

Minutes

55th Meeting of the ADVISORY FORUM

Parma, Italy 4-5 March 2015

Chair: Bernhard Url, Executive Director, EFSA

MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY FORUM

Belgium	Benoît	Horion
Czech Republic	Petr	Beneš
Denmark	Flemming	Bager
Germany	Andreas	Hensel
Estonia	Martin	Minjajev
Ireland	Ray	Ellard
Greece	Eirini	Tsigarida
Spain	Ana	Canals
France	Coralie	Bultel
Croatia	Andrea	Gross-Bošković
Iceland	Jón	Gíslason
Italy	Giancarlo	Belluzzi
Cyprus	Popi	Kanari
Latvia	Aivars	Bērziņš
Lithuania	Zenonas	Stanevičius
Luxembourg	Patrick	Hau
Hungary	Ákos Bernard	Józwiak
Malta	Ingrid	Busuttil
Netherlands	Antoon	Opperhuizen
Norway	Marie Louise	Wiborg
Austria	Klemens	Fuchs
Poland	Jacek	Postupolski
Portugal	Pedro	Portugal Gaspar
Romania	Nicușor	Ciocănea
Slovenia	Urška	Blaznik
Slovak Republic	Zuzana	Bírošová
Finland	Matti	Aho
Sweden	Leif	Busk
United Kingdom	Penny	Bramwell

OBSERVERS

European Commission	Jeannie	Vergnettes
----------------------------	---------	------------

GUEST SPEAKER

Chair of FEEDAP Panel	Christer	Hogstrand
------------------------------	----------	-----------

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY

Advisory Forum Secretariat:

Jeffrey Moon, Saadia Noorani, Elena Marani, Daniela Benetinova

Stef Bronzwaer	Ernesto Liebana
Stefano Cappè	Tobin Robinson
Andrea Germini	Alberto Spagnoli
Roy Kirby	Shira Tabachnikoff
Juliane Kleiner	Manuela Tiramani

1 WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE MEETING

Bernhard Url opened the meeting and welcomed the AF members and observers, noting that apologies had been received from Switzerland and Bulgaria. Also noted were members joining for the first time from Hungary, Ákos Józwiak (alternate), from France, Coralie Bultel (Focal Point), from Denmark, Flemming Bager and the vice chair of the FEEDAP Panel, Christer Hogstrand.

Apologies also noted from Marta Hugas, Head of Department for Risk Assessment and Scientific Assessment (ad interim).

2 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Bernhard Url noted that additional items have been proposed from Portugal (Creating an awareness on Food safety - A partnership between ASAE and TAP) and Lithuania (Update on upcoming events).

The members agreed the adoption of the final agenda.

Bernhard reminded members of the requirements to ensure they have submitted an up to date Annual Declaration of Interests and asked for any additional Oral Declarations of Interest for this meeting.

No declarations were made.

3 MATTERS ARISING

For the first time members had been provided with a short 'flash' report on the proceedings of the 22nd Focal Point meeting which was held on 11 and 12 February 2015.

Members were informed that the draft opinion on the safety of caffeine was endorsed by the NDA Panel in December 2014 and was open for public consultation until 15 March 2015 and Members had been invited to submit comments. A stakeholder meeting was to be held on 5 March 2015 in Brussels.

Valeriu Curtui presented the main conclusions of the opinion and details of the consultation and answered questions posed by the members.

Bernhard Url opened the floor to members to discuss any other point relating to the previous meeting or correspondence since the last meeting, which were not already on the Agenda.

Germany requested an update on EFSA's collaboration with the JRC following a meeting in January. Bernhard Url provided an update noting that there was a need to intensify collaboration at an institutional and operational level with work still to be done on

harmonising primary information from laboratories. Germany noted the need to harmonise test methods across Europe to improve data quality and proposed that laboratories needed to be represented in discussions on a harmonisation strategy. Hubert Deluyker proposed that it would be appropriate to have a group of AF members to provide further input, possibly to consider for the Data Road Map. The UK, Netherlands, Hungary, Cyprus, Denmark indicated support to join Germany in developing a paper for discussion.

