33rd PESTICIDE STEERING NETWORK (PSN) meeting

6 May 2025
9:30-16:00 (CET)
Minutes agreed on 27 May 2025

Location: Webconference

Attendees:

- Network Participants:

Country	Member State Organisation
Austria	AGES
Belgium	Federal Government BE
Bulgaria	Central Institute for Supervising and Testing in Agriculture
Finland	Finnish Safety and Chemicals Agency (Tukes)
France	Anses
Germany	Bundesamt für Verbraucherschutz und Lebensmittelsicherheit (BVL)
Greece	Benaki Phytopathological Institute Hellenic Ministry of Rural Development and Food
Hungary	National Food Chain Safety Office Directorate of Plant Protection and Oenology
Ireland	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Latvia	State Plant Protection Service
Lithuania	The State Plant Service under the Ministry of Agriculture
Malta	Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority (MCCAA)
Netherlands	Ctgb
Norway	Norwegian Food Safety Authority
Poland	National Institute of Public Health NIH - National Research Institute
Portugal	DGAV
Slovenia	Kmetijski inštitut Slovenije
Spain	INIA-CSIC
Sweden	Swedish Cemicals Agency, Swedish Food Agency

- Observers:
  National Food Authority (Albania); Food Safety Agency (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Agency of Food and Veterinary of Kosovo (Kosovo); Directorate of Plant Protection Central Research Institute (Turkey).

- European Commission (DG SANTE): NIENSTEDT Karin.

- EFSA:TIRAMANI Manuela (Head of Unit), KARDASSI Dimitra (chair), HALLING Katrin (co-chair), BERNASCONI Giovanni, CAVALHEIRO Joao Filipe, COLAGIORGI

Angelo, COLAS Mathilde, DE LENTDECKER Chloe, DE MAGISTRIS Isabella, LEUSCHNER Renata, MOLNAR Tunde Katalin, SZORADI Andras, VIANELLO Giorgia, MAGRANS SORIA José Oriol, GIAROLA Alessandra, DELFINO Alessandro, DE BERARDIS Sara, MACCHI Chiara, MAZZEGA Silvia, VAN HAVER Ellen, CAVALLI Ermanno.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants. Apologies were received from Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (Switzerland).

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Outcome of the PSN survey as an action point from the 32nd PSN meeting

3.1 Outcome of the PSN survey impacting the intake phase

EFSA presented the key findings from the PSN survey targeting the intake phase with a special focus on the following key areas: i) coordination of Member State activities with ECHA (biocides, REACH, classification and labelling); ii) pesticides peer-review expert meetings; iii) quality of the dossiers in the field of pesticides; iv) quality of the Assessment Reports in the field of pesticides; v) resource constrains/difficulties; and vi) ideas for improvement. For details see related presentation. The main issue at the intake phase is the poor quality of dossiers, which impacts the entire process. Nevertheless, the quality of the dossiers is expected to improve in the coming years with the use and further development of IUCLID. To overcome some of the identified issues, a set of actions/proposals has been identified, e.g. increased support to applicants, increased IUCLID validation assistant rules, improved admissibility and completeness checklists, etc.

Q&A/Discussion

The Netherlands inquired weather Member States or EFSA are working on a proposal on how to present literature studies for biopesticides. EFSA confirmed that this action is under consideration. EFSA clarified that all the responses submitted by Member States to the survey are considered with the aim of getting additional feedback also from those Member States that were less descriptive in their responses, or did not participate in the survey.

France noted that it was not entirely clear why EFSA is suggesting that it should be the RMS to inform the applicant(s) to apply the admissibility checklist before submitting the dossier. It was agreed that it should be done jointly by EFSA and the RMS. With respect to the suggestion of inviting EFSA to pre-submission meetings between the RMS and the applicant(s) (section 2.2. of the EFSA Administrative Guidance document, 2021), Austria clarified that these pre-submission meetings are most often not procedural, but of technical/scientific nature. EFSA confirmed its availability to join such pre-submission meetings to support the RMS, with the recommendation that some context/background on the substance and/or on problem formulation be provided to best steer the discussions and derive a meaningful advice. (cfr. ppt 09 Tools and options for engaging with applicants from 32nd PSN meeting). As part of the discussion, Germany suggested that EFSA could liaise with ECHA to explore the possibility to reduce/avoid comments related to formatting or editorial changes during the completeness check of the Draft Assessment Reports (DARs)/Renewal Assessment Reports (RARs).

