



ENGAGEMENT & COOPERATION UNIT

Final Minutes

72nd MEETING OF THE EFSA ADVISORY FORUM

Meeting details

Date: 03-04 July 2019

Venue: University Ceremony Hall (Háttíðarsalur Háskóla Íslands), Reykjavík, Iceland

Meeting hours: 09H00 – 17H30 (03.07.2019)
09H00 – 12H30 (04.07.2019)

Members	
Belgium (BE)	Xavier Van Huffel
Bulgaria (BG)	Georgi Georgiev
Croatia (HR)	Darja Sokolić
Cyprus (CY)	Charitini Frenaritou
Czech Republic (CZ)	Jitka Götzová
Denmark (DK)	Flemming Bager
Estonia (EE)	Martin Minjajev
Finland (FI)	Pia Mäkelä
France (FR)	Charlotte Grastilleur
Germany (DE)	Andreas Hensel
Greece (EL)	Dionysios Vlachos
Hungary (HU)	Ákos Józwiak
Iceland (IS)	Jón Gíslason
Ireland (IE)	Pamela Byrne
Italy (IT)	Alessandra Perrella
Latvia (LV)	Vadims Bartkevičs
Lithuania (LT)	Sniegule Scepaviciene
Luxembourg (LU)	Marc Fischer
Netherlands (NL)	Dick T.H.M. Sijm
Norway (NO)	Danica Grahek-Ogden
Poland (PL)	Jacek Postupolski
Portugal (PT)	Filipa Melo De Vasconcelos
Romania (RO)	Monica Neagu
Slovenia (SI)	Urška Blaznik
Slovak Republic (SK)	Marica Kuzmiak Theiszová
Spain (ES)	Ana Canals Caballero
Sweden (SE)	Per Bergman
United Kingdom (UK)	Jesus Alvarez-Pinera

Observers & Guest Participants	
Albania (AL)	Pamela Radovani
Bosnia and Herzegovina (BA)	Dzemil Hajric
Republic of North Macedonia (MK)	Zoran Atanasov



<i>Serbia (RS)</i>	<i>Tamara Bošković</i>
<i>Switzerland (CH)</i>	<i>Vincent Dudler</i>
<i>European Commission (EC)</i>	<i>Péter Bokor</i>
<i>European Commission (DGRTD-SAM)</i>	<i>Dulce Boavida (VC)</i>
<i>European Commission (EC-JRC)</i>	<i>Birgit Sokull-Klüttgen (VC)</i>
<i>European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)</i>	<i>Peter Simpson (VC)</i>

EFSA Representatives

Advisory Forum Secretariat: Sérgio Potier Rodeia

Bernhard URL: Chair

Juliane Kleiner: Co-Chair

Guilhem de Seze: Co-Chair

Barbara Gallani: Co-Chair

Marta Hugas

Dirk Detken (VC)

Davide Arcella

Jane Richardson

Ana Afonso

Stylianos Koulouris (VC)

Apologies

Austria *Klemens Fuchs*

Malta *Ingrid Busuttil*

*Kosovo** *Valdet Gjinovci*

Montenegro *Vesna Dakovic*

Turkey *Senay Eken*

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

1. Opening of the meeting

Bernhard Url, Chair of the meeting welcomed participants to the 72nd Advisory Forum (AF) meeting. Apologies were noted from Austria, Malta, Kosovo, Montenegro and Turkey. The Chair welcomed Ms. Ása Þórhildur Þórðardóttir, Acting Director-General of the Department of Food and Agriculture at the Ministry of Industries and Innovation from Iceland; and Péter Bokor, representative from the European Commission (DG-SANTE). The newly appointed AF members from Luxembourg, Marc Fischer, and Greece, Dionysios Vlachos, were welcomed by the Chair.

2. Welcome by Acting Director-General of the Department of Food and Agriculture of the Ministry of Industries and Innovation from Iceland

The floor was given to Ms. Ása Þórhildur Þórðardóttir who welcomed the participants to the meeting and to Reykjavík, Iceland.



3. Adoption of agenda and action points from last meeting

The Chair asked if there were any new items to be included in the draft Agenda. Dick Sijm (NL) asked for the addition of the item "Opinion on possible health effects of the food additive titanium dioxide" which was included under Point 9 "Risk Assessment Activities". The plenary adopted the agenda for the meeting. The Chair noted that minutes of the 71st Advisory Forum meeting were published on EFSA's website on 16.05.2019.

■ 3a - Declaration of Intent on Independence

Dirk Detken (EFSA) briefly presented to AF members the final draft of the Declaration of Intent on Independence. The document was re-submitted to plenary following revision in line with comments received from AF members during the 71st AF meeting in Romania. The Declaration of Intent was endorsed unanimously by all present AF members.

Action Point 1: EFSA to publish the endorsed Declaration of Intent on Independence on EFSA's website.