(Action 1: EFSA and Germany to coordinate a Discussion Group of the forum to draft a paper regarding data quality for further consideration)

4 STRATEGIC DISCUSSION ON EFSA'S WORK WITH MEMBER STATES

4.1 Scientific Cooperation

a. Strengthening National Networking

Following discussions at the AF meeting in December on the importance of national networking, Stef Bronzwaer presented a graphical overview of the AF, Focal Points, AF Communication Working Group, Article 36 organisations and organisations with representatives in EFSA's Scientific Networks for each of the member countries as a means of identifying the interactions between the national organisations and EFSA. Members welcomed the graphical representation and noted its usefulness as a means of identifying the necessary communications lines to be developed at national level and to explain to national network representatives the information flow and interactions between organisations.

Spain, Sweden, Germany, Greece and France welcomed the information noting that the Article 36 organisations are not all active, and commented on the complexity of the interactions of the representatives of the scientific networks making it difficult for AF members to have an overview. Greece informed members that a survey had been carried out on Article 36 organisations which could be shared.

(Action 2: Greece to present the details of a survey on Article 36 organisations at the June AF meeting)

b. Guest Scientist Scheme

Stef Bronzwaer provided members with feedback on the pilot year of the Guest Scientist Scheme, noting that the feedback received from Guest Scientists and EFSA colleagues has been positive and asking whether members agreed to continue with the Scheme and would want to assign the coordination of the scheme to the Focal Points. He further suggested, based on the experience from the pilot year, to decouple the EFSA staff exchange from the Guest Scientists coming to EFSA, so that both exchanges can continue but that it is not necessary to make a match. Finally he asked whether members could be interested in EFSA providing short term stays for PhD students.

Norway, Latvia, Spain, Ireland, Germany, Cyprus, Netherlands and Croatia shared views in support of the continuation of the scheme, welcoming the possibility of opening the scheme further but expressing caution in taking in PhD students, where EFSA could be overwhelmed by expressions of interest.

Bernhard Url concluded that the scheme should continue with efforts to increase the number of staff exchanged with investigation into means of further support that could be offered to guest scientists placed at EFSA.

(Action 3: Members / Focal Points to express interest in guest scientist exchange to the AF Secretariat by end April 2015 with proposals for learning objectives/projects; EFSA to further develop a scheme for PhD students for discussion at the June AF meeting)

4.2 Data Warehouse

Stefano Cappé provided a brief update on the scientific data warehouse project with a practical demonstration of how the warehouse can be accessed and used. Members were informed of the “data warehouse access rules” which were to be shared with members after the meeting. During his presentation, Stefano informed members that training would be provided starting from July to guide users in the functionalities provided by the tool.

Sweden, UK, Finland, Germany, France, Italy and Spain welcomed this significant development and raised a number of technical questions which were answered.

4.3 Risk Ranking

Due to time constraints, this item was not taken.

4.4 Article 30 Divergence

Juliane Kleiner introduced the topic with lessons learnt from dealing with situations of potential scientific divergence with examples of perchlorate and Bisphenol A and the interactions between EFSA and the Member States in trying to resolve divergences through joint meetings and the production of joint documents as detailed in Article 30 of Regulation (EC) No. 178/2002. Juliane Kleiner also noted the most recent situation on Bisphenol A and the publication of a statement by Denmark.

Tobin Robinson noted that while it was originally intended to have a guideline agreed by the Advisory Forum on how to deal with scientific divergence in the context of Article 30, reviewing the recent experiences pointed to the need to have a clear procedure in place in cases of scientific divergence, but to also have clear responsibilities and commitment of all AF member in early identification of potential scientific divergence. In order to accomplish this, Tobin Robinson proposed that a short explanatory procedure should be developed from the draft guideline to deal with situations described mainly in Article 30(4) and in the context of the ongoing review of the operation of the Advisory Forum, to update the rules of procedure of the Advisory Forum to include more explicitly members commitment to early identification and resolution of situations of scientific divergence.

Bernhard Url acknowledged that while scientific divergence may exist, such divergence should not lead to confusion for consumers and risk managers.

The Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, Ireland, Denmark, Finland, Lithuania and France provided their views on scientific divergence with support to the proposal. The European Commission noted the discussion and acknowledged that it was also a matter to be considered by risk managers.

