



**MINUTES OF THE 14<sup>TH</sup> PLENARY MEETING OF THE EFSA SCIENTIFIC  
COMMITTEE HELD ON 15-16 SEPTEMBER 2005 IN PARMA**

(adopted on 17 October 2005)

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**PARTICIPANTS**

*Scientific Committee (SC):*

Sue Barlow, Andrew Chesson, Dan Collins, Tito Fernandes, Tony Hardy, Bo Jansson, Pierre Le Neindre (Vice-Chair), Ada Knaap (Vice-Chair), Vittorio Silano (Chair), Josef Schlatter, Philippe Vannier, Josep Vives-Rego

*Representative*

Jeremy Sweet

*European Food Safety Authority (EFSA):*

Geoffrey Podger, Herman Koëter, Marie-Noelle Costa, Marta Hugas, Juliane Kleiner, Djien Liem, Suzy Renckens, Valérie Rolland, Chris Totte

*European Commission (EC):*

Marina Marini and Michael Walsh

*Voedsel en Waren Autoriteit (VWA)<sup>1</sup>*

Marcel Mengelers, Hub Noteborn, Wim Ooms

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<sup>1</sup> Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority, The Hague, The Netherlands (present for agenda item 4 only)

## **1 OPENING, APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. Apologies for absence were received from Albert Flynn and Harry Kuiper. Jeremy Sweet was present on behalf of the GMO Panel.

The Members of the Scientific Committee congratulated Herman Koëter with the prestigious Doerenkamp-Zbinden Foundation prize for his efforts in improving animal welfare through the development of alternative methods to animal testing

## **2 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The agenda was adopted as proposed.

## **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **4 IDENTIFICATION AND CREATION OF A NETWORK OF KEY SOURCES TO SUPPORT EFSA IN THE IDENTIFICATION OF EMERGING RISKS – PROGRESS REPORT OF THE EMRISK PROJECT**

Hub Noteborn of Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority in The Netherlands (VWA) gave an oral report on behalf of the consortium<sup>2</sup> conducting the EMRISK project on request of the EFSA. The main deliverables of this project will be:

- A position paper on the elements of information required to identify emerging risks;
- An inventory on useful operating networks, databases and other sources and their coverage;
- A report of options to capture relevant information into an accessible pro-active system/procedure;
- A proposal of criteria for the science-based evaluation of information including options of data sharing;
- An identification of a best practice for creating a model of the required network and its maintenance.

In the discussions following Dr. Noteborn's presentation, the consortium exchanged views with the members of the Scientific Committee on the ways to proceed. The following general remarks were made:

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<sup>2</sup> The EMRISK project is funded by EFSA to identify and create a network of key sources to support the Authority in the identification of emerging risks. The project is executed by a consortium consisting of the Dutch VWA (co-ordinator), RIVM, RIKILT, BVL, FAVV and FAO under the supervision of the SC Working Group on Emerging Risks.

- The Scientific Committee appreciated the holistic approach proposed for the identification and evaluation of emerging food related risks.
- The consortium was requested to define a timeframe (i.e. a short and medium term approach) for options EFSA could consider for building an adequate and manageable mechanism for the identification and evaluation of emerging risks.

The final report will be presented to the EMRISK WG early 2006. The EMRISK WG will then prepare a document with the conclusions of the project for discussion at a future plenary meeting of the Scientific Committee.

## **5 GENERAL FEEDBACK FROM EFSA**

### **5.1 Operational strategy for expert meetings in Parma**

Herman Koëter introduced a working paper on a possible strategy for scientific expert meetings in Parma. The objective of this paper was to address the concerns expressed by the SC/Panel experts in relation to the move of the EFSA offices to Parma and to provide a first view on possible measures EFSA intends to take into consideration.

Herman Koëter informed the Scientific Committee that many valuable suggestions were given by the SC/Panel experts which EFSA will take into consideration in EFSA's expert guide that will clarify the rules for scientific expert meetings in Parma.

The main concerns of the SC/Panel experts can be summarised as follows:

- The additional traveling time, in comparison to Brussels, reduces the availability to EFSA of the experts as the time they can devote to EFSA cannot be realistically increased.
- Concerns about the overall financial compensation of the expert services in relation to the extra traveling time, work undertaken at home and the need to stay overnight.

