94th MEETING OF THE EFSA ADVISORY FORUM

04 December 2024: 9:00-17:30
05 December 2024: 9:00-12:30
MINUTES

EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY

Location: Budapest, Hungary

Members	Attendance
Austria (AT)	Johann Steinwider
Belgium (BE)	Fabien Bolle
Belgium (BE)	Axel Mauroy
Bulgaria (BG)	Donka Popova
Croatia (HR)	Andrea Gross - Bošković
Cyprus (CY)	Rebecca Kokkinofta
Cyprus (CY)	Charitini Frenaritou
Czech Republic (CZ)	Jitka Gotzova
Denmark (DK)	Dorte Lau Baggesen
Estonia (EE)	Mari Reinik
Finland (FI)	Leena Räsänen
France (FR)	Matthieu Schuler
France (FR)	Salma Elreedy
Germany (DE)	Andreas Hensel
Germany (DE)	Matthias Greiner
Greece (EL)	Zoi Mousia
Hungary (HU)	Ákos Bernard Józwiak
Iceland (IS)	Katrin Gudjonsdottir
Ireland (IE)	Wayne Anderson
Italy (IT)	Alessandra Perella
Latvia (LV)	Vadims Bartkevics
Lithuania (LT)	Jurgita Bakaseniene
Luxembourg (LU)	Caroline Merten
Malta (MT)	Mark Cassar
Netherlands (NL)	Dick Sijm
Norway (NO)	Tore Skeidsvoll Tollersrud
Norway (NO)	Danika Grahek-Ogden
Poland (PL)	Jacek Postupolski
Portugal (PT)	Luis Lourenço
Romania (RO)	Monica Mariana Neagu
Slovak Republic (SK)	Kristína Lépesová
Slovenia (SI)	Urška Blaznik
Spain (ES)	Ana López-Santacruz Serraller
Sweden (SE)	Helena Brunnkvist

Observers	Attendance

Albania (AL)	Amarilda Keli
Bosnia and Herzegovina (BA)	Dzemil Hajric
Kosovo*	apologies
Montenegro (ME)	Vladimir Djakovic
Montenegro (ME)	Mirjana Lekic
Republic of North Macedonia (MK)	Oliver Milanov
Republic of North Macedonia (MK)	Jasmin Hadji Vasilev
Serbia (SR)	Tamara Boskovic
Switzerland (CH)	Katharina Stärk
Türkiye (TR)	Ersin Dilber
European Commission (Observer)	Anastasia Alvizou
EFSA Representatives	
Barbara Gallani (Co-Chair)	Aikaterini Vlachou (Speaker)
Nick Kriz (Co-Chair)	Giuseppe Stancanelli (Speaker)
Guilhem de Seze (Co-Chair)	Alessandro Coppede (Speaker)
Carlos Das Neves (Co-Chair)	Ana Afonso (Speaker)
Sérgio Potier Rodeia (Team Leader, Community Management)	Melanie Camilleri (Speaker)
Maria Azevedo Mendes (Advisory Forum Secretariat)	Bruno Dujardin (Speaker)
Andrea Laroni (Advisory Forum Secretariat)	Gloria Lopez-Galvez (Speaker)
Rita Melo Aguiar (Advisory Forum Secretariat)	Montserrat Anguita (Speaker)
Virginia Spurio Salvi (CORSER)	Zainab Al Harraq (Speaker)
Claudia Heppner (CSO)	
External speakers	
Mart Kinkar (AFB)	Jasper Engel (WUR)
Katleen De Brouwere (VITO)	Jacob Van Klaveren (RIVM)
Amélie Crepet (ANSES)	Carolina Vogs (SLU)
Yann Le Bodo (ANSES)	Géraldine Carne (ANSES)
Philip Marx-Stölting (BfR)	Márton Nobilis

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Item 1: Opening and welcome address

Barbara Gallani opened the 94th meeting of the Advisory Forum (AF) as the Chair by welcoming the participants of the AF present in person in Budapest and online. Apologies were noted from Kosovo and from EFSA's Executive Director, Bernard Url, who was in Brussels. The chair noted the appointment of the new European Commission and its priorities for its mandate. She then introduced Mr. Martin Nobilis, Secretary of State for the Food Economy and Agricultural Vocational Training.

Item 2: Welcome address from the Secretary of State from the Ministry of Agriculture

Martin Nobilis, Secretary of State for the Food Economy and Agricultural Vocational Training at the Ministry of Agriculture welcomed participants to the 94th EFSA AF on behalf of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU. He acknowledged the AF role in protecting European citizens' health and food safety, highlighting Hungary's commitment through the work of the National Food Chain Safety Office and the Ministry of Agriculture. Mr. Nobilis detailed Hungary's contributions to EFSA, including data collection, risk assessments, and initiatives like "Safe to Eat" and "Plant Health for Life" campaigns. He reaffirmed Hungary's dedication to supporting EFSA's mission for a safer, more sustainable food system and concluded by wishing the participants a fruitful meeting.