■ 3b - ToR of the AF Discussion Group on Capacity Building

Ana Canals (ES) took the floor on behalf of the Advisory Forum Discussion Group (AFDG) on Capacity Building, briefly describing the proposed draft Terms of Reference (ToR), highlighting the support provided to the EU-FORA Programme so to ensure its sustainability; and the intention to work towards a harmonised European Master's degree in Risk Assessment in the food chain.

Péter Bokor (EC) stressed that more trained scientists are needed, though currently there is lack of information on how many are being trained and how many end up working in regulatory risk assessment in public organisations. It was agreed that a business case for a harmonised European Master's degree in Risk Assessment in the food chain would be useful. Péter Bokor asked for a copy of the questionnaire being prepared by the AFDG. It was suggested that risk assessment skills could also be integrated into science degrees, such as biology and chemistry, since basic scientific skills create the foundation for a risk assessment career. Péter noted that the EC is open to further discuss the subject.

The Chair expressed his support to the proposed Master's degree initiative, as it would support the sustainability of EU risk assessment model in the new Transparency Regulation. Following proposal from the Chair, the plenary agreed to endorse the draft ToR after changing "feasibility assessment" to "business case". The Chair closed the agenda item by thanking Germany, Spain and the other members of the AFDG group for their contribution.

Action Point 2: AFDG on Capacity Building to include the EC in the respective distribution list; share the draft survey on post-graduate studies; update the ToR with a business case rather than naming it a feasibility study.

4. Recent EFSA activities

■ 4a - Inter-Agency related initiatives



1. Meeting with DG-RTD

Marta Hugas provided an oral debrief on the DG-RTD meeting that took place on 15.05.2019 in Brussels between the Director of DG-RTD, the Executive Directors of the ENVI Agencies (EEA, ECHA, EMA, ECDC, EFSA) and representatives of from DG-SANTE and DG-ENV. The meeting focused on an increased involvement of EU Agencies in the Research Knowledge Cycle. MS were encouraged to register for the EU Innovation Day, to take place on 26-27.09.2019.

Marta enquired the plenary about possible entry points for the EU Agencies in Horizon Europe and reminded that a public consultation has already started. Germany asked if it would be best to proceed independently with proposals to Horizon Europe or to channel them through EFSA for greater impact. In this context, EFSA was asked to find an optimal communication channel since food safety might not be high on the list of priorities. The Chair encouraged MSs to highlight on their proposals the respective strategic dimension, focusing on a small list of important topics (e.g. food safety research needs for 2030¹, regulation of chemicals, environmental impact of agrochemicals) and then feed them to Horizon Europe. Spain informed about an upcoming national meeting for discussion of a new research agenda, and asked if EFSA could provide information on its main strategic topics for alignment purposes. Ireland agreed that there was a need to define strategic priorities that align with the needs of the majority of MSs, and asked if AF members should review their proposals for greater impact. Ireland also highlighted that after submitting a proposal, the outcome remains unknown. However, it would not be a wasted exercise, since the EC would likely pay attention to reoccurring topics. Ireland also invited participants to take note of the EC webpage concerning the Expert Group to act as "shadow" Strategic Configuration of the Horizon Europe Programme Committee². The Chair concluded discussions noting that it would be important that MSs express their national priorities on their Horizon Europe proposals.

2. EFSA – ECHA Workshop

Juliane Kleiner provided an oral update on the EFSA-ECHA workshop that took place on 12.04.2019 in Helsinki between Bjorn Hansen (ECHA Executive Director), the Chair and respective Management Teams. The main outcome of the meeting was an agreement to move from ad-hoc joint activities to a strategic partnership to become more efficient and deliver quicker high-quality assessments. Priority areas discussed in the meeting included structured data, assessment methodologies, research and people management. Areas for future joint activities include the development of compatible data management tools and a global approach for Sustainable Development Goals.

3. EU Chemicals Policy 2030 Conference

Guilhem de Seze shortly briefed the plenary on the high-level conference "EU chemicals policy 2030: building on the past, moving to the future" held on 27-28.06.2019 in Brussels. The conference focused on recent developments in the EU chemical policy, assessment of current challenges, and future development of an EU chemical policy to improve protection of human health and the environment. The Chair highlighted that the EU has an effective chemical regulation system, though regulation at a more global level is still missing, especially considering controls over imported products. The Chair further highlighted that

¹ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/e170622>

² <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/index.cfm?do=groupDetail.groupDetail&groupID=3662&news=1>



managing the “tension” between feeding more people and adhering to an EU model of no biotechnology and agrochemicals remains a priority reflection.

■ **4b - Meeting with DG-ENV**

Marta Hugas debriefed the plenary on a EFSA/DG-ENV meeting held on 15.05.2019 in Brussels with the General-Director of DG-ENV Daniel Calleja Crespo, and representatives from DG-SANTE. The aim of the meeting was to improve collaboration between EFSA and EU Agencies under the umbrella of DG-ENV (i.e. ECHA and EEA); discuss administrative matters of common interest; and improve governance on common work priorities. EFSA aims to participate in regular meetings between DG-ENV and MSs competent authorities on matters relevant to EFSA and explore ways to provide more data to the Information Platform for Chemical Monitoring (IPChem) on food and feed. EFSA also aims to further support DG-ENV Agencies on safe chemicals policies and non-toxic strategy.