3.2 Outcome of the PSN survey impacting the peer-review, possible improvement actions

EFSA presented the key findings from the PSN survey targeting the peer-review phase along with some proposals for possible improvements. For details see related presentation and survey report.

Q&A/Discussion

As part of the discussion, it was clarified that the main reason for Member States providing limited contribution to EFSA peer-review expert meetings, other than in their capacity as RMS, is linked to the lack of both financial and human/expert resources at Member State level. It was also noted that attending a one-week long EFSA peer-review expert meeting requires one full week of preparation to ensure meaningful contributions to the discussions. The European Commission wondered if it would be possible to reduce the time needed to prepare for the expert discussions, i.e. by focussing on controversial areas, so that participation could be more focused and participation in EFSA peer-review meetings can be increased. EFSA will consider the proposal, while noting that a detailed summary of the points of discussion is provided by the EFSA staff ahead of each peer review meeting.

With regard to the finalisation of the Assessment Report, by the RMS, with incomplete or missing data, Sweden emphasised that the process does not allow for information requests that would delay the RMS evaluation, and that additional data should be requested by EFSA. EFSA clarified that there have been cases where missing information from the first peer-review/approval was also missing at the time of the renewal peer-review/approval. Ideally, data gaps identified on the occasion of the first peer-review/approval should be addressed during the renewal peer-review/approval.

In addition, EFSA also noted that there have been cases where, after the assessment of the additional information by the RMS, the content of the updated DAR/RAR changed significantly compared to the initial versions. This has led to additional and unexpected workload for both EFSA and the Member States. While the European Commission representative suggested exploring ways to address missing information at the time of the admissibility check, some Member States pointed out that it is often only at a later stage that a submitted study or position paper is found to be scientifically inadequate or inappropriate for addressing a specific issue.

- **ACTIONS**
- The issue of limited financial and human resources was a recurring theme. EFSA might consider proposing support mechanisms (see also item 4).
- EFSA to follow up on the issue of requiring complete literature studies versus summaries of publicly available literature in IUCLID (see minutes of 32nd PSN). However it is clear that if a study is deemed relevant, the risk assessors at RMS must have access to the complete study to assess it.
- Further actions could be elaborated targeting the peer-review phase based on improvements proposed in the survey.

4. Plans for the establishment of a Support Office for Pesticide Risk Assessment "SOPRA"

EFSA presented its plans to establish SOPRA (Support Office for Pesticide Risk Assessment), highlighting its aims to give support to the Member States in the risk assessment process, pre- and post- submission. This initiative is linked to the earlier discussion regarding the resource constrains (Member States were asked to clarify whether they face shortages in

financial resources, personnel, or both). EFSA emphasised its ongoing investments in partnerships, stakeholder collaboration, and framework agreements to help alleviate the workload and capacity challenges faced by Member States.

The complexity of the risk assessment process has increased significantly over the years. Many competent authorities in the Member States are required to manage a broad range of tasks, leading to backlogs and limiting the ability of certain substances to enter the market. It was stressed that the SOPRA office will operate in accordance with EFSA's procedures and will perform its activities in an independent way, while providing support to Member States facing difficulties in different parts of the assessment process (e.g. Member State X is lacking the expertise on ecotoxicology, then SOPRA can step in for this part, thereby freeing resources for other substances).

An open call for the establishment of the SOPRA office is expected in autumn 2025, with the office anticipated to become operational by May 2026. The office will be financed by a grant of about a minimum of €4Mio. in 4 years (potentially longer and renewable, no co-financing). The SOPRA office can be established by an Art. 36 organisation, or a consortium of Art. 36 organisations.