Item 3: Adoption of the agenda

The Chair provided an overview of the meeting agenda and invited any additional topics to be raised for inclusion in the agenda. An update on EFSA's external evaluation from DG SANTE was added to the agenda. The chair informed the plenary that the final **minutes of the 93rd Advisory Forum** meeting were published on EFSA website on 15 November.

Item 4: Update on the Advisory Group on Data

Akos Józwiak (Hungary) provided an update on the Advisory Group on Data (AGoD), focusing on recent developments, such as the EFSA Artificial Intelligence (AI) taskforce, EC and MS data initiatives, the 2024-27 roadmap under development, the work of the subgroups, the start of the People and Capacity Subgroup, the related amendment of the terms of reference and the success of the October symposium in Parma, which supported awareness and networking for AI in food safety. AI will now be a standing agenda item, with plans to involve external experts and agencies like EMA and ECHA. Akos Józwiak encouraged smaller nations and institutions to adopt AI, emphasizing its opportunities with minimal investment. The Netherlands expressed strong support for AI initiatives, emphasising the importance of proactive engagement to remain globally competitive. The plenary praised the symposium's success, suggesting a mix of frequent smaller events and an annual large-scale event to keep pace with the rapidly evolving AI landscape.

Item 5: Partnerships

5.1. Exploring EFSA's Funding plans for 2025/26

Aikaterini Vlachou (EFSA), presented on an online event scheduled for December 6th, covering EFSA's funding plans for 2025/26, including upcoming calls for grants and procurement, and thematic areas such as plant health, animal welfare, and food consumption. Registration would close on December 4th at 12:00 CET. The event aimed to engage new participants and provide details on budget allocations, although some information may change.

During the discussion, Denmark, France, and Luxembourg emphasized the importance of EFSA's long-term funding plans and the need for detailed budget information. Denmark appreciated the long-term visibility the event would provide, for effective planning and engagement. France highlighted the benefits of this initiative for national-level planning and coordination, encouraging national participation in EFSA's activities. Luxembourg also noted the importance of detailed budget estimates for national-level planning, and for securing necessary budgets. EFSA reported on the success of last year's event, noting that it attracted 400 registrants, and encouraged increased participation.

5.2. Overview of EFSA grants on research to reduce RA uncertainties in Plant Health

Giuseppe Stancanelli (EFSA) presented on grants aimed at reducing uncertainty in risk assessment for plant health, emphasizing the importance of addressing knowledge gaps, particularly for exotic pests threatening European agriculture and forestry. He highlighted successful past projects, such as research on Xylella fastidiosa and citrus black spot, to illustrate the value of targeted research in understanding pest biology, climatic requirements, and potential impacts. Giuseppe announced the upcoming launch of two grant opportunities focused on specific pests: an African moth affecting tomatoes and aubergines, and the false codling moth, which poses risks to citrus and other crops. These grants are designed to collect crucial data for improving risk assessments and preparing for potential pest invasions.

During the discussion, France shared insights on their national mandates for plant health and highlighted the benefits of involvement in EFSA’s network, which allows teams to respond swiftly to local threats. He underscored the importance of international collaboration and proactive participation in EFSA initiatives to enhance preparedness and resilience.

Giuseppe concluded the discussion by stressing the necessity of evidence-based and open-access risk assessments, which rely heavily on scientific research often lacking for exotic pests. He emphasized the need to identify uncertainties to prioritize research efforts, both for EFSA and broader European initiatives. EFSA made a call for Member States and Art. 36 organizations to engage in the upcoming grants to strengthen Europe’s preparedness and prevent the establishment of invasive plant pests.

Action point 2: AF members to encourage participation of art. 36 organisations to grants in the area of plant health.

Item 6: Fostering Cooperation through Capacity Building

6.1 Session on staff exchange: promoting an innovative approach for enhanced collaboration

Guilhem de Sèze (EFSA) opened the session on Staff exchange by emphasizing the importance of cooperation in data, methodology, and people to strengthen EFSA’s mission. He highlighted the need to enhance the capacity and capability of staff and introduced existing programs, such as the Seconded National Expert (SNE) scheme and guest scientist exchanges. Guilhem posed questions on improving these programs to foster collaboration and build capacity, setting the stage for a discussion on exchanging experiences and learning from each other.

Alessandro Coppede (EFSA) introduced a new proposed scheme aimed at enhancing the SNE program. The scheme focuses on improving cooperation between EFSA and countries by addressing implementation challenges such as bureaucracy, financial constraints, and staffing gaps, and by co-designing the content of the individual SNEs to ensure mutually beneficial exchanges that develop talent, fill competency gaps, and build strategic partnerships. Coppede emphasized the need for clear objectives, shorter durations, and better promotion of the program.

Ana Afonso (EFSA) shared a positive experience of an exchange via mission with Austria, highlighting the importance of specific objectives and flexibility. The exchange improved cooperation and understanding of methodologies between EFSA and the Austrian agency.

