

**EFSA-IT Experts Meeting for the provision of Zoonoses data
in XML and Excel format**

MEETING MINUTES

version 18/10/2010

**14-15 September 2010
EFSA, Parma ITALY**

AGENDA:

1. Welcome
2. Declaration of interests
3. Current status of the XML/Excel submission in EFSA:
 - a. Zoonoses Data Collection project: current XML schemas in use
(Speaker: Fabrizio Abbinante)
 - b. Feedback from the countries that used the XML submission in Zoonoses
(Speaker: Fabrizio Abbinante)
 - i. Feedback from Germany on XML submission of FBO data
(Speaker: Annette Reinecke)
 - ii. Feedback from Italy on XML submission of AMR data
(Speaker: Luca Forlizzi)
 - c. Other EFSA Data Collection projects: experiences and achievements in using XML standards
 - i. Overview of the “Standard Sample Description for food and feed”
(Speaker: Eileen O’Dea)
 - ii. Overview on the “Draft Guidance on Data Exchange”
(Speaker: Stefano Cappè)
4. Introduction to the EFSA’s Data Collection Framework (DCF) project
 - i. General overview of DCF
(Speaker: Marco Leoni)
 - ii. DCF: A case study for the collection of pesticides residues
(Speaker: Jane Richardson)
5. Outcomes of the Zoonoses XML Survey and possible solutions for future submission of Zoonoses data in XML/Excel format
(Speaker: Fabrizio Abbinante)
6. Division in three subgroups for discussing the following topics:
 - a. Future use of XML files for submission of Zoonoses data
 - b. Future use of Excel files for submission of Zoonoses data
 - c. Future exchange protocols and technologies for submitting XML/Excel files
7. Feedback from the three subgroups Conclusions
8. Conclusions and recommendations
(Pia Makela, Fabrizio Abbinante)
9. Any other business

PARTICIPANTS:

Members and other National or Commission representatives:

Arche Stéphane (FR), Bandelj Boris (SI), Bernet Daniel (CH), Colangeli Patrizia (IT), Forlizzi Luca (IT), Iannetti Simona (IT), Rydin Joao (PT), Kern Thomas (AT), Kurucz Peter (SK), Molina Carlos Alberto (ES), Nibhraonian Ruth (COMM), Stojkowska Lile (MK), O'Dea Eileen (IE), Petkov Kolayan (BG), Reinecke Annette (DE), Roosileht Reimo (EE), Saevels Stijn (BE), Sahin Guzin (TR), Saule Atis (LV), Sewell Peter (UK), Sipsean Cristian (RO), Sporniak Sebastian (PL), St. John Jean Paul (MT), Staskevicius Tadas (LT), Tarpai Attila (NO), Tomislav Kis (HR), Tenhagen Bernd Alois (DE), Tuominen Mikko (FI), Hedbavny Petr (CZ), Zarka Péter (HU)

EFSA:

Fabrizio Abbinante (Chair) , Francesca Riolo, Kenneth Mulligan, Gabriele Fabbri, João Alho, Saara Kotila Valentina Rizzi, Frank Boelaert, Simona Fusar Poli , Pia Mäkelä (Zoonoses).
Cappe Stefano (DATEX), Richardson Jane (AMU)
Marco Leoni, Malpeli Luigi, Panizza Alessia, Pellegrini Sara, Dondi Roberto, Roffili Riccardo (ITOP).

MEETING MINUTES:

1. WELCOME

The chair welcomed the participants and announced that the intention of the meeting was to focus on provision of Zoonoses data using XML and Excel files. This was the first of this type of meeting organised by EFSA and it was felt necessary in order to find the best way to plan and develop the future Zoonoses XML/Excel submission tools from an IT perspective.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The chair invited four experts to fill in the Declaration of Interest form before the starting of the meeting. No additional interests were informed by the participants.