■ **4c - Meeting with IARC**

Guilhem De Seze provided a brief overview of EFSA’s meeting with IARC, held on 24.05.2019 in Lyon, France. The meeting aimed at strengthening EFSA - IARC collaboration and focused on independence, sharing of evidence, capacity building and communication activities. Guilhem highlighted the updated IARC Preamble. The Chair noted that IARC’s assessment methodologies and evidence evaluation practices differ from those in the EU and EFSA, thus future differences on outputs are possible. Germany encouraged a closer EFSA - IARC collaboration, while Spain proposed stronger communication efforts when in presence of notable differences on scientific outputs.

5. Preparatory work for the implementation of the new Transparency Regulation in the food chain (amending the GFL and 8 other sectoral acts)

Péter Bokor (DG-SANTE) provided an overview of ongoing preparatory work for the implementation of the new Transparency Regulation in the food chain. Guilhem de Seze and Barbara Gallani proceeded with presenting EFSA’s preparedness activities to implement the new Regulation, highlighting key priorities to be addressed (on transparency and confidentiality; on engagement and risk communication; on scientific value; and on governance); the timeline for implementing the new provisions by 2021; and the overarching programme (named ART) and underlying projects, with particular reference to the one on Engagement and Risk Communication EN.RI.CO). Members were informed that during the November AF meeting a dedicated session will be organised for discussing the new provisions (with focus on the ones impacting on MSs) and possible processes for addressing them.

Germany noted concerns regarding the number of scientific experts available to work for EFSA as a result of selection criteria, highlighting that an improved management system and more flexibility are necessary in order not to limit EFSA’s operational and scientific capacity. The Chair clarified that measures such as increased expert remuneration (enhancing a sustainable expert framework) and better distribution of work between Scientific Panels, Article 36 Organisations and EFSA staff are being looked on this regard. The Chair further highlighted that EFSA staff should primarily have a supporting role in the scientific assessment process; long-term partnership models with MSs will be co-created so to ensure MS engagement and proportionate distribution of efforts; and that there is a unique opportunity to have public consultations on each application.



Sweden expressed their content with the plans for the proportionate task distribution and Spain noted the high investment planned to be allocated to scientific cooperation. Spain further mentioned the importance of involving more MSs in the planning of collaborative work namely through the future Management Board representatives, and at the same time ensure risk communicators are well-linked at a national level. The Chair agreed with the views expressed also considering that not all past collaborations with national organisations were successful. A new partnership model is needed for improved collaboration, including staff exchanges between EFSA and national organisations. The EC added that delivering results with high quality and adhering to the deadlines should remain the highest priority, suggesting consultations with MSs limited to where really necessary.

Reference also to EFSA's proposal for the creation of a Sounding Board, a stakeholder-oriented consulting body that aims to ensure transparent procedures for the involvement of all parties during the implementation of the new provisions. Upon request from the Chair, three MSs (HU, SE and ES) expressed interest in joining the Sounding Board and report back on its activities at AF meetings; while DE and FR expressed availability to collaborate at a more technical level, namely in the Sounding Board Technical Committees.

6. Working with partners to establish a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for Horizon Europe

Marta Hugas provided an update on recent research coordination developments in preparation to establishing a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) for Horizon Europe. Specific reference was made to the Coordination and Support Action (CSA) on food safety systems adopted on 2 July and to be launched 15 October, inviting Advisory Forum members to express interest and, in this way, help in setting the SRIA on safe food systems for Horizon Europe. It was further mentioned that EFSA started preparations for RARA2020 that will follow-up on the DG-RTD Workshop (held on 17.01.2019). It was finally noted that the EFSA report on Food Safety Regulatory Research Needs 2030 was recently published in the July edition of the EFSA Journal¹.

The Chair emphasised environmental sustainability and chemical-free agriculture as topics that potentially could be funded by Horizon Europe. Marta Hugas noted the public access to the "Shadow Programme Committee"² of Horizon Europe, encouraging MSs to visit this EC website regularly and to liaise with representatives from their MSs once their names become available. Marta highlighted the RARA2020 event, planned for December 2020 linked with an AF meeting, and invited members to join the respective Programme Committee. Ireland already volunteered for the Programme Committee of RARA2020.

Action Point 3: AF members to express interest in participating in the Programme Committee for RARA2020 by Friday 19.07.2019.

Action Point 4: AF members to note registrations are open for the European Research and Innovation Days³ (Brussels, 24-26.09.2019).

7. Engagement & Communications update

³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/events/upcoming-events/european-research-and-innovation-days_en



Barbara Gallani provided an update on EFSA's recent engagement and cooperation activities. The presentation included media highlights from the past quarter; an update on stakeholder engagement activities; key highlights from the 2019 Eurobarometer on Food Safety in the EU⁴; the celebration of #WorldFoodSafetyDay on 07.06.2019; and highlights from the #EUandMyFood campaign.

