Validation of diagnostic protocols for the detection of grapevine viruses covered by phytosanitary rules

F. Faggioni¹, F. Anaclerio², E. Angelini³, G. Bianchi³, P.A. Bianco⁵, M. Cardoni⁶, P. Casati⁵, R. Credi⁷, E. De Luca⁸, G. Durante⁸, C. Gianinazzi⁵, G. Gambino⁵, A. Luvisi⁶, U. Malossini⁹, F. Mannini⁸, P. Saldarelli¹⁰, F. Terlizzi⁸, E. Triolo¹⁰, N. Trisciuuzzi¹³

¹CRA – Centro di Ricerca per la Patologia Vegetale, Via C.G. Bertero, 22, 00156 Rome (Italy) francesco.faggioni@entecria.it
²Vivai Cooperativi Rauscedo, Rauscedo, Pordeneone (Italy)
³CRA – Centro di Ricerca per la Viticoltura, Conegliano Veneto, Treviso (Italy)
⁴ERSA – Friuli Venezia Giulia; Pozzuolo del Friuli, Udine (Italy)
⁵Dipartimento Produzione Vegetale, Università degli Studi di Milano (Italy)
⁶Centro Attività Vivaistiche, Tebano, Ravenna (Italy)
⁷DISTA – Plant Pathology, Alma Mater Studiorum, University of Bologna (Italy)
⁸IPAD Lab, Lodi (Italy)
⁹CNR – Istituto di Virologia Vegetale, Sezione di Grugliasco, Torino (Italy)
¹⁰Dipartimento di Coltura e Difesa delle Piante Agrarie, Università di Pisa (Italy)
¹¹Fondazione Edmund Mach, Istituto Agrario San Michele all’Adige, Trento (Italy)
¹²CNR – Istituto di Virologia Vegetale, Sezione di Bari (Italy)
¹³CRSA – Basile Caramia, Locorotondo, Bari (Italy)

The Italian Ministry of Agriculture has financed the Finalized Project “ARNADIA” with the purpose to produce validated reference diagnostic protocols for the control and monitoring of plant pathogens of phytosanitary interest. The grapevine viruses covered by phytosanitary rules were identified among them. To this end, it has been established the “Working group ARNADIA – grapevine viruses (WG)” which included 8 Research Institutions, 3 accredited Private Laboratories, one Plant Health Service and one Association of Grapevine Nurseries.

The aim of WG was to produce reference and validated serological and molecular protocols allowing for the harmonization of the diagnosis of 8 grapevine viruses (GLRaV 1, 2, 3, GVA, GVB, ArMV, GFLV and GFKV).

A protocol validation is the evaluation of a process to determine its fitness for a particular use. A validated assay yields test results that identify the presence of a specific target. Parameters that influence the capacity of the test result to predict accurately the infection status of the sample are diagnostic sensitivity (ability of the method used to detect the presence of the pathogen in the samples surely infected by the pathogen in
question - true positive) and diagnostic specificity (ability of the method used to not
detect the presence of the pathogen in samples not infected by the pathogen in question
- true negative). Other parameters that must be considered and which determine the
efficiency of a protocol are: the analytical sensitivity (the smallest amount of infectious
entities that can be identified by the diagnostic method), repeatability (degree of
conformity of the results obtained in replications of the method, made at short intervals
of time, using the same reference sample and in the same working conditions i.e.
equipment, operator, laboratory) and reproducibility (degree of conformity of the results
obtained using the same method with the same reference samples in different
laboratories).

In this view, 122 grapevine samples (varieties, rootstocks and pool) have been analyzed
by serological (using 24 antisera of three commercial companies) and molecular
(multiplex RT-PCR) protocols. Moreover, different extraction methods, reagents and
materials have been compared in 13 laboratories. Processing of the obtained results
(a bout 24,000 data) has led to the definition of validation parameters according to
UNI/EN/ISO 16140 and 17025 and EPPO standards PM7/76 and PM7/98.

ELISA has proved to be a highly effective technique comparable with the molecular
method, although the latter, as expected, it turned out to be more efficient for some
viruses and on specific samples (rootstocks and pool). On these bases, serological and
molecular protocols could be considered as alternative methods and their use has been
suggested for different specific applications.

All results and parameters obtained will be the subject of detailed discussion.