During the plenary meeting, specific questions were asked about:

- Rules for taking a taxi and the use of private cars e.g. for transportation from home to airport and vice versa..
- Bank charges for transferring from EUR into UK Pound Sterling.
- Financial compensation of additional expenses in case of situations beyond the control of the expert, e.g. in case of missed flights, flight cancellations.
- Financial compensation for time spent for traveling; work/preparations at home, video-conferencing, etc.
- Daily allowances (per diems) for meetings in and outside Parma.
- Reimbursement of additional costs due to changing non-flexible tickets.
- Reimbursement of renting meeting rooms at airports.

It was emphasised that EFSA prefers to have both its plenary meetings as well as its WG meetings in Parma, but that it wishes to apply a strategy that needs to be sensible and sufficiently flexible for the experts working for the Scientific Committee and Panels as well as EFSA's staff.

Following the discussions, Geoffrey Podger and Herman Koëter proposed to contact the FINANCE colleagues in EFSA to clarify the situation in relation to some of the financial issues raised by the SC/Panel experts. It was explained that the financial compensation system is adapted from the system which is already in use by the European Commission for many years. It was however suggested to do an additional check of the comparability of EFSA's system with the one applied by the European Commission, e.g. the one applied by DG Research.

The Scientific Committee will come back to this issue again once the financial compensation systems have been compared and EFSA has updated its document on an operational strategy for meetings in Parma based on the suggestions made by the SC/Panel experts prior to and during the plenary meeting.

## **5.2 State-of-Play as regards the appointment of a new Executive Director of the EFSA**

The Chair opened this agenda item by expressing his appreciation on behalf of the Scientific Committee members for all the work done by Geoffrey Podger in the first years of EFSA's operation. Geoffrey Podger thanked the Chair and also expressed his appreciation for the good collaboration with the members of the Scientific Panels and Committee as well as with his colleagues at EFSA.

Following these initial remarks, Geoffrey Podger explained the procedure and timetable for the appointment of his successor. Geoffrey Podger also announced that the Management Board approved at its last meeting the appointment of Herman Koëter to become the Acting Executive Director once Geoffrey Podger will leave the Authority at the 26<sup>th</sup> of November. The Scientific Committee was also informed that Herman Koëter appointed Antoine Cuvillier, currently Head of Legal Affairs to become the Acting Deputy Executive Director, and Djien Liem as Acting Director of Science. Valérie Rolland will take over Djien Liem's responsibilities as scientific co-ordinator of the Scientific Committee. The Members of the Scientific Committee were asked to suggest possible candidates to fill in the temporary vacancy in the SC Secretariat.

## **5.3 Management Board meeting of 13 September 2005**

Geoffrey Podger updated the Scientific Committee about issues discussed at the Management Board meeting of 13 September of relevance for the Scientific Panels and Scientific Committee. Special attention was given to the issue of progress indicators for which EFSA is seeking the views of the Scientific Committee.

### *Progress indicators*

The Management Board assessed the Authorities' activities on the basis of a set of proposed EFSA progress indicators e.g. the number of scientific opinions, number of requests for scientific opinions, number of opinions which do not meet the deadline<sup>3</sup>. It was generally felt by the members of the Board that some of these progress indicators still not allow an adequate judgement of the work of the Scientific Panels and Committee and that there is still a need for improvement. The Chairs of the Scientific Panels and Committee were therefore invited to come with proposals for more appropriate indicators of progress in the work of the Scientific Panels and Committee. During the discussions following, the following remarks were made:

- It was proposed to have progress reports prepared by the Chairs of the Scientific Panels and Committee. The idea to prepare of narrative reports to be shared with the Management Board rather than a table with numbers of meetings and opinions was supported by many Committee members.
- The number of opinions as such was not considered to be an appropriate progress indicator, however it would be helpful to have an indication of the number of opinions that were issued within the agreed time, or to be informed when the clock stops in the process of the preparation of certain opinions.

EFSA would like to develop more sophisticated progress indicators next year; possible including qualitative indicators as suggested by some members of the Scientific Committee.

The Scientific Committee agreed with the Chair's proposal to create a working group composed of members of the Scientific Committee and EFSA's staff to develop a blueprint for indicators of progress in the work of the Scientific Panels and Scientific Committee. Geoffrey Podger asked the Committee to have the proposal available by the end of the year. Dan Collins and Josep Vives-Rego offered to participate in the new SC Working Group on Progress Indicators.