The first year will primarily focus on staff training. Once trained, the staff will begin addressing backlogs in the Member States, prioritising active substances. This includes providing pre-submission advice and contributing to peer review activities, and, if necessary, supporting co-formulant assessments. It was clarified that SOPRA will not be involved in the authorisation of products at the national level.

To mobilise expertise, EFSA referred to its annual intake of over 100 trainees (approximately 10 in the PREV unit), the potential involvement of retired senior experts on a part-time basis, and outreach to academic institutions

Internal discussions within EFSA, with the Commission and with Member States on how to organise the work programme of SOPRA, refine the proposal and define its priorities, have been on-going for the last 7-8 months. Member States interested in participating are encouraged to contact @manuela.tiramani@efsa.europa.eu at EFSA. If no interest is expressed, the proposal will be reconsidered.

Q&A/Discussion

Sweden inquired if the SOPRA staff would handle peer review issues originating from other Member States, or whether they could also work with their own assessments, for which they serve as RMS. EFSA replied that the intention is to create an office within a Member State to support other Member States (the tasks will be listed in the call). The staff will be employed by the awarded organisation(s).

Austria asked about the tasks of SOPRA and if SOPRA should take over assessment work from the Member States if they are delayed. EFSA replied that the tasks will be specified in the call and assured that the intention is to support Member States who struggle with delays, and it is still to be decided how the support will be organised.

Sweden inquired whether financing the participation in expert meetings has been considered as a way of supporting Member States, as it may be a manageable approach. EFSA explained that, under current rules, Member States are not compensated for the peer review activities. While experts are nominated, they are not remunerated in the same way as members of panels or working groups. Nevertheless, EFSA acknowledged the potential to establish dedicated working groups composed of experts from competent authorities, academia, or other sectors. These groups, structured similarly to peer review meetings, could form a core

team with specific expertise and be compensated for attending meetings and discussing active substances.

- **ACTIONS**
- Member States to consider the opportunity of SOPRA project, grant giving possibility to get services to alleviate the workload/backlog for the EU assessment for pesticides active substances. EFSA welcomes any feedback and/or expression of interest in applying to this project.

5. Upcoming innovative NAS dossiers and delays on IUCLID dossiers admissibility check (special focus on 2021-2022 dossiers)

EFSA FDP (Front-Desk & Workforce Planning Unit) provided an overview of the delays observed in the finalisation of the admissibility check by competent RMSs for dossiers submitted in the period 2021-2022, shortly after the implementation of IUCLID as a tool for preparation and submission of dossiers occurred in March 2021. The objective was to trigger an open discussion on possible ways forwards.

It was highlighted that, in some cases, significant delays occurred, which had a strong impact on the overall assessment timelines and planning. In particular 17 renewal dossiers (AIR), one dossier on amendment of Maximum Residues Levels and two basic substance dossiers submitted in 2021 and 2022 are pending admissibility at the date of the PSN meeting. While for most of the dossiers an updated version was submitted in the tool, indicating that an admissibility check is ongoing, in some other cases no submissions occurred.

EFSA highlighted the ongoing initiatives to support Member States during the admissibility phases, such as the availability of support materials, including videos and demos, step-by-step instructions for carrying out the notification of studies (NoS) assessment, the ongoing review of the admissibility checklist, the existence of the PSN IUCLID subgroup to discuss potential issues, and the possibility of targeted and ad-hoc support to Member States through pre-admissibility teleconferences.

EFSA acknowledged that some of the primary issues causing delays in the process are stem from the poor quality of the dossiers submitted in 2021/2022, when only a minimum viable version of IUCLID was available, and the limited experience of the applicants at the time of the submission. It is recognised that such dossiers would require resubmission to comply with admissibility rules. EFSA invited Member States to request re-submissions from applicants and offered its support, acknowledging that the resubmission of an old dossier could be challenging due to the many new business rules. Additionally, EFSA mentioned its aim to identify Member States with limited experience with IUCLID and provide targeted, ad-hoc support to assist them in managing admissibility procedures within IUCLID.

The European Commission indicated its intention to inform the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (SCoPAFF), considering the impact of such delays on the subsequent steps of the renewal process and the need to extend the approval date of substances in case delays are beyond the applciant’s control.

