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EFSA Journal Editorial Policy

European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)

Parma, Italy

1. INTRODUCTION

The Editorial Policy aims to inform readers about principles, practices, and policies in the context of the EFSA Journal. The scientific outputs of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) form the content of this journal; in some ways, its publishing procedures vary from those of other scientific journals. As EFSA has to respect [Regulation \(EC\) 178/2002](#) which describes the Authority's role and lays down the operating procedures to follow, parts of this Editorial Policy are therefore specifically dedicated to EFSA's operating and review processes and its quality assurance measures that are in place to ensure high scientific quality, independency, and transparency.

2. EFSA'S MISSION

EFSA's mission is to provide independent scientific advice to risk managers of the European Commission and Member States and to communicate to all interested parties and to the public at large on risks in the food and feed chain. In this respect, [EFSA's Strategic Plan 2009-2013](#) provides medium- to long-term strategic direction for EFSA and establishes priorities. It serves as the basis for the Authority's annual work programmes and overall planning during the 2009-2013 period.

EFSA's remit covers food and feed safety, nutrition, animal health and welfare, plant protection and plant health. In all these fields, EFSA's most critical commitment is to provide objective, science-based advice, and clear and coherent communication, grounded in the most up-to-date scientific knowledge and data. EFSA's scientific advice underpins the European food safety system.

3. GOOD PRACTICE

3.1. OPERATING AND REVIEW PROCESS

EFSA's Scientific Committee and Scientific Panels carry out EFSA's risk assessment work. Their members are independent scientific experts from all across Europe and beyond with a wide range of relevant expertise coming from universities, research institutions and national food safety authorities. All members are appointed through an open selection procedure on the basis of proven scientific excellence, including experience in risk assessment and peer-reviewing scientific work and publications.

EFSA's Scientific Committee has the task of supporting the work of EFSA's scientific Panels on scientific matters of a horizontal nature and providing strategic advice to EFSA's Executive Director. It is also responsible for general co-ordination to ensure consistency in the scientific opinions prepared by the Scientific Panels. The Scientific Committee focuses on developing harmonised risk assessment methodologies in fields where EU-wide approaches are not already defined. The Scientific Committee is composed of the chairs of the Scientific Panels and six other external scientists.

[EFSA's Scientific Panels](#), each composed of about twenty scientists, carry out risk assessment work in their respective specialised fields, as follows:

- Animal health and welfare (AHAW)
- Food additives and nutrient sources added to food (ANS)
- Biological hazards (BIOHAZ), including BSE/TSE-related risks
- Food contact materials, enzymes, flavourings and processing aids (CEF)

- Contaminants in the food chain (CONTAM)
- Additives and products or substances used in animal feed (FEEDAP)
- Genetically modified organisms (GMO)
- Dietetic products, nutrition and allergies (NDA)
- Plant protection products and their residues (PPR)
- Plant health (PLH)

The Scientific Committee and Scientific Panels may set up working groups involving additional external scientists with relevant expertise to deal with specific issues and to help develop draft scientific opinions, statements and guidance. These drafts are then considered by the relevant Scientific Committee/Panel, amended if necessary. Once the final advice has been agreed and the scientific opinion is adopted by the Scientific Committee/Panel, the output is published in the EFSA Journal. The experts on EFSA's Scientific Committee, Scientific Panels and their working groups are also supported by EFSA's scientific staff.

The [workflow for scientific opinions](#) runs from the moment EFSA receives a request for scientific advice or initiates its own activity to the moment it publishes and communicates its scientific finding.

EFSA's scientific units may also produce scientific outputs on behalf of EFSA, which are published as one of the five types of "other scientific outputs of EFSA" (see also 4.4.).

3.2. QUALITY ASSURANCE

3.2.1. Transparency

EFSA's Founding Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 178/2002) states that risk assessments should be undertaken in a transparent manner. To underpin this requirement, EFSA's Scientific Committee has adopted a set of recommendations on [transparency in risk assessment](#) intended to guide the work of EFSA and its Scientific Committee/Panels and other scientific outputs produced by EFSA. The recommendations are contained in two opinions, covering scientific and procedural aspects of the risk assessment process.

EFSA has also developed a comprehensive body of [good risk assessment practices](#) in very specific areas to guide its Scientific Committee/Panels experts to help ensure EFSA opinions respect the highest scientific standards. This body of best practice covers both the scientific and procedural aspects of EFSA's risk assessment workflow. EFSA constantly seeks to build on these practices and it regularly reviews its guidance, recommendations, and processes to ensure they reflect the latest scientific knowledge.

Timely publication of EFSA scientific outputs in the EFSA Journal is essential to the risk assessment process.

