

13th MEETING OF EFSA STAKEHOLDER BUREAU

VIRTUAL MEETING, 10 OCTOBER 2023



INTRODUCTION

The 13th Stakeholder Bureau Meeting held virtually on the 10th of October 2023. The meeting provided the opportunity to discuss upcoming engagement and communication activities, the launch of the Stakeholder Discussion Group on Environmental Risk Assessment and the Stakeholder Forum agenda. Furthermore, EFSA provided a presentation on its partnerships with Member States' competent bodies and an update on the Transparency Regulation as requested by the stakeholders during the call for agenda items.

Bernhard Url, in his capacity as both EFSA's Executive Director and Chair of the Bureau, started the meeting by emphasizing the vital importance of stakeholders actively participating. He highlighted the crucial role of the Stakeholder Bureau as EFSA's trusted advisors, responsible for providing valuable insights on societal concerns within EFSA's realm. Bernhard Url commended the dedicated members of the Bureau for their strong commitment to advancing food safety in the European Union. He stressed the significance of their proactive involvement in steering discussions and decisions within this influential forum.

After the initial greetings, Aivars Bērziņš, the Chair of EFSA's Management Board, underscored the integral part played by stakeholders within the Management Board. He updated the Bureau about the ongoing process for the renewal of the NGO Member. Aivars Bērziņš reaffirmed his commitment to maintaining accessibility and availability for stakeholders, expressing gratitude for their proactive involvement and extending congratulations on their recent responsibilities.

UPCOMING ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

Barbara Gallani, EFSA's Head of Communication and Partnership Department, presented a comprehensive overview of EFSA's upcoming engagement and communication activities.

She presented stakeholders' involvement in the key campaigns undertaken by EFSA. The "StopASF" campaign highlighted the collaborative efforts with farmers and veterinarian stakeholder organizations to enhance its reach. Barbara Gallani informed the Bureau about the launch of the post-campaign survey in 2023, a yearly initiative aimed at gauging awareness levels and identifying areas for improvement. For the "PlantHealth for Life" campaign, collaboration with stakeholder organizations involved in Plant Health was emphasized, and the social media toolkit was shared with registered stakeholders to support outreach efforts. Similarly, the "EUChooseSafeFood" campaign stressed the importance of collaboration with consumer stakeholder organizations.

She also shared upcoming stakeholder events, including an ad hoc meeting on cell culture-derived foods, the 3rd meeting of the Tools related to the application of the Transparency Regulation, a stakeholder meeting on the welfare of beef cattle and turkeys, the 30th meeting of the EFSA Stakeholder DG on Emerging Risks, and the 6th Stakeholder Forum. Additionally, she expressed gratitude for the high participation of stakeholder organisations in EFSA Annual Strategy Survey 2023, whereby, among other aspects, the impact on engagement events and results of EFSA's risk assessments and risk communications activities was looked at.

The presentation concluded with a glimpse into the Communications Calendar from October 2023 to February 2024, ongoing public consultations, calls for data, and the announcement of a new Stakeholder Discussion Group on Environmental Risk Assessment, in keeping with the work carried out by the Bee Guidance Revision Group but with a broader mandate.

The representative of Business and Food Industry expressed interest in such developments towards new evidence-based communication while the representative of NGOs and Advocacy Groups insisted on the need to ensure proper feedback mechanisms in the way EFSA is consulting and engaging with its stakeholders. The matter will be addressed and further discussed in more details at the occasion of the 6th Stakeholder Forum in November this year.

LAUNCH OF THE CALL FOR THE STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSION GROUP ON ENVIRONMENTAL RISK ASSESSMENT

Domenica Auteri, the Ecotoxicology Team Leader in the Environment, Plants, and Ecotoxicology Unit, provided a comprehensive overview of the recently initiated call for the Stakeholder Discussion Group on Environmental Risk Assessment. The objective is to enhance scientific guidance and methodological approaches to ensure relevance and effectiveness in future environmental risk assessments.

The newly launched stakeholder group is set to convene at least once a year, with additional ad-hoc discussions as needed.