Q&A/Discussion

In response to the issues highlighted in the presentation, Member States provided feedback on the main causes of these delays, primarily emphasizing:

- The poor quality of the IUCLID dossiers was confirmed to be one of the primary cause of delays.

- Some applicants faced difficulties in understanding the notification of studies (NoS) process, leading to NoS compliance-related mistakes in the dossiers.
- Applicants who are not large companies struggled to address the data requirements.
- Missing data in the dossiers, that necessitated additional time for the applicants to update them.
- There was a tendency to prioritise newer dossiers due to their higher quality.

6. Implementation of GLP revised approach by EFSA

EFSA provided a presentation focusing on the implementation of the GLP revised approach by EFSA. The importance of verifying the GLP status of studies submitted in the context of applications was emphasised. The GLP principles are a mandatory requirement for pesticides, for all studies related to the characterisation of the properties or safety, with specific derogations. The process of verifying GLP studies across the different food sector domains within EFSA's remit was presented.

The project on the establishment of a GLP verification methodology and tools, including a fit-for-purpose GLP verification checklist was noted. This project ran from December 2022 to June 2024. A total of 784 studies, plus 200 for the development of the methodology, were checked. The results are available on EFSA's website, together with the GLP checklist. Additionally, a hands-on training program was developed as part of the project, with training material on the use of the GLP checklist made available on the EU Academy platform.

EFSA explained how EFSA performs the verification of GLP studies as part of non-pesticides' applications. This consists of verifying for all GLP claimed studies the GLP compliance statement, QA certificate and the GLP status of test facilities (i.e. formal GLP criteria as part of the GLP systematic check), while a more extensive evaluation using the GLP verification checklist is applied on a proportionate number of studies that have either been randomly selected, or following a risk-based approach when GLP issues on specific studies have been identified. In case of pending GLP concerns, EFSA can then also request the relevant GLP Monitoring Authority to perform an *ad hoc* study audit for verifying the GLP claim of the study in question.

In case of pesticides' applications, the verification of GLP status of studies is under the responsibility of RMS/EMS and performed during the admissibility and risk assessment phases. In addition to the formal GLP criteria that are expected to be checked for all studies, the Member States were informed about the possibility of using the GLP checklist for a more thorough verification were relevant. This checklist includes the GLP provisions for pesticides and applicable derogations.

EFSA can ask a GLP monitoring authority to carry out a GLP study audit to verify the GLP status of a study, either in the context of EFSA's annual audit programme, or on ad hoc basis. The Annual Audit Programme covers both pesticides and non-pesticides applications. The outcome of the study audits is shared with Member States, especially if the GLP monitoring authority identifies any GLP deviations. When a pesticide application is under evaluation by the Member States, major GLP deviations or an amended study report prompt the RMS/EMS to liaise with the applicant to ensure the appropriate follow-up or to request for the amended study report where relevant.

Q&A/Discussion

Germany raised questions about the potential additional workload from the GLP checklist and the possibility of automating the checklist using large language models (AI). EFSA responded, indicating that the checklist takes about 45 minutes per study on average, though this can vary considering the different study types. EFSA also emphasised that while the checklist is a

useful tool, it does not necessarily need to be applied systematically to all pesticide studies. Instead, it could be used selectively when there are suspicions about a study's compliance with GLP.

Formal GLP criteria are expected to be checked for all studies, but this is something that was already done by RMSs. It was emphasised that this formal check could be enhanced through the verification of the GLP compliance status of the test facility in the OECD Annual Overviews, and the receiving authorities can request access to this password protected website via their national GLP Monitoring authority.

7. EFSA repository on co-formulants

EFSA gave a brief presentation of the EFSA repository on co-formulants planned for release at the end of June 2025. EFSA has been continuing the work started with the Technical report on co-formulants published in August 2022, adding co-formulants identified in the EFSA peer review processes and including toxicological and ecotoxicological data . The main goals are to help gain experience in assessing co-formulants, to support a more harmonised, component-based approach in PPP evaluations and to reduce duplicated efforts at both national and EU levels. The confidential version which includes the full composition of PPPs and related co-formulants, will be shared with Member States and ECHA whereas a non-confidential version will be published on the EFSA website.

