.g. municipal sewage discharge pipes) would improve health protection against enteric viruses and other anthropogenic pollutants. It was agreed that further work was required to develop criteria (e.g. based on geographic or dilution approaches) for such zones.

6. Further to the above, several NRLs provided information on current practices regarding buffer zones in their countries. The EURL agreed to place a summary of the information on the EURL website.

Official Controls –Proficiency testing statutory determinands

7. The workshop noted that performance of all NRLs in proficiency testing for statutory determinands *E. coli* and *Salmonella* was satisfactory. However, it was identified that several NRLs were either not participating or were not participating at the agreed frequency (1 matrix and at least 1 EURL non-matrix distribution per year – Resolution 8, workshop 2012). The

EURL identified that it intended to follow-up lack of acceptable participation in proficiency testing through the Commission Protocol for Lack of Collaboration with EURLs.

Marine Vibrios

8. The workshop noted the progress of the revision of ISO TS 21872 (Detection of potentially pathogenic *Vibrio* spp.) and the method validation under the CEN mandate (M/381). The EURL thanked NRLs for their support in these initiatives. It was agreed that proficiency testing distributions for *Vibrio* spp. would be organised following the conclusion of the validation exercises due for completion by the end of 2013.

Viruses

9. Several NRLs reported the results from surveillance studies for enteric viruses in a variety of bivalve species in their Member State. Studies confirmed the high prevalence of norovirus in both production areas and products placed on the market. However hepatitis A virus was either not detected or detected at a very low frequency. Studies by NRL France showed the suitability of the CEN approach for detection of hepatitis E virus (HEV) in bivalve molluscs. Surveillance studies using this approach did not detect HEV in bivalve molluscs in that Member State.

10. A third country presented data on the importance of control of faecal pollution sources in production areas for reducing norovirus contamination. NRLs agreed that this was an important focus of attention for improving water and bivalve shellfish quality.

11. The EURL noted the trend from proficiency testing indicating that performance had improved substantially over recent distributions. Method harmonisation (i.e. use of ISO TS 15216 type methodologies including reagents recommended by CEN TAG4) was a key factor in this improvement. Regarding assessment of quantification performance, possible areas for improvement were identified including: ensuring sufficient sample homogeneity; considering extraction efficiency; ensuring accurate quantity calculations; use of standardised control materials.

12. Further to the above, NRLs noted the importance of the availability of commercial quantitative standards and controls for implementation of virus testing. The EURL agreed to continue to progress the development of materials to assist in the implementation of ISO TS 15216. In the interim starter stocks of dsDNA (and mengo virus) would be made available to NRLs on request.

13. NRLs supported continuing virus proficiency testing on the same basis for 2013/14. NRLs were encouraged to communicate the availability of the PT scheme to other interested laboratories. It was agreed to introduce scoring of performance for qualitative detection for the next distribution.

14. NRLs reported information on outbreaks associated with bivalve mollusc consumption occurring in their Member State. For effective outbreak investigation NRLs identified that it remained important to secure good evidence on sample origin (traceability), clinical aetiology, and epidemiological association with the food vehicle. It was noted that without this evidence risk managers may experience difficulty in implementing effective controls.

15. NRLs provided information on practices regarding management of norovirus outbreaks associated with bivalve molluscs. The EURL agreed to summarise the information and place it on the EURL website. It was identified that procedures for management of outbreaks varied across Member States and would benefit from improved harmonisation.

16. NRLs noted the current discussion regarding possible introduction of virus controls and identified that it was important to ensure alignment of analytical techniques with any limits defined in legislation e.g. performance characteristics for quantification of total norovirus content (GI plus GII).

17. Next meeting would be at the EURL in Weymouth on the 13th, 14th and 15th May 2014.