Stakeholder Interviews

Image and Performance of EFSA

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Market and Management Advice

Stakeholder Interviews

Methodology

- Qualitative Research
  - Semi-structured interviews (14 interviews - 23 participants)
  - A wide selection of key players :
    - EU Commission (DG Sanco – DG Environment)
    - EU Parliament
    - Member States : Food Safety Agencies / Ministry of Agriculture
    - Scientific Panel
    - Industry
    - Consumer
    - Press
    - NGO
  - Field work : March-April 2004

Positive Overall Opinion

- **Everyone agrees that EFSA was a good idea and all are very willing to support**
  - Most even state readiness to adapt their own organisation for better fit with EFSA
- **The general opinion is moderate to quite positive**
  - Start-up seen as far too slow
  - Output not yet impressive (too few opinions)
- **Everyone agrees on key role of EFSA, but..**
  - Confusion and disagreement about other roles
  - Confusion about the work programme, priorities and timetable
- **The quality of the work is mostly seen as positive and improving**
  - Most positive feedback comes from consumer, industry and press
  - Some concern raised by Commission
  - Member State opinions vary widely
- **EFSA employees seen as competent and communicative**

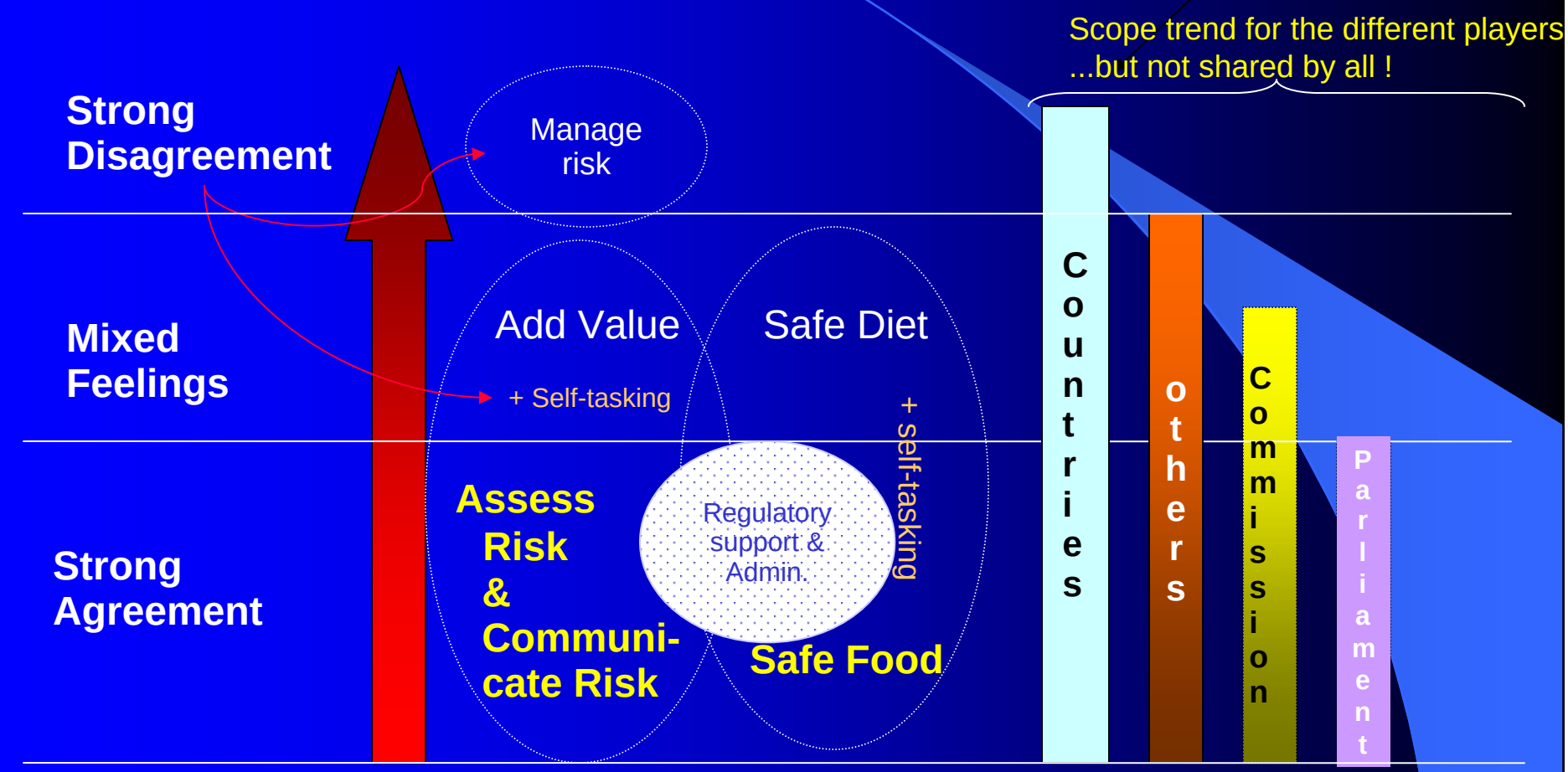
Expectations :
An interesting challenge !

