

Framework for interaction between the European Food Safety Authority and the Stakeholder Forum

The scope of this document is to provide a framework for interaction between EFSA and one of the two permanent stakeholder engagement platforms, in particular the Stakeholder Forum (the Forum). The relations and the work carried out through all interactions within this engagement mechanism will be guided by EFSA's core values of transparency and independence.

1. Background

Since EFSA was created, stakeholders have contributed significantly to its activities. They have engaged with EFSA on the implications of its work for their own activities and also sought to ensure that the views of society at large are reflected in what EFSA does. Up to this point, EFSA's engagement with stakeholders has occurred primarily through EFSA's Stakeholder Consultative Platform. In recent years, EFSA has recognised changes in societal expectations and a demand, from a number of interested parties for more transparency and closer involvement in the scientific process.

According to the first strategic objective of the EFSA Strategy 2020 (full document available [here](#)) the Authority shall aim to prioritise public and stakeholder engagement in the process of scientific assessment.

EFSA has carried out a comprehensive review of the way in which it engages with stakeholders, including: consultation with the Management Board and the existing Stakeholder Consultative Platform; research carried out with organisations with a potential interest in EFSA's activities; and a benchmarking exercise with other EU institutions and agencies.

The results of this review have led EFSA to propose a new approach to stakeholder engagement.

The Stakeholder Engagement approach shall firmly adhere to the principles of authenticity, inclusiveness and balanced representation of views and interests, supported by targeted modalities that address the various stakeholder communities in an equal manner.

In line with the strategic objective n.1 "Prioritise public and stakeholder engagement in the process of scientific assessment", contained within EFSA's Strategy 2020 the overall purpose of the new framework for EFSA's stakeholder engagement is to provide stakeholders with a better understanding of its scientific decision making processes and to improve the quality of EFSA's scientific outputs and the extent to which they meet stakeholders' needs.

2. Scope of interaction

The Stakeholder Forum will enable all registered stakeholders to provide strategic input to EFSA's work plans and future priorities on an annual basis. The themes and topics of each annual forum will be determined by demands from its registered stakeholders and by the priority areas identified by EFSA in line with its Strategy 2020. The forum will produce recommendations for EFSA in particular regarding strategic planning and activity implementation, the development of horizontal policies and processes, and the review of how the various engagement platforms function.

3. General objectives

This framework for interaction aims to meet the following objectives:

- 1) give the stakeholders the opportunity to provide strategic input to EFSA's work plans and future priorities.
- 2) improve the opportunities stakeholders have to contribute to the different stages of scientific assessment and communications in a balanced way, while preserving the independence and transparency of these processes,
- 3) improve communication and provide efficient, targeted and timely information to stakeholders in a proactive manner,
- 4) Expand both EFSA and stakeholders' access to the evidence base and expertise needed for high quality scientific risk assessment,
- 5) Engage with stakeholders representing a broader range of interests in order to deliver effectively on EFSA's mission,
- 6) Gather knowledge, views and concerns from stakeholders as early as possible in the risk assessment process through transparent methods and using new engagement techniques,
- 7) Improve understanding among stakeholders and consumers of EFSA's scientific risk assessment process, thereby improving trust in, and creating a sense of ownership over decisions taken,
- 8) Improve accountability to stakeholders for the input they provide to EFSA.

4. Working methodology

The External Relations function (EXREL) of EFSA will coordinate the Stakeholder Forum and provide administrative support including drafting the minutes and reports of the meetings and reporting back to the Forum. The implementation of the new stakeholder approach will start with the launch of the registration process. EFSA will report back to the Management Board with an update on the list of stakeholders.

In order to achieve the objectives identified under the Point 3. and in line with the Decision of EFSA Management Board establishing the Forum¹, the Forum will apply the following working methodology:

- a) The Forum shall be an annual workshop to which registered stakeholders shall be invited. The Forum is chaired by EFSA's Executive Director.
- b) The registered Stakeholders will be able to provide proposals for specific themes and topics to be discussed at the Forum. Based on these proposals and in consultation with the Stakeholder Bureau, EFSA shall decide on the final agenda for the Forum. EFSA shall strive to ensure that the final agenda of the Forum is representing the full breadth of interests of its stakeholders. EFSA shall ensure the relevance of the topics and balanced representativeness of all stakeholder groups.
- c) EFSA shall take into account of all recommendations resulting from the Forum in its strategic planning as well as in the development of the Authority's processes. The proceedings and outcome of the Forum shall be made public.

¹ Decision of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority on the criteria for establishing a list stakeholders and the establishment of the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau, ref. mb160316-a3, adopted at 15 June 2016

d) Representatives from EFSA's Management Board, EFSA's Advisory Forum, and Scientific Committee may be invited to attend the Forum.

e) The costs of participation in the meetings organised by EFSA which foresee the participation of stakeholders will be borne by each individual stakeholder organisation.

f) Exceptionally, EFSA may contribute to financing the costs of those organisations that could not otherwise afford to participate in meetings. Financial contributions may only be awarded to stakeholder organisations which are non-governmental, not-for-profit, independent of industry, commerce and business and have as their primary objectives and activities the promotion and protection of public health, the safety of consumers, animal health or welfare, plant health and the environment.

g) Requests for financial support shall be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will need to be properly documented by the requesting organisation.

5. Transparency requirement

Openness and transparency are fundamental aspects of EFSA and are enshrined as concepts in EFSA's regulatory framework (art. 38 of EFSA's Founding Regulation (EC) No 178/2002) and in the Decision of the Management Board establishing the Forum.

The transparency of the work of the Forum will be made available through the timely announcement of EFSA's upcoming activities related to the Forum as well as through the publication of agendas, participant' lists and the outcome of each of the meetings of this platform on the EFSA website.

A report on EFSA' interaction with registered stakeholders within the scope of interaction with the Forum shall be presented annually to the Management Board.

6. Monitoring and review

A review of the effectiveness of EFSA's stakeholder engagement, including activities related with the Forum, shall be carried out every three years, as of the entry into force of the Decision of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority on the criteria for establishing a list stakeholders and the establishment of the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau (15 June 2016) and, at any time, upon request of the Management Board, Article 9.