Cyprus congratulated and thanked EFSA for conducting this Eurobarometer, after 8 years from the previous one, which is particularly important for countries that do not have the means to conduct such national surveys on their own. It also emphasized its importance for the national competent food authorities which, based on national findings, will try to target their communication actions more specifically. Ireland thanked EFSA for the valuable results obtained by the 2019 Eurobarometer initiative and mentioned that, according to national surveys, food poisoning is the number one concern in Ireland, which was validated by Eurobarometer results. Germany asked for more details on the aims of the study conducted, highlighting that EFSA's opinions must be explained in simpler manner in order to reach the public. Hence, developing strong relationships with "multipliers of key messages" is strategically important. Barbara noted that it is important to collect data about the concerns and expectations of European citizens. Research conducted by social scientists feeds into an effective communication strategy from EFSA. Barbara further noted that it was not possible to include the IPA countries in the latest Eurobarometer survey due to contractual restrictions, however, this will be overcome before year-end.

On the renewal of the Article 36 list of organisations, Barbara sought the support from AF members in ensuring that MS organisations will have reviewed their profiles (or requested withdrawal) and that FPs send their last assessments to EFSA by mid-July 2019.

Action Point 5: AF members to note the results of the 2019 Eurobarometer on Food Safety in the EU, available on EFSA's website⁴.

Action Point 6: With regards to the ongoing renewal of the Article 36 List of organisations, AF members to support FPs, on a need basis, in sending the last assessment requests for review to EFSA by mid-July 2019.

8. Data Collection

■ 8a – EU MENU: What's next?

Davide Arcella informed members about upcoming challenges for the EU Menu Framework project. A total of 36 dietary surveys in different age groups and countries has been financed by EFSA, with 17 of them already concluded and data successfully transferred to EFSA. The last projects under the EU Menu project are expected to finalise by 2023. In its latest meeting, the Network on Food Consumption Data stressed the importance to continue the collection of accurate, harmonised and detailed food consumption data in the future. This should still remain a primary long-term objective for EFSA, and a top priority for collaboration with the EU MSs.

Juliane Kleiner kicked-off discussions emphasising the importance of reliable food consumption data. In this context, Slovenia and Croatia thanked EFSA for the support provided on surveys, highlighting that future work on this domain is welcome. Croatia

⁴ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/corporate/pub/eurobarometer19>



further highlighted the importance of EFSA's role in the exchange of experiences and use of new technologies for data collection, and proposed an active role for EFSA in the collection and harmonization of food composition data at EU level. Greece raised concerns over potentially high costs associated with maintaining data up-to-date. Cyprus informed to be conducting an EU meta-analysis of data and to be using a tool transforming data from FOODEX2 to FOODEX1 to enable their usage by its own deterministic risk assessment tool "ImproRisk". Sweden noted to have used data collected for exposure assessment purposes (e.g. iron deficiency recently detected) and that using new survey technologies is more cost-effective than classical approaches. Spain noted to be interested in updating data from old surveys and from their outdated food consumption database. Italy informed to have been granted by its national member of the Food consumption network that the data collection conducted in Italy for EU MENU in 2014 was carried out in full compliance with the privacy and personal data protection and that the procedures have been adjusted to the General Data Protection Regulation. Therefore, on the EFSA platform, no data appears that can identify the subjects. The Italian Delegation also added to be in favor of the publication of data aimed at re-use, granted that EFSA takes all the necessary precautions to guarantee in publishing such data, in compliance with the legislation on treatment of data, full protection and anonymity of the subjects who took part in the consumption survey, even in the phase of re-use of raw data. It was pointed out to assume that the procedure for the publication of data by the Authority described in the EFSA report "Publication of scientific data from EU coordinated monitoring programs and surveys" will also apply to data on food consumption collected within the EU Menu and in particular section 3.1.1. Approval of a dataset for publication".

The EC reminded members about the importance of avoiding duplication of activities and specified that DG-SANTE is particularly interested in the nutrition-related topics.

The Chair summarised comments noting that EFSA, jointly with MSs, should analyse how much would be feasible to invest in developing new technologies for the surveys and discuss how to join forces and expertise to minimise investment into new costly tools. Davide Arcella reminded that work is still ongoing on the EU MENU and thus the current infrastructure, tools and guidelines are important points for discussion. Davide further highlighted that food consumption surveys should be regularly carried out, at least once every 10 years. Bosnia and Herzegovina concluded the agenda item thanking EFSA for providing financial support for the implementation of a national food consumption survey and promising to share results once concluded.

■ **8b - Update on the harmonised chemical monitoring data network**

Jane Richardson presented an update on the harmonised chemical monitoring data network activities. The first meeting took place on 19-21.03.2019, with presentations focusing on contaminants, food additives, veterinary medicine residues and pesticide residues. To facilitate Task Force activities and effective communication, an online community consisting of 207 members has been established. The community space gives access to supporting documents and FAQs; and operates as a platform to communicate with EFSA and other data providers. Members interested in information shared in this space should contact EFSA to gain access. As to reporting timelines, data collection opened on 15.03.2019; first validation checkpoint is planned for July 2019; data collection is scheduled to close on 01.10.2019.

