SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

6th Working Group meeting on the welfare of animals kept for fur production

16th September 2024 09:00 – 18:00
17th September 2024 09:00 – 16:00
MINUTES - Agreed on the 4th of October 2024

EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY

Location: Hybrid meeting (Physical & Web conference)

Attendees:

- Working Group Members:
  - Mette Herskin
  - Maria Diez-Leon
  - Sandra Edwards (web)
  - Angela Schwarzer

- Hearing Experts[1]:
  - Bo Algers
  - Per Jensen (web)
  - Stanisław Łapiński
  - Jens Malmkvist

- European Commission representatives:
  - Susanne Dittmann Rasmussen (web)
  - Ana Maria Popa (on 17th September)(web)

- EFSA:
  - Marika Vitali (BIOHAW Unit)
  - Michaela Hempen (BIOHAW Unit)
  - Neil Joseph Tirchett (BIOHAW Unit)
  - Marianna Kujawa (FEEDCO Unit)
  - Carolina Baptista (MESE Unit)

- Others:
  - Not Applicable

I. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

II. Adoption of agenda

No additional points were added to the agenda.

III. Declarations of Interest of Working Groups members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[2] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[3], EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening

[1] As defined in Article 34 of the Decision of the Executive Director concerning the selection of members of the Scientific Committee, the Scientific Panels, and the selection of external experts to assist EFSA with its scientific work: https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/paneloperation.pdf

[2] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/policy_independence.pdf
[3] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/competing_interest_management_17.pdf

process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

IV. Agreement of the minutes of the 5th Working Group meeting held on 15th July 2024, via web-conference

The minutes of the 5th Working Group meeting were agreed by written procedure on the 24th of July 2024.

V. Scientific topic(s) for discussion

a. Selection of welfare consequences for chinchilla, raccoon dogs, arctic and red foxes (EFSA-Q-2023-00869, item 4, 5, 7 in the agenda)

Prior to the meeting, experts were asked to compile their individual judgments on the selection of welfare consequences for the raccoon dogs, chinchilla, arctic fox and red fox species in relation to the identified husbandry systems and animal categories (i.e. scenarios). The scores were assigned to the 33 welfare consequences based on the EFSA guidance 2022[4] and species specificities agreed in the previous meetings. The experts then discussed the ranking of the different welfare consequences per each scenario per respective animal and classified them into not applicable, low, moderately and highly relevant; based on their expertise, scientific literature available and evidence received from the call for evidence.

During the meeting, the staff provided an overview of the results obtained and moderated the group discussion for the selection of the highly relevant welfare consequences in response to section ToR2a of the mandate for the raccoon dog, chinchilla, arctic fox and red fox. Experts shared their knowledge on animal welfare consequences on the respective species mentioned above and raised for fur production, discussing the available data and literature.

The welfare consequences classified as highly relevant across the different scenarios were compared, and discussion were held on the selection of the five most relevant welfare consequences for the species, in response to ToR2b of the mandate. The working group agreed on the most relevant welfare consequences that will be further discussed at the next meetings.

VI. Any Other Business

a. AHAW Plenary Feedback (EFSA-Q-2023-00869 item 8 in the agenda)

The chair informed the WG on comments received by the revision of the first draft of the Technical report (Art 31) of this mandate by the AHAW Panel, describing biology, husbandry system and farm practices in mink, foxes, raccoon dogs and chinchilla kept for fur production. The chair informed the WG that the discussion on the main comments will be carried out by the chair and EFSA staff in the upcoming BIOHAW - AHAW 159th Panel Plenary, being held on the 18th and 19th September 2024.

b. Task distribution & roadmap (EFSA-Q-2023-00869 and EFSA-Q-2024-00126 item 9 in the agenda)

EFSA staff presented an overview of the intermediate deadlines which are necessary to be followed for the implementation of the mandate. An update was provided on the ongoing tasks

[4] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/7403

and deadlines. The full list of tasks will be assigned by email to the experts, to be completed according to the respective deadline.

VII. Next meeting

The date of the next meeting via web conference will be confirmed by email.

SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

5th Working Group meeting on the welfare of animals kept for fur production

15th July 2024
09:30 – 18:30
MINUTES - Agreed on the 24th of July 2024

Location: Web conference

Attendees:

- Working Group Members:
  - Mette Herskin
  - Maria Diez-Leon
  - Sandra Edwards
  - Angela Schwarzer
- Hearing Experts[1]:
  - Bo Algers
  - Per Jensen
  - Stanisław Łapiński
  - Jens Malmkvist
- European Commission representatives:
  - Ana Maria Popa
- EFSA:
  - Marika Vitali
  - Michaela Hempen
  - Neil Joseph Tirchett
  - Eleonora Cattaneo
- Others:
  - Not Applicable

I. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

II. Adoption of agenda

No additional points were added to the agenda.

III. Declarations of Interest of Working Groups members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[2] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[3], EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

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[2] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/policy_independence.pdf

[3] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/competing_interest_management_17.pdf

IV. Agreement of the minutes of the 4th Working Group meeting held on 17th June 2024, via web-conference

The minutes of the 4th Working Group meeting were agreed by written procedure on the 26th of June 2024.

V. Scientific topic(s) for discussion

a. Selection of welfare consequences for mink (EFSA-Q-2023-00869, item 5 in the agenda)

Prior to the meeting, experts were asked to compile their individual judgments on the selection of welfare consequences for the mink species in relation to the identified husbandry systems and animal categories (i.e. scenarios). The scores were assigned to the 33 welfare consequences based on the EFSA guidance 2022[4] and species specificities agreed in the previous meeting. The experts then discussed the individual ranking of the different welfare consequences and classified them into low, moderately and highly relevant; based on their expertise, literature and evidence received from the call for evidence.

During the meeting, the staff provided an overview of the results obtained and moderated the group discussion for the selection of highly relevant welfare consequences in response to section ToR2a of the mandate for the mink. Experts shared their knowledge on animal welfare principles and of mink raised for fur production, discussing the available data and literature.

The welfare consequences classified as highly relevant across the different scenarios were compared, and discussion were held on how to select the five most relevant welfare consequences for the species, in response to ToR2b of the mandate. The selection of the five most relevant welfare consequences will be agreed by email or at the next meeting. The working group agreed also to proceed with the selection of the welfare consequences for the remaining species in the next meeting.

VI. Any Other Business

a. AHAW Plenary Feedback & roadmap through adoption (EFSA-Q-2023-00869 item 4 in the agenda)

The chair communicated that there was positive feedback on the presentation of the sections related to the Domestication and Consideration of Needs and Wants during the BIOHAW - AHAW 158th Panel Plenary held on the 2nd and 3rd July 2024. It was also noted that the comments and suggestions mentioned by the Panel members were addressed accordingly.

b. Task distribution (EFSA-Q-2023-00869 and EFSA-Q-2024-00126 item 8 in the agenda)

Tasks were assigned to the experts for drafting the preparatory documents (as mentioned in item 7 of the agenda) and identifying scenarios for species other than mink. The specific deadlines for each task were also discussed, with further task specific information to be provided via email.

VII. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 16th and 17th September 2024, in hybrid mode, both in person and via web conference.

[4] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/7403

SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

4th Working Group meeting on the welfare of animals kept for fur production

17th June 2024
10:00 – 15:00
MINUTES - Agreed on the 26th of June 2024

Location: Web conference

Attendees:

- Working Group Members:
  - Mette Herskin
  - Maria Diez-Leon
  - Sandra Edwards
  - Angela Schwarzer

- Hearing Experts[1]:
  - Per Jensen
  - Stanisław Łapiński
  - Jens Malmkvist

- European Commission representatives:
  - Ana Maria Popa

- EFSA:
  - Marika Vitali
  - Neil Joseph Tirchett
  - Eleonora Cattaneo
  - Aitana Lopez

- Others:
  - Not Applicable

I. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants. Apologies were received by Bo Algers for not attending the meeting.

II. Adoption of agenda

No additional points were added to the agenda.

III. Declarations of Interest of Working Groups members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[2] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[3], EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening

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[2] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/policy_independence.pdf
[3] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/competing_interest_management_17.pdf

process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

IV. Agreement of the minutes of the 3rd Working Group meeting held on 27th May 2024, via web-conference

The minutes of the 3rd Working Group meeting were agreed by written procedure on the 27th of May 2024.