Mart Kinka, a former SNE from Estonia, described his experience in EFSA's plant health team, focusing on relevant topics like priority pest projects and surveillance toolkits. He emphasized the personal and professional benefits, including enhanced expertise and valuable contacts.

Melanie Camilleri, a seconded national expert (SNE) from Malta, shared her experience working in EFSA's Plant Health unit, highlighting the benefits of the new approach to the SNE scheme. Her work focused on addressing specific plant health crises relevant to Malta, such as the tomato brown rugose fruit virus and Xylella fastidiosa. By bringing back her hands on experience gained in EFSA through organizing workshops and training sessions in Malta, she improved public awareness, stakeholder relationships, and the overall capacity of Malta's National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO) to handle plant health issues. Melanie emphasized the importance of sharing EFSA's methodologies and tools with her home organization, which enhanced the NPPO's efficiency and effectiveness. Her experience demonstrates how the new approach to the SNE scheme fosters mutual benefits, with EFSA gaining high-level expertise and the sending organization receiving valuable knowledge and training tailored to their specific needs.

Following the presentations, Luxembourg raised concerns about a possible brain drain and whether seconded experts return to their home organizations. The Netherlands suggested shorter secondments with partial objectives to maintain engagement with home organizations, while Ireland proposed staff exchange programs to support smaller organizations struggling to manage without key staff. Switzerland inquired about the eligibility of non-EU countries for the SNE program. On the latter, the Executive Director Decision states that "…except where the Executive Director grants a derogation, an SNE must be a national of an EU or EFTA Member State or a country with which the Council has decided to open accession negotiations, and which has concluded a specific agreement with EFSA on staff secondments.". Malta expressed gratitude for the program's career development benefits, despite the risk that some individuals may choose to further their careers in EFSA rather than return to their home organizations.

Guilhem emphasized the need to ensure mutual benefits and clear objectives for secondments, noting that the SNE program might not fit all needs and that alternative schemes should be explored. Barbara acknowledged administrative challenges and confirmed that the SNE program requires full-time commitment to EFSA but highlighted the potential for more flexible arrangements. Alessandro Coppede suggested co-designing secondments with MS to align with national priorities and ensure mutual benefits.

The discussion concluded with unanimous agreement on the need for shorter-term, flexible exchanges tailored to the specific needs of Member States. Nik Kriz (EFSA) highlighted the critical importance of setting clear objectives, ensuring mutual benefits, and leveraging collaboration opportunities to strengthen partnerships. Moving forward, EFSA plans to launch a new call for second national experts (SNEs) in January, encouraging Member States to actively promote these opportunities within their national public administrations. Additionally, EFSA will consider reaching out to Member States through detailed communications to specify profiles and areas of focus for secondments, ensuring well-defined objectives that deliver mutual value. EFSA will also explore alternative initiatives, such as guest scientist programs, to enable shorter-term collaborations that address the unique needs of smaller organizations while maintaining continuous engagement with national tasks.

Action Point 3: AF members to promote through their national public administrations the new Call for Seconded National Experts (SNEs) to be launched in January 2025.

6.2 The European Food Risk Assessment (EU-FORA) Fellowship Programme

Barbara Gallani (EFSA) provided an overview of the current state of the EU-FORA Fellowship Programme, as well as of the recent updates and planned initiatives. The programme continues to be a vital capacity-building tool, offering fellows and host organizations valuable training opportunities. The improvements implemented after the review of the Programme back in 2021, including application in consortium, shorter placements and on-site training, have proved to meet their objectives.

The call for the 2025/2026 cycle was launched at the end of November, with applications due by March 2025. The Call includes a pilot aimed at boosting the EU-FORA potential on partnerships and capacity building. For the former, EFSA has included a list of specific topics for the applicants to consider, focusing on EFSA's preparedness needs, to align the programme with current scientific priorities and gaps. These topics are not mandatory but serve as thought starters for fellows and hosting organizations. On the other hand, for capacity building, fellows will be required to create as deliverable, narrated presentations on the work performed, aimed at increasing the visibility and impact of their contributions.

Estonia suggested considering shorter training periods to make the programme more feasible for organizations with limited human resources. Ireland highlighted the difficulty in measuring the direct value of the programme to Member States but acknowledged its benefits for fellows and academic institutions.

Barbara emphasized the importance of the programme for building capacity in food safety risk assessment across Europe. She encouraged Member States to continue supporting and participating in the programme, noting that funding is secured for the foreseeable future.

EFSA will continue to collect feedback from participants and stakeholders to review and refine the programme. This ongoing evaluation aims to ensure the fellowship effectively addresses the needs of both the fellows and Member States while maintaining its relevance

Action point 4: AF members to disseminate through their national networks the Call and the information on the EU-FORA Fellowship Programme and encourage their Art. 36 organisations to apply, by March 2025.

Item 7: Preparedness for Risk Assessment needs

7.1 Data centered food safety research activities of the Univ. of Vet. Med. Budapest: the HE-FARM & HOLiFOOD projects

Akos Jozwiak (Hungary) presented on data-driven food safety research at the University of Veterinary Medicine Budapest, highlighting the HE-FARM and HOLiFOOD projects. These initiatives leverage advanced technologies and collaboration to address food safety challenges and build resilient, sustainable food systems.

