

87th MEETING OF THE EFSA ADVISORY FORUM



15 March 2023: 9:00-17:30
16 March 2023: 9:00-12:00
MINUTES

Location: EFSA – Parma, Italy / Webconference

Members	Attendance	
	In person	Virtual
Austria (AT)	Klemens Fuchs	
Belgium (BE)		Axel Mauroy
Belgium (BE)		Fabien Bolle
Bulgaria (BG)		Donka Popova
Bulgaria (BG)		Iliyan Kostov
Croatia (HR)	Andrea Gross Bošković	
Cyprus (CY)		Charitini Frenaritou
Czech Republic (CZ)	Apologies	
Denmark (DK)	Christine Nellemann	
Estonia (EE)	Mari Reinik	
Finland (FI)	Pia Mäkelä	
France (FR)	Matthieu Schuler	Salma Elreedy
Germany (DE)	Andreas Hensel	
Germany (DE)	Tanja Schwerdtle	
Greece (EL)	Stavros Zannopoulos	
Hungary (HU)	Akos Jóźwiak	
Iceland (IS)	Apologies	
Ireland (IE)	Anderson Wayne	
Italy (IT)		Alessandra Perella
Latvia (LV)		Vadimis Bartkevics
Lithuania (LT)	Deimante Biknryte	
Luxembourg (LU)		Denny Zust
Malta (MT)		Mark Cassar
Netherlands (NL)	Antoon Opperhuizen	
Norway (NO)	Harald Djein	Danica Grahek-Ogden
Poland (PL)		Jacek Postupolski
Portugal (PT)		Filipa Melo de Vasconcelos
Romania (RO)		Monica Neagu
Slovak Republic (SK)		Kristína Lépesová
Slovenia (SI)		Urška Blaznik

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Spain (ES)	Icía Fierros Sánchez-Cuenca	
Sweden (SE)		Helena Brunnkvist
Observers & Other Participants	Attendance	
	In person	Virtual
Albania (AL)	Amarilda Keli	
Bosnia and Herzegovina (BA)		Dzemil Hajric
Kosovo*		Kujtim Uka
Montenegro (ME)	Vladimir Djakovic	
Republic of North Macedonia (MK)	Nikolche Babovski	
Serbia (RS)	Tamara Boskovic	
Switzerland (CH)	Michael Beer	
Turkey (TR)		Serap Hanci
European Commission – DG SANTE – E.1 (Observer)		Raikos Athanasios
European Commission – DG SANTE – E.1 (Observer)		Anastasia Alzivou
European Commission (DG SANTE)		Sandra Tuijtelars
European Commission (DG SANTE)		Sandrine Amsler
European Commission (DG SANTE)		Carolin Bendadani
European Commission (DG ENV)		Valentina Bertato
European Commission (DG GROW)		Martijn Beekman
The Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food and Environment		Helen Engelstad Kvaem
Finnish Food Authority		Jukka Ranta
Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA)		Joost Meekes
National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM)		Thijs de Kort
National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM)		Astrid Bulder
European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)		Bastian Zeiger
State General Laboratory of Cyprus		Rebecca Kokkinofa
EFSA Representatives		
Bernhard Url (Chair)- On site	Claudia Heppner- On site	
Barbara Gallani (Co-Chair) – On site	Ermanno Cavalli - Online	
Nick Kriz (Co-Chair)- On site	James Ramsey – On site	
Guilhem de Seze (Co-Chair) – On site	Gorgias Garofalakis – On site	
Carlos Das Neves – On site	Franz Streissl – On site	
Victoria Villamar – On site	Luc Mohimont – On site	
Sérgio Potier Rodeia - On site	Domenica Auteri – On site	
Maria Azevedo Mendes (Advisory Forum Secretariat)- On site	Milen Georgiev – On site	
Virginia Spurio Salvi (Advisory Forum Secretariat) - On site	Francesca Baldinelli – On site	

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Cristina Alonso Andicoberry (Advisory Forum Secretariat) - On site	Lisa Kohlne – On site
Sofia Altesini (Advisory Forum Secretariat) - On site	Lisa Marie (Advisory Forum Secretariat) - On site



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Item 1: Opening and welcome address

Bernhard Url, Chair, opened the 87th Meeting of the Advisory Forum (AF) by welcoming the members of the AF in the EFSA Board Room, in Parma. The meeting included participants from 35 countries and the European Commission (EC). The AF also welcomed external speakers from Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, and Germany. A warm welcome was extended to a new Advisory Forum member, Helena Brunnkvist from Sweden, and to the colleagues from the EC (DG SANTE, DG ENV, and DG GROW).

Item 2: Adoption of agenda and action points from last meeting

The Plenary adopted the agenda of the meeting as it was proposed by the Chair. No AOBs were noted. The Chair informed the Plenary that the final minutes of the 86th Advisory Forum meeting had been published on 1 March.

Item 3: A new approach for closer cooperation with the AF community

The Plenary discussed EFSA's proposal for a new approach for a closer cooperation with the AF community. The proposal foresees an enhanced governance mechanism, new priority topics, possible new meeting formats (e.g., break-out sessions), Member States (MS) co-chairing of meetings, and more concise minutes.