France raised a concern that the data collection and submission period might be too short. Jane clarified that data submission by the end of June followed by the validation check point in July would be on a voluntary basis. Data submission would remain open until early October 2019, however, early submissions would be welcome to ensure all issues were captured as soon as possible.



■ 8c - ECHA collaboration and pesticides dossier pilot

Jane Richardson briefed members on a collaborative initiative with ECHA within the framework of the pesticides dossier. At the time of the 72nd AF meeting, ECHA was preparing a service level agreement for the pilot to be signed in July 2019. Configuration of IUCLID was planned for August – September 2019, while the pilot is planned to be launched between October - December 2019. An architectural proposal from ECHA for managing EFSA's pesticides dossier is part of the preparedness activities for addressing the new provisions in the Transparency Regulation. Juliane Kleiner encouraged both industry and the Rapporteur Member States (RMS) to volunteer as pilot participants of the IUCLID pesticides dossier. The focus of the pilot will be on understanding the processes within the RMS and integration requirements within the existing IT systems.

Péter Bokor asked whether the tool will be ready by the deadline set for implementing the new provisions. Jane clarified that using OECD harmonised templates would speed up the progress, however, following the launch of the pilot at the end of 2019 the tool would need to be thoroughly tested and endorsed by the MSs. Jane also added that having a fully operational system ready to receive information would only address part of the provisions. All parties would need to be prepared, trainings would need to occur and guidance documents updated so to minimise integration delays.

The Chair pointed out that IUCLID seems to be a balanced future-oriented solution and that it should comply with the legal regulations by March 2021. Guilhem de Seze mentioned that industry would require time to comply with the new standards. Péter added that data format must be suitable, and it will be crucial to meet the deadlines.

■ 8d - Update on TF on data collection and data modelling

Ákos Józwiak briefed the plenary on main outcomes of the 4th meeting of the AF Task Force on Data Collection and Modelling which took place on 02.07.2019. The meeting focused in progressing recommendations regarding the Inventory of Reporting Needs, Data Modelling and Data Architecture. A draft report on "Data collection and Reporting: MS reporting in the Food / Feed domain" will be submitted to AF members by end of August for adoption at the AF meeting in Helsinki.

Finland noted that food and feed were dominating topics and asked (1) whether there would be similar initiatives for plant health data; (2) will MSs maintain access to their own data; and (3) how will personal data protection be approached. Ákos explained that food and feed domains were identified as priority fields, however, the whole food chain is taken into consideration, thus plant and animal health will follow. Any personal data protection issues will be solved within the data community. The Chair encouraged having a medium- and long-term outlook, bringing together data specialists from the EC, EFSA and different domains to develop a data architecture in time. This work should be done under the leadership of the EC.

Action Point 7: Task Force on Data Collection and Data Modelling to submit report on "Data collection and Reporting: MS reporting in the Food / Feed domain" to AF members by end of August for endorsement at the September AF meeting in Helsinki.

9. Risk Assessment activities

■ 9a - Rapid Assessment of Contaminant Exposure (RACE) tool



Ana Afonso presented the “Rapid Assessment of Contaminant Exposure (RACE)” tool. The tool uses food consumption information from the EFSA Comprehensive European Food Consumption Database, provides estimates of acute and chronic exposure from single foods and compares results with the relevant toxicological reference points.

Following question from Spain, Ana specified that the 4 training sessions on the tool that took place on 22-24.05.2019 aimed the RASFF network members. Ana further clarified that having a RASFF user-profile is not necessary, since the tool is available to all, in order to register a email request must be sent to sc.secretariat@efsa.europa.eu. Germany raised the concern that the tool might not be suitable as a monitoring system, since it only does selective sampling. Ana noted that the RACE tool does not aim monitoring purposes but instead to help the EC and risk assessors to evaluate potential health risk in the RASFF context. Albania inquired whether candidate countries have access to the tool, which Ana confirmed. On question from Greece regarding uncertainty of outputs generated by the tool, Ana clarified that the RACE tool produces a output number that compares the exposure estimate with a toxicological reference point, not a range.

■ **9b - Update on Chlorpyriphos**

AF members were provided with a short update on the ongoing peer review of Chlorpyriphos. It was noted that the ongoing review is the first under EFSA’s mandate/responsibility and that the deadline for re-approval was recently extended one year in order to allow the peer-review to include aspects that relate to human health, in particular development neurotoxicity.

- **9c - EFSA mandates**
- **9d - MS RA plans**
- **9e - Upcoming public consultations**
- **9f – Opinion on possible health effects of the food additive titanium dioxide (E171)**

Juliane Kleiner and Guilhem de Seze updated the plenary on recent EFSA mandates, MS RA plans and upcoming public consultations.

Juliane Kleiner noted that EFSA’s mandate to update the guidance on the risk assessment of PPP on bees might of interest to the MSs. Guilhem de Seze noted that the mandate was received by EFSA to define the missing protection goals for the bee guidance.

