

2nd Meeting of Expert Group on Food Consumption Data

24 October 2007 - PDUC Umberto I - 9:00-16:00

Meeting Report

Attendees

Member States' representatives

Vandevijvere Stefanie	(Belgium)
Petrova Stefka	(Bulgaria)
Ruprich Jiri	(Czech Republic)
Tetens Inge	(Denmark)
Rajasalu Piret	(Estonia)
Valsta Liisa	(Finland)
Volatier Jean-Luc	(France)
Lindtner Oliver	(Germany)
Hearty Áine	(Ireland)
Sette Stefania	(Italy)
Satkute Rima	(Lithuania)
Johansson Lars	(Norway)
Sekula Włodzimierz	(Poland)
Cozachievi Alecsandra Dida	(Romania)
Leskova Emilia	(Slovakia)
Suarez Lourdes	(Spain)
Enghardt-Barbieri Helene	(Sweden)
Ocké Marga C.	(The Netherlands)
Boss Alexander	(United Kingdom)

Ad hoc experts

Brion Stephane	DG SANCO
Leclercq Catherine	INRAN
Verger Philippe	Mét@Risk
Slimani Nadia	IARC

EFSA staff

Arcella Davide	DATEX
Behring Carsten	IT
Bianchi Chiara	IT
Bottex Bernard	SC and AF Panel

Fabiansson Stefan	DATEX – Chairman
Ramberti Luca	EFSA consultant
Spyropoulos Dimitrios	AFC Panel
Vernazza Francesco	DATEX
Pesci Muriel	DATEX – Secretariat
Bernazzali Valeria	CONTAM – Secretariat

Apologies

Koenig Juergen S.	(Austria)
Colić-Barić Irena	(Croatia)
Markidou Eliza	(Cyprus)
Krestos Vassilios	(Greece)
Birò Lajos	(Hungary)
Steingrímisdóttir Llaufey	(Iceland)
Santare Dace	(Latvia)
Calhau Maria Antonia	(Portugal)
Gabrijelcic-Belnkus Mojca	(Slovenia)
Schlatter Josef Rudolf	(Switzerland)

Acronyms

BfR	Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung
DATEX	Data Collection and Exposure
DoI	Declaration of Interests
IARC	International Agency for Research on Cancer
MS	Member States
UCD	University College Dublin
WG	Working Group

Agenda

#	Items	Who
1	Welcome and apologies for absence	Stefan Fabiansson (EFSA)
2	Adoption of the agenda and confirmation of new name for the Committee	Stefan Fabiansson (EFSA)
3	Declarations of interests and administrative matters	Muriel Pesci
4	Roundtable: Introduction of the participants	All
5	DATEX Unit presentation	Stefan Fabiansson (EFSA)
6	Update on EFSA's European Food Consumption Concise Database: Presentation of the received data Example of opinions using preliminary data from the concise database (CONTAM) Ad hoc requests from EFSA (example of human intake data of Vitamin A)	Davide Arcella (EFSA)
7	New support service for the arrangement and transmission of the food consumption data	Oliver Lindtner (BfR)
8	Discussion on EFSA's European Food Consumption Concise Database: Grouping food descriptors Data transfer Data accessibility and copyright Guidance Document for the use of the European Concise Food Consumption Database in Exposure Assessment	All
9	Lunch	
10	European research project and initiatives related to food consumption surveys and exposure assessment: EFCOVAL project / EPIC-SOFT FACET project DG SANCO activities	Nadia Slimani (IARC) Aine Hearty (UCD) Stéphane Brion (DG SANCO)
11	Future steps – Roundtable: Refinement of EFSA's European Food Consumption Concise Database (e.g. more specific food groups, other age classes) Harmonization of methodologies for collection and collation of food consumption data European food consumption survey Creation of Working groups	All
12	Any Other Business	All

Report

After the welcome and apologies for absence for some members of the group, the agenda was adopted and the Chairman proposed a change of name and status for the group, from "Network of Food Consumption Database Managers" to "Expert Group on Food Consumption Data". The proposal was accepted without objections.

The DoI's were compiled and signed by the participants and the administrative details were presented and managed by the Secretariat. The participants briefly introduced themselves.

Data Collection and Exposure Unit (DATEX) presentation

The DATEX Unit was recently formed under the EFSA's Science Directorate, in the Department of Scientific Cooperation and Assistance, with the main purposes of managing the collection of data related to risk assessment activities and performing exposure assessments. DATEX is therefore EFSA's preferential interface with the Institutions of the MS for data exchange (collection and classification) and networking activities in the field of chemical food safety. Structure, staffing, present activities and perspectives were presented by Stefan Fabiansson, the Head of Unit.

Update on EFSA's European Food Consumption Concise Database

Davide Arcella presented the background to the EFSA's food consumption concise database, followed by comments on structure, constraints and future perspectives for the database.