HE-FARM develops risk-based methodologies for disinfection and biosecurity in animal farms, incorporating engineering and physics to monitor disease transmission. Findings highlight nano-aerosols as key contributors to disease spread, emphasizing the need for granular data and further research.

HOLiFOOD adopts a holistic risk assessment approach, addressing health, environmental, and economic impacts. It identifies emerging risks, develops early warning systems, and conducts multi-dimensional risk assessments in cereals, lentils, and poultry supply chains using advanced analytical methods.

During the discussion, representatives from various countries shared their perspectives and experiences. The Netherlands expressed strong interest in the methodologies and their potential to optimize risk reduction efforts, emphasizing the importance of balancing tasks and risks to contribute effectively to reducing the most significant risks. Ireland highlighted the importance of balancing health risks with sustainable systems, noting that future choices will require robust mechanisms to make informed decisions. Denmark shared their experience with a research group focused on risk-benefit assessment, which has evolved to include environmental and economic impacts. They noted an increasing demand from authorities for comprehensive assessments that balance risks and benefits. France emphasized the need to understand the limitations of methodologies used when providing risk managers with options. France emphasized the importance of understanding the limitations of methodologies used when providing risk managers with options. It was highlighted the need to consider the quality and source of data, particularly economic data provided by socio-economic stakeholders, who may have their own interests. This contrasts with data such as toxicological or epidemiological data, which typically come from peer-reviewed publications.
The discussion underscored the importance of integrating advanced data analytics and cross-disciplinary collaboration to enhance food safety standards. Participants recognized the need for comprehensive risk assessments that consider health, environmental, and economic impacts. There was a consensus on the necessity of generating more granular data and the potential for collaboration between the University of Veterinary Medicine Budapest and other institutions to expand the impact of these projects. The meeting concluded with a call for continued investment in basic scientific research and the development of robust methodologies to support holistic risk assessments.

7.2 Session on Aggregated Exposure Assessment

The Co-chair, Carlos das Neves, opened the session on aggregated exposure assessment by emphasizing the importance of the topic and its relevance to various regulatory frameworks. He highlighted the need for a collaborative approach involving multiple stakeholders, including EFSA, other EU agencies and national agencies, to address the complexities of aggregated exposure. Carlos mentioned that the goal of the session was to explore the current state of aggregated exposure assessment, share insights from ongoing projects like the "European Partnership for the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals"(PARC), and discuss potential frameworks for future work. He also stressed the importance of integrating data from different sources and the need for continuous improvement in methodologies to ensure effective risk management.

Bruno Dujardin (EFSA) set the scene of the session on "Aggregated Exposure" by emphasizing the critical importance of understanding how different sources and routes contribute to overall human exposure to chemicals. He highlighted the complexities of assessing these combined exposures and underscored the need for innovative tools and methods. Bruno framed the day's discussions by stressing collaboration among partners and the ongoing pursuit of effective strategies to protect public health.

Following this introduction, Jacob van Klaveren (Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment) introduced the session. He highlighted the collaborative spirit among PARC partners and underscored the development of comprehensive tools capable of capturing the intricacies of multiple exposure routes and sources use innovative approaches. Katleen De Brouwere (Flemish Institute for Technological Research) then introduced the PARC project on aggregate exposure assessment. In PARC 198 partners from 28 counties and 3 EU agencies (EFSA, ECHA, EEA) are working together to provide innovative tools and new concepts for the next generation of chemical risk assessment ensuring relevance to regulatory science with a budget of 400 M€. PARC task 6.2 is focussed on integrated approaches for exposure and risk assessment and PARC task 8.3 on integrative models, advanced modelling techniques needed for a correct interpretation of human biomonitoring results, health impact and kinetic models to be linked to the sources of exposure by

providing a "digital ecosystem" of tools for chemical risk assessment. She illustrated her points with real-world case studies, showing how these methods improve our understanding of human exposure and how Food Safety Authorities may strengthen their effort to ensure safe food based on PARC innovation. Building on these insights, Amélie Crepet (ANSES - French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety) focused on mixture risk assessment using human biomonitoring data. In PARC, partners from 20 Member States organised their human biomonitoring studies in a harmonised way. They are performing mixture risk assessment based on their HBM data using the MCRA software. Two case studies are addressing the overall or aggregated exposure to a mixture of pesticides affecting the nervous system and 3 cases studies are addressing the total or aggregated exposure related to contaminants. One case study is focused on mixture of PFAS affecting the immune system, another is about mixtures of contaminants associated with IQ loss, and a third case study on a mixture of heavy metals affecting the kidney. PBPK models are needed for the link between HBM observation and the sources of exposure. Once the exposure of a mixture is of concern the PARC project on aggregated exposure might detail risk drivers or the main source of exposure. For that, a strategy to model the contaminant transfer from their emission sources to the exposure sources in contact with the human body as such as the aggregation of the sources by route (ingestion, inhalation, dermal contact) was proposed. It comprises the inventory and organization of the data (chemical in the environment, food, consumer behaviours, exposure factors, etc), the exposure models for general and occupational population and their connection and the application of aggregate models to case studies. Jasper Engel (Wageningen University & Research) presented the Monte Carlo Risk Assessment (MCRA) software as key-tool for the risk assessment using human biomonitoring data in PARC. The MCRA tool is already in use by EFSA and Member States for dietary cumulative risk assessment and accepted by the European Commission. It is secure by design according to the GDPR Regulation requirements. Also, the integration with PBPK models and models for health impact assessment is well-underway and will be used in the next round of PARC projects in an integrative manner. Jacob van Klaveren concluded PARC´s intervention explaining the ongoing dialogue between PARC and the European Commission. He highlighted how the results of these approaches and mixture risk assessment support risk managers with the European Commission and the Member States in developing effective risk mitigation strategies. The PARC case studies are being discussed with DG SANTE, DG ENV and DG GROW as well as with the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA).

