



# Sixth EFSA Stakeholder Forum | Report

Brussels, 09-10 November 2023



## CONTENTS

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Background .....</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Agenda .....</b>  | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Setting the scene .....</b>   | <b>4</b> |
| <b><i>The breakout discussions.....</i></b>                            | <b>4</b> |
| <b>    Impactful and targeted communications .....</b>                 | <b>4</b> |
| <b>    Collaborating for long-term preparedness .....</b>              | <b>5</b> |
| <b><i>Stakeholder Fair .....</i></b>                                   | <b>5</b> |
| <b>    Stakeholder Engagement:.....</b>                                | <b>6</b> |
| <b>    Foresight and Preparedness: .....</b>                           | <b>6</b> |
| <b>    Risk Communication: .....</b>                                   | <b>6</b> |
| <b>    Risk Assessment:.....</b>                                       | <b>7</b> |
| <b>    Pre-submission Activities and Intake of Applications: .....</b> | <b>7</b> |
| <b><i>Conclusions and next steps.....</i></b>                          | <b>7</b> |
| <b><i>Participating stakeholders .....</i></b>                         | <b>8</b> |



## BACKGROUND

The annual Stakeholder Forum aims to provide strategic feedback on particular areas of EFSA's work by bringing together members of the registered stakeholder organisations, its Stakeholder Bureau, EFSA's Management Board, EFSA's Senior Management, officers, and the European Commission. It provides a platform to discuss upcoming opportunities and challenges for the risk assessment ecosystem.

The sixth Stakeholder Forum was organised as two half-day sessions on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> November in Brussels, Belgium.

Its format was structured around two blocks: an afternoon session with breakout sessions centred on Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement and collaboration for long-term preparedness and a morning session with the "EFSA 4 Stakeholders Fair" where stakeholders could walk around service-based stands for in depth discussions with EFSA staff.

In addition, the programme was complemented by a session dedicated to applicants to provide insights on the latest updates related to EFSA's Scientific Application process.

## AGENDA

| <b>Afternoon session 9 November 2023</b> |   |
|--|---|
| 14:00                                    | <b>Opening of the Stakeholder Forum</b> by Bernhard Url, EFSA Executive Director and Aivars Bērziņš, Chair of the EFSA Management Board   |
| 14:15                                    | <b>Strengthening Collaboration and Effective Communication for the EU Food Safety System</b> by Barbara Gallani, Head of Communication and Partnership Department   |
| 14:30                                    | <b>Breakout sessions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement through Impactful and Targeted Communications</li> <li>Collaborating for Long-Term Preparedness</li> </ul> |
| 16:30                                    | <b>Bringing discussion results together</b>   |
| 17:10                                    | <b>Official closing of the day</b> by Bernhard Url  |
| 17:30                                    | <b>Networking cocktail</b>  |
| <b>Morning session 10 November 2023</b>  |   |
| 09:30                                    | <b>Opening of the day &amp; introduction to the Stakeholder Fair</b> by Victoria Villamar, Head of Engagement and External Relations Unit   |
| 09:45                                    | <b>EFSA 4 Stakeholders Fair &amp; Dedicated session on Applications</b>   |
| 11:15                                    | <b>Feedback from the fair EFSA Staff</b>  |
| 11:45                                    | <b>Official closing of the Forum</b> by Barbara Gallani   |



## SETTING THE SCENE

EFSA's Executive Director, Bernhard Url, inaugurated the event with a warm welcome to participants, emphasizing the evolving nature of science and regulatory practices. He acknowledged the increasing complexity of these fields, underlining that resolution requires collaborative efforts beyond the scope of individual institutions and organisations. Bernhard Url highlighted the indispensable role stakeholders play as key partners in navigating this intricate landscape, contributing valuable insights and practical expertise.

Recognising the need for a collective approach, he advocated for a multi-stakeholder strategy as the optimal path forward to address upcoming challenges and achieve tangible results. Following these insightful remarks, Aivars Bērziņš, the Chair of the Management Board, underscored the pivotal role played by stakeholders. He elaborated on how their significance is reflected in their representation on the Management Board, emphasizing their integral contribution to decision-making processes.

The opening session also featured a presentation by Barbara Gallani, Head of Communications and Partnerships, on the theme of Collaboration and Effective Communication for the EU Food Safety System. This overview aimed to set the stage for meaningful discussions and foster a spirit of cooperation among participants. She emphasized how the implementation of the Transparency Regulation has led to the necessity for additional efforts to enhance communication engagement and dialogue as well as significant measures to build more direct communication with citizens. EFSA has thus shifted the communication approach and committed to developing innovative approaches to communication such as digital platforms, data visualization, and social media in concert with stakeholders even more.

## THE BREAKOUT DISCUSSIONS

Following the opening speeches and introductory words, the programme moved to an interactive discussion along two different topics:

- Impactful and Targeted Communications
- Collaborating for Long-Term Preparedness.

The common theme across the groups was a user-centric approach, aiming at exploring how communication and insights were used by stakeholders and gather feedback on ongoing developments within EFSA.