Barbara Gallani gave an overview of the proposed new governance structure - a trio of MS, to work with the AF team for six meetings, with the exception of the first round trio, in which Czechia and Sweden will work with the AF team for 1 and 2 meetings respectively. The trio will be involved in the creation of the agenda, co-chairing of the meetings, and advising EFSA on the assessment of the Focal Points tailor made proposals. For the AF meeting preparations it is envisaged a commitment of one remote meeting before and one after each AF meeting.

Participants welcomed the proposal. Finland outlined their support, particularly to the foreseen report from the Management Board (MB) Chair in one of the AF meetings, to foster a closer contact and information sharing between the two bodies allowing for a closer interaction also at national level. The Netherlands, Germany, and France suggested increased collaboration between the AF and scientific activities both within the Scientific Panels and the commonly appointed Networks and to this end called for regular reporting of activities and obstacles faced by each specific panel/network in order to identify areas for improved cooperation.. The debate included the importance of having discussion groups working on specific areas between meetings and the need to consider international collaboration, suggested by Germany and supported by Portugal. Hungary praised the suggestion of new meeting formats with the introduction of breakout sessions and moderators, considering it an added value to building the community but also a more dynamic way for information sharing and extracting knowledge.

Cyprus, although finds the co-preparation of AF meetings by the members from the EU Council trio Presidency countries on a voluntary base an interesting proposal that will contribute to the continuity of the discussions at AF meetings, it expressed its concerns on the foreseen huge workload that a small MS, with limited human resources, would have to face and overcome during the trio Presidency period. In that sense it will need administrative assistance in case it will be involved.

Barbara outlined the possibility that the new FP framework brings for these kind of interactions through the possible creation of discussion groups working on priority areas. She also suggested that international activities are covered as a standing agenda item or the creation of a newsletter where everyone could share planned and ongoing activities



and interventions. Addressing the questions of the EC on the links among MB, Heads of Agencies (HoA) and AF and on the need to address more effectively divergences, Barbara pointed out that this new approach will contribute to clarifying the roles of the different *fora* and an opportunity to increase cooperation. She also stressed that the aim of this new proposal is also to look at how to prevent and resolve divergencies through better awareness of the ongoing and planned work, the methodologies being developed, the guidance documents and work programs planned. The Chair noted that the AF could be the starting point to collect ideas on topics for joint work via working groups that would then test the ideas, bring in other players and possibly lead to partnership agreements.

Action:

- EFSA to consider the suggestions from the AF to increase collaboration (exchanges on the work plans of expert panels and scientific networks, inclusion of EEA countries in the governance, working groups to advance work in between AF meetings, standing agenda item or newsletter on international activities by EFSA and MS).

Item 4: Update on Advisory Group on Data

The progress of the Advisory Group on Data was presented. During the last meeting of the Advisory Group on Data, the group discussed its next priorities for 2023. . The results of a survey on priorities in the area of data in the Advisory Forum, as well as the results of the discussions in the subgroups were presented. The group then identified the top five priorities as automation, impact on data analysis, communication and engagement, information sharing, and quality and timeliness in a workshop. The group plans to publish the 2022 Annual Report in March ([2022 Annual Report of the Advisory Group on Data \(wiley.com\)](https://www.wiley.com)) and to break down the priorities into actionable items by June.

Akos Józwiak discussed the need for more awareness and understanding of the transformative nature of data and IT in the agrifood system, and the need for collaboration between the European Commission and EFSA to harmonize data for risk assessment. He suggested that the Advisory Forum and MS should work together to create a project dedicated to showcasing the potential of data and IT, as well as an overarching set of methodologies to guide the process.

The Plenary discussed the need for better alignment between risk assessment and risk management processes, as well as the exponential growth of data processing and predictive technology.

Item 5: New Focal Point Operational Framework 2023-2027

Introduction

Victoria Villamar (EFSA) provided an overview of EFSA's multiannual investment envisaged for the FP activities for the years 2023-2027. She explained that the baseline budget for the principal activities is €2.2 million, with a small increase compared to previous years due to inflation. Additionally, there is an estimated € €4 million for tailor-made grant agreements, representing a boost compared to the foreseen budget for this year. By 2026/2027, the budget is predicted to reach an overall amount of €10 million. Lastly, she highlighted the importance of the Focal Points framework and the collaboration with the MS in the implementation of the framework.

Victoria Villamar clarified that the process for submission of tailor-made activities kicked off during three main windows set throughout the year. Each window is composed by three phases: (1) submission, (2) assessment, and (3) signature/planning.



It was explained that the tailor-made activities are implemented via specific grant agreements signed with one country, and clarified that the assessment and evaluation process is part of the grant modalities. Finally, it was suggested the creation of a platform for communication and collaboration aimed at making the process transparent and activities visible to all, so to foster collaboration and partnerships among MS.

