Multiannual Work Plan
2014-2016

Annual Work Plan 2014
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EFSA’s Work Plan for 2014 has been drafted in the context of our first Multiannual Work Plan (MAP) for 2014-2016. We are confident that by placing greater emphasis on medium-term planning EFSA can meet the challenge of maintaining the excellence of its scientific work while delivering value for money to EU citizens in times of austerity.

The priorities of the MAP reflect the tighter budget with which the Authority will have to work in the foreseeable future. Given the restrictions in the EU’s budget, EFSA will have to improve the way it cooperates with national and European bodies in order to optimise the use and sharing of expertise and information. A key strategic objective – building trust – is crucial to the value of EFSA’s work for citizens; we have already taken many initiatives in relation to transparency, openness, independence and communication, and we will continue to strengthen these key building blocks of trust in collaboration with all stakeholders. These form part of a transparency initiative that we will begin to implement in 2014.

EFSA’s work programme for 2014-2016 illustrates the challenges Europe faces from an increasingly complex food chain and also our commitment to continuing to protect our citizens with robust scientific advice. Highlights for 2014 include work on issues of key public health importance, such as exposure to acrylamide in food and the threat posed by pathogens like *Salmonella* and norovirus in foods of non-animal origin, to mention but two examples. The evaluation of products potentially destined for European markets will continue across a wide range of substances. Other highlights for 2014 are the renewal of the ANS and CEF Panels, and the development of an ISO 9001-compatible Quality Management System.

The coming years will be challenging and not always predictable, but with thorough planning and resource allocation EFSA can ensure that it is prepared for most eventualities and thus continue to serve the citizens of the EU.

Bernhard Url,
*Executive Director*
2. **Multiannual Work Plan 2014-2016: Overview**

### 2.1 Strategic objectives

EFSA will continue to play a key role in protecting public health by providing the scientific advice that enables decision-makers to address food-related risks and support healthy dietary choices. To this end, the Authority has identified three key strategic priorities for 2014-2016.

- **Strengthen the utility and fitness for purpose of its scientific advice.** EFSA must ensure that its scientific outputs are written in a manner that means they can be easily understood by those who have the ultimate responsibility for managing the risks, as well as by other stakeholders.

- **Build the EU risk assessment community and optimise the use of resources.** EFSA must make optimal use of the resources at its disposal, internally by enhancing its efficiency and externally by improving its cooperation with national food safety agencies, European bodies and international organisations.

- **Build more transparency and trust.** In addition to the programme to open science meetings to observers, EFSA aims to increase transparency in relation to both working processes and access to the scientific data it uses. Effective communication is an essential component in building trust, and there will be renewed focus on increasing the relevance and understanding of EFSA’s communications and meeting the needs of target audiences.

### 2.2 The operating context

It is expected that demand for EFSA’s scientific advice will remain steady until 2016, with an average of 500 mandates received each year. There will be a growing demand for risk assessments and scientific advice in areas such as novel foods, pesticides, plant pests and enzymes, while demand may diminish in other areas like health claims. The boundaries of EFSA’s work will continue to be challenged, with a growing demand for scientific advice in areas such as environmental risk assessment, post-market monitoring, risk benefit and efficacy.
Coupled with the impact of technological and scientific advances, the trend for EFSA’s mandates to become more complex is expected to continue. Moreover, in light of the challenges posed by an increasingly globalised trade in foodstuffs and ingredients, EFSA must remain positioned to respond rapidly – with scientific advice and hands-on technical assistance – to urgent food safety-related incidents, the majority of which are likely to be transnational in nature.

2.3 Trends in scientific work

In line with the strategic objectives related to the excellence of EFSA’s scientific advice, over the next three years the Authority will: develop methodologies for the identification of emerging risks; strengthen the evidence base for its scientific advice, with a particular emphasis on data collection and access to scientific literature; and continue to develop and harmonise guidance and methodologies. In addition, the groundwork has been laid for a public health risk ranking exercise to help EFSA identify priorities in its work programme.

2.4 Trends in risk communication

External feedback has shown that stakeholders generally regard EFSA’s communications as useful and clear enough to inform and support the decision-making of risk managers, but EFSA will continue to invest to reach a broader audience. The Authority will improve the effectiveness of existing tools, in particular its website, and strengthen its role in promoting coherence in communications, particularly when urgent scientific advice is needed, through more effective cooperation with national food safety agencies.
3. Annual Work Plan 2014

3.1 Overview

The workload in various scientific areas will remain considerable in 2014, with more than 500 outputs scheduled for completion.