Different expectations about areas of responsibility

- In spite of the EFSA mission statement, expectations sometimes go well beyond this statement
- Everyone is aware that the workload involved is huge and that there is a risk of over-stretching EFSA capacity

Strong Disagreement	• Risk Management • Self-Tasking
Mixed Feelings	• Product Approval Administration • Validation of claims (safe diet) • Involvement in nutrition policies (profiles...) • Value adding activities (advisory role)
Strong Agreement	• Independent scientific assessment and communication of food safety risk • European Contact • Restore consumer confidence • Set European standards • Build reference libraries • Coordinate countries - create networks • Underpin Commission policy making

And different expectations by different players



Opinions and expectations as to scope of EFSA responsibilities vary widely across stakeholders but risk assessment is always seen as core activity.

Performance

Performance

- All realise that EFSA is still a very young organisation
- Most are concerned about workload of EFSA and their capacity to cope with demand
- All underline quality and service-orientation of staff
- Everyone wants EFSA to succeed and is willing to help

Performance

What is EFSA doing - very - well ?

- Quality of the reports is mostly seen as excellent
- Bringing the countries together
- At last one contact point for for other European/global organisations
- Helpful and service-minded employees/organisation
- They communicate well
- Serve as a reference and a resource

Performance of EFSA
Some Statements

- *EFSA is really an ally of local food safety authorities*
- *Good structures and the people are efficient and open*
- *Quality of the opinions is state-of-the-art* // The quality is *impressive...*
- *They communicate well*
- *They inform national agencies very well and in time*
- *Communication is much better than in the days of the Commission when we would get absolutely no warning*
- *Semi-carbazides - their first challenge - was extremely well managed*
- *Communication works very well now - step-change*

Performance

What is EFSA doing not so well ?

- Quantity of opinions is seen as low
- Insufficient communication of work programme - projects - priorities
- Some concern that time-tables are slipping
- Advisory Forum coordination and leverage
- Serve as a reference and a resource

Performance

What is EFSA doing not so well ?

- Quantity of opinions seen as low
  - Point made by various stakeholders
  - Little understanding as to what is driving that and at the same time concern about time-tables
- Communication of work programme - projects - priorities
  - Creates confusion and concern
  - Feeling that there is too much focus on ‘media-hype’ vs real risk issues
- Advisory forum coordination and leverage
  - Different people around the table -> identify process to communicate effectively
  - Representatives do not necessarily represent total FS scope of their country
  - Risk of duplication, even competition
- Serve as a reference and a resource
  - Would like to see more added value (e.g. tables with ‘preferred substances’ etc.)
  - Standardisation of methods and data exchange should be more looked into