5.1 Knowledge and information management and support to scientific production

The German Focal Points introduced 2 tailor-made activities carried out under the Focal Points operational framework:

- the development of supporting material for the functioning of the FP network. This activity is composed of two main tasks: an onboarding program for new Focal Points and a mentoring program for all Focal Points; and the development/update of guidelines to ensure coherent processes and efficiency within the FP network. ;
- the development of a concept for maintaining the country profile in the BfR World Food Safety Almanac to ensure it is up to date as well as promotion of the Almanac , collection of feedback and identification of bottlenecks.

5.2 Engagement, collaboration, and partnerships

Gorgias Garofalakis (EFSA) presented the objectives of the area of work on engagement, collaboration, and partnerships, which are to enable the Focal to better support engagement with MS actors leading to partnerships, and support the expertise sustainability across the risk assessment community in the European Union. He, then, briefly explained the four activities under this area, namely: capacity building on the characteristics and modalities of EFSA's mechanism for grants and procurement; the joint planning of risk assessment activities between EFSA and the MS risk assessment actors, the promotion of networking and engagement towards the creation of partnerships, and knowledge sharing across the risk assessment community. Gorgias Garofalakis closed the presentation by outlining the high-level timeline of the meetings for the FPs involved in the activities under this area.

Stavros Zannopoulos (EFET) presented the plan for a scientific conference to be organised by EFET, in Athens, Greece, entitled "Food Safety: Key Pillar for One Health Approach". This initiative will be implemented in the context of the engagement, collaboration and partnership area under the FP tailor-made activities. The conference aims to bring together organizations involved in food safety, the Farm to Fork strategy, and the One Health concept. The event is expected to be held in late October and will include Greek Article 36 organisations, risk managers, consumer organizations, industry associations, and international speakers. More information on the event will be shared shortly.

Antoon Oppenhuizen (NVWA) commented by mentioning the upcoming meeting in Amsterdam on October 5 and 6 on antibiotics and antibiotic resistance, and Christine Nellemann reminded the Plenary of the coming European Partnerships on Animal Health and Welfare, One Health Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR), and on Food Systems.

5.3 Capacity Building

Nicole Gollnick (BfR) presented the European Excellence Label (EEL) project stemming from a collaboration between six countries (Steering Group): Germany, Denmark, Croatia, Hungary, Italy and the Netherlands. The project involves Germany as leading country and Denmark as coordinating country. The project aim is to create a European pool of highly qualified Risk Assessment professionals by establishing a European Excellence Label for courses in Food Safety RA; and to build a framework with defined quality standards that



guarantees comprehensive and state-of-the-art post graduate training opportunities for future and acting food safety risk assessors across Europe. The project is currently in an onboarding period, with nine MS participating (Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands and Norway) and it is composed of three working groups (EEL criteria and RA expert involvement; EEL communication and Stakeholder management; EEL webplatform).

Matthieu Schuler (FR) underlined the importance of the work and asked how and when countries who are not part of the steering group or participating countries will be invited to contribute, e.g. in order to identify the training programmes available in their countries. Jukka Ranta (FI) from the Finnish Food Authority presented the tailor-made activity on the organization of training on tools and methods for risk assessment. This activity will involve webinars, a Moodle platform, and a workshop in Helsinki. There will be 8 sessions per training, the first one to be expected in October. The workshop will probably take place in early November. The training will focus on probabilistic methods and quantitative assessment approaches, and will include a specific example of a dietary exposure model for microbiological and chemical hazards. It is expected to have 1 participant per Member State. More information will be released shortly.

5.4 Data

Ermanno Cavalli took the floor to present the tailor-made activities implemented under the data area. He briefly mentioned activity 4.3 regarding data flow mapping, which focuses on developing a methodology to map flow of the data in the MS and have participant countries documenting the flow of data by also identifying pain points. He then moved to activity 4.4 on data model mapping, which aims to develop a flexible tool which can be configured to automatically transform from one to another for data models, data terminologies, and data reporting. 3 MS have volunteered to lead and/or participate. The activity is expected to start in mid-April 2023. The second activity (4.6) is the Member State Co-creation of tools, which aims to develop a flexible tool that can be configured for use of sampling officers or inspectors to capture information and route it to systems, reducing manual data entry and retyping samples in SSD2 and automatic routing. Portugal has volunteered to lead, and Denmark to participate in this activity.

Joost Meekes (NVWA) presented a project carried-out together with Austria and aimed at looking at the optimal mix of risk-based and random sampling for inspection programs. The project consists in an inventory of current practice, a literature review, and a symposium with colleagues from the Austrian Agency. The project will develop tools to help agencies achieve a better mix of risk-based and random sampling. The project will continue into 2024 and other MS are invited to join.