## **5.4 Scientific Co-operation in accordance with Article 36 of Regulation 178/2002**

Herman Koëter explained the procedure for the designation of competent scientific organisations for a scientific network according to Article 36 of EFSA's Founding Regulation 178/2002. The launch of this process was initiated on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 2005 through a letter of Geoffrey Podger to the Permanent Representations of the Member States to the EU.

In order to facilitate the evaluation by Member States of the competence of national organisations in this context, a questionnaire should be completed for each organisation considering applying for this status and willing to cooperate with EFSA. Member States' authorities, through their Permanent Representations will evaluate all national applications before submitting them to EFSA. These designations should be submitted by the Permanent Representations to EFSA within two months after

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<sup>3</sup> See [http://www.efsa.eu.int/mboard/mb\\_meetings/1128/progressindicatorsfinal1.pdf](http://www.efsa.eu.int/mboard/mb_meetings/1128/progressindicatorsfinal1.pdf)

receipt of the letter of Geoffrey Podger<sup>4</sup>. After shortlisting, EFSA will build framework contracts with organisations having similar expertise in specific areas, providing means to select through a fast process an organisation to carry out a certain task outsourced by EFSA.

## **5.5 New mandates from EFSA to the Scientific Committee**

### *Animal welfare*

Herman Koeter explained the mandate of EFSA to the Scientific Committee on the welfare of experimental animals relating to EFSA's activities. The Scientific Committee accepted to follow the approach as outlined by Geoffrey Podger in his letter to the Chair of the Scientific Committee<sup>5</sup>.

Pierre Le Neindre, Chair of the WG on Experimental Animal Welfare asked for experts to be nominated by the Chairs of the AFC, AHAW, CONTAM, GMO and FEEDAP Panels to take part in this working group; experts from NGOs would also be involved in a later stage of the activities of the Working Group. It was also proposed to invite experts from the non-food Scientific Committees operating under DG SANCO.

### *Benchmark Dose Approach*

The Scientific Committee accepted to follow the approach as outlined by Geoffrey Podger in his letter to the Chair of the Scientific Committee<sup>6</sup>. It is intended to organise the first meeting of the Benchmark Dose Working Group in November.

### *Botanicals*

Djien Liem informed the Scientific Committee that the Secretariat received several nominations from the Scientific Panels and will try to organise a first meeting of this new working group around the end of September. The Scientific Committee accepted to follow the approach as outlined by Geoffrey Podger in his letter to the Chair of the Scientific Committee<sup>7</sup>.

### *Qualified Presumption of Safety*

The proposed mandate of the Scientific Committee has been sent to EFSA on September 6<sup>th</sup>. The Secretariat expects that the mandate from EFSA will follow soon. The QPS Working Group of the Scientific Committee intends to have its first meeting under the new mandate in October. It is intended to finish its work by the end of the mandate of the Scientific Committee (May 2006).

### *Evaluation of the use of the mouse-bioassay as Community reference method for marine biotoxins*

The Secretariat informed the Scientific Committee that it received a request from the German Institute for Risk Assessment – BfR – to evaluate the scientific basis for the use of the mouse-bioassay as reference method for the detection of marine biotoxins. The BfR is of the opinion that there are alternative chemical methods which are more capable of detecting the toxins in mussel samples than

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<sup>4</sup> The deadline for submission of the designations has been extended until December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> See [http://www.efsa.eu.int/science/sc\\_committee/sc\\_documents/1068\\_en.html](http://www.efsa.eu.int/science/sc_committee/sc_documents/1068_en.html)

<sup>6</sup> See [http://www.efsa.eu.int/science/sc\\_committee/sc\\_documents/1067\\_en.html](http://www.efsa.eu.int/science/sc_committee/sc_documents/1067_en.html)

<sup>7</sup> See [http://www.efsa.eu.int/science/sc\\_committee/sc\\_documents/1066\\_en.html](http://www.efsa.eu.int/science/sc_committee/sc_documents/1066_en.html)

the mouse-bioassay. The Secretariat will prepare a terms of reference for discussion at a future plenary meeting of the Scientific Committee.