Guilhem De Seze informed that EFSA recently published an opinion on characterisation of titanium dioxide, noting that the most recent results did not put the 2016 EFSA opinion into question. However, more time and research are needed to address some of the uncertainties. Guilhem further noted EFSA’s interest on the outcomes of (1) ANSES’s characterisation of hazards associated with the use of potassium salt by at-risk groups; (2) the Swedish studies on (a) methodologies of benefit-assessment of whole grains; and (b) nutritional status and exposure to potentially toxic compounds from food in Swedish adolescents.

■ **9f – Opinion on possible health effects of the food additive titanium dioxide (E171)**

Dick Sijm (NL) briefly introduced the upcoming content opinion from the Dutch Office of Risk Assessment 7 Research on E171, following a workshop that discussed recent scientific research showing that E171 may be associated with the formation of colon cancer. The



opinion will be publicly available at the end of August 2019. EFSA is currently awaiting the outcomes of information from industry, before end of Summer 2019, and the results of the Extended One Generation Reproduction Study (EOGRTS), before end of 2020. EFSA, EC and NL will discuss outside the meeting how industry can be moved to adapt the EOGRTS.

10. Thematic Discussion: micro- and nano-plastics in food and feed

The Chair introduced the thematic discussion on micro- and nano-plastics in food and feed, aimed at exchanging information on the topic and identify synergies, knowledge gaps and draw recommendations for future joint initiatives.

■ 10a - Introduction

Marta Hugas noted the importance of this thematic discussion, highlighting the potential negative impact on food safety and human health of micro- and nano-particles through their spread in the environment and food chain. Reference was made to currently relevant H2020 projects and upcoming related activities such as JRC's Global Summit on Regulatory Science 2019, focused on Nanotechnology and Nanoplastics (Ispra, 24-26.09.2019); and to the preparatory work and key aims of EFSA's 2020 Scientific Colloquium on micro- and nano-plastics.

■ 10b - SAM Opinion on Environmental and Health Risks of Microplastic Pollution

Dulce Boavida (from DG-RTD's Scientific Advice Mechanism (SAM)) presented the recently published Opinion on Environmental and Health Risks of Microplastic Pollution. Reference was made to the timeline and steps for building up the opinion (including consultations with EFSA) and as well to key recommendations on how the EU, together with other global policy actors, should respond to micro- and nano-plastic plastic pollution based on state-of-the-art scientific knowledge and insights. The main parts of the opinion receiving most attention to date by policy makers, scientists and the public are the ones concerning marine microplastic pollution, which is understandable given that the plight of the ocean has played a major role in drawing attention to the ubiquity of plastic pollution and its pernicious effects.

■ 10c - JRC activities on microplastics

Birgit Sokull-Klütgen (from the EC Joint Research Centre - JRC) presented JRC's activities on microplastics, with focus on tools and analytical methods for reliable detection and quantification of micro- and nano-plastics. JRC supports the implementation of the EU strategy on plastics and as well activities aiming a better knowledge-base in the area of micro- and nano -plastics in food and the environment. Upon question, Birgit further informed that JRC was starting a project to determine if plastic particles are accumulating inside or outside the cells, an activity that will be done on cell cultures and microorganisms.

■ 10d - ECHA activities on microplastics

Peter Simpson (from the European Chemicals Agency - ECHA) presented the Agencies' activities on micro- and nano-plastics. Highlights include ECHA's proposal for a REACH restriction on "intentionally-added" microplastics requested by the EC as a part of the EU Plastics Strategy. The proposal was published in January 2019 and, at this point is undergoing evaluation by ECHA's Scientific Committees for Risk (RAC) and Socio-Economic



Analysis (SEAC). A public consultation on the proposal is ongoing until 20.09.2019 and the evaluation by RAC and SEAC will be completed by March 2020. The proposed restriction may be adopted by the EC in 2021/2022.

■ **10e Activities in MSs**

1. Belgium

Xavier Van Huffel (BE) briefly presented the ongoing national research on microplastics in food. Reference was made to the PLASTIC_IN_FOOD project, financed by the Belgian Federal Public Service of Health, Food Safety and Environment. The aim of the project is to investigate microplastic contamination in food products on the Belgian market with suspected high microplastic contamination. The Chair highlighted that more knowledge is required on the toxicological impact of microplastic particles.

2. Spain

Ana Canals (ES) briefed the AF on the planned literature review on micro- and nano-plastics. The Scientific Committee of AECOSAN will be reviewing information on safety aspects related to the use of plastics in the food sector and of their presence as contaminants in food. The opinion is expected to be published in 8 months. The Chair noted the different approaches being carried out by MSs to address the microplastics topic depending on national priorities.

3. Sweden

Per Bergman (SE) presented an ongoing survey that aims to map the presence of microplastics in drinking water in Sweden. Results from this assignment are expected no later than 15.12.2019.