V. Scientific topic(s) for discussion

a. Discussion on housing scenarios and welfare consequences (EFSA-Q-2023-00869 and EFSA-Q-2024-00126 item 5 in the agenda)

The experts continued the discussion from the previous meeting in relation to the exercise for the selection of highly relevant welfare consequences specifically for the mink species in reply of ToR2a of the mandate.

The discussion was concentrated on the management practices linked to mink farming.

The experts agreed on the scenarios to be used in the exercise for the selection of the welfare consequences in relation to housing systems, animal categories and management practices. Additionally, the experts proceeded with discussing the specie-specificities of the 33 welfare consequences included in EFSA guidance 2022[4].

Further EFSA staff explained how the exercise will be carried out and the working group agreed that details about this will be provided via email to the experts.

b. Discussion on the welfare assessment protocol for mink (EFSA-Q-2023-00869 and EFSA-Q-2024-00126 - item 6 in the agenda)

The experts discussed what potential measures from the Mink Welfur protocol can be utilised for the purpose of this mandate. The experts shared their insights and comments on preliminary evidence. The working group followed by identifying new tasks to be carried out in support of the development of the mandate, that will be addressed in the next meetings.

VI. Any Other Business

a. Presentation on "Dealing with external requests" (item 2.1 in the agenda)

EFSA staff presented the EFSA Media Guidelines for Experts which should be followed by working group members in cases where they are contacted by media or in general, for any requests related to EFSA's ongoing work on the mandate.

b. AHAW Plenary Feedback & roadmap through adoption (item 4 in the agenda)

The chair communicated that there was positive feedback on the presentation of Tollgate 1, and it was approved during the BOHAW - AHAW 157th Panel Plenary held on the 21st and 22nd May 2024.

EFSA staff presented the current state of play within this mandate, showing the roadmap and milestones towards the publication of the scientific outputs by the AHAW Panel, as well

[4] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/7403

intermediate deadline necessary for the development of the mandate.

c. Task distribution (item 8 in the agenda)

The full list of tasks will be assigned by email to the experts, to be completed according to the respective deadline.

VII. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 15th July 2024, via web conference.

SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

3rd Working Group meeting on the welfare of animals kept for fur production

15th May 2024
11:00 – 16:00
MINUTES - Agreed on the 27th of May 2024

Location: Web conference

Attendees:

- Working Group Members:
  - Mette Herskin
  - Maria Diez-Leon
  - Sandra Edwards
  - Angela Schwarzer

- Hearing Experts[1]:
  - Bo Algers
  - Per Jensen
  - Stanisław Łapiński
  - Jens Malmkvist

- European Commission representatives:
  - Not applicable

- EFSA:
  - Marika Vitali
  - Michaela Hempen
  - Neil Joseph Tirchett
  - Roxane Delacourt
  - Eleonora Cattaneo

- Others:
  - Not Applicable

I. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

II. Adoption of agenda

No additional points were added to the agenda.

III. Declarations of Interest of Working Groups members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[2] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[3], EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest

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[2] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/policy_independence.pdf
[3] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/competing_interest_management_17.pdf

related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

IV. Agreement of the minutes of the 2nd Working Group meeting held on 11th April 2024, via web-conference

The minutes of the 2nd Working Group meeting were agreed by written procedure on the 23rd of April 2024.

V. Scientific topic(s) for discussion

a. Discussion on the development of ToR1a related to the mandate (EFSA-Q-2024-00126 item 3 in the agenda)

The experts discussed the first draft of the section on the biology of the species in relation to Artic fox (in response to ToR1a of the mandate). It was agreed that when no updates have been found since the SCAHAW report (2001)[4], reference should be made to that report, in line with the request of the mandate to provide an update of the information since then.

b. Discussion on water accessibility for mink housing systems (EFSA-Q-2023-00869 and EFSA-Q-2024-00126 item 4 in the agenda)

The working group started to discuss the topic of water access for mink for other purposes than drinking. The experts discussed the scientific literature retrieved and emphasized aspects that will require further discussion. The need to define behavioural needs and wants in the context of this opinion and of the most updated scientific knowledge was highlighted. The latter was found applicable to all the aspects of the welfare assessment. It was agreed to develop this part further and continue discussing it in the next meetings.

c. Discussion on welfare consequences (EFSA-Q-2023-00869 and EFSA-Q-2024-00126 item 5 in the agenda)

The WG continued the discussion on the set up of the exercise for the selection of highly relevant welfare consequences in reply of ToR2a of the mandate.