## **5.6 Issues related to the functioning of the Scientific Committee and Scientific Panels**

Herman Koeter introduced a first draft of a document to be considered by the Management Board at its meeting of the 27<sup>th</sup> of October which deals with issues related to the functioning of the Scientific Committee and Panels. The Scientific Panels, Committee and EFSA's scientific staff have been invited to use this document as starting point to evaluate the experiences gained by the Scientific Panels and Committee in the first two years of operation and to suggest ways to improve the functioning of the Panels and Committee in the future. The document will be updated taking into consideration the suggestions made by the SC during the plenary meeting and those submitted to the Secretariat before the end of September.

## **6 REPORT BACK FROM SCIENTIFIC PANELS AND SC WORKING GROUPS**

### **6.1 Report back from Scientific Panels**

The Chairs of the Scientific Panels provided a brief update of the issues the panels are currently dealing with (see the minutes of the plenary meetings of the Scientific Panels). The following issues were brought to the attention of the members of the Scientific Committee for further consideration.

- The AFC panel has received hundreds of dossiers on dietary supplements for which it will seek assistance from the NDA panel to cover the nutritional aspects (e.g. bioavailability) of these dossiers.
- The AFC Panel is considering using parts of dossiers of one applicant for evaluation of a dossier of another applicant, but wishes to check the legal aspects with the LEGAL Services before doing so.
- The AHAW Panel is about to send a letter to EFSA's management to prepare guidelines for risk assessments in the animal welfare area.
- The Chair of the BIOHAZ Panel reported that the Panel became quite upset after an intervention by a Commission official during the final stages of the adoption of an opinion.
- The Chair of the CONTAM Panel was pleased to announce that the Management Board appointed Dr. Diane Benford as new member of the Panel on Contaminants in the food chain at its meeting on 13 September.
- The NDA Panel released the latest opinions in the series of opinions of upper levels for vitamins and minerals, i.e. for phosphorous and for tin. It is planned to publish the whole series of upper level opinions as prepared initially by the former Scientific Committee on Food and after the end of the term of the SCF, by EFSA's NDA Panel. The Chair congratulated the Panel and the former SCF with the finalisation of this important task.

## **6.2 Progress report from SC Working Groups**

### *Exposure Assessment WG*

The Chair of the SC Working Group informed the Scientific Committee about the progress in the establishment of the concise EU-wide Food Consumption Database and about the preparation of the opinion on uncertainties in exposure assessment.

### *GENTOX WG*

Valuable comments were received during the public consultation of the draft opinion. Comments were received from Scientific Panels, from national food authorities as well as from various research organisations. After the consultation period, the GENTOX Working Group met twice to update the draft opinion taking into consideration the comments received during the public consultation period. Once the GENTOX WG has agreed on the text of the updated draft opinion, it shall be submitted to the Scientific Committee for final adoption.

### *Transparency WG*

The next meeting of the Transparency WG will be on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September. The members of the WG were encouraged to participate and to prepare the contributions as agreed at the last meeting of the WG. The members of the Scientific Committee agreed on the proposal of the Secretariat to give the Scientific Panels the opportunity to comment on a draft of the document before its final adoption by the Scientific Committee.

### *Research priorities WG*

A revised version of the research priorities document had been sent to DG Research for further consideration in the development of the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme.

### *Interface RA-RM WG*

The discussion of a draft guidance document on the interface between risk assessment and risk management had been postponed after a consideration of the comments on a previous draft circulated to the members of the Interface RA-RM working group and the Chairs of the Scientific Panels early July. It is intended to update the draft, to share it with the Panels and subsequently to have it adopted at a future plenary meeting.

## **6.3 Preparation of input from the SC on EFSA's Management Plan 2006**

The Scientific Committee discussed the way it will provide input into EFSA's Management Plan 2006. It agreed to start from the document that was provisionally adopted at the Management Board meeting of 10 March 2005 and to update the various chapters with relevant issues for 2006. A revised document including the suggestions of the members of the Scientific Committee and Scientific Panels will be circulated for discussion at the next plenary meeting in October.



## **7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- The Scientific Committee considered the planning of plenary meetings in 2006 and agreed on the following dates: 15/16 February, 10/11 April and 31 May-1 June 2006.
- Marina Marini informed the Scientific Committee about the objectives and arrangements of the meeting of Chairs of European Scientific Committees on 7-8 December in Brussels.