5.5 Risk Communication

James Ramsey (EFSA) presented the area of risk communication by focusing on the building blocks for coordinated communications in the EU, both within the MS and between EFSA and the MS. He explained that the framework is designed to improve coordination between risk assessors and risk managers in the MS and at the EU level when it comes to communications on food safety. The framework involves five tailored activities, which were identified in cooperation with the Focal Points. These activities include (1) developing a good practice guide for Focal Points and Communications Expert Network (CEN) on how MS and Focal Points can work together more efficiently and effectively at the MS and EU level; (2) defining the model for EU Coordinated Communications, which includes defining the goals, structures, and processes to put in place, and identify roles, responsibilities, skills, and expertise needed; (3) MS to recruit and invest in communication professionals in their institutions using the funds provided by EFSA under the operational framework; (4) establishing an EU-wide learning and development programme for coordinated



communications on food safety with the aim of establishing a common skill set; (5) developing joint communication tools, such as MS to create communication materials available to other MS. 19 MS have signed up to take part in at least one of these activities. The discussion also touched upon the process of applying to joint projects, and the need for more clarity on how to join, close, and view the status of projects.

Antoon Opperhuizen (NVWA) presented the initiative of organising a risk communication summer school in the Netherlands for eight countries in Europe, an initiative carried-out under the risk communication and capacity building areas. The training will focus on risk assessment and risk management from an economic and social perspective. The goal is to understand how risk is amplified in society and how to use communication to align with that. The training will be open to 8 countries for free and will take place in September. Those interested in participating should contact Carla Geijkjes.

Actions:

- EFSA to provide a more visual/accessible overview on the activities already implemented under the new FP framework.
- EFSA to further clarify, via the Focal Points, the process for submitting tailor-made proposals and/or to join existing ones.

Item 6: Partnership opportunities

Carlos das Neves, Co-Chair, opened the afternoon session and extended a special welcome to colleagues from the EC. He then invited Barbara Gallani to give a brief update on the Eurocigua II project. Barbara reminded the attendees of the project's budget, duration, and consortium led by the Spanish Ministry of Health, and asked the Plenary to disseminate the information and express interest in the project.

6.1 Sustainable crop protection - assessing alternatives to chemical PPP

Franz Streissl (EFSA) proceeded by presenting the mandate tasked by the EC to develop a fit-for-purpose protocol on sustainable plant protection to assess emergency authorisations of pesticides under Article 53 of EU Regulation 1107/2009 in light of objectives put forward in the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies. He outlined the principles of the protocol, the timeline for its completion, and the need for involving MS and other stakeholders in the preparatory work and the development of the protocols. The deadlines for delivering the protocols are May 2025 for insecticides and acaricides, March 2026 one for fungicides and bactericides and January 2027 for all other functions of active substances. A grant call will be launched for the development of the protocols end of April/beginning of May. Questions were raised regarding the evaluation of reasonable alternatives, in terms of impacts such as yield loss and farmers income, and the assessment of invertebrates as plant protection agents. Questions were also raised regarding the involvement of industry and the availability of data from MS. It was agreed that industry knowledge should be used, and that MS should be involved in order to get the necessary information. DG SANTE clarified the context of Article 53, which states that the Commission may ask EFSA for an opinion as to whether emergency authorizations are scientifically justified or not.

6.2 Cooperation with EFSA in the area of Cumulative Risk Assessment from dietary exposure to pesticides

Luc Mohimont took the floor to discuss the cooperation needed in the area of Cumulative Risk Assessment from dietary exposure to pesticides. He provided context and background information, including the role of EFSA regarding Regulation 396/2005 on maximum residue levels (MRL) of pesticides and food commodities. He presented the two types of



assessments EFSA is expected to perform: (1) prospective cumulative risk assessment under Article 14 to anticipate what could be the risk associated with new uses of pesticides; (2) retrospective cumulative risk assessment under Article 32, in which EFSA assesses the risk for consumers in real life, based on monitoring data from MS. He then presented the methodology used to perform cumulative risk assessments and outlined the past and current work EFSA is doing in this area, including retrospective cumulative risk assessments for the nervous system, thyroid, craniofacial alterations, kidney, and liver, and prospective cumulative risk assessments, which are so far less advanced.

Luc then discussed the upcoming call for partnership with MS organizations to continue and finalize the work on retrospective cumulative risk assessments. The call will be organized in lots, allowing organizations to apply for either the toxicological part or the exposure part, or even for specific toxicological domains. The forming of consortia will no longer be necessary, reducing the administrative and coordination constraints for applicants. The partnership agreements will be concluded for a period of four years, with around 20 specific actions anticipated to be negotiated and agreed upon. Uncertainty analysis and expert knowledge elicitation will be under the responsibility of EFSA and will no longer be outsourced, but the organisation that participated in the modules on CAGs establishment and exposure assessment will be involved for this specific expertise in the context of expert knowledge elicitation.

6.3 System-based Environmental Risk Assessment

The discussion then shifted to the System-based Environmental Risk Assessment (PERA) project, with a presentation from Domenica Auteri. The project includes a multi-annual plan focusing on pesticides. Different outsourcing mechanisms have been identified, one procurement to develop environmental scenarios for ERA and non-target organisms (€6 million budget), and a grant to develop specific methodologies for low-risk pesticides. In addition, a call for establishing a framework partnership agreement will be launched to cover several areas to advance the environmental risk assessment of pesticides. In general, the goal is to better predict the effects of pesticides on non-target organisms, including biodiversity, pollinators, and soil health. For this project, EFSA seeks to engage and identify possible partnerships with MS, but also with sister agencies, and tries to identify synergies with the European Commission's activities. The project will use existing research and data as well as will generate new data via experimental work. Primarily, the project aims to create the first building blocks for prospective risk assessment and make data from different sources interoperable. The plenary discussed the complexity of the field and the need to review existing data in order to gain insight into what is available and what has been used in the past, and to use a One Health perspective. Finally, they highlighted the need to develop models that use more geographically refined data in order to bring together a complex picture of the landscape given the different practices and uncertainties in ecological risk assessment.