At the present time, the concise database is planned to contain consumption data for a limited number of broad food categories and subcategories and only for the adult population (16 to 64 years old). It is intended to be used as a screening tool for preliminary exposure assessments by the EFSA Scientific Panels and Member States.

Problems were highlighted in relation to:

- Completeness
 - 16 countries provided EFSA with the relevant data,
 - data from another 6 countries could still be provided to EFSA
 - relevant data are not available in 10 countries
- Age range (the 16 countries providing data presented different age classes)
- Survey methodology (Individual dietary record, 24-hour recall, Dietary-history and Food Frequency Questionnaire)
- Transfer format (XML, Excel EFSA template, Excel)
- Unfilled main food categories and sub-categories for countries providing data

Summary statistics were shown, derived from the available data, with the intention of checking the data for possible misclassifications of important food items according to the main food categories and sub-categories.

Examples of adopted and ongoing opinions using preliminary data from the concise database were presented. Finally the ad hoc EFSA request related to the human intake of Vitamin A was presented and discussed.

Comments

Ad hoc requests regarding food consumption data to MS should be detailed and clear, in terms of scope, methodology and requirements for data and surveys

Before sharing data with the EFSA Panels or make them public, a feedback is requested from MS to allow consistency check of the processed data at their origin.

New support service for the arrangement and transmission of the food consumption data

Oliver Lindtner (BfR) presented a project aimed at providing support and assistance in codifying, refining, transferring and documenting food consumption data to be provided by MS to EFSA.

The project is structured as a 1 year project and should provide assistance to about 10 MS. Three Workshops in Berlin are planned (~ Jan/Apr/Sep 2008) to cover all the objectives of the support action.

Comments

The project should be fine-tuned based on the latest results of the project concerning the development of the concise database and the decisions of the present meeting.

Discussion on EFSA's European Food Consumption Concise Database

It was highlighted that food consumption data collected using different methods should not be compared. EFSA will avoid pooling data from different countries and the existence of different methodologies will clearly be presented and discussed in the Guidance document accompanying the concise DB.

The amount of work required at country level is steadily growing, some MS pointed out the problem of not having resources to carry out this work.

The publication of data from the concise database was discussed. All the participants agreed to the following:

- data at individual level will not be published, they will be stored by EFSA and MS will be informed in case of their use
- summary statistics from the concise database (similar to the tables currently presented in the guidance document) will be published on the EFSA web site per each country
 - a preliminary check of the data will be requested before the publication
 - each country table will be complemented by explanatory notes (e.g. method used to collect the food consumption data, year, reference scientific paper or project report, etc.)
 - low percentiles will be included in order to allow use of the data on the "benefit" side.

The suggestion to check the summary statistics from the concise database against those from DAFNE and/or EPIC prior to publication was accepted by EFSA.

The Guidance document will be revised by EFSA and peer reviewed by a restricted sub-group, C. Leclercq, P. Verger, J.L. Volatier, S. Sette and O. Lindtner voluntarily accepted to join this sub-group.

EFCOVAL project / EPIC-SOFT

Dr. Nadia Slimani presented the EFCOSUM project. Starting from the results of previous EC founded projects such as EFCOSUM and EPIC, the EFCOVAL project intends to further adapt the pre-existing software EPIC-SOFT and validate this instrument for the

assessment of dietary intake of the specific needs and context of a trans-European monitoring setting.

The project involves groups from 11 countries and the IARC of WHO. The main branches of the project are the following:

- perform a validation study in 5 selected countries
- identify the most appropriate method(s) for dietary assessment in children (< 15 yrs)
- adapt the EPIC-SOFT for use in the assessment of dietary exposure
- pan-European implementation, dissemination and upgrading of the EPIC-SOFT

The EPIC-SOFT software was also presented, together with notes on the facets (e.g. for food descriptors) and on the adopted validation method. Further improvements, a maintenance system and tailoring for the different countries are foreseen.

Comments

It would be advisable to have the EPIC-SOFT software available to institutions and MS. The condition of distribution have not yet been decided, a decision will be taken at the end of the EFCOVAL project (2009).

The food consumption data sets collected within the EPIC study could be utilised for a range of broader use than just the relationship between diet and cancer.

FACET project

Aine Hearty (University College of Dublin) presented the project "Flavourings, Additives, Contact materials Exposure Task" (FACET) that is expected to start in January 2008. The main objective of this project is the estimation of exposure to additives, flavourings and contact materials in the EU.

This project is based on previous experiences with a focus on probabilistic modelling. The project involves 21 participants from 14 countries with 9 work packages, largely regarding food intake, chemical occurrence and regional modelling. Industry is involved in the project and is in charge of collecting occurrence data in the case of food additives and contact materials.