The selection process for the group will adhere to key principles, including:

- Knowledge and expertise, with a focus on terrestrial ecotoxicology, encompassing agronomy and landscape ecology.
- Interest in the field and the anticipated benefits of organizational participation, as expressed in the application.
- Role and remit of the organization at the EU level.
- Ensuring a balanced representation of stakeholder interests and categories.

Domenica extended an invitation to stakeholders, encouraging them to submit their nominations and spread the word about this important call for participation. It would be important to ensure a representation therein covering the seven categories of EFSA's registered stakeholders. Find here more information about the [Framework for Interaction](#) of the Stakeholder Group.

Several members of the Bureau stressed the importance of good communication on the selection process in order to clearly understand the profile sought for the experts who will participate in this new consultation group.

STAKEHOLDER FORUM: DRAFT AGENDA

Victoria Villamar, Head of Engagement and External Relations Unit, shared the plans for the upcoming 6th Stakeholder Forum happening in Brussels on November 9th and 10th. This year's forum was a chance for face-to-face discussions, where EFSA's Senior Management would give important updates. There would be two breakout sessions—one about "Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement through Impactful and Targeted Communications" and the other about "Collaborating for Long-Term Preparedness." Victoria Villamar asked Bureau Members to volunteer to report back from these sessions during the feedback session in the main meeting. Material would be circulated ahead of the Forum to enable better preparation and evaluation of the way in which the breakout sessions would be run.

On the second day, the "EFSA 4 Stakeholders Fair" would be organised with stands, visuals, and EFSA staff ready to share insights into EFSA's services and ongoing activities. The fair would cover important areas like risk assessment, risk communication, and stakeholder engagement.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH MEMBER STATE COMPETENT BODIES

Gorgias Garofalakis, Scientific Officer in the Knowledge, Innovation, and Partnership Management Unit, presented EFSA's partnership initiatives with Member State Competent Authorities. He initiated the presentation by providing a clear definition of partnerships, characterizing them as "long-term, trust-based cooperation built on common values and goals, featuring attractive win-win elements. These partnerships primarily involve EFSA, Member State competent organizations, EU Agencies, and EC Services. They entail shared risks and benefits, generating tangible outputs."

EFSA was currently refining the concept of partnership to optimize collaboration across Member, with more innovative mechanisms enabling addressing scientific tasks by leveraging the expertise at Member States level. The approach involved the outsourcing of specific tasks to trusted partners, enabling to benefit from Member States specialized knowledge and resources. Hence, beyond mere cooperation, EFSA actively co-evolved with Member States. by aligning strategies and timelines, with the aim to enhance efficiency and tackle the complexities inherent in risk assessments.

Garofalakis proceeded to explain the significance of partnerships for stakeholder groups, highlighting the mutual advantages and collaborative elements they bring. Additionally, he outlined the decision-making process EFSA employed in selecting tasks to be implemented through partnerships.

To illustrate the practical application of these principles, Garofalakis presented a specific example: "Support to EFSA in the Risk Assessment of Food Enzymes, Food Additives, Food Flavorings, and Feed Additives." This real-world case served to demonstrate how partnerships operate in the context of risk assessment, highlighting the collaborative efforts that contributed to EFSA's comprehensive evaluation of various substances.

The presentation not only clarified the conceptual framework of partnerships but also showcased a tangible instance, providing stakeholders with a practical understanding of EFSA's collaborative endeavours.

PRESENTATION ON TRANSPARENCY REGULATION AS REQUESTED BY BUSINESS AND FOOD INDUSTRY CATEGORY

Bénédicte VAGENENDE, Head of Front Desk & Workforce Planning, delivered a presentation enriched with figures and statistics outlining the new responsibilities arising from the Transparency Regulation. This encompassed various tasks like pre-submission advice activities, Notification of Studies, Public Consultations, Public Access to Documents, and the handling of Confidentiality requests. Notably, she underscored the fact that EFSA received considerably fewer comments on Public Consultations related to Applications compared to the Generic mandates, which attracted most of the comments.

The presentation also included an overview of engagement activities associated with the Transparency Regulation, with a commitment to continuous improvement through further enhancements of tools and manuals.