6.4 Identification of emerging risks related to food supplements

Milen Georgiev proceeded with a topic presentation on the identification of emerging risks related to food supplements suggesting partnership and project proposal for a productive identification of emerging risks related to food supplements. The idea is to explore the possibility to create a Community of Knowledge and Analysis to facilitate the exchange of information from the various European and non-European monitoring nutri-vigilance systems associated with consumption of food supplements with adverse health effects and identify plant-based substances of concern. It was discussed that the benefit of this work would include a more holistic approach, beyond just safety assessments, and that it could be a good reference point for transfer of knowledge on predicted toxicity of plant based substances. The project would benefit from existing material such as the EFSA



Compendium of Botanicals. The proposal is to have a grant for a two year project estimated to launch at the Quarter 3 in 2023, with approximately 200,000 EUR available for the project. Wayne Anderson (IE) suggested that Milen contact the Heads of Agency's subgroups working on this area. Milen agreed to do so and indicated EFSA's engagement with Heads of European Food Safety Authorities Working Group "Food Supplements".

6.5 Strategic roadmap and studies

Roadmap for action on Applying Omics and Bioinformatics Approaches: Towards Next Generation Risk Assessment

Claudia Heppner gave a short update on the activities related to omics and bioinformatics approaches in risk assessment and presented an update on the Roadmap "Applying Omics and Bioinformatics Approaches in Risk Assessment". Advances in Omics technologies such as genomics, epigenomics, transcriptomics, proteomics and metabolomics have been made but before the use of these technologies can become a routine in risk assessment certain gaps need to be filled. Therefore, a strategic roadmap has been commissioned to define priorities for the integration of omics and bioinformatics approaches within EFSA's remit and provide recommendations for implementation by 2027. The roadmap consists of five work areas: (1) Creation, curation and usage of publicly available omics data repositories ; (2) Improve/extend the use of Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) analysis; (3) Incorporate use of metagenomics into risk assessment; (4) Incorporation of other Omics techniques (transcriptomics metabolomics, proteomics); and (5) Transition to holistic food exposure assessment through exposomics and bioinformatics tools. The roadmap should address the following objectives :, enhancing capability for mechanistic-based advice, consolidating and harmonizing approaches across regulatory domains, exploiting publicly available big data, providing agreed open source and Open Access bioinformatic tools, and facilitating data and expert sharing. Claudia highlighted the need to move to a more automated risk assessment based on molecular mechanisms of adverse effects and reduce animal testing. Additionally, a 3,000,000€ call¹ related to multi-omics was recently published with overarching goal to define, validate and apply standardized workflow for deriving human reference points and health-based guidance values by using in-vitro approaches such as organ on the chip platforms and multi-omics endpoints (transcriptomics, metabolomics, and epigenomics)

Discussions included uncertainty about artificial intelligence and the need to verify its quality, concerns about the governance of such technologies, the importance of making the roadmap a mechanics-based approach to risk assessment, the importance of agencies working together to make the transition from animal testing to the "Next Generation Risk Assessment (NGRA)" and the need of all EFSA partners to provide input and to decide how to shape this when moving forward..

Actions:

- MS to express interest on "[Ciguatera 2](#)":
 - Sampling imported fish and cytotoxicity analysis;
 - Training on ciguatoxins (CTX) identification, quantification and characterisation
 - Awareness raising campaign for ciguatera fish poisoning.
- AF members to share with their national networks, as may be appropriate, EFSA's intention to launch partnership calls in the coming weeks, among others, in the areas presented.

¹ <https://etendering.ted.europa.eu/cft/cft-display.html?cftId=13386>



Item 7.1: Part I: Activities on Perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)

The Co-Chair introduced the session welcoming also guests from DG SANTE, DG ENV, DG GROW and ECHA. The aim of the session was to have an overview of current and planned risk assessment activities on PFAS in MS and EU agencies and to discuss opportunities for stronger collaboration on this topic at EU level. Prior to the meeting EFSA collected information on ongoing and/or planned risk assessment activities on PFAS from MS with a view to sharing with participants after the meeting upon agreement.

Tanja Schwerdtle, Chair of the former EFSA CONTAM Panel working group on PFAS, set the scene by providing an overview of the 2020 CONTAM Panel Opinion on risk to human health related to the presence of PFAS in food. Available data (e.g. biomonitoring and exposure) suggest exceedance of the TWI (Tolerable Weekly Intake), which indicates a possible health concern. The main toxicological effect relates to an impaired response to vaccination. Several recommendations were made including the development of approaches for deriving potency factors for PFAS as well as updates to the exposure assessment for which considerable uncertainty was reported. More data on exposure and toxicological mechanisms are needed to reduce the uncertainty on PFAS effects.