Q&A/Discussion

Denmark mentioned that as Member States are assessing co-formulants part of the RAR/DAR, they were wondering whether they should provide their assessment to EFSA in a similar format or a specific template or is it EFSA task to fill in the repository.

Denmark's proposal is welcomed and will be taken into account in the ongoing discussions on database maintenance. EFSA also clarified that the repository is including co-formulants declared in the PPP for representative uses at EU level and for the time being the addition of co-formulants declared at product authorisation level are not listed.

France inquired whether a public consultation/commenting phase would be launched on the EFSA repository for co-formulants to gather input from Member States and other stakeholders. Moreover, it was asked how this repository should be used.

- EFSA clarified that while no formal commenting round is planned, feedback from Member States is very welcome to enhance the tool and support activities on co-formulants. This repository was firstly developed for co-formulants declared in the PPP from the representaive uses in the active substances dossiers and to support EFSA internal work on this matter. EFSA is a public institution and is sharing the repository for transparency purposes. This is not a binding tool but EFSA would rely on its own work, unless new data are becoming available.

Germany proposed the creation of a centralised database for toxicological data on co-formulants. This would allow designated Member States to contribute regularly with data extracted from dossiers. The aim would be to structure and collect the new information automatically, potentially integrating data from publicly available tools, such as genotoxicity potential or acute toxicity when data are lacking, also read-across approaches could be considered. in this context, it was mentioned that co-formulants toxicity data could be made publicly available in a format that would support read-across analysis for example to use OECD QSAR toolbox.

- EFSA explained that the current repository was developed on a self-task basis. Although EFSA is willing to further develop the tool in line with needs, it is resources demanding. Member States are also invited to contribute, notably by sharing national

databases. Germany will follow up with EFSA on the potential sharing of their PPP database containing co-formulants data.
Finally, it was mentioned the Common data platform on chemicals under development by ECHA that would likely include co-formulants data.

- DG SANTE is also considering the development of a shared database, this is currently under discussion with Member States and relevant EU agencies.
- In a similar way, Netherlands proposed that EFSA create a similar tool to collect data on secondary metabolites from microorganisms.
- DG SANTE informed on an ongoing project focused on data collection for various microorganism species used in PPP and is drafting a data collection report.

8. EFSA's future plans for AI implementation in risk assessments and the evaluation of pesticides (request from Sweden)

An overview of the use of AI within EFSA was provided, highlighting that it started in 2020 with a roadmap on AI. Several actions from this roadmap have already been implemented.

An update was given on the key AI tools already in use at EFSA: Microsoft Copilot, AutoCAT, and AI for FoodEX codes mapping. One prominent tool currently in use for systematic literature reviews is DistillerSR. An overview of its workflow was presented, highlighting the tool's capability to operate autonomously once programmed, although emphasising the continuing necessity of human oversight. A brief explanation of the AI functionalities available in DistillerSR was provided. Statistical data collected from colleagues indicated that, at the time, AI was employed in 56 out of 111 systematic literature reviews. This demonstrates the established use of AI tools for screening abstracts and titles. For critical appraisal, the majority of units use the NPT-OHPC model. This tool features two user interfaces, highlighting relevant sentences within papers using different colours, subsequently generating an automatic summary. However, it was noted that the tool has not yet reached full reliability to guarantee complete accuracy.

Quantitative data regarding time savings through AI usage was shared, along with EFSA's future expectations for further improvements.

The presentation also touched upon the "Microsoft Copilot," which has been implemented in EFSA's aiming (among other things) at enhancing the quality of EFSA outputs. Three documents were tested in Round A, alongside a general document in Round B. Conclusions identified sections where Copilot performed effectively and sections where it requires further maturity. Collaboration with the legal department for additional support is ongoing. An additional pilot project involves PLH outputs, where documents are being "deconstructed" into knowledge bits. This is part of a project to create a knowledge repository, from which the AI tool automatically fills scientific outputs. Current work is addressing remaining problematic areas such as searching knowledge bits and document re-construction.