(Action 4: EFSA to draft short procedure for dealing mainly with Article 30 (4) situations for further discussion with members in June, and review the Advisory Forum rules of procedure as part of the review of the operation of the Forum)

5 Forthcoming Risk Assessment Activities

- **EFSA Mandates**
- **MS Mandates/Activities**

A summary table of mandates received by EFSA between December and end of February was tabled, with Tobin Robinson highlighting a mandate relating to Dioxins in Food and Feed.

Austria, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Norway, Sweden, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and the UK contributed to a round table update on new activities being initiated by Member States. Members welcomed the sharing of this information which assisted them in identifying similar activities which were being initiated in other countries and creating possibilities for collaboration.

In response to a question from Germany, Olaf Mosbach-Schultz provided an update on EFSA's activities relating to the mandate on investigation of foodborne outbreaks where EFSA has a technical support role.

6 Emerging Risks

Andrea Altieri presented an overview of the recent work of the network detailing the closed activities, ongoing activities, lessons learnt and next steps in the continuing identification of potential emerging risks.

Members welcomed the information with Italy, Spain, Germany and Finland raising discussion points. Tobin Robinson noted that working with stakeholders such as food industry representatives was a long term undertaking which is now starting to generate a greater input into the identification system.

Bernhard Url concluded noting the issue of Emerging Risks is clearly indicated in the founding regulation as involving the Advisory Forum and proposed the topic to be a standing item at future meetings, recognising the members' interest in the area.

7 Communications/AFCWG

Shira Tabachnikoff gave a brief overview of the new Work Program for 2015 through 2017 for the Advisory Forum Working Group on Communications (AFCWG) and the introduction of a new way of working with the Group to increase engagement with and leadership of members and noted the completion of a new edition of the Risk Communication Guidelines, with requests for translation into Chinese, Japanese and Spanish. Shira informed members that the AFCWG would like to increase engagement with the AF and would like to explore mechanisms to achieve closer alignment, expressing a strong desire to retain strategic alignment with the Forum.

Members welcomed the update and acknowledged that there was a need for better governance of the Working Group by the Forum and expressing support for the group to continue as a Working Group of the Advisory Forum. Italy, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands raised questions on the activities of the group and in particular what the EFSA Communications Department interface with the Working Group was.

Bernhard Url noted that for the next Advisory Forum meeting further discussions were needed on how the Advisory Forum and the Working Group could interact better.

(Action 5: Discussion on the governance of the AFCWG to be included on Agenda for next AF meeting)

8. Latvian Presidency Priorities

Latvia provided members with an update on the main food safety related priorities during the Presidency, noting in particular the Open Data policy and the Baltic Sea Research and Development Programme (BONUS) a regional programme supported by EU focusing mainly on environmental issues.

9. Risk assessment of alkenylbenzenes as botanicals

Germany, on behalf of the BfR, ANSES and DTU presented background work on the Risk assessment of alkenylbenzenes as botanicals which are considered as of concern as genotoxic carcinogen, proposing that EFSA conduct a comprehensive risk assessment of the compounds.

Tobin Robinson noted that a large number of botanical products had not had comprehensive risk assessments concluded on them and there needed to be a strategic discussion before commencement of work on a broad scientific approach to address the concerns.

Bernhard Url requested that the members request for work on alkenylbenzenes as botanicals be made in writing following discussion with EFSA.

(Action 6: EFSA to prepare a paper on progressing risk assessment of alkenylbenzenes as botanicals with the Member States)

10. Foodborne Viruses

- FSA Report
- BIOHAZ Activities

The UK presented details of an Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF) report on viruses in the food chain identifying the three most important viruses associated with foodborne infection as Norovirus, Hepatitis A and E and posing questions on areas of possible cooperation and opportunities for further collaboration to support risk assessment in the area.

Ernesto Liebana presented an overview of activities of the BIOCONTAM Unit on foodborne viruses, providing an overview of data on foodborne outbreaks collected through the zoonoses network, and a brief summary of recent EFSA risk assessment activities, including advice on control measures and considerations on microbiological criteria and limits for foodborne viruses with particular relevance to Norovirus, Hepatitis A and E.