## IMPACTFUL AND TARGETED COMMUNICATIONS

EFSA provided a detailed overview of how mandates are received and assessed, shedding light on the critical role of communication and engagement in the process. The presentation encompassed various communication methods, including consultations, pre-notifications and dissemination through targeted channels.

Stakeholders and EFSA engaged in a fruitful discussion to enhance collaboration and streamline efforts. Stakeholders expressed genuine appreciation for EFSA's commitment to efficient communication and the integration of thematic stakeholder engagement into mandates,



particularly highlighting recent initiatives on animal welfare. The success of these initiatives was attributed to the early and consistent involvement of stakeholders throughout the risk assessment process until the adoption of a scientific opinion.

Stakeholders stressed the need for clearly communicating the scientific rationale for assessing sensitivity and emphasized transparency in evaluating sensitive dossiers.

## COLLABORATING FOR LONG-TERM PREPAREDNESS

The session focused on EFSA's preparedness, particularly the role of the Knowledge Innovation and Partnership Unit in transforming activities into actions. The discussion emphasized the multifaceted nature of the work, considering expert communities, societal awareness, legislative frameworks, and stakeholder involvement. The goal was to enhance collaboration and preparedness for future challenges through quicker, more agile interactions.

A key aspect introduced was the Environmental Scanning process, aimed at identifying trends in food and feed safety, plant and animal health, and environmental aspects. This process serves as a single-entry point for collecting signals that could trigger various actions, including updating guidance documents, addressing ongoing initiatives, and alerting the European Commission.

The participants engaged in questions and clarifications, focusing on contributing to the signal collection. The transparency and confidentiality aspects of these processes were also addressed, highlighting the current limitations on public access and the submission of issues to specific stakeholders and organizations.

## STAKEHOLDER FAIR

The second day, the meeting room turned into the venue of the second edition of the EFSA 4 Stakeholders Fair. As EFSA's registered stakeholders form a remarkably diverse community, varying in size, composition, and areas of interest, an opportunity for direct interaction with relevant EFSA staff proved helpful in fostering mutual understanding and strengthening bonds between the stakeholder community and EFSA.

To achieve this, EFSA arranged five stands in total under three macro areas and the selected themes were following:

| <b>Stand name</b>          | <b>Topics covered</b>   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Stakeholder Engagement     | New Stakeholder DG on ERA.<br>Stakeholder Engagement Approach bodies<br>Stakeholder Discussion Groups<br>Stakeholder communication channels |
| Foresight and Preparedness | Environmental Scanning<br>Emerging Risks  |



|  |  |
|--|--|
| Risk Communication                                   | Roadmap for evidence-based risk communication<br>Plain Language Summaries<br>EFSA campaigns.   |
| Risk Assessment                                      | RA & publication mandates PESTICIDES<br>RA & publication mandates non-PESTICIDES<br>Public and targeted Consultations during risk assessment                       |
| Pre-submission activities and intake of applications | Pre-submission advice<br>Notification of studies<br>Ask Question<br>Completeness check of application dossiers<br>IT Platforms supporting the application workflow |

The fair was complemented by a parallel info session for applicants, providing insight into the latest updates related to EFSA’s scientific application process and an opportunity to ask questions. While participants generally appreciated EFSA's communication efforts, some concerns were raised, notably regarding the confidentiality process. Stakeholders emphasized the need for greater clarity and streamlining of procedures, advocating for additional resources to address these challenges.

The fair was followed by plenary feedback by both the EFSA staff at the stands as well as by the stakeholders.

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT:

Positive feedback was received on the fair's format, emphasizing fruitful discussions. Continuous engagement throughout a mandate's life and the risk assessment process was highlighted as a valuable approach to be further mainstreamed in engagement work.

## FORESIGHT AND PREPAREDNESS:

Discussions reflected a big interest by stakeholders in EFSA’s preparedness work. They emphasized the importance of open and honest exchange as it is instrumental to understating EFSA's work and the new workflows being implemented, particularly in emerging areas like environmental scanning. Stakeholder interest in examples, especially related to environmental scanning, was noted. EFSA encouraged stakeholders to submit questions, highlighting their approachability.

## RISK COMMUNICATION:

Stakeholders recognised the challenges in EU-level communication, given diverse languages and cultures. Stakeholder inquiries focused on campaign target audiences and topic selection. Here, the need to adapt communication to citizens' perceptions in each country was acknowledged.



## RISK ASSESSMENT:

The open dialogue during the fair was valued for providing insights into stakeholders' perspectives. Appreciation was expressed for feedback received, particularly addressing delays in risk assessment tools. The migration to a new system was discussed, assuring stakeholders that efforts are underway, with the new system expected in the coming months.

## PRE-SUBMISSION ACTIVITIES AND INTAKE OF APPLICATIONS:

A commitment to maintaining an open dialogue with applicants was expressed, reflecting on opportunities for future interaction. Feedback regarding process optimization for confidentiality was acknowledged, with an assurance to consider potential changes. The importance of understanding specific needs and plans to address limitations were discussed.

## CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Stakeholders showed appreciation for EFSA's efforts in communicating and incorporating thematic stakeholder engagement into mandates. They suggested the establishment of additional discussion groups and the provision of an overview of opportunities for thematic stakeholder participation, possibly through webinars or written guidelines.

Stakeholders called for exploring the feasibility of creating a dedicated Stakeholder group using tools such as LinkedIn.

Stakeholders were also positive about their potential contribution to the new environmental scanning approach for collecting signals in the areas of food and feed safety, plant health, animal health and environmental aspects.

As stated in EFSA 2027 Strategy, further strengthening Stakeholders involvement within EFSA's scientific work remains a priority. Over the next months, EFSA will address and follow up, with the support and coordination of the Stakeholder Bureau, on the action points that emerged from this meeting.

## ACTION POINTS:

1. EFSA will explore ways to improve the accessibility and relevance of engagement tools for stakeholders (e.g. targeted newsletters and automatic notifications for risk assessment events), to provide a comprehensive overview of opportunities for thematic stakeholder participation.
2. EFSA will encourage stakeholder participation in existing discussion groups and support the submission of proposals for the establishment of discussion groups on different topics.
3. EFSA will strengthen and streamline the early involvement of stakeholders in specific areas of its work as successfully achieved by the Animal Welfare info session.
4. Given the success of the LinkedIn group for applicants, the setup of a similar group dedicated to registered stakeholders will be explored.



## PARTICIPATING STAKEHOLDERS

|  |
|--|
| <b>Association of the European Self-Medication Industry (AESGP)</b>  |
| <b>Association of Manufacturers and Formulators of Enzyme Product (AMFEP)</b>  |
| <b>AnimalhealthEurope</b>  |
| <b>Association of Veterinary Consultants (AVC)</b>   |
| <b>Association of Poultry Processors and Poultry Trade in the EU Countries (AVEC)</b>  |
| <b>Association of the Chocolate, Biscuit and Confectionery Industries of Europe (CAOBISCO)</b>   |
| <b>The European Chemical Industry Council (CEFIC)</b>  |
| <b>European Association of Sugar Manufacturers (CEFS)</b>  |
| <b>The European Liaison Committee for Agricultural and Agrifood trade (CELCAA)</b>   |
| <b>Centre de Liaison des Industries Transformatrices de Viandes de l'Union Européene (CLITRAVI)</b>  |
| <b>Copa-Cogeca</b>   |
| <b>CropLife Europe</b>   |
| <b>European Biostimulants Industry Council (EBIC)</b>  |
| <b>European Coffee Federation (ECF)</b>  |
| <b>EUROPEAN FLAVOUR ASSOCIATION (EFFA)</b>   |
| <b>European Forum of Farm Animal Breeders (EFFAB)</b>  |
| <b>European Federation of Food Safety Consultants (EFFSACO)</b>  |
| <b>European Federation of Associations of Health Product Manufacturers (EHPM)</b>  |
| <b>Energy Drinks Europe (EDE)</b>  |
| <b>Federation of European Specialty Food Ingredients Industries</b>  |
| <b>European Potato Processors' Association (EUPPA)</b>   |
| <b>EuropaBio</b>   |
| <b>European Chemical Society (EuChemS)</b>   |
| <b>European Dairy Association (EDA)</b>  |
| <b>European Federation of Allergy and Airways Diseases Patients' Associations (EFA)</b>  |
| <b>European Food Information Council (EUFIC)</b>   |
| <b>European Industrial Hemp Association (EIHA)</b>   |
| <b>European Vegetarian Union (EVU)</b>   |
| <b>European Salt Producers' Association (EUsalt)</b>   |
| <b>Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE)</b>   |
| <b>The EU Vegetable Oil And Proteinmeal Industry (FEDIOL)</b>  |
| <b>EU Association of Specialty Feed Ingredients and their Mixtures (FEFANA)</b>  |
| <b>European Federation for Animal Health and Health Security (FESASS)</b>  |
| <b>Food Fermentation Europe</b>  |
| <b>Food Supplements Europe (FSE)</b>   |
| <b>FoodDrinkEurope</b>   |
| <b>European Federation of the Trade in Dried Fruit, Edible Nuts, Processed Fruit &amp; Vegetables, Processed Fishery Products, Spices, Honey and Similar Foodstuffs (FRUCOM)</b> |
| <b>International Biocontrol Manufacturers Association (IBMA)</b>   |
| <b>International Life Sciences Institute Europe (ILSI Europe)</b>  |
| <b>International Sweeteners Association (ISA)</b>  |
| <b>Pesticide Action Network Europe (PAN Europe)</b>  |
| <b>Plastics Europe</b>   |
| <b>Primary Food Processors (PFP)</b>   |
| <b>Safe Food Advocacy Europe (SAFE)</b>  |
| <b>Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry Europe (SETAC)</b>  |