The terminology and features of the main housing systems for fur animals was discussed. It was further mentioned that if limited variation was found in the type of housing systems within the same species, more variability would potentially exist in the management practices. The experts shared their knowledge about that, considering also information submitted within the recently concluded calls for evidence[5,6,7,8]. The experts decided to identify a list of housing systems and management practices per each species to be discussed at the next meeting in the view to set up different scenarios for the exercise on the selection of the highly relevant welfare consequences.

[4] https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-12/sci-com_scah_out67_en.pdf
[5] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/call/call-evidence-scientific-opinion-welfare-animals-kept-fur-production-mink
[6] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/call/call-evidence-scientific-opinion-welfare-animals-kept-fur-production-foxes
[7] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/call/call-evidence-scientific-opinion-welfare-animals-kept-fur-production-racoon-dogs
[8] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/call/call-evidence-scientific-opinion-welfare-animals-kept-fur-production-chinchilla

The experts proceeded with discussing the list of 33 welfare consequences included in the EFSA guidance 2022[9] considering species specificities, in view of the welfare assessment. Specific welfare issues relevant to animals kept for fur production were also mentioned, and it was discussed under which welfare consequence these would belong. Experts agreed that an explanation of this process is needed and will be included in the scientific opinion.

d. Discussion on the Welfur protocols (EFSA-Q-2023-00869 and EFSA-Q-2024-00126 item 6 in the agenda)

The experts shared insights about the Welfur protocols for mink. The purpose of these protocols and their use was discussed, followed by an explanation of how the information available could be included the work within this mandate. The WG identified some aspects to be further discussed at next meeting and tasks have been assigned to the experts.

VI. Any Other Business

a. Discussion on Domestication and Production cycle (item 7 & 8 in the agenda)

The experts prepared and commented a preparatory text on domestication and production cycle before the meeting. It was agreed that the following discussions related to these topics will be addressed in more depth in the upcoming meetings.

b. Task distribution (item 9 in the agenda)

Tasks will be assigned by email to the experts to be completed by the next working group meeting.

VII. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 17th June 2024, via web conference.

[9] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/7403

SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

2nd Working Group meeting on the welfare of animals kept for fur production

11th April 2024
09:30 – 17:30
MINUTES - Agreed on the 23rd of April 2024

Location: Web conference

Attendees:

- Working Group Members:
  - Mette Herskin
  - Maria Diez-Leon
  - Sandra Edwards
  - Angela Schwarzer

- Hearing Experts[1]:
  - Bo Algers
  - Per Jensen
  - Stanisław Łapiński
  - Jens Malmkvist

- European Commission representatives:
  - Ana Maria Popa

- EFSA:
  - Marika Vitali
  - Michaela Hempen
  - Neil Joseph Tirchett

- Others:
  - Not Applicable

I. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

II. Adoption of agenda

An additional point was added to the agenda after opening the meeting: Short update on the ongoing call for evidence (point 3.1).

III. Declarations of Interest of Working Groups members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[2] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[3], EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening

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[2] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/policy_independence.pdf

[3] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/competing_interest_management_17.pdf

process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

IV. Scientific topic(s) for discussion

a. Presentations by experts on topics related to the mandate (EFSA-Q-2023-00869 and EFSA-Q-2024-00126 items 4 to 9 in the agenda)

The experts were tasked with delivering presentations on pertinent subjects within the framework of this mandate. Each presentation was followed by group discussions.

During the discussions, experts explored the topic of domestication and unanimously agreed that welfare assessments should prioritize the needs of animals, regardless of their level of domestication. However, further discussion will be necessary to determine the extent to which different stages of domestication could influence animals' responses to captive environments. Examples highlighting differences between wild and captive mink were presented to support these discussions.