In the field of regulated products, a major milestone this year will be the renewal of the Scientific Panel on Food Additives and Nutrient Sources Added to Food (ANS) and Food Contact Materials, Enzymes, Flavourings and Processing Aids (CEF). The centralisation of many functions in the Applications Desk Unit has brought significant efficiency gains in recent years, but there is scope for further progress. A more general effort is envisaged to identify the optimal allocation of work between experts, staff and outside contractors. The adoption of outputs will remain the responsibility of the Scientific Panels, but the intention is to improve working processes in the preparation and drafting of opinions. This has implications for the competency profiles and planning of staff, an issue that is being addressed by EFSA’s Talent Management programme, the aim of which is to enable the organisation to attract, retain and develop its staff and experts.

An external review of past grant and procurement projects together with the outcome of the Scientific Cooperation Review will allow EFSA to present a revised cooperation roadmap in 2014, including suggestions to further improve the Article 36 outsourcing network.

In line with the strategic priorities described in the Multiannual Work Plan, EFSA will continue to position itself as the hub of European food safety data networks. Central to this aim is the development of the Authority’s data warehouse. As well as integrating data from multiple sources, the warehouse will facilitate access by Member States and stakeholders to relevant data.

EFSA is committed to increasing the clarity of its communications and to improving the effectiveness of the tools at its disposal, in particular its website. A redesign of the website will begin in 2014, with the aim of re-launching in autumn 2015. A review of the EFSA Journal – the publication vehicle for all the Authority’s scientific outputs – will also be undertaken.
The volume of work planned for 2014, combined with the restrictions on resources, means that EFSA will continue to search for new ways of working more efficiently by reviewing its organisation and working practices.

### 3.2 Scientific opinions and advice

The recent reorganisation of the Risk Assessment and Scientific Assistance Department will increase the service orientation of the department, promote efficiency through synergies, and encourage more innovative approaches.

EFSA’s Scientific Committee will continue to harmonise risk assessment approaches in areas such as the use of a weight-of-evidence approach for risk assessment, the integration of biological relevance for toxicological risk assessment, methodologies for the characterisation of uncertainties in risk assessment and the assessment of human exposure, and environmental risk assessment.

Key areas of the Authority’s risk assessment work will include a final report on the Schmallenberg virus and an update of the 2010 opinion on African swine fever. EFSA’s animal health experts will also finalise work on the interaction of multiple risk factors affecting pig welfare as well as a scientific opinion on the welfare of sheep that includes risk ranking for different breeds and farming systems.

EFSA expects to receive requests from the European Commission for 40 pest risk assessments as part of the review of the EU’s list of organisms that are a risk to plant health. Other priorities in the area of plant health include a full assessment of the plant bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa* and an environmental risk assessment of the apple snails *Pomacea maculata* and *P. canaliculata*.

Risk assessments will be carried out for mycotoxins, metals and acrylamide in food. In relation to biological contaminants, work will focus on the public health risk posed by pathogens such as *Salmonella* and norovirus in food of non-animal origin.
Assessments will also be carried out on the risks associated with the transport of fresh meat and the deterioration of table eggs. EFSA will continue its evaluation of molecular typing methodologies for major food-borne microbiological hazards to support the investigation of outbreaks and improve surveillance. As a follow-up to the baseline survey of *Listeria* in ready-to-eat foods, EFSA will work on typing the whole genome sequence of the pathogen.

The Authority’s nutrition experts will continue their work on dietary reference values (DRVs) by setting DRVs for micronutrients. Advice will also be provided on composition of infant follow-up formula, intake of caffeine, and possible thresholds for allergens in food.

EFSA’s risk assessment work will continue to be bolstered by the collection and monitoring of food safety data – such as on chemical occurrence, zoonoses, antimicrobial resistance, food consumption, and pesticide residues – and the assessment of exposure to food-borne chemical hazards. In 2014, the priorities will include the assessment of dietary exposure to hazardous compounds using occurrence data stored in the Comprehensive European Food Consumption Database.

### 3.3 Evaluation of regulated products

The evaluation of regulated products and health claims will remain a high priority for EFSA in 2014.

A significant increase in workload is anticipated in the area of food enzymes, and evaluations are also planned for existing and new food flavourings, monomers and additives to be used in plastic food contact material, recycled plastic materials, and active and intelligent packaging.

The draft Scientific Opinion on bisphenol A, subject to a two-stage public consultation on exposure assessment and public health impact, is scheduled for finalisation at the end of 2014. Existing feed additives will be re-assessed and new ones evaluated.
EFSA will assess applications for the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in food and feed as well as for cultivation, in addition to assessing their safe use and providing assessments of post-market environmental monitoring. Guidance documents will also be prepared and updated for applicants. In the area of nutrition, work will continue on health claim applications and the development of further or revised guidance for applicants. The safety assessment of novel foods will continue, together with the development of guidance for applicants.