Tanja's opening presentation was followed by two brief presentations from Germany and France outlining ongoing and planned as well as some past risk assessment activities on PFAS relating to food and feed.

A third presentation from the Netherlands (RIVM) included amongst others, an overview of the current PFAS research programme in the Netherlands (2022-2025) which aims to address how PFAS exposure through food, drinking water and the environment can be reduced in addition to the management measures already taken. It focuses on the Dutch population, with possible special focus on subpopulations (e.g. regional hotspot areas), collecting knowledge about the presence of a wide selection of PFAS (final list to be established) with the use of RPFs (Relative Potency Factors). Five main themes are planned which include amongst others, current exposure in food and drinking water, cost effectiveness of management options to reduce exposure, and human and environmental monitoring. Comparison with data from other countries will be performed if possible. RIVM would welcome the opportunity to coordinate work with fellow institutes in other MS.

The following topic was presented by RIVM and addressed the PFAS restriction proposal submitted by Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands to ECHA in January this year. The proposed restriction is in the form of a ban with two options: i) a full ban 18 months after entry into force and ii) a full ban 18 months after entry into force with time-limited and use-specific derogations (5 or 12 years (+ transition period) depending on the availability of alternatives on the market). The proposed ban regards the manufacture, use and placing on the market of the substances on their own, or within certain limits when used as a constituent, mixture or article.

The Co-Chair opened the floor for a general discussion and invited participants to reflect on opportunities to collaborate on PFAS moving forward, and on how EFSA could support. The following points were raised by participants:

- The need to overcome analytical challenges.
 - The need for data collection to accompany reductions in exposure.
 - The need for more information on toxicological effects and reference values for PFAS not phased out
 - The need to better understand routes of exposure to derive better information on exposure.
 - The need to keep measuring and reporting individual PFAS and to take into account differences in potency factors.
-



- The need for coordination of the derivation of HBGVs (Health Based Guidance Values).
- It was also acknowledged that EU research programmes should take into account these needs in order to gain more information about HBGVs.
- The need to exercise a pragmatic approach when deciding next steps to effectively utilise resources given the volume of different PFAS and their use also in the non-food sector.
- Concerns were also expressed about PFAS substitutes and the need to be proactive instead of being reactive. This might include also research on methodologies on how to eliminate PFAS contamination (e.g. microorganisms).
- The need to define and assess relative costs of management interventions to find out the best PFAS phase out measures, while learning more about their toxicological effects and exposure.
- It was suggested to focus on short term PFAS.
- It was suggested to distinguish PFAS to be restricted from those that are not phased out. Toxicological data are mostly needed for PFAS that will be still in use. Furthermore, it was noted that regarding the toxicological information, we are more than 10 years behind as compared to dioxins. It was therefore suggested to group these substances and go for a pragmatic approach due to limited data.
- There is also a need to look for alternatives for the future.
- It was suggested to focus on both prevention and monitoring to understand how big the problem is.
- The need to balance between risk assessment and risk management. It is very important to have monitoring in place to check where action is needed to reduce risks.
- Several participants noted a need for the community to think how to address these issues, and how to communicate about the related risks.
- A webinar is planned in autumn to address the PFAS situation in Northern Europe.

The Chair emphasised that it is important to narrow down a scope that would be manageable regarding how MS could put together collective knowledge and workforce to move forward on PFAS. Denmark, Germany, France, Norway and the Netherlands proposed to create a working group to address the various issues raised above including risk assessment, communication, etc. and report back to the AF.

Action:

- MS to share all information on PFAS activities with EFSA if they have not already done so
- EFSA to make all information on PFAS activities received from MS available (subject to MS agreement) in a shared space open to AF members
- MS invited by ECHA to contribute to the ECHA Public Consultation on the PFAS restriction proposal and submit their MS information within the frame of the Public Consultation
- Denmark, France, Germany, Norway and The Netherlands to convene a working group before the next AF meeting to propose possible next steps for a collaborative approach across Europe on data exchange, identification of data gaps, methodological exchange, potential EU common monitoring project.

Item 7.2: Part II - Mandates, RA Plans, upcoming Public Consultations

The Chair Bernhard Url welcomed the colleagues in the room and those online. He thanked the group for joining the evening before and for the tour of the Cathedral of Parma.



a) EFSA

Nik Kriz and Guilhem de Seze presented the first session of the day, on Mandates, RA Plans, and upcoming Public Consultations. They highlighted a number of mandates of interest for EFSA from Norway on (1) knowledge base about food and the environment, (2) *Echinococcus multilocularis* - risk assessment related to public health, (3) Carrageenan, processed *Eucheuma* seaweed, sodium carboxymethyl cellulose and agar, and (4) triploid salmon - risk assessment related to animal health and welfare. They also mentioned upcoming public consultations on Styrene and the sweetener. Two mandates from Italy were also highlighted: (1) risk assessment for salmonella in edible insect chain and risk analysis and (2) a survey on the prevalence and distribution of pathogens transmitted by ticks in goat farms, as well as risk assessment related to the presence of Tick Borne Encephalitis Virus (TBEV) in raw milk and derived products. From Lithuania, two mandates were highlighted: (1) scientific opinion on the risk of rabies virus entering the Republic of Lithuania, and (2) research on innovative methods for product production and safety assurance.