Subsequently, the conversation shifted to an overview of carnivores bred for fur production, (i.e. mink, foxes, and raccoon dogs). The working group highlighted the need to retrieve more information on foxes and racoon dogs. Following this, examples of alternative housing systems for mink were presented, with a clarification that these systems are not currently implemented in commercial farms. The experts concurred on the importance of discussing the provision of water surface for mink, which will be further discussed once scientific data and evidence on the topic have been collected.

Furthermore, a presentation was delivered on chinchillas bred for fur production. The working group agreed that, also for chinchilla, the level of scientific knowledge is limited. The final presentation explored the potential utility of information gathered within the WelFur protocol. Experts noted that access to raw data could prove advantageous for assessments, however such data are not publicly available.

b. Protocol discussion (EFSA-Q-2023-00869 , item 10 in the agenda)

The draft protocol written for the purpose of this mandate was presented, discussed and explained and commented with the working group. Upon finalization, it is slated to be submitted to the AHAW panel for endorsement.

c. Discussion on production cycle, housing systems and welfare consequences (EFSA-Q-2023-00869 and EFSA-Q-2024-00126 items 11 to 13 in the agenda)

The methodology used to determine the welfare consequences, as outlined in the EFSA AHAW guidance 2022[4], was discussed. The working group planned the exercise by identifying potential scenarios for evaluation, considering various husbandry systems, farm practices, and animal categories across the five species. Further refinement of the exercise is scheduled for upcoming meetings.

V. Any Other Business

a. Call for evidence (item 3.1 in the agenda)

[4] https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/7403

The experts were briefed on the latest status of submissions made to the four calls for evidence and final deadline.

b. Task distribution (item 14 in the agenda)

Task were identified and assigned to be completed by the next working group meeting.

VI. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 15th May 2024, via web conference.

SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

1st Working Group meeting on the welfare of animals kept for fur production

26th March 2024
14:00-18:00
MINUTES - Agreed on the 8th of April 2024

Location: Web conference

Attendees:

- Working Group Members:
  - Mette Herskin
  - Maria Diez-Leon
  - Sandra Edwards
  - Angela Schwarzer

- Hearing Experts[1]:
  - Bo Algers
  - Per Jensen
  - Stanisław Łapiński
  - Jens Malmkvist

- European Commission representatives:
  - Ana Maria Popa

- EFSA:
  - Marika Vitali
  - Michaela Hempen
  - Neil Joseph Tirchett
  - Yves Van Der Stede

- Others:
  - Not Applicable

I. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

II. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

III. Declarations of Interest of Working Groups members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence[2] and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management[3], EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Working Group members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening

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[2] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/policy_independence.pdf

[3] http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/competing_interest_management_17.pdf

process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

IV. Scientific topic(s) for discussion

a. Presentation of the mandate (EFSA-Q-2023-00869 and EFSA-Q-2024-00126).

The mandate assigned by the EC on the protection of animals kept for fur production was explained to the experts. The background, terms of reference were described and discussed. The experts were also informed about the outcome of the stakeholders' meeting organised in Brussels on 22nd January 2024. Reference was also made to the open four calls of evidence on mink, foxes, raccoon dogs and chinchilla.

b. Draft opinion on Scientific opinion and Technical assistance concerning the welfare of animals kept for fur production (EFSA-Q-2023-00869 and EFSA-Q-2024-00126).

The WG discussed the potential structure of the scientific opinion and technical report, where it was agreed that the five species being described in this mandate should be maintained and assessed separately. This discussion was followed by discussing the animal categories. The housing systems currently in use for animals kept for fur production were also discussed and should be further addressed in next meetings.

c. Task distribution and upcoming WG meetings planning.

Specific tasks were assigned among the WG members and HEs, to be completed for the next WG meeting. The potential schedule for the upcoming WG meetings was also discussed.

V. Any Other Business

- **Introduction to the Working Group (item 4 in the agenda)**

All the attendees including the WG members, Hearing Experts, EFSA staff and representative from the EC were introduced themselves and their scientific background in relation to the mandate on the welfare of fur animals.

- **EFSA corporate presentation & introduction to EFSA's risk assessment in Animal Welfare (items 5 to 7 in the agenda)**

A presentation on the technicalities of how EFSA operates and the roles of the experts within a working group was explained. An overview of the methodology and the previous and current F2F mandates which EFSA is working on was given.

VI. Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 11th April 2024, via web conference.