Poland, Latvia, Croatia, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Belgium, Finland and Slovakia shared information on experience and activities relating to norovirus (in particular bivalve molluscs) and hepatitis in pork products noting the need for a one health approach involving the different disciplines of veterinary and public health expertise.

Bernhard Url noted the interest from members to work collaboratively on issues that would support risk assessment, even if extending partially beyond EFSA's remit, such as sampling plans, surveillance, analytical methods, new methods to decontaminate food that could involve reference labs, the Commission, ECDC, and industry. This could become a joint project, as foreseen by the EU risk assessment agenda with support from EFSA in collaboration with partners.

11. Report on the Hexachlorobenzene situation in Austria

Austria presented details of a recent problem relating to the investigations of an incident of hexachlorobenzene contamination at farm level, noting the particular challenges of the experience including split responsibilities between different agencies and administrations, sampling and test methodology and risk communications on the issue.

Sweden, Germany, The Netherlands and Finland noted similarities with national experience and the importance of a coherent communications strategy to increase the level of public trust.

12. Risk Assessment for Lead in Cyprus & The IMPRORISK Model

Cyprus presented information on the approach used to conduct a national risk assessment on Lead using the IMPRORISK Model, a deterministic model using food consumption data at individual level, noting that the model fills a gap in exposure assessment for contaminants.

13. Customer Feedback Exercise

Roy Kirby presented information on the Customer Feedback Exercise with DG SANTE as a follow up to previous discussions with the AF on the fitness for purpose exercise EFSA has been undertaking on its Opinions, noting the main outcomes as being the overall quality high, all selected outputs having been used in risk management and the level of scientific detail appropriate. Roy indicated some issues to be addressed on clarity and coherence, but that overall the Opinions were fulfilling the expectations.

Members welcomed the update.

14. EFSA Scientific Panel Presentation – FEED Unit and FEEDAP Panel

The Head of the Feed Unit Manuela Tiramani together with the Vice Chair of the FEEDAP Panel Christer Hogstrand, presented the activities and the organisation of the FEEDAP Panel, in particular with reference to the high number of WGs and to the necessary competencies to fulfil its tasks. The workload in the last years was described as well as the outcomes prepared.

Finland, Latvia, Italy and Germany welcomed the presentation and posed questions relating to the work load of the Panel, the use of waste as animal feed, special requirements relating to aquaculture and cooperation between FEEDAP and other Panels on issues such as claims related to functional feeds.

15. Results from the Perception Survey amongst Greek National Representatives in EFSA's Scientific Networks

Greece presented details of a survey carried out with national representatives of EFSA Scientific Networks noting that the findings of the survey were overall positive and making a number of recommendations relating to strengthening cooperation and networking via the networks for both members and for EFSA. Greece informed members that the questions used in the questionnaire were also available in English.

Sweden, Spain and France informed members of their own experiences with Spain requesting consideration of providing representatives with some form of certificated recognition of their participation in the network and France noting a similar survey conducted among members.

Stef Bronzwaer requested that members who had done similar surveys, to inform EFSA and share information (web links) on questionnaires through the AF Secretariat.

(Action 7: France and other members to share outcomes of national surveys)

16. Feedback on Consultation – ‘increasing robustness, transparency and openness’

Tobin Robinson provided information on the recent consultation on the ‘increasing robustness, transparency and openness’ package and detailed the proposed workshop which will be held in June. Advisory Forum members had received a written request to nominate relevant experts to take part in the workshop.

Bernhard Url provided further information on how the consultation fitted into the developing Open EFSA strategy.

Germany, UK, Denmark and Spain raised questions on the process and noted difficulties in getting feedback from national experts.

17. EXPO 2015 Scientific Conference: Programme Outline

Tobin Robinson provided an update of EFSA’s 2nd Scientific Conference “Shaping the future of food safety, Together” which is due to take place at the Milan EXPO in October 2015. Details were also provided of the satellite events including the joint Advisory Forum and Focal Point meeting on 13 October, an event sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Health on Emerging Risks planned for 14 October and World Food Day which is due to take place on 16 October.

The Netherlands asked how the Scientific Advisory Committee for the scientific conference was established.