3.2.2. [Independence](#)

When appointing members of the Scientific Committee/Panels, EFSA ensures a high level of collective scientific competence and expertise in order to fulfil the mandates of the Scientific Committee/Panels, and consistent with this, a geographical distribution that reflects the diversity of scientific problems and approaches in the EU. The Scientific Committee/Panel as well as working group members and other external experts are appointed in a personal capacity; they act independently of external influence. For this purpose, EFSA has established a policy and has issued guidance on [Declarations of Interest](#). Members of the Scientific Committee/Panels, working groups, as well as external experts make a Declaration of Commitment and an Annual

Declaration of Interests in writing, which is published on the EFSA website. In addition, before each meeting they have to declare any interests which might be considered prejudicial to their independence in relation to the items on the agenda. Any members/experts considered to be in a potential conflict of interest are excluded from participation in discussions and decision-making on the topic for which they have an interest. All the opinions of EFSA's Scientific Committee/Panels result from collective decisions, each member having an equal say with any minority views recorded. For more information on the establishment and operation of European Networks of scientific organisations operating in the fields within the Authority's mission please see the [Decision](#) adopted by the EFSA Management Board.

3.2.3. Quality Assurance processes

To ensure high quality standards EFSA has implemented a quality assurance system in-line with ISO 9001 for its scientific outputs. In addition EFSA operates the Internal and External Review (INEX) process, the most important element of which is the External review. This comprises of independent external reviewers examining a significant proportion of EFSA's scientific outputs, and then providing an overview of the quality of EFSA's science. They also suggest future benchmarks that might be implemented to ensure best scientific practice and may comment on the review process itself. The results of the whole INEX process are published.

In line with the principles of ISO 9001 EFSA maintains a programme of continuous improvement which is based on both stakeholder and internal staff feedback. This strategy provides EFSA with the means to assure the quality of its scientific activities.

3.2.4. Consultation

EFSA's approach on [public consultation](#) on draft scientific outputs reflects EFSA's commitment to transparency, accountability, high scientific quality and efficiency. Article 42 of EFSA's Founding Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 178/2002) explicitly mentions the interaction between EFSA and the public. Public consultations are one way in which the interaction between EFSA, EU citizens, consumers, and all relevant stakeholders is fostered.

The importance of public consultations, mainly undertaken for guidance documents and horizontal scientific topics, is inherent to the concept of transparency. In addition, consultations on draft scientific outputs are also important in gathering views, data sources and comments that should in turn ensure the completeness, the clarity and the effective respect of those outputs.

4. ABOUT THE EFSA JOURNAL

4.1. SCOPE OF THE EFSA JOURNAL

The EFSA Journal covers methods of risk assessment, guidance documents, reports on data collected, and risk assessments in the individual areas of plant health, plant protection products and their residues, genetically modified organisms, additives and products or substances used in animal feed, animal health and welfare, biological hazards including BSE/TSE, contaminants in the food chain, food contact materials, enzymes, flavourings and processing aids, food additives and nutrient sources added to food, dietetic products, nutrition and allergies as well as the assessment of nutrition and health claims. With a growing body of EU law which calls for EFSA to evaluate products before they can be authorised for use in the EU, an increasing percentage of EFSA's scientific outputs concerns applications.

4.2. TYPES OF SCIENTIFIC OUTPUTS PUBLISHED IN THE JOURNAL

[EFSA's scientific outputs](#) published in the EFSA Journal can be classified into two categories:

- Scientific Opinions of Scientific Committee/Panels: these comprise opinions, statements and guidance of the Scientific Committee or Scientific Panels;
- Other scientific outputs of EFSA: these comprise statements, guidance and scientific reports of EFSA, conclusions on Pesticide Peer Review, and reasoned opinions. These “Other scientific outputs” are not prepared and published by the Scientific Committee or one or more Scientific Panels.

4.3. PURPOSE

The EFSA Journal is an open-access online scientific journal which is free of charge. It publishes the scientific outputs of EFSA on a dedicated web area of the EFSA corporate website (<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/publications/efsajournal.htm>). The web area of the EFSA Journal is the official site and unique entry for EFSA scientific outputs. The EFSA Journal neither accepts nor commissions third party content.

The EFSA Journal aims to publish EFSA scientific outputs with a view to informing and sharing scientific findings, advice, risk assessment conclusions, and recommendations for further research in the areas within EFSA's remit with European risk managers and the scientific community at large as well as interested stakeholders such as industry, consumer organisations and NGOs. It also aims to increase the visibility and awareness of EFSA's scientific work worldwide.

The articles published in the EFSA Journal represent the formal answer of EFSA to a request from the European Commission, the European Parliament, or EU Member States, or are a result of work carried out and issued on EFSA's own initiative (“self-mandate”).

In compliance with Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 and its implementing rules, scientific outputs from EFSA have to be published as adopted. If new scientific evidence becomes available, EFSA may decide to re-evaluate the issue and provide updated advice.

The risk assessment/evaluation process and adoption of scientific outputs follow well-documented internal procedures. Due to the applicable legal framework, an independent peer-review of EFSA scientific outputs is not carried out. However, the rigorous standards described above that EFSA and its Scientific Committee/Panels observe in relation to scientific excellence, transparency and best practice in risk assessment can be considered equivalent to existing peer-review practices. In addition, the number of scientists involved in a risk assessment underpins the well-balanced expertise, e.g. 20/21 experts coming from a bunch of disciplines work together in a Panel carrying out the risk assessments.