From EFSA, two mandates of interest to MS were highlighted: (1) a self-task mandate from the BIOHAW Unit on the public health aspects of *Vibrio* spp. related to the consumption of seafood in the EU, and (2) a mandate from the NIF Unit to update its Guidance on safety evaluation of sources of nutrients and bioavailability of nutrient sources. Additionally, Norway informed the Plenary that the Norwegian Food Safety Authority is currently conducting a risk assessment of a technique to make salmon infertile (CRISPR method), and more information will be available this spring. Alessandra Perrella (Italy) explained more on the research regarding ticks in milk that Italy is conducting.

b) MS - Mandate for the ongoing assessment of health risks from eating grilled foods

Helen Engelstad Kvaalem (Norway) presented on the ongoing project to assess the health risks from eating grilled foods. The project will be finalized by December 2023. The terms of reference include identifying process contaminants that are formed to a greater extent by grilling, highlighting the conditions relevant to the formation of these compounds, and evaluating the health risk related to consumption of grilled food. Two different strategies are being used: a classical risk assessment method and a systematic literature research. The project combines both the toxicology approach and the epidemiological approach.

The Norwegian Food Safety Authority will use the collected data to provide advice to people about how to safely grill. They are interested in data on all types of food that can be grilled, including meat, fish, vegetables, and vegetarian options. Finland, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden have already provided data for the project. The floor was then opened for questions and interventions. France asked whether the emissions from different contaminants, such as acrolein, were being considered. Hungary shared that a colleague at the University of Veterinary Science in Budapest had done a PhD on a similar topic and offered to share data and information.

Item 7.3: Part III: Enhancing preparedness: the case of Avian Influenza

Francesca Baldinelli and Lisa Kohlne presented on the topic of enhancing preparedness for Avian Influenza. They provided an overview of the distribution of highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreaks in Europe since October 2016, which showed a seasonality shape and unprecedented geographical spread. They discussed the shape of the epidemic curve during the summer 2023, highlighting the persistence of the virus mainly in wild birds species. They also discussed the weekly distribution of the different HPAI serotypes in



poultry and wild birds' categories. Finally, they discussed the spread of the virus outside Europe, including Americas, Africa and Asia.

Lisa discussed EFSA's initiatives to enhance preparedness for the disease in the EU, including the Migration Mapping Tool and the Bird Flu Radar, which provides real-time spatio-temporal risk assessments of HPAI introductions in wild birds. The tool is accompanied by an alert messaging system, which provides countries with weekly summary reports by email. EFSA is also working on expanding the tool to include the estimation of risk of introduction and establishment in poultry. MS were called to liaise with EFSA if they wished to advance and benefit the development of the HPAI predictive model in poultry by submitting data on their country's poultry population on a voluntary basis through EFSA's SIGMA framework.

The discussion also included France's efforts to monitor the virus and its movement between species, including periodic season analysis the importance of a One Health approach and the question of protecting workers most in contact with animals, and the production by ANSES of an opinion on vaccination strategies for poultry and ducks by the end of March, and Norway's detection of avian influenza in the Arctic area. Carlos discussed the need for a One Health approach between the Ministries of Environment, Agriculture, and Health. Guilhem discussed the implications of the disease on biodiversity. The topic was concluded with a call for feedback on the predictive modeling tools.

Action:

- MS to express interest on the HPAI predictive model (to provide contact details to be included in the alert messaging system)
- MS that are already using the HPAI predictive model to provide feedback on how to improve the model to better fit their needs
- Link to EFSA's podcast on HPAI [here](#)

Item 7.4: Part IV: EFSA's scientific panels

a) Update on the call for Renewal of EFSA Panels

Nik Kriz (EFSA) gave an update on the call for the renewal of EFSA's Scientific Panels. He emphasized the need for the best possible experts in order to continue to function. He encouraged everyone to think of five colleagues to send the link to the call for applications. He then provided an update on the selection appointment timeline, criteria for selection, implementing rules, and promotion campaign. He also highlighted that Ireland and Norway had separate individual campaigns to promote the call for EFSA panel. At 6 March 2023, 748 applications were in draft status and 287 were submitted. The call was viewed 35,000 times. The gender distribution was not yet balanced. The average age of applicants was 47. To that date, the main expertise of the applications was in food feed technology and chemistry. There was great interest in the Scientific Committee itself, but pesticide expertise was lacking. Italy led in terms of geographical distribution, followed by Spain and Greece. Barbara Gallani asked the attendees to help spread the word and be ambassadors for EFSA. France commented that it is important to emphasize that science is part of the decision-making system.