4. Norway

Danica Grahec-Ogden (NO) presented the mandate and objectives of the Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food and Environment (VKM) opinion on "Microplastics - occurrence, levels and implications for environment and food safety in Norway". Discussion and approval by VKM's Steering Committee is expected in September 2019, while publication is anticipated for October 2019. Norway further specified that there is not much information available on the effects of microplastics in human health, suggesting MSs interested in the ongoing research to contact VKM. Spain offered to share input with VKM given the similarities in their national work. The Chair encouraged MSs to share anticipated initiatives and knowledge at regional / European scale before carrying out scientific activities related to micro- and nano-plastics, so to enable joint actions in the near future.

5. Germany

Andreas Hensel (DE) briefed the AF about current German activities on micro- and nano-plastics. Germany informed that according to the latest *in-vivo* studies on mice, the uptake of plastic particles through the gut is not of high concern. Nevertheless, participants were informed that more research is needed to explore methodologies and develop standard procedures on this domain. Germany emphasised the importance of not duplicating work and encouraged MSs to visit their website or to direct contact them for further information on BfR initiatives on this domain. Germany further reminded that microplastics are not a new phenomenon and that all evidence must be carefully evaluated before making any definitive statements about the effect of micro- and nano-plastics on the environment and in human health.

■ **10f - Discussion**



The Chair opened the floor for discussion, inviting participants to raise questions to presenters, comment on priorities and share ideas for future joint work.

Birgit Sokull-Klüttgen (JRC) highlighted that the Swedish project on microplastics in drinking water was highly relevant to their work and indicated that JRC would be interested in collaborating with Belgium on the PLASTIC_IN_FOOD project. Dulce Boavida (DG-RTD/SAM) encouraged MSs to look at the SAPEA article "A scientific perspective on microplastics in nature and society", a report highlighting that currently available evidence suggesting microplastics and nano-plastics do not pose a widespread risk to humans is limited, and that the situation could change if pollution continues at the current rate. Dulce further asked if any MS is working on single-use biodegradable plastics. Spain volunteered to share information about their work on the subject.

Barbara Gallani informed that EFSA's Eurobarometer 2019 survey included a question on microplastics. Results of the survey showed that 49% of consumers have heard about the issue and that 20% are concerned about the impact of microplastics in human health, which is comparable to concerns associated with allergic reactions to food.

Per Bergman (SE) asked Birgit if JRC was planning to have an extensive study of the reference materials that will look into. Birgit responded that JRC will start with basic reference materials, such as PET plastics in water, as well as other materials in sediments, in order to deliver results by the end of 2019. Per (SE) volunteered to share the Swedish reference reviews and mapping exercises, asking in addition (1) if MSs can contribute to the subject beyond the sharing of research information; and (2) if JRC's upcoming Global Summit on Regulatory Science will focus on policy or rather on science and methodologies. Birgit clarified that the Global Forum will focus on science for policy, with sessions on food, nano-plastics and standards; and that a more technical meeting will take place in Ispra in January 2020 for a detailed discussion on analytical methods between specialists with knowledge on measurement.

Germany reminded that there are still no findings on the effects of microplastics on human health and that no information regarding the environmental impact of nano-plastics is available. Therefore, further characterisation of these risks by ECHA is still necessary so to avoid endorsement of inaccurate global public perception on the subject – a view that is not explicitly reflected in scientific research. Peter Simpson (ECHA) highlighted that risks posed by microplastics are directly linked to their persistence in the environment and that the topic has to be approached with a long-term perspective, since failure in changing our current behaviour may result in the near future in exceeding currently set thresholds.

Xavier Van Huffel (BE) inquired about the risk of fraud linked to the use of micro- and nano-plastics in food and rose the question of its current public perception. Charlotte Grastilieur (FR) noted also the uncertainties around the topic, e.g. potential toxicity of heated microplastics, thus suggesting caution in drawing conclusions until more scientific information becomes available. In this context, Barbara Gallani proposed the development of a coordinated communications approach on micro- and nano-plastics, with a clear timeframe. EFSA could also make use of its CEN to find the best approach for tackling knowledge gaps and uncertainties, while providing for harmonised communications to consumers and industry.

The Chair noted that research on micro- and nano-plastics does not seem to be coordinated across the different MSs, suggesting additional efforts among JRC and other EU and national institutions. The Chair finally thanked all participants on the thematic



discussion, highlighting that EFSA will progress with its work on the topic, namely through Inter-Agency collaboration, the 2020 Scientific Colloquium and through the CEN.

Action Point 8: EFSA to develop lines to take on micro- and nano-plastics with the support of the CEN.

11. Any Other Business (*Chaired by Barbara Gallani*)

■ 11a - Phyto-pharmacovigilance in France

Charlotte Grastilieur (FR) presented the French phyto-pharmacovigilance scheme aimed at post-marketing surveillance of side effects of Plant Protection Products and contaminations in the environment. EL asked if the scheme is being implemented under (or is linked to) Directive 2009/128/EC concerning the sustainable use of pesticides in the EU. FR clarified that the scheme is being implemented at national level as a result of discussions with industry stakeholders and asked if there are any similar systems in place in other MSs (which could potentially lead to a wider (EU) initiative). Given that no feedback was provided in plenary (and given that some MSs were no longer present), the Chair concluded the item asking MSs to provide written feedback to FR on the question raised.