France raised a question on the role played by HBM Guidance values. There are clear and shared habits on how to use TDI, which are reference values for external exposures. The interest of HBM, is to take into account all exposures. But there is a need to express a common understanding of the meaning / consequences of measurements beyond or above HBM GV, both at individual and populational level. In France, there is the example of lead BM values, which are set up to trigger graded actions for public health, this is not the case for most contaminants.

In the next set of presentations, the session focussed on national experiences with aggregated exposure assessment, illustrated through case studies. Carolina Vogs (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences) introduced Sweden's focus on PFAS contamination and its implications for public health, emphasizing the need to examine PFAS levels in drinking water and their contributions to overall human exposure. The presentation focused on how to use physiologically based toxicokinetic models to estimate PFAS from drinking water contribution in humans exposed to multiple sources. She concluded by summarizing the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of this approach. Geraldine Carne and Yann Le Bodo (ANSES - French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety) then explored France's elevated cadmium levels, outlining a methodological approach combining aggregate exposure assessment with socio-economic analysis to prioritize and implement measures aimed at reducing cadmium exposure. Philip Marx-Stölting (German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment) presented Germany's perspective, detailing the Apple study's use of biomonitoring and environmental sampling to measure occupational pesticide exposure and explaining how the Metapath database aids in determining the origins of detected metabolites.

During the discussion and comments that followed, the EC underscored the importance of aggregated exposure in guiding targeted risk management and proposed organizing a scientific colloquium on cumulative risk assessment for pesticides. Luxembourg highlighted the necessity of disseminating aggregated exposure initiatives more effectively at the national level, suggesting broader events to heighten awareness among risk managers. The Netherlands stressed the practical application of aggregated exposure data and called for more comprehensive consumer product databases across the EU. On cadmium and lead levels, the Netherlands informed on the recent studies by RIVM *Risk assessment of the mixture of cadmium and lead for people over fifty (openrepository.com)* and *Biomonitoring of cadmium and lead in adults (openrepository.com)*. Furthermore, the Netherlands inquired about the future progress of PARC, noting its existence for several years, and inquired about what can be expected in terms of model integration, specifically regarding the availability of information on the number of chemicals and aggregated exposures in the coming years. Denmark expressed its commitment to ongoing collaboration and pledged to continue these discussions at the national level.

The key takeaways from the session reinforced the essential role of aggregated exposure in achieving robust risk assessments and effective risk management. Participants agreed that closer collaboration among MS, EFSA, other EU agencies and PARC is vital for its success, and they recognized the growing need for comprehensive consumer product databases and a better communication of findings at the national level. Continuous advancements in data collection and methodologies remain crucial for addressing challenges and refining the accuracy of aggregated exposure assessments.

Moving forward, the focus will remain on developing a comprehensive EU framework for aggregated exposure assessment that unites expertise and resources from multiple sources, ensuring a more complete understanding of chemical exposures and fostering effective management strategies across the EU. PARC will continue to work on aggregated exposure, mixture risk assessment using human biomonitoring data and model integration until 2029. Training will be given, and PARC training might also be offered to the Food Safety Authorities of the Member States.

Item 8: Focal Point Operational Framework 2023-2027

Sergio Potier Rodeia (EFSA) presented updates on the FP operational framework focusing on the tailor-made activities and recently kicked-off health check on it. He noted that during the previous FP meeting (13-14 November 2024), FP were asked if the current FP framework has increased networking among organisations and experts. All respondents replied positively indicating benefits brought by the framework. Nevertheless, there are still complexities to be addressed, e.g., complexity of the system, workload, subcontracting process. Sergio brought for attention the draft work plan indicating timeline for the main milestones to support the preparation for 2025. The last part of the presentation was dedicated to health check to inform AF on the aim of this exercise that will last until the end of current framework cycle in 2027 and to indicate envisaged work together with MS.