Other ongoing projects focus on areas such as Taxonomy (following EPPO standard) and the collection of updated AI use cases within pesticide evaluation:

- Critical appraisal tools;
- 90-day toxicity evaluations;
- Data sanitisation and completeness checks.

It was also noted that at EFSA level is fundamental to balancing business value vs. feasibility, emphasising the importance of being aware of potential drawbacks.

Q&A/Discussion

Sweden highlighted that Member States are experiencing similar issues with the use of AI. And asked if there are plans to share EFSA's progress on AI with the MS.

EFSA confirmed that progress is regularly reported on the advisory forum and within the specific subgroup dealing with data. Acknowledged that AI presents different challenges for different needs.

Sweden mention that would be relevant to share progress with Member States and expressed concern that the advisory forum may not include individuals directly involved in hands-on assessment. It was suggested that the PSN or a similar platform might be more appropriate for sharing this information.

Austria inquired if there are any other AI initiatives at the EU level or led by the European Commission.

The European Commission welcomed the advancement of EFSA with the use of AI in risk assessment.

9. Update on Interactive Pesticide Residue Platform (IPReP)

EFSA provided an update on the Interactive Pesticide Residue Platform (IPReP), which is a recently established knowledge community of Member States and EFSA risk assessors on pesticide residues with the aim to facilitate consistent approaches and performing harmonised assessments. The concept for an interactive residue platform was presented at the PSN in October 2022, followed by a survey launched in 2023 to seek feedback from Member States on how to develop the workspace and proposals for topics to be covered. The outcome and follow-up were presented in the previous PSN meetings.

As regards the governance of the TEAMs platform, the IPReP Microsoft Teams workspace is hosted by the EFSA's PREV Unit and managed by a governing board composed of the Head of Unit, residue team leaders, the residue lead scientist and an administrator. Up to two residue experts from each Member State have been nominated to contribute to the scientific activities. The terms of reference (ToRs) were approved and presented at the PSN in October 2024. On 1 April 2025, the 1st virtual IPReP meeting with the nominated Member States experts took place.

EFSA recalled the vision of the knowledge community, in particular the following objectives:

- Sharing knowledge between Member States experts and EFSA in the area of pesticide residues;
- Building consensus amongst pesticide risk assessors;
- Alignment of pesticide risk assessment principles between Member States and EFSA;
- Continuous improvement through capacity building;
- Timely (faster) risk assessments;
- Discussion of pesticide residue topics respecting independency and processes.

EFSA gave an overview on the scientific topics and latest developments of activities ongoing so far, including 'rotational crops', 'deriving residue definitions', as well as on the progress of the LEAN initiative launched by EFSA on MRL application which aims to streamline the Article 10 assessment process, to reduce the impact of clock-stops and to optimise the time needed to finalise assessments. In the context of this initiative, IPReP is used as a platform to interact with Member States on selected topics; so far 2 dedicated channels have been established to collect feedback from Member States with regards to: i) 'scientific check lists' and ii) on the 'applicable data requirements (old vs new)' with the aim to build a harmonised and consistent approach among Member States and EFSA in checking the scientific compliance of the MRL

applications and performing scientific checks. For both topics, the deadline to submit feedback is 21 June 2025.

Member States are requested to provide their input through their nominated IPReP experts, in the dedicated channels established in the platform. In addition, to better understand the cause of delays encountered in the assessment of MRL applications, Member States are also requested to share their feedback as regards the reasons of the delays they are facing with preparation of the Evaluation Reports (ERs). Indeed, over the past 2 years, despite a relatively large number of admissible applications (ca 80), the number of ERs submitted to EFSA seems declining.

As new scientific topic, 'bridging residue trials for different formulation types' has been included recently to the IPReP workspace following the proposal by Belgium to develop criteria for bridging residue trials where different formulation trials are used to allow a consistent approach on possible extrapolation to other (more recently used) formulation types. Member States are invited to provide their input through their nominated IPReP experts, in the dedicated channel, by 1st June 2025.