Action Point 9: AF members to provide written feedback to FR on any existing national systems for phyto-pharmacovigilance. FR to collate replies and report results at an upcoming AF meeting.

■ 11b - Update on the EU-FORA cycle 2019-2021

Stylianos Koulouris presented a short update on the EU-FORA programme, highlighting that, during the 2019 admission cycle, the number of applicants increased by 57% compared to 2018; and that the number of EU-FORA work programme applications increased by 31%. In order to ensure the sustainability of this programme in the long term, SE suggested to investigate why it has attracted more attention from certain countries. IE shared with the plenary that participants from Ireland had a positive experience with the programme while cost of living and organisational challenges were considered the main constraints to be addressed. Stylianos clarified that hosting institutions now assist the fellows with finding a suitable accommodation. ES suggested that the Communications Expert Network could further support FPs with the promotion of the programme, while SE noted that FP network might not be the most effective dissemination channel, particularly among universities. SE further suggested that countries who had the most applicants share their dissemination strategies with all MSs. The Chair closed the item highlighting that different promotion approaches were implemented by different MSs and that suggestions made during plenary discussion are considered by the EU-FORA Programme Committee for upcoming cycles.

Action Point 10: EU-FORA Programme Committee to consider improvements suggested by the plenary in future campaigns, including the possible development, jointly with the CEN, of a guidance on good communication and dissemination practices.

■ 11c - Communication activities in food safety remit in Portugal

Filipa Melo Vasconcelos (PT) presented recent risk communication initiatives implemented at national level, including an International Conference on Emerging Risks & Health Communication; the IV Annual Meeting of the EUROCIGUA Governing and Advisory



Boards, held in Funchal; and a national event celebrating the World Food Safety Day. The Chair thanked for the initiatives carried out and invited PT to present them at a coming meeting of the Communications Expert Network.

■ 11d - Upcoming AF meetings

Sérgio Potier Rodeia provided an overview of upcoming AF meetings in 2019 and 2020. The next two meetings would take place in Helsinki (18-19.09.2019) and in Parma (27-28.11.2019).

The Chair further informed about upcoming thematic discussions planned for AF meetings. The September AF meeting in Helsinki will focus on combined exposure to multiple chemicals, while the November AF meeting in Parma will focus on structured data. In addition, during the November meeting, a special session will be dedicated to the implementation of the new Transparency Regulation, while regular updates will be provided during all AF meetings.

The Chair proceeded with opening the floor for questions regarding upcoming AF meeting plans. ES highlighted that AF members must be aware of the consequences to MSs deriving from the implementation of the new provisions in the Transparency Regulation in the Food Chain. ES also highlighted the need for linking the new provisions with the official controls regulatory framework, namely with regards to data harmonisation between MSs in their multiannual national reports.

Martin Minjajev (EE) requested the floor to inform the plenary that he was changing positions in his national organisation and that he would not represent EE in future AF meetings. Martin expressed his gratitude for the good work achieved and mentorship received. On behalf of the plenary, the Chair thanked Martin and as well Charlotte Grastilieur (FR) – as well stepping down as AF representative – for their important contributions to the work of the forum and wished them all the best for their future professional careers.

End of meeting

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking Iceland and the Icelandic AF member for hosting the 72nd AF meeting; AF representatives and the EC for participating in the meeting and contributing to constructive discussions; invited speakers for delivering impactful talks and sparking conversation, as well as EFSA Colleagues in Parma for supporting the meeting.

LIST OF ACTION ITEMS

Reference	Who	What
Action 1	EFSA	<i>Publish the endorsed Declaration of Intent on Independence on EFSA's website</i>
Action 2	AFDG on Capacity Building	<i>AFDG on Capacity Building to include the EC in the respective distribution list; share the draft survey on post-graduate studies; update the ToR with a business case rather than naming it a feasibility study</i>



Action 3	AF members	Express interest in participating in the Programme Committee for RARA2020 by 19.07.2019
Action 4	AF members	Note registrations are open for the European Research and Innovation Days (Brussels, 24-26.09.2019)
Action 5	AF members	Note results of the 2019 Eurobarometer on Food Safety in the EU, available on EFSA's website
Action 6	AF members	On the Article 36 List of organisations, support FPs, on a need basis, in sending the last assessment requests for review to EFSA by mid-July 2019
Action 7	TF Data Collection & Data Modelling	Submit report on "Data collection and Reporting: MS reporting in the Food / Feed domain" to AF members by end of August, for endorsement at the September AF meeting
Action 8	EFSA	EFSA to develop lines to take on micro- and nano-plastics with the support of the CEN
Action 9	AF Members & France	AF members to provide written feedback to FR on any existing national systems for phyto-pharmacovigilance FR to collate replies and report results at an upcoming AF meeting
Action 10	EU-FORA Programme Committee	Consider improvements suggested by the plenary in future EU-FORA campaigns, including the possible development, jointly with the CEN, of a guidance with good communication and dissemination practices