MS provided feedback and raised several key points. The Netherlands commended the progress, while raising concerns about the focus on national subcontracting practices and rules, suggesting that the strong rules imposed by the EU should also be considered in the process and confirming their willingness to contribute to discussions. Denmark praised the advancements and inquired about extending direct access to information on tailor-made activities beyond AF and FP members to support project design and alignment. Ireland recognized the improvements in the framework and sought clarity on the inclusion of non-Art. 36 organizations, particularly regarding their eligibility for subcontracting. France emphasized the pivotal role of FP in scientific collaboration and supported the early initiation of the FP health check process, noting the importance of having sufficient time at the end of the process, once the reflection is finished, to allow for adjustments

before final decision-making on the approach adopted. This recommendation is based on lessons learned from the preparation of the previous cycle (the current FP framework).

Sergio addressed the complexities of subcontracting and regulatory boundaries, especially when involving Art. 36 organisations across borders. He noted that there continues discussion to clarify applicable rules and to lean process for the future. Sergio also discussed access to the FP microsite, suggesting that Art. 36 organizations could potentially gain access if necessary technical and licensing conditions are meet. Regarding involvement of organisations beyond the Art. 36 organisation list, it was clarified that certain benefits remain exclusive to Art. 36 organizations, meanwhile for example events and actions like conferences stemming from implementation of the TMA are open to experts from various organisations.

EFSA highlighted on the structural and legal constraints around current framework partnership agreement and accountability of FP organisations towards subcontracted activities. EFSA reminded participants of key deadlines for signatures of specific agreements and for the proposal submission window. EFSA urged them to seek clarifications if needed and cooperate among each other on timely manner to ensure smooth process.

EFSA concluded the discussion by expressing gratitude for the ongoing efforts of the FP and acknowledging the contributions of MS and the flexibility of the FP in onboarding the current framework. It emphasised the importance of early preparation for the next framework to avoid past delays and stressed a co-creation approach with MS to enhance efficiency and adaptability.

8. 2 EU Library on Food/Feed Guidance documents - Focal Point support

Gloria López-Gálvez (GLG; EFSA) presented the background of the 'EU Library of Food and Feed Guidance Documents' (GD) —aimed at organising knowledge, identifying gaps, and harmonizing GD— which will incorporate those produced at MS national level. The initiative will strive first to build a repository, which will evolve to a user-friendly (possibly with web-access) Library. EFSA proposed to involve Focal Points (FP) to validate the first list (already generated with the data provided by AF following the survey launched in April'24), to expand the list with some metadata and to keep the list/repository duly updated.

Participants expressed strong support for the initiative. France highlighted the importance of GD for its scientific work, asked for the metadata to be added and proposed the inclusion of tools and models in the Library, for example, where relevant, to provide a link to RAKIP. The next step, once the repository is available, is to look at what might be missing and thereby identify what we should work on. Ireland suggested the translation to EN of (at least) the summary of the documents (eg. with AI). Luxembourg recommended including consultation with Art. 36 organisations for a comprehensive data collection concerning GD and expressed interest in identifying commonalities/divergencies across GD. The Netherlands outlined the importance of this project for the One Substance One Assessment and the alignment of methodologies; NL proposed to search another name for the library to include all EFSA's domains. The European Commission emphasised the importance of setting the scope of the Library and possibly to include GD of other Agencies.

EFSA addressed these points by confirming the repository would include all EFSA scientific areas and that a 'more inclusive' name for the Library should be found. The type of documents to include in the Library will mirror the GD Repository of EFSA. It has been already envisaged a translation to EN of GD summaries. GLG will contact FP and request involvement of Art. 36 organizations in the GD collection.

Action Point 5.1: EFSA to approach the FP for their support:(i) to revise the list of national guidance documents provided in April-May 2024 to verify and validate it, (ii) to add some basic metadata to each of the GD listed and to (iii) maintain/updating the GD repository once it is created.

Action Point 5.2: Countries that did not contribute to the initial list, to provide inputs, where relevant.

Item 9: Risk Assessment activities

9.1 DANMAP report 2023 - AMR

Dorte Lau Baggesen (Denmark) presented the 2023 DANMAP report, highlighting its role since 1995 in monitoring antimicrobial use (AMU) and resistance (AMR) across humans, animals, and food. The report noted an increase in AMU, particularly in pig production, due to the zinc oxide ban for weaner pigs causing more diarrhea. Despite this, positive trends include reduced problematic resistance patterns and no carbapenemase-producing E. coli detected in Denmark. During the discussion, future plans to expand surveillance to environmental factors and ongoing research into AMR transfer between humans and animals were mentioned, along with strategies to reduce AMR in cattle. EFSA raised concerns about the rise in AMU in pigs. Denmark replied that it was due to the zinc oxide ban and increased weaner production for export. The DANMAP program remains essential for guiding AMR prevention and policymaking.