The Plenary discussed the risk assessment incompatibility issue and the need to ensure that experts are able to work on both national and European levels. Denmark noted the high workload of MS and the need to act on joint knowledge in Europe. Nik mentioned the financial compensation of €900 for a day in a panel, and the importance of making it attractive to work with EFSA. The Chair noted that it is important to prioritize working together for Europe, as it can create a win-win situation for MS. Carlos das Neves highlighted the potential of a new generation of scientists to bring a new dynamic to the panels and create new networks.

**b) Report on the 'SWOT analysis of EFSA Panel system -workshop'**

Regarding the evaluation of EFSA's panel system, it was discussed whether the current system is still fit for purpose after 20 years. The Chair presented the main highlights of the workshop on the topic held on 14 March and attended by representatives from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), the Joint Research Centre (JRC), the European Medicines Agency (EMA), the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), the European Environment Agency (EEA), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), The World Health Organization (WHO), the Portuguese Economic and Food Safety Authority (ASAE), the Danish DTU National Food Institute (DTU) and the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR). The scope and composition of the 10 scientific panels were discussed, as well as the role of the panels in the risk assessment process. The conclusions of the workshop draw a broad diagnosis of EFSA's operational model. Strengths include the independence, specialisation and multi-disciplinarity within panels, while lack of agility, speed and interaction were seen as weaknesses. The high workload, scientific divergences and the need to keep pace with innovation appear threats. Participants also pointed to the potential of increased cooperation, One Health approaches or new methodologies. To follow up on the workshop's analysis, EFSA will discuss internally the possibilities for adjustments to the panel system.

Action:

- MS to further disseminate and promote the call for renewal of EFSA panels
- EFSA to share the final report on the evaluation of EFSA's panel system

Closing of the meeting

The Chair closed the meeting outlining the need for continuous reflection and work to provide scientific advice to policy makers in the most effective way, taking into account the complexity of society. The Chair thanked the EFSA staff for their work and for the well-prepared meeting and wished the Plenary a safe journey home and looked forward to the next meeting in Sweden.



SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Action reference	Who	Agenda topic	What
Action 1	EFSA	Item 3 - A new approach for closer cooperation with the AF community	<p>EFSA to consider the suggestions from the AF to increase collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exchanges on the plans of expert panels and scientific networks; • inclusion of EEA countries in the governance; • working groups to advance work in between AF meetings; • standing agenda item or newsletter on international activities by EFSA and MS.
Action 2	EFSA	Item 5 – New Focal Point Operational Framework 2023-2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EFSA to provide a more visual/accessible overview on the activities already implemented under the new FP framework • EFSA to further clarify, via the Focal Points, the process for submitting tailor-made proposals and /or to join existing ones.
Action 3	MS	Item 6 – Partnership opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MS to express interest on “Ciguatera 2”: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Sampling imported fish and cytotoxicity analysis; ◦ Training on CTX identification, quantification and characterisation ◦ Awareness raising campaign for ciguatera fish poisoning. ◦ Contact points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ FMB of the Eurocigua II project: eurocigua2@sanidad.gob.es ◦ EFSA contact point: Angelo.maggiore@efsa.europa.eu • AF members to share with their national networks, as may be appropriate, EFSA’s intention to launch partnership calls in the coming weeks, among others, in the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Sustainable plant protection: Assessing alternatives to chemical plant protection (presentation) ◦ Cumulative risk assessment from dietary exposure to pesticides (presentation) ◦ System-based environmental risk assessment (ERA) (presentation), and – in particular – EU environmental scenarios for ERA of non-target organisms (call for tender Prior information notice in TED) ◦ Emerging risks related to food supplements (presentation) ◦ Applying -omics and bioinformatics approaches (presentation), noting that a call for tender on “Implementation of a Multi-OMICS Workflow to Derive Human Reference Points and Health-based Guidance Values (HBGVs) from Quantitative in Vitro Data” is currently open.
Action 4	EFSA/MS	Item 7.1 – Part I: Activities on Perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MS to share all information on PFAS activities with EFSA if they have not already done so (afsecretariat@efsa.europa.eu) • EFSA to make all information on PFAS activities received from MS available (subject to MS agreement) in a shared space open to AF members • MS are invited by ECHA to contribute to the ECHA Public Consultation (PC) on the PFAS restriction proposal and submit their MS information within the frame of the PC (Submitted restrictions under consideration - ECHA (europa.eu)) • DE, DK, FR, NL and NO to convene a working group before the next AF meeting to propose possible next steps for a collaborative approach across Europe on data exchange, identification of data

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			gaps, methodological exchange, potential EU common monitoring project.
Action 5	MS	Item 7.3 – Part III: Enhancing preparedness: the case of Avian Influenza	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MS to express interest on the HPAI predictive model• MS that are already using the HPAI predictive model to provide feedback on how to improve the model to better fit their needs• Link to EFSA's podcast on HPAI here
Action 6	EFSA/MS	Item 7.4 – Part IV: EFSA's scientific panels	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MS to further disseminate and promote the call for Renewal of EFSA Panels (deadline: 3 April 2023; further extended to 17 April)• EFSA to share the final report on the evaluation of EFSA's panel system