18. European Commission Update

The European Commission provided an update on the changes within the Commission and outline of the current status and timelines of the ‘REFIT’ exercise being conducted on the Founding Regulation and its possible impact on EFSA, noting the intention to have the mandates for the 2 planned external evaluations relating to the exercise published in the near future.

Sweden, Finland and Spain raised discussion points on how EFSA would be involved in the evaluation process with particular relevance to Article 30 of the Regulation which has not specifically been included in the questions being posed to Member States through the external evaluation questionnaire.

Bernhard Url noted the need for collecting input from members that would be useful for EFSA in the anticipated discussions with the Commission on the issue.

(Action 8: Input from members on the relevant articles of the founding regulation to be collated by EFSA)

19. Advisory Forum Review Progress Report and Planning

Jeffrey Moon provided an update of the review of the operation of the Advisory Forum outlining the actions carried out to date and changes implemented in the organisation of the meetings and outlined the plan for 2015 which included the further dialogue with members on their role within the Forum and a further discussion session planned for the

June AF meeting. Jeffrey Moon also outlined the main topics for discussion for the remaining meetings in 2015 and provided an overview of the visits planned in 2015 by the Executive Director to individual countries.

Members were asked to indicate willingness to participate in interviews with external contractor on the review of the operation of the Advisory Forum and to propose strategic topics for discussion at future meetings.

UK, Lithuania, Slovakia, Spain volunteered for interviews. Topics that were suggested for further discussion were risk communication, food contact materials, European Neighbourhood Programme, Horizon 2020, and the REFIT exercise.

(Action 9: Members to indicate willingness to participate in interviews by 28 March)

20 AOB

20.1 Creating an awareness on Food safety- A partnership between ASAE and TAP

Portugal presented a short film on a recent partnership between the national food agency and TAP, the national airline, which was shown on board flights to locations such as Brazil and other countries where Portuguese is spoken.

20.2 Panel Renewal

Tobin Robinson provided an update on the Scientific Committee and Panel renewal process, thanking members for the feedback on the short list following consultation in January. Tobin indicated that the first meeting of the Scientific Committee and eight renewed panels involving new members will take place in July.

20.3 EU Food Safety Almanac

Germany provided an update on the publication of the EU Food Safety Almanac noting that it was now published in French, Spanish and Chinese and posed the question on developing links with the ENP countries informing members that the almanac had also been translated into Macedonian.

20.4 Lithuanian Events

Lithuania informed members of a national event on Risk Assessment methodology taking place on 22 April and in International Conference being held on 22 September on Materials in contact with Food.

(Action 10: Lithuania to inform AF Secretariat of conference details for circulation to members when published)

Close of Meeting

Bernhard Url closed the meeting thanking members for their contributions to the discussions and to colleagues from EFSA who participated in and supported the meeting.

The next meeting of the Advisory Forum will be held on 11-12 June 2015 in Riga, Latvia.

55TH ADVISORY FORUM MEETING

SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

Action Number	Action
1	<i>EFSA and Germany to coordinate a Discussion Group of the forum to draft a paper regarding data quality for further consideration</i>
2	<i>Greece to present the details of a survey on Article 36 organisations at the June AF meeting</i>
3	<i>Members / Focal Points to express interest in guest scientist exchange to the AF Secretariat by end April 2015 with proposals for learning objectives/projects; EFSA to further develop a scheme for PhD students for discussion at the June AF meeting</i>
4	<i>EFSA to draft short procedure for dealing mainly with Article 30 (4) situations for further discussion with members in June, and review the Advisory Forum rules of procedure as part of the review of the operation of the Forum</i>
5	<i>Discussion on the governance of the AFCWG to be included on Agenda for next AF meeting</i>
6	<i>EFSA to prepare a paper on progressing risk assessment of alkenylbenzenes as botanicals with the Member States</i>
7	<i>France and other members to share outcomes of national surveys relating to scientific networks</i>
8	<i>Input from members on the relevant articles of the founding regulation to be collated by EFSA as part of REFIT discussions</i>
9	<i>Members to indicate willingness to participate in interviews on the review of the AF by 28 March</i>
10	<i>Lithuania to inform AF Secretariat of conference details for circulation to members when published</i>