9.2 EFET Conference on "Risk Assessment and Ranking of Risks in European Food Safety Systems"

Zoi Mousia (Greece) presented the EFET Conference held in Athens on November 28th, organized by the Greek FP The Hellenic Food Authority -EFET and funded by EFSA. The conference aimed to share knowledge and methodologies on risk assessment and risk ranking, featuring 12 presentations from Greece, EFSA, and five other MS. The event was attended by high-level officials, including the Greek Minister of Rural Development and Food, and attracted significant international participation. Presentations and recordings of the event will be made available on the EFET website, with some modifications to unpublished data.

Ireland inquired whether a report would be prepared for the event. It was confirmed that a report would be produced, and the recordings and presentations would be accessible on the EFET website.

9.3 Report on the Assessment and handling of dietary supplements seminar

Dorte Lau Baggesen (Denmark) reported on the seminar on dietary supplements, that highlighted the need for harmonisation in regulations and communication across European countries. Participants noted that differing national regulations often lead to confusion and challenges in the industry, with some countries being perceived as more stringent than others. Harmonisation would strengthen communication and ensure a consistent approach to risk assessment and management, ultimately benefiting both the industry and consumers. The Danish authorities expressed a strong interest in supporting efforts towards greater harmonisation in this field.

9.4 RA plans; Public consultations; events; updates

Guilhem de Sèze (EFSA) presented the regular risk assessment (RA) update covering ongoing public consultations, a RA activity of Norway on PFAS, several draft opinions on feed additives, novel foods, and pesticide MRLs. He also outlined upcoming events, including webinars on styrene and microorganisms, and a scientific colloquium on indirect effects of pesticides in environmental

risk assessment scheduled for June 2025. The importance of these events for collaboration and encouraged MS to participate and engage with EFSA's activities was emphasised.

The Netherlands raised a question about making the risk assessment plans database accessible to Art. 36 organizations. It was acknowledged that there had been previous discussions about this. However, the transition to a new platform, Salesforce, is currently underway, which involves associated costs. The transition is expected to be completed within the next three months, followed by testing. The ambition is to possibly widen current access rights once the transition is complete, with a prior update and discussion to be carried out in an upcoming Advisory Forum meeting.

France inquired about the re-evaluation of styrene as an extraction solvent, and it was confirmed that discussions are ongoing between the European Commission and EFSA, with a mandate expected soon.

Action Point 6: EFSA to update the Advisory Forum at one of the next meetings on the progress of transitioning the MS RA Plans database to a new platform in Salesforce.

9.5 Update on the Guidance on Microorganisms

Montserrat Anguita (EFSA) presented the draft guidance on microorganisms used in the food chain, which was endorsed for public consultation by the EFSA Scientific Committee. The guidance focuses on the identification of microorganisms, the presence of genes or substances of concern, and the impact on the receiving environment. The public consultation is open until February 7, 2025, with an online event scheduled for December 17, 2024, to boost participation. France inquired whether the guidance addresses the detection of recombinant DNA in fermentation products, specifically regarding the limit of 10 nanograms per gram of DNA. Montserrat clarified that the current guidance maintains the existing position on the detection of recombinant DNA in fermentation products, as outlined in the feed additive and food enzyme guidance documents.

Action Point 7: Member States to distribute the draft guidance document to relevant stakeholders and to encourage relevant stakeholders to participate to the Public Consultation on the draft guidance and the online event on December 17, 2024.

9.6 Styrene mandate

Zainab Al Harraq (EFSA) provided an update on EFSA’s risk assessment of styrene in food contact materials, concluding that styrene is not genotoxic following oral exposure and that a specific migration limit of 40 ppb poses no safety concerns. She announced a public consultation on the draft opinion from December 10 to January 28 2025, accompanied by a webinar on January 14 to explain the mandate and conclusions. Zainab also mentioned that EFSA FCM Panel submitted comments on the Dutch Health Council’s draft report proposing styrene’s reclassification as a mutagenic substance.

Following her presentation, the European Commission expressed concerns about possible divergences between EFSA’s conclusions and the Dutch proposal, emphasizing early communication to avoid public confusion and maintain scientific credibility. The EC urged mobilizing the AF for proactive cooperation on such matters. The Netherlands offered engaging with the Dutch Health Council to address the issue. Zainab confirmed that EFSA has already taken proactive actions back in June 2024 by contacting the DHC and proposing an exchange meeting between the EFSA WG experts and the DHC committee assessing styrene. Unfortunately, this proposal was rejected. Despite this, EFSA FCM Panel submitted their comments on the Dutch report while it was in public consultation. It was also clarified that the discrepancies cannot be confirmed at this intermediate stage where the DHC committee still has to provide EFSA with feedback on the Panel’s

comments (will the classification of styrene as mutagenic remain or be revised?). Nik concluded the discussion by stressing the importance of early detection, communication, and leveraging the advisory forum for enhanced coordination, highlighting the episode as a learning opportunity for improving collaboration between EFSA and Member States.

Action Point 8: MS to contribute to the public consultation (open until 28 January 2025) and participate in the webinar on 14 January.