3. CURRENT STATUS OF THE XML/EXCEL SUBMISSION IN EFSA

3.1 Zoonoses Data Collection project: current XML schemas in use

Fabrizio Abbinante (FA) gave an introduction to the mandates that govern the Zoonoses data collection systems, outlining the flow of data between the competent authorities such as the European Commission, Member States, ECDC and EFSA. The main vehicle that drives data collection and harmonisation for Zoonoses is the annual Community Summary Report (CSR), and as such FA described the functionality the current web based collection system provides, focusing on the types of table present in the system. The current system supports submission of two types of tables via XML which are based on the generic data model schema proposed for use in XML data submission by EFSA and Zoonoses. The current submission of food-borne outbreak (FBO) and antimicrobial resistance data (AMR) data via XML has been piloted by Germany and Italy. ([Link to presentation](#), requires login)

3.2 Feedback from Germany (FBO) and Italy (AMR) on XML submission of data

The feedback presentations from both Germany and Italy outlined the need for much better overall support and example documentation. It was proposed that also a more intuitive naming of elements within the generic XML schema should be employed thus reducing the learning curve for early adopters. The general feeling for both countries was positive, but the point was raised that the generic model is not a trivial implementation and requires expertise IT assistance.

([Link to presentations for Italy and Germany](#), requires login)

3.3 Other EFSA Data Collection projects

3.3.1 Standard Sample Description for food and feed

Eileen O’Dea gave an introduction to the scope and mandate that governed the Standard Sample Description for food and feed working groups. Its main task was to develop a generic standardized model to collect data from different sources/studies around Europe allowing for comparative analysis. The Standard Sample Descriptions generic structure makes use of already existing controlled terminology with the addition of some new catalogues produced by the working group. It was explained that these catalogues are now codified thus easing the issues surrounding language, normally associated when mapping data across heterogeneous countries.

([Link to presentation](#), requires login)

3.3.2 Draft Guidance on Data Exchange

Stefano Cappè outlined the current guidance on data exchange protocol developed for the Standard Sample Description (SSD) generic data model. The transmission protocol is based on three XML exchange messages. The first sender message containing SSD data presenting itself to the DCF, the resulting Message Receipt Notification (MRN), indicating well formed XML, and the final Message Acknowledgement (MA), which checks XML against predefined business rules. Both the MRN and the MA have error reporting capabilities and will support by both business to business web services and manual data submission.

([Link to presentation](#), requires login)

4. INTRODUCTION TO THE EFSA’S DATA COLLECTION FRAMEWORK (DCF) PROJECT

4.1.1 General overview of DCF

Marco Leoni outlined the current in house EFSA data collection framework (DCF), which is a highly configurable data submission system used for bespoke data collections. Once a data manager has configured the data collection facts, dictionaries and user permissions, the system can accept submissions in the formats XML, XLS and CSV. The DCF submission protocol follow similar process flow to that outlined in the “Draft Guidance on Data Exchange” document.

([Link to presentation](#), requires login)

4.1.2 DCF: A case study for the collection of pesticides residues

Jane Richardson presented as a case study the regulation EC 396/2005 for annual monitoring of residues in food and feed of plant and animal origin for the assessment of MRL compliance and consumer exposure assessment. It was outlined that the 2007 data submission consisted of excel

workbooks with over 50 worksheets making data validation difficult and error prone. This complexity was greatly reduced by the development of an xml schema to standardize the data for upload through the DCF. An Excel template was provided to member states for data entry, with an embedded macro to generate XML, based on the schema. Member states now, when uploading XML data via the DCF, have very fast feedback on errors in their data set through the automatic validation processes operating within the DCF. It was highlighted that the DCF can be used by member states to compile national level data, where individual data providers within a country can directly upload and validate their data without it having to be centralized and compiled at a national level before submission to EFSA. This distributed approach can greatly ease the work load for competent authorities at national level.

([Link to presentation](#), requires login)

5. OUTCOMES OF THE ZOOSES XML SURVEY AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS FOR FUTURE SUBMISSION OF ZOOSES DATA IN XML/EXCEL FORMAT

Fabrizio Abbinante (FA) gave a detailed run through of the results obtained from the XML survey he sent out to Member States. The results of the survey highlighted that the majority of countries do not have a uniform collection of Zoonoses data at national level. There are normally different actors involved in the collection, storage and processing of the data with the result that the data has no central model or repository. It was also outlined that Excel is the most utilized software for the collection, storage and mapping of data. The future submission of XML based aggregated data is widely supported with 17 Member States willing to support the standard of which 8 are already interested in participating in a XML pilot scheme.