Performance

- *A bit difficult to keep track of what they're working on*
- *Opinions come out of the blue*
- *EFSA should be asked to give an activity update to the Parliament*
- *The work programme is not sufficiently clear, there is a risk that countries work on the same programmes*
- *We noticed they went into independent activity, it is their good right, but where is the priority ?*
- *The way in which EFSA is structured is an issue as it encourages a lot of duplication, work schedules are not clearly discussed and there is the issue of confidentiality…we don't want competition, we want cooperation*
- *Role of the Board is a bit dubious, they should not get too involved in the day-to-day programmes*

Performance
Different players - different views

	Not so good too early	Quite good	Very good
Who	Commission 1 Country, NGO	Consumer, Science, Countries, E.P.	**Industry, Countries, Press**
Issues	• Quantity of output • Timeliness • Too many ties with Commission • Start-up too slow • No view on priorities, work programmes • Concern about self-tasking • But willingness is there...Positive signs Matter of time...and process	• Quantity of output • Confusion re. roles • Good time to re-visit the mission : assess and re-focus • EFSA is important for aligning countries • Opinions eg GMO should include benefit assessment	**• Already authoritative** **• Brought countries closer** **• Need to give them time** **• Countries communicate better** **• Still too much duplication** **• Agendas unclear**

Core Performance Aspects

A few examples of specific performance elements that were mentioned :

- Science

Positive	Negative (concern)
- Quality of opinions - In-house staff	- Number of opinions - Workload - Timing and Priorities - Composition of panels - Relationship with Commission

- Communications

Positive	Negative (concern)
- Better than before - Good press releases - Improved website - Professional and cooperative staff	- Need more practice in working together : avoid man-made crisis - Ensure long enough leadtimes

Performance

Overall Assessment

- Quality of work seen as at least as good as prior to EFSA
- There are still many challenges :
  - the youth of the organisation
  - processes that need fine-tuning
  - more output momentum
- But things are improving :
  - little or no nostalgia; strong feeling that this is the right way to go
  - the core quality of the work is perceived as very high
  - EFSA appears to be a listening and learning organisation
  - the EFSA-staff is quoted as a key asset

Other Issues

Other issues

- Arrival of new member states
  - not seen as critical risk
  - will burden administrative workload
- Parma
  - mixed feelings
  - away from it all
  - will promote new (cheaper) ways to communicate
  - inconvenient location, esp.. for scientists and Commission
- How independent is EFSA (Separate from Commission)
  - Most think this is the best solution
  - Many do not - not yet - see a difference in quality of opinions
  - Most agree that communication has significantly improved
  - Many agree on serious risk of Commission over-burdening EFSA, hence no time for other priorities or self-tasking
  - Some still feel the Commission is put first instead of European consumer

The EFSA Vision

The EFSA Vision

- Most think it is very good to have a vision (and taking a while to get there..)
- Most gave very constructive feedback and volunteered ideas for improvement

The working Proposal :

"Working closely with national authorities and stakeholders, the European Food Safety Authority is the keystone of the European food safety network.
The Authority is committed to providing scientific advice of the highest possible quality and clear communication of existing and emerging risk."

Comments

- Fine as it is - good statement : xxxxx
- Good statement - needs some adjustment : xxxxxxx
- Not good - needs major adjustment : xx

The EFSA Vision

The vision statement was subsequently reworked in accordance with most of the suggestions for improvement and is now on the web site :

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is the keystone of European Union (EU) risk assessment regarding food and feed safety. In close collaboration with national authorities and in open consultation with its stakeholders, EFSA provides independent scientific advice and clear communication on existing and emerging risks.

Conclusions

There is a strong feeling that EFSA is on the right track*...but not quite there yet :

The key areas to address are :

- Manage expectations
- Communication of work programme - projects - priorities - time tables
- Advisory Forum co-ordination and leverage
- Quantity of opinions

* It was interesting to observe increase of comments on improvement along with the interviews' timeline (March-April).

As we see it,

according to the stakeholders' comments, nothing should prevent EFSA from delivering an outstanding contribution for ensuring better food safety in Europe and, ultimately, restoring consumer confidence.

...and, building on that,

we would expect most of the issues in this document to be solved or at least looked into !

Thank you.

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