4.4. STRUCTURE

As soon as a scientific output of EFSA is adopted and prepared for publication, it is published without delay on the EFSA Journal. All EFSA scientific outputs published in a particular month represent an issue; a volume represents all issues of a year. The outputs are published chronologically in their specific section:

Scientific Opinions of Scientific Committee/Panel:

- Opinion of the Scientific Committee/Panel
- Statement of the Scientific Committee/Panel
- Guidance of the Scientific Committee/Panel

Other scientific outputs of EFSA (not adopted by the Scientific Committee/Panels):

- Statement of EFSA
- Guidance of EFSA
- Conclusion on Pesticide Peer Review
- Reasoned Opinion
- Scientific Report of EFSA

The full article (i.e. the full scientific output of EFSA) is published as PDF document in the EFSA Journal alongside with an abstract of no more than 300 words, a summary, and key words. Relevant information of the published scientific output including the title, the journal reference number, the Digital Object Identifier (doi), the author(s), affiliation etc are displayed in HTML.

4.5. AUTHORSHIP

The EFSA Scientific Committee or Panel that adopts a scientific output is responsible for it and is therefore the corporate author. For the other scientific outputs of EFSA the “European Food Safety Authority” is the corporate author. Any co-authors e.g. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) or the World Health Organization (WHO)/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) are mentioned in the PDF document of the scientific output and on the EFSA webpage dedicated to this output.

4.6. TARGET READERSHIP

The EFSA Journal is primarily targeted at scientists interested in risk assessment in the area of food and feed safety, nutrition, animal health and welfare, plant protection and plant health. The Journal content is also be of interest to professionals from related fields, such as risk managers, scientific journalists, and EFSA stakeholders such as food manufacturers, distributors and processors, and consumer organisations.

4.7. EDITORIAL BOARD (EB) AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The EB is made up of members of EFSA’s Scientific Committee who are not chairing a Panel, EFSA’s Executive Director as well as the EFSA Science Directors.

The main task of the EB is to provide feedback and guidance on the EFSA Journal. This means in particular:

- Taking responsibility for the overall policy of the EFSA Journal;
- Providing guidance on the EFSA Journal web area and whether standard requirements of a scientific journal are met;
- Advising on the editorial quality with regard to the publication of the scientific outputs in the EFSA Journal;
- Steering further development of the EFSA Journal;
- Suggesting measures and initiatives to continuously increase the visibility of the EFSA Journal in the scientific community.

The EB meets regularly to discuss issues arising.

The Editor-in-Chief contributes to ensuring appropriate promotion and dissemination activities are undertaken, and represents the EFSA Journal, e.g. at international conferences and during visits to key institutions and bodies, if appropriate. The Editor-in-Chief chairs the EB meetings.

4.8. EDITORIALS

Editorials, addressing both broad and specific relevant issues, are published by invitation of the Editorial Board in cases, where a clear usefulness has been identified. A number of relevant subjects can be identified as being relevant for an editorial. Some examples are follows:

- Providing broad overviews on overall approaches adopted by EFSA in the finalisation of a number of opinions related to a specific topic such as health claims, new technologies or food/feed additives;
- Providing background information on a complex scientific topic EFSA is or has recently been dealing with;
- Explaining the approach, process and results of EFSA with regard to risk assessment on a specific subject;
- Providing an overall perspective on issues dealt with by EFSA over a long period of time under an evolving regulation;
- Putting an issue into context by providing information on a risk assessment and risk management measures taken as a result of it;
- Addressing risk assessment issues characterized by a significant impact on regulation and, vice versa, on regulatory issues impacting on risk assessment; and
- Introducing new features and tools of the EFSA Journal.

Editorials are published under the name(s) of one or more senior author(s) who, are

- Members of the Editorial Board; and/or
- Members of an EFSA Scientific Panel and/or the Scientific Committee; and/or
- EFSA Heads of Unit.

4.9. LANGUAGES

The EFSA Journal is published in English.

4.10. COPYRIGHT

The content of the EFSA Journal is EFSA copyright. Except where otherwise stated, reproduction of documents/information/articles for personal use (*i.e.* for research, educational purposes, private study or internal circulation within an organisation) or for further non-commercial dissemination to end users is authorised under the condition that appropriate acknowledgement is given to the source.

4.11. ISSN/DOI

The ISSN (International Standard Serial Number)¹ assigned to the EFSA Journal is ISSN 1831-4732. Each article of the EFSA Journal includes a Digital Object Identifier (doi)². The grammar of EFSA Journal doi is: *10.2903/j.efsa. year of publication.scientific output number*. The EFSA scientific output number is a unique number which characterises one specific scientific output of EFSA.

¹ ISSN is an eight-digit number which identifies all periodical publications as such, including electronic serials. Each ISSN assigned to a serial publication is registered in an international database: the ISSN Register. It is the most comprehensive and authoritative source for the identification of serial publication world-wide.

² The doi system is a management system for persistent identification of content-related entities on digital networks. EFSA registers its publications with the Office of Official Publications of the European Communities (OPOCE).