

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE AND ADVISORY FORUM UNIT

Parma, 28 July 2009

EFSA/SGC/M/2008/249/RES/FIN

Minutes**6TH MEETING OF THE STEERING GROUP ON COOPERATION
PARMA (ITALY), 18 MAY, 2009**

Chair: *Djien Liem*, Head of Scientific Committee and Advisory Forum Unit, European Food Safety Authority.

MEMBERS THE ADVISORY FORUM

Belgium	<i>Horion Benoît</i>
Denmark	<i>Arne Büchert</i>
France	<i>Lilian Puech</i>
Germany	<i>Andreas Hensel</i>
Ireland	<i>Alan Reilly</i>
Netherlands	<i>Evert Schouten</i>
Slovak Republic	<i>Zuzana Bírošová</i>
United Kingdom	<i>Alison Gleadle</i>
European Commission	<i>Jeannie Vergnettes</i>

MEMBERS OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

SC Chair	<i>Vittorio Silano</i>
SC Vice-Chair	<i>Ada Knaap</i>
SC Vice-Chair	<i>Pierre Le Neindre</i>

EFSA STAFF

<i>Simona Androni</i>
<i>Bernhard Berger</i>
<i>Bernard Bottex</i>
<i>Alexandre Feigenbaum</i>
<i>Miriam Jacobs</i>
<i>Elena Marani</i>
<i>Jeffrey Moon</i>
<i>Dimitrios Spyropoulos</i>

1 WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE MEETING

Djien Liem welcomed the members of the group and those attending on behalf of colleagues to Parma and opened the meeting.

2 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted without change and no additional items being raised.

3 ESCO WORKING GROUP UPDATE: ISOFLAVONES

Miriam Jacobs presented an overview of the progress of the ESCO Working Group on Isoflavones, outlining the proposed timelines for the completion of the work. The first meeting had taken place on 11-12 May and it was proposed to collect data through a systematic search between May and June, 2009. Miriam Jacobs indicated that delivery of a final report was scheduled for November, with the expected deliverables being to characterise the potential hazards and health benefits of isoflavone consumption. It was noted that there was some missing expertise in the area of paediatric/soya infant formulae, which may lead to a request for further nomination if a suitable representative could not be identified.

The question of selection of experts was raised by the group, with a request for clarification between the use of nominations from the Advisory Forum members, and the use of experts identified from the Expert Database. Bernhard Berger clarified that for ESCO working Groups, the nominations are sought from the Advisory Forum and Scientific Committee whereas the Expert Database was more suited to identifying additional expertise if required for Panel work and other related activities.

There was some discussion on communications, with members of the Group raising questions about the proposals to include communications aspects in the report, noting particularly the area of infant formulae. Miriam Jacobs indicated that the communications aspects would need to be considered also by EFSA's

Communications Directorate. The Steering Group on Cooperation (SGC) recommended that the consideration of communications aspects would be too much to include in the ESCO report and this should be reconsidered and dealt with separately.

On a general point, the SGC also noted that there should be more clarity on what an ESCO working group was, highlighting the cooperation aspect and that the procedural aspects of report finalisation should be better defined.

4 PROPOSED ESCO WORKING GROUP ON NON-PLASTIC FOOD PACKAGING MATERIALS

Alexandre Feigenbaum led the discussion on the proposal arising from the Advisory Forum meeting of 22-23 April, 2009 on the need for cooperative work in the area of food packaging not already subject to specific legislation, particularly in the context of reactive/crisis situations. In considering how to proceed with such work, he indicated that printing inks, coating materials, paper/cardboard and adhesives were all areas which could be considered. One possible proposal for an ESCO was to conduct an inventory of substances, identify priority areas and prepare guidelines for how evaluations should be made.

The SGC raised a number of issues to be considered before an ESCO could be established. The primary concern was the amount of work that would be involved and how this would relate to other work of the CEF panel. The need for avoidance of duplication and overlap, especially with initiatives of the EMRISK Unit was highlighted. One proposal was to undertake further work in the area as an Article 36 project rather than an ESCO working group. It was noted that for printing ink alone there was in the order of 1800 substances in use.

The SGC noted that there would be expertise available in a range of other non-food institutions at national and EU level (such as ECHA) and that it would be important to engage with these. The use of industry data was also discussed in the context of the requirements of the framework regulations relating to Food Contact Materials and the obligations on the industry to produce 'declarations of compliance' to ensure products were safe.

In considering the way forward, the SGC considered that a substance by substance approach would not be appropriate, but a 'grouped' approach as used in dealing with flavourings was preferred. It was agreed that prioritisation was necessary, but the means of prioritising were difficult to identify. The involvement of industry in relation to the Council of Europe and existing inventories of substances already in use would be helpful as a starting point.