During the presentation, the representative from the Business and Food Industry category acknowledged the clarity achieved by positive developments. However, they emphasized the need for additional guidance, particularly concerning notification requirements and limits. While the practical arrangements had been well-received, lingering uncertainties persisted. Furthermore, the group expressed interest in understanding potential delays and highlighted the importance of clear scientific advice criteria. EFSA's engagement activities, including TG

Tools, updated manuals, and industry association interviews, aimed to enhance understanding of the Transparency Regulation provisions. It was reminded that this topic would be addressed at a dedicated session at the upcoming Stakeholder Forum in November this year.

Finally, to the question regarding the state-of-play of the evaluation of EFSA's performance, as foreseen under the General Food Law, the representative of the European Commission gave some further information, whereby the evaluation would now occur every five years. It would be performed by the European Commission for the first time, and due in March 2026.

AOB

Before closing the meeting, there were two issues brought on the table. It concerned the following:

- ❑ *One Substance, One Assessment (OSOA)*: as a follow-up of the previous Stakeholder Bureau meeting in June, where an update was given on the state of collaboration between EFSA and ECHA/EMA in that field, it was reminded that a legal proposal was under preparation, led by European Commission DG ENV, with the support of DG SANTE colleagues. The scope would impact on the resources needs between ECHA and EFSA. OSOA is key for transparency while also aiming at avoiding possible divergences.
- ❑ *Sustainability of the Stakeholder Bureau*: for Bernhard Url, after 7 years of existence of the Stakeholder Bureau, it would seem appropriate to question the added value of holding the Bureau meeting in its current format, and what lessons could be learned from the outcome of previous meetings. Bernhard asked the Bureau members to think about it, and this could be one of the next items on the agenda for the next Bureau meeting.

ANNEX 1 : AGENDA

Time	N	Item	Speakers
14:00-14:15	1	Welcome to the meeting	Bernhard Url, Executive Director Aivars Berzins, Chair of the EFSA Management Board
14:15-14:35	2	Upcoming Engagement and Communication activities	Barbara Gallani, Head of Communication and Partnership Department
14:35-14:50	3	Launch of the call for the Stakeholder Consultation Group on Environmental Risk Assessment	Domenica Auteri Ecotoxicology Team leader Environment, Plants & Ecotoxicology Unit
14:50-15:10	4	Stakeholder Forum: agenda & participation of Bureau	Victoria Villamar, Head of Engagement and External Relations Unit
Agenda items raised by stakeholders:			
15:10-15:25	5	Partnerships with MS competent bodies	Gorgias Garofalakis Scientific Officer Knowledge, Innovation and Partnership Management Unit
15:25-15:45	6	Presentation on Transparency Regulation as requested by Business and Food Industry category	Laurent Oger Alternate Member of Business and Food Industry category Bénédicte VAGENENDE Head of Front Desk & Workforce Planning
15:45-16:00	7	AOB & Closing remarks	Bernhard Url, Executive Director

PARTICIPANTS LIST

STAKEHODLER REPRESENTATIVES

Name	Stakeholder Category representing
Camille Perrin	Consumers
Angeliki Lyssimachou	NGOs and Adovacy Groups
Eva Sali	Farmers and Primary Producers
Laurent Oger	Business and Food Industry
Nelli Hajdu	Distributors and HORECA
Rimma Ishimbaeva	Practitioners
Furio Brighenti	Academia

EFSA REPRESENTATIVES

Bernhard Url	Executive Director
Aivars Berzins	Chair of the EFSA Management Board
Barbara Gallani	Head of Communication and Partnership Department
Victoria Villamar	Head of Engagement and Relations Unit
Bénédicte Vagenende	Head of Front-Desk & Workforce Planning
Domenica Auteri	Ecotoxicology Team leader Environment, Plants & Ecotoxicology Unit
Gorgias Garofalakis	Scientific Officer, Knowledge, Innovation and Partnership Management Unit
Christophe Wolff	Policy Officer, Engagement and External Relations Unit
Luisa Abrahamyan	Junior Officer, Engagement and External Relations Unit
Goran Kumric	Communications Officer, Front-Desk and Workforce Planning

EUROPEAN COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVES – OBSERVERS

Anastasia Alvizou	Deputy Head of Farm to Fork, E.1, DG SANTE, European Commission
Athanasios Raikos	Policy Officer, E.1, DG SANTE, European Commission