EFSA’s pesticide specialists will continue to publish conclusions on new active substances as well as on existing substances that are due for renewal. Assessments of the potential risks posed to bees by pesticides – in particular neonicotinoids – will continue in support of risk managers. Work will continue on the revision of harmonised risk assessment methodologies and guidance documents for assessing the effects of pesticides on human health and the environment.

The Applications Helpdesk will continue to enhance the dialogue with and quality of services provided to applicants, Member States, and stakeholders, in particular small and medium enterprises. It will coordinate and streamline the registration and administration procedures associated with applications received for the evaluation of food and feed products, GMOs, plant protection products, food additives and packaging, and health claims. The establishment of consistent timelines for applicants to submit additional or supplementary information to EFSA will further streamline the evaluation process.
3.4 **Data collection, scientific cooperation and networking**

EFSA will continue to prioritise cooperation with stakeholders as it aims to move towards establishing a common risk assessment agenda in the EU.

EFSA will cooperate with Member States, EU institutions, stakeholders and relevant agencies in third countries and international bodies through forums such as the Advisory Forum and its Focal Points, the Stakeholder Consultative Platform, and EU scientific networks coordinated by EFSA. A review of the Expert Database at the end of its first five years of operation is ongoing. In addition to the Pre-accession Programme, EFSA will contribute to the European Neighbourhood Programme, thus fostering cooperation beyond the Member States.
Guided by the strategy outlined in the Emerging Issues Annual Report (2012), EFSA will continue to work with Member States, institutional partners and stakeholders to proactively identify emerging issues in the food chain. The work will be supported by a standing working group of the Scientific Committee. A project describing toxicological data for 100 examples of chemical mixtures will be finalised, providing concrete evidence of what may be achieved in this area. Data will also be collected through procurement on a review of the state-of-the-art of human biomonitoring and its application to the assessment of exposure of humans to chemicals in food. EFSA will continue to identify data and risk assessment gaps in the area of bee health, with a view to developing a holistic approach to risk assessment in this area, building on the EFSA scientific colloquium of 2013.

EFSA will proceed with its project to develop a food safety data warehouse in 2014. The Authority will continue to issue reports on selected contaminants requested by the Commission. The food classification system released in 2010-2011 will be progressively integrated into EFSA’s activities and made available to Member States. Planning and collection of harmonised occurrence and food consumption data will be promoted, including the post-market monitoring of food additives. Data collection for the pan-European food consumption survey (EU Menu) will also continue in 2014. The first pilot data collection on molecular typing data from food-borne pathogens in food and animals will be carried out in collaboration with the EU reference laboratories during 2014. The annual EU Summary Reports on food-borne outbreaks and antimicrobial resistance will be produced in collaboration with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. The annual reports on veterinary drug residues and pesticide residues will also be published.
3.5 Communication and dialogue

EFSA is committed to increasing the clarity of its communications and to improving the effectiveness of the tools at its disposal, in particular its website.

A significant revision of EFSA's website will begin in 2014, with the aim of relaunching in autumn 2015. Another key priority is to raise awareness of EFSA’s role and that of the discipline of risk assessment. A review of the EFSA Journal will be undertaken in 2014 to position it where it can most effectively communicate the Authority’s scientific work.

EFSA will begin to prepare for the next Eurobarometer survey, which the agency aims to carry out in early 2015 to provide further insights on, and monitor consumer perceptions of, food-related risks across the EU.

EFSA will continue to work closely with stakeholder groups, the Advisory Forum Working Group on Communications and Focal Points to streamline communication efforts at national level, further enhancing the effectiveness of its outreach in the Member States. The Authority will also investigate how best to raise awareness of its work amongst specific target groups such as public health professionals.

EFSA will strengthen its role in facilitating coherence in European risk communications, particularly when urgent scientific advice is needed. This will be implemented through more effective cooperation with national food safety agencies (underpinned by a training programme in 2014) and supported by the creation of guidance to better support effective communications in times of crisis.
3.6 Risk assessment highlights for 2014

- Public consultation on acrylamide in food
- Publication of report on data gaps in risk assessment of bees
- Scientific Opinion on bisphenol A
- Final report on the Schmallenberg virus
- Updated opinion on African swine fever
- Advice on *Xylella fastidiosa*
- Environmental risk assessment of *Pomacea maculata* (apple snail)
- Assessment of risks posed by pathogens in food of non-animal origin
- Evaluation of molecular typing methodologies
- Opinion on caffeine intake from all sources
- Risk assessment of allergens in food
- Risk assessments of neonicotinoid pesticides
- Renewal of membership of two Scientific Panels