The main expected outputs of the FACET project are the following:

- food consumption database to represent regional diet variety from existing databases in 8 EU member states
- food grouping systems for modelling food chemicals
- database on occurrence of targeted food additives, flavouring substances and food contact materials in EU regions
- validated probabilistic methods and associated software program for estimation of target food chemicals

Comments

The project is totally congruent with activities involving EFSA and the MS network as well. Therefore many participants expressed a strong wish of effective coordination, availability of data and maximised efforts to get quality results useful at institutional level.

DG SANCO activities

The ongoing legislative work on food additives that unifies the former 3 regulations on Colours, flavours and miscellaneous additives was presented by Stéphane Brion (DG Sanco). One of the interesting aspects of the new perspective is the foreseen unified food categorisation that will be annexed to the regulation; it will be the reference for limited usage of one additive in particular food categories or limited number of permitted additives in one category. As explained, the categories are going to be very detailed, for the purposes of the legislation.

The categorisation system will be adapted after consultation with MS and industry (through the associations)

Comments

Many different categorization systems are currently used, and new ones have been developed also inside the EU institutions. A harmonisation effort is urgently required. As far as possible a reduction in the number of food categorisation systems was claimed to be highly desirable. It was recognised as difficult to convince database managers to change the food categorisation system, however instruments describing in detail the food characteristics (such as LanguaL) could be used in order to make the existing systems compatible and easily pass from one system to another.

Future steps – Roundtable

Details were requested with respect to work currently carried out by DATEX regarding the collection of food composition data. Support has been given to the collaboration between EFSA, CIAA and the EuroFir project.

From the point of view of MS a mid-to-long term plan for activities related to food consumption data is advisable, it is fundamental in order to allocate resources for the future needs. A strategy paper regarding the collection of food safety data is currently under development by EFSA. This paper will clarify the EFSA priorities in the medium- to long-term, however unexpected urgent needs are always possible that cannot be anticipated.

In the short-term the development of a concise DB for children, using the same food groups as for the adults, is considered a priority. The age range for being considered as a child was discussed: infants (from 0 to 1 year old) must be considered as a separate population and the children category should be broader than only small children (from 1 to 4 years old). The needs for EFSA as well as for the European Member States in terms of children age range will be explored before the network agrees on final categorisation.

At the same time it was suggested to further develop the concise database for adults by including information concerning the portion sizes and the frequency of consumptions. These data would be extremely useful when assessing the exposure to micro-organisms and pesticides (acute exposure in general)

In the long term it would be important to develop a homogeneous food consumption database at European level.

MS pointed out the problem of being contacted independently by two or more EFSA groups. Different and heterogeneous questions from EFSA were recently received and this was rather confusing for them. MS would prefer to have a unique interface with EFSA,

DATEX should maintain the contacts with MS in the EFSA requests for food consumption data.

A question emerged whether to use international data for national risk assessment; the answer was that use of data from a neighbouring country with similar eating patterns would be possible, but it would require careful considerations.

Scientific papers or reports describing, in as much detail as possible, the protocol and the results of the latest national food consumption survey were provided by Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and the United Kingdom. Other MS were invited to send their scientific papers or reports by email or post. These documents should preferably be in English but also the ones in other languages are welcomed.

It was finally proposed to create two Working Groups, a first WG should discuss methods for food consumption surveys with the view of better harmonisation across Europe and, at the same time, study the feasibility of a Pan-European food consumption survey. A second WG should lead the evolution of the concise database. The WGs should report to the whole "Expert Group on Food Consumption Data" that will meet once a year. EFSA will circulate the terms of reference of the above mentioned WGs and ask for volunteer participants.

Exposure experts currently involved in the EFSA Panels should be involved in the definition of the mandate for the WGs under development.

DATEX will maintain contacts with all the members of the "Expert Group on Food Consumption Data" by emails or possibly through a customised newsletter.

Any Other Business

The next meeting of the "Expert Group on Food Consumption Data" was briefly discussed, it will probably take place in Parma in July or September 2008.

Action Summary

Ref	WHO	WHAT	BY
	DATEX	Inclusion of low percentiles in the summary tables of the concise database	
	DATEX	Request feedback from MS on the processed data of the concise database before publication on the EFSA web site	30/11/07
	DATEX and B. Bottex	Prepare a new draft of the Guidance Document for the concise database	30/11/07
	DATEX	Publication of summary tables of the concise database on the EFSA website	15/03/08
	C. Leclercq P. Verger J.L. Volatier S. Sette O. Lindtner J. Ruprich	Peer review of the new draft of the Guidance Document for the concise database.	15/03/08
	All MS	Supply of children's data for the concise database	
	All MS	Supply data on portion size and frequency of consumption	
	DATEX	Circulate the terms of reference of the new WGs	
	DATEX and BfR	Redefine the BfR project concerning the development of the concise DB	
	DATEX	Proposal for a suitable instrument to circulate information inside the Expert Group	