([Link to presentation](#), requires login)

6. DIVISION IN THREE SUBGROUPS FOR DISCUSSING THE FOLLOWING TOPICS

The chair invited the present to create three subgroups composed of 10-15 experts where to discuss the following aspects:

- a. Future use of XML files for submission of Zoonoses data
- b. Future use of Excel files for submission of Zoonoses data
- c. Future exchange protocols and technologies for submitting XML/Excel files

One Rapporteur for each subgroup was nominated and asked to chair the discussion and to prepare a summary for the entire audience at the end of the subgroups session.

7. FEEDBACK FROM THE THREE SUBGROUPS

The three Rapporteurs presented the outcomes of the discussions to the entire audience:

The subgroup on “Future use of XML files” agreed that the EFSA proposed generic XML model provides Member States and EFSA with a more maintainable flexible model, allowing for any future changes to have a minimum knock on affect to Member States implementing it.

It was underlined that although more complicated the generic models learning curve can be greatly improved through documentation and examples that EFSA will make available with each release of the schema.

It was underlined that any future adoptions to the schemas would need to be agreed at the last of the yearly Zoonoses Task Force meetings, thereby giving Member States enough time to implement and test these changes, three months being the generally expected minimum period required. Any move towards the generic XML schema will require a more formal pick list/dictionary change management system where new revisions are versioned and accompanied by supporting documentation outlining all changes made. A test environment to allow the testing of the XML submission is also strongly recommended.

The subgroup on “Future use of Excel files” agreed on the fact that Excel files as ‘data transmission format to EFSA’ should not be supported. Instead, Excel files with the added functionality of a macro generating XML files for transmission to EFSA was seen as a possible solution. The practicality of this solution has already been demonstrated by Germany, where this exact solution has been implemented for the submission of FBO data using the EFSA generic XML schema. Germany expressed its availability in providing access to the Excel file containing the developed macro.

The main conclusion from the subgroup on “Exchange protocols and technologies” was that the “Draft Guidance on Data Exchange” (in the process of being approved), can also be considered valid for any future Zoonoses project.

The conclusions of the three subgroups were supported by the entire audience with no modifications.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The chair announced that from EFSA’s part the meeting was really useful and successful. A report from this meeting will be given by Fabrizio Abbinante at the next Zoonoses Task Force meeting on 9-10 November 2010. The following proposals to the Zoonoses Task Force will be made for approval:

- In order to have the possibility to discuss on a regular basis and with a proper audience practical IT aspects linked to the reporting of Zoonoses data, it is proposed to have this Zoonoses IT Experts meeting once a year, ideally in September.
- It is proposed, for the next upcoming Zoonoses reporting period, not to change the current XML submission for both FBO and AMR data: only the normal maintenance of the XML Schemas will take place.
- By January 2012, EFSA will produce and publish the seven finalised XML schemas using the generic flexible model. EFSA will improve the documentation of the XML schemas and their maintenance process. EFSA will also try to revise the naming of the XML schemas elements and attributes with a view to simplifying their usage in the mapping process. A Test Environment for the XML Submission will also be provided to the Member States.
- In preparation of the XML submission scheduled for 2012, a pilot with the provision of draft XML Schemas is proposed. This pilot will give the possibility to the Member States to provide a feedback to EFSA before the seven final XML schemas will be published in January 2012. The draft XML Schema will be circulated by EFSA in the summer of 2011.

- Concerning the use of Excel files, EFSA will not develop a second manual data entry interface using Excel files. EFSA will try to look and investigate the possibility to provide some solutions on the use of Excel files as intermediate step for generating XML files to be submitted to EFSA.
- Concerning the XML exchange protocols, it was recognised there the protocols currently available in DCF and the ones under development in DCF are compliant with the Zoonoses needs. It is therefore proposed that the document “Draft Guidance on Data Exchange” is endorsed by the Zoonoses Task Force. In this context, it is also proposed that, in the future, some representatives of the Zoonoses Task Force should be part of the Data Exchange Working Group to help drive requirements from a Zoonoses perspective.