Djien Liem summarised the discussion and proposed that the next step would be for background paper to be drafted with terms of reference for further work (and

timescale) to be discussed with the Advisory Forum and the CEF panel. This was agreed by the SGC.

Action 1: EFSA to draft background paper/Terms of Reference for possible ESCO working group on Non-Regulated, Non-Plastic Food Packaging Material for further discussion with the Advisory Forum

5 MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBER STATES

5.1 Suggested Work on Harmonisation arising from Conference ‘Assessment of the Health risks of food, animal and plant imports in the EU’

France presented the outcome of a joint event held by Afssa/EFSA in October, 2008, highlighting two areas of work which could possibly be taken forward as an ESCO WG. These were:

1. Contribution to drawing up guidelines for assessing risks during a crisis by analysing feedback (with particular emphasis on imported food area) and
2. Methods of identifying risk determinants, quantifying and prioritising risks to support decision making (the development of tools for risk management decisions).

There was general support from the SGC on progressing these matters, but it was noted that there was likely to be some overlap with the considerations on prioritisation of Harmonisation of Risk Assessment procedures and that certain elements of the proposals relate to risk management and control issues which were not within the remit of EFSA.

France was requested to prepare a background document on the possible scope of the work for further consideration and discussion at the next Advisory Forum meeting.

The SGC raised a general point on the planning of cooperation projects and suggested that a longer period of planning ahead (1-2years) should be considered and recommended this be discussed within the Advisory Forum.

Action 2: France to prepare proposal on possible cooperative work in area of assessment of health risks of food imported into the EU for discussion at next Advisory Forum meeting

6 ESCO WORKING GROUP REPORT: ASSESSMENT OF BOTANICALS AND BOTANICAL PREPARATIONS

Bernard Bottex presented an overview of the work of the ESCO WG on Botanicals and Botanical Preparations. The presentation included the original Terms of Reference, membership of the sub-groups and a review of the timelines

for the work. Detail was given on the use of the compendium, with examples of real cases.

The SGC welcomed the completion of the work and noted the benefit that it would be for those involved in risk management at Member State level and also for industry. The need for ensuring that the compendium was kept up to date was highlighted. Support was given to possible extension of the compendium to include exotic plants.

It was also noted by the group that it was important to consider the work at international level to work towards a more common approach, with suggestions for follow up work with the OECD and EMEA and cooperation with US authorities. The Codex Alimentarius was also seen as an important international forum for consideration of the work.

Bernard Bottex noted that the scope of the work identified by the original Question to EFSA had been addressed with the finalisation of the report and compendium. The SGC recommended that consideration for follow up work should be discussed with the Advisory Forum when the ESCO report is presented.

7 FURTHER WORK ON HARMONISATION OF RA APPROACHES

Djien Liem introduced the item by reminding the SGC of the discussions within the AF and SC on how to proceed with the work on Harmonisation of RA approaches after the completion of the ESCO WG report. One action that was agreed was that MS would be asked to indicate priority areas for further work.

Simona Androni presented the results of the Survey on Harmonisation of RA priorities, explaining the methodology and the outcomes. It was noted that of the 30 Countries the questionnaire was sent to (27 MS + 3 EEA/EFTA countries) only 14 responses were received.

Concern was expressed by members of the group that the response from MS was low. Several representatives of the AF indicated that it was not clear what the reason or objectives of the survey were and the approach of dividing the RA process into the sections indicated in the questionnaire may not have been the best way to consider prioritisation.

It was suggested that the proposed timeframe for further discussion with the SC was too short and it was agreed that it would be more appropriate to hold discussions at the July meeting rather than in May. It was further recommended that the starting point for prioritisation should be related to the work on Transparency which addresses many of the areas considered for prioritisation. Both the documents on Transparency and the completed ESCO report should also be considered fully by the AF members in agreeing priorities for work with a

clear indication of the objectives of the prioritisation presented to them. This approach was generally supported by the SGC.

The proposal to work on a small number of areas as a priority, with the possibility of combining issues, was understood and supported by the group

It was restated that as one of the main purposes of the work was to allow MS to make use of RA carried out in a different MS, it was important to have agreement on what the priority areas were to be with a view to eventually covering all aspects of RA.

It was agreed by the SGC that it would not be possible to make any decision on priorities at the meeting without further full discussion with all members of the AF and that the matter would be referred to the next AF meeting for full discussion. It was recommended by the SGC that representatives of the SC be invited to attend the AF meeting.

8 AOB

The SGC was reminded that the next meeting will take place on Friday 16 October in Dublin, Ireland.

9 CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

Djien Liem thanked participants for their attendance and closed the meeting.