Action Point 9.a: The Netherlands to follow-up with the Dutch Health Council

Action Point 9.b: EFSA to follow up with relevant parties

9.7 Scientific Committee work programme update

Nik Kriz (EFSA) presented the Scientific Committee's ongoing work programme, highlighting the development of the new guidance on the characterisation of microorganisms used in the food chain, the guidance for the use of read-across approaches in food safety assessments. MSs were also informed about the endorsement by the SC of the Scientific Report on the conceptual basis to develop a guidance on the use of biomarkers of effect in risk assessment of chemicals. EFSA is exploring options on how to involve MSs in the co-creation of the guidance on the use of biomarkers of effects, to ensure membership reflects diverse expertise, fosters consensus, and addresses practical challenges, while promoting harmonized methodologies.

Ongoing revisions to existing guidance on default values used in risk assessment in the absence of actual data, on genotoxicity testing strategies, and on nanomaterial risk assessments were also presented. Recent endorsements included an updated consumer risk assessment for fluoride, now open for public consultation, and an opinion on bromide in food and feed, adopted at the plenary meeting in November.

Future priorities for cross cutting guidance development include revisions to guidance for the risk assessment of botanicals and botanical preparations, and development of a new guidance on evidence appraisal, following a mandate received from DG Sante. Key drivers for the work-programme 2026-2027 are One Substance One Assessment, reducing the use of animal testing when performing scientific assessments, and managing growing scientific complexity.

France raised a significant point regarding the need for a methodology to assess the risk of endocrine disruptors (EDs) in substances that are not equally considered under all regulations. When hazard is characterised in a regulation, it should be considered in others. It was highlighted that with the new classification of hazards under the CLP regulation, more substances will be identified as ED. While some regulations, like those for plant protection products (PPPs) and biocides ban EDs, others do not, necessitating a risk assessment to demonstrate safety. There is a need to elaborate a common methodology to assess risks associated to exposure to ED substances, for those that are not ruled by regulatory frameworks. In 2022, France presented a very specific topic on cholecalciferol, which had been identified as an endocrine disruptor (ED) in biocides but is also used as used as a food supplement (Vitamin D). The presenter wished to advocate for the consideration of this topic within the risk assessment methodology for ED substances.

The Netherlands emphasised the importance of One Health as a programme driver. Daniela Maurici (EFSA) invited detailed suggestions via email for inclusion in the consultation process to define the 2026-2027 SC work-programme.

Nik concluded by stressing the importance of collaboration and early engagement with MS to ensure harmonized, comprehensive risk assessments and effective guidance development.

AOB: Update on EFSA's external evaluation

The EC provided an update on the EFSA evaluation, which is due by March 2026 and will be conducted every five years thereafter, with a contractor selected in July for a 12-month contract. The evaluation will include a 12-week public consultation in all official languages, a 6–8-week targeted survey in English, and interviews with advisory forum members, with the final report expected by July. AF representatives and national agencies were encouraged to proactively participate in the evaluation process.

Action Point 1:

a) AF members to contribute to the consultations the contractor will undertake on behalf of the EC on EFSA's external evaluation and to encourage participation from their national agencies

b) EFSA to ask AF members if they are interested in participating in the contractor's interview.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Action reference	Who	Agenda topic	What
Action 1	MS and EFSA	AOB - Update on EFSA's external evaluation	a) AF members to contribute to the consultations the contractor will undertake on behalf of the EC on EFSA's external evaluation and to encourage participation from their national agencies b) EFSA to ask AF members if they are interested in participating in the contractor's interview.
Action 2	MS	5.2 - Overview of EFSA grants on research to reduce RA uncertainties in Plant Health	AF members to encourage participation of art. 36 organisations to grants in the area of plant health.
Action 3	MS	6. - Fostering Cooperation through Capacity Building	3 - AF members to promote through their national public administrations the new Call for Seconded National Experts (SNEs) to be launched in January 2025.
Action 4	MS		AF members to disseminate through their national networks the Call and the information on the EU-FORA Fellowship Programme and encourage their Art. 36 organisations to apply, by March 2025.
Action 5	EFSA and MS	8.2 EU Library on Food/Feed Guidance documents - Focal Point support	1 - EFSA to approach the FP for their support: (i) To revise the list of national guidance documents provided in April-May this year to verify and validate it, (ii) To add some basic metadata to each of the GD listed. (iii) To maintain/updating the GD repository once it is created. 2- Countries that did not contribute to the initial lists, to provide inputs, where relevant.
Action 6	MS	9.4 RA plans; Public consultations; events; updates	EFSA to update the Advisory Forum at one of the next meetings on the progress of transitioning the MS RA Plans database to a new platform in Salesforce.

Action 7	MS	9.5 Update on the Guidance on microorganisms	Member States to distribute the draft guidance document to relevant stakeholders and to encourage relevant stakeholders to participate to the Public Consultation on the draft guidance and the online event on December 17, 2024.
Action 8	MS	9.6 Styrene Mandate	MS to contribute to the public consultation (open until 28 January 2025) and participate in the webinar on 14 January 2025.
Action 9	EFSA		a - The Netherlands to follow-up with the Dutch Health Council b - EFSA to follow up with relevant parties