As conclusion, EFSA highlighted the importance of IPReP as a platform for engagement and exchange with MS risk assessors on dedicated topics and activities of common interest which could be of benefit for both risk assessors (at EU and national level) and applicants. Besides scientific topics, it is also envisaged to exchange training materials on recent developments in pesticide residues, such as the EFSA rotational crop guidance or ongoing work on the OECD guidance on residue definition. As new topic proposed by Germany, development of criteria for indoor and outdoor residue trials is envisaged to be included in the platform in the near future. Member States are also invited to share/propose any additional topics they would like to address.

EFSA reminded the Member States that IPREP members are expected to act as ambassador of the platform and share its content with all relevant colleagues within their National Competent Authority.

The next IPReP meetings are envisaged to take place later in 2025 or beginning of 2026.

Q&A/Discussion

France raised the question whether it is intended to organise similar platforms for engagement, by analogy to IPReP, also in other sections, e.g. physical-chem properties, mammalian toxicology etc. EFSA confirmed that IPReP has been established as a knowledge community focussing specifically on pesticides residues and MRL assessment. However, with the experience to be gained over time EFSA might consider expanding the scope further. This idea was welcomed also by Denmark.

Action points

- Member States to provide feedback on the topics '**scientific check lists'** and '**clarification on the applicable data requirements (old vs new DRs)**' in the context of the MRL application leaning exercise, in the dedicated channels through their nominated IPReP experts by **21 June 2025**.
- Member States to provide their input on the topic on '**bridging residue trials for different formulation types**', in the dedicated channel through their nominated IPReP experts by **1st June 2025**.
- Member States are invited to share/propose any additional topics they would like to address.
- Member States to share their feedback on the reasons of the delays they are facing with preparation of the Evaluation Reports (ERs).

10. Any other business

10.1 Update on the Call for proposals – Support to EFSA for the risk assessment of pesticides

EFSA reminded the participants of the Call for proposals "Support to EFSA for the risk assessment of pesticides" (EUBA-EFSA-2025-PREV-02) with a closing date of 22 May 2025. The aim of the call is to set up framework partnership agreements (FPAs) to support EFSA in the risk assessment of pesticides active substances and residues. The FPAs under the previous call (GP/EFSA/PREV/2021/01) will expire at the end of 2025. EFSA flagged that supporting information, including a link to material from an info session and the email address to use for clarification questions (deadline: 14 May 2025), could be found in the call: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/euba-efsa-2025-prev-02.

11. Conclusions

EFSA wrapped up the meeting and provided closing remarks:

- *Lack of Resources*:

Core critical issue identified for the EU risk assessment of pesticide active substances. In this respect, EFSA warmly invited Member States to carefully consider the opportunity of SOPRA project, grant giving possibility to get services to alleviate the workload/backlog for the EU assessment for pesticides active substances. EFSA welcomes any feedback and/or expression of interest in applying to this project.

- *Data Quality & Increasing complexity in the risk assessment:*

EFSA reminded the range of initiatives implemented to better support stakeholders, thus including applicants and Member States risk assessors, along the full life cycle of an application. These relate to the services as described in the EFSA's Catalogue of support initiatives during the life-cycle of applications for regulated products[1] and in the EFSA Administrative Guidance[2].

Also, it has been recalled the EFSA support network for IUCLID-related matters. Accordingly, Member States were encouraged to make more regular use of these services to enhance the efficiency and improve the EU evaluation process of pesticides active substances.

Next meeting: 11-12 November (lunch-lunch) in Parma and hybrid. Meeting open to observers.

[1] EFSA (European Food Safety Authority), 2021. EFSA's Catalogue of support initiatives during the life-cycle of applications for regulated products. *EFSA supporting publication* 2021: 18(3):EN-6472. 35 pp. doi:10.2903/sp.efsa.2021.EN-6472

[2] European Food Safety Authority, 2021. Administrative guidance on submission of dossiers and assessment reports for the peer-review of pesticide active substances and on the maximum residue level (MRL) application procedure, *EFSA supporting publication* 2021: 18(3):EN-6464. 90 pp. doi:10.2903/sp.efsa.2021.EN-6464