96th MEETING OF THE EFSA ADVISORY FORUM

04 June 2025: 9:30-13:00
05 June 2025: 9:30-13:00
MINUTES

Location: Web-conference

Members	Attendance
Austria (AT)	Klemens Fuchs
Belgium (BE)	Fabien Bolle
Belgium (BE)	Axel Mauroy
Bulgaria (BG)	Donka Popova
Croatia (HR)	Sara Mikrut Vunjak
Croatia (HR)	Andrea Gross-Bošković
Cyprus (CY)	Rebecca Kokkinofta
Cyprus (CY)	Charitini Frenaritou
Czech Republic (CZ)	Jitka Gotzova
Denmark (DK)	Dorte Lau Baggesen
Denmark (DK)	Martin Bahl
Estonia (EE)	Mari Reinik
Finland (FI)	Leena Räsänen
France (FR)	Matthieu Schuler
France (FR)	Salma Elreedy
Germany (DE)	Andreas Hensel
Greece (GR)	apologies
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
Slovak Republic (SK)	Petra Vanková
Slovenia (SI)	Urška Blaznik
Spain (ES)	Ana López-Santacruz Serraller
Sweden (SE)	Helena Brunnkvist

Observers	Attendance
Albania (AL)	Polikseni Drazho
Bosnia and Herzegovina (BA)	apologies
Kosovo*	apologies
Montenegro (ME)	Vladimir Djakovic
Republic of North Macedonia (MK)	Oliver Milanov
Republic of North Macedonia (MK)	Martin Josheski
Serbia (SR)	Tamara Boskovic
Switzerland (CH)	Katharina Stärk
Türkiye (TR)	apologies
European Commission (EC)	Anastasia Alvizou
European Commission (EC)	Athanasios Raikos
European Commission (EC)	Alexandra Eftimie
European Commission (EC)	Frans Verstraete
European Commission (EC)	Veerle Vanheusden
European Commission (EC)	Almut Bitterhof
External speakers	
Aivars Bērziņš (Management Board Chair)	Jorge Numata (BfR)

EFSA Representatives	
Bernhard Url (Chair)	Valeriu Curtui (Speaker)
Barbara Gallani (Co-Chair)	Luisa Ramos Bordajandi (Speaker)
Carlos Das Neves (Co-Chair)	Elena Rovesti (Speaker)
Tobin Robinson (ASSESS HoD ad interim)	Chantra Eskes (Speaker)
Victoria Villamar (HoU ENREL)	
Sérgio Potier Rodeia (Team Leader, Community Management)	
Maria Azevedo Mendes (Advisory Forum Secretariat)	
Andrea Laroni (Advisory Forum Secretariat)	
Virginia Spurio Salvi (CORSER)	
Dirk Detken (Speaker)	
Fabrizio Abbinante (Speaker)	
Manuela Tiramani (Speaker)	
Bernard Bottex (Speaker)	

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Item 1: Opening and welcome address

Bernard Url opened the 96th meeting of the Advisory Forum (AF) as the Chair by welcoming the participants of the AF joining the meeting online. The chair noted apologies from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Kosovo* and Türkiye.

Item 2: Adoption of the agenda and action points from last meeting

The Chair provided an overview of the meeting agenda which was approved by the AF. The chair informed the plenary that the final **minutes of the 95th Advisory Forum** meeting were published on the EFSA website on 6 may.

Item 3: Update from the Management Board

Aivars Bērziņš, the Management Board (MB) Chair, highlighted several key developments within the MB since their last meeting. Firstly, he mentioned personnel changes, noting that new colleagues from NGOs and MSs would be joining the MB. Then, Aivars delved into the recruitment process for the new EFSA Executive Director. He outlined the steps taken, including the validation of the vacancy notice, the establishment of an ad hoc MB subgroup to prevent conflicts of interest, and the publication of the vacancy notice in the EU Official Journal. He emphasised the collaborative efforts between the EC and the MB, culminating in a shortlist of candidates. The final nomination is expected by the end of June, followed by a hearing at the European Parliament in mid-July. Moving on to the Independence Policy, Aivars explained that the MB had updated the policy in June last year, focusing on both EFSA experts and staff. He noted that the consultation with the EC is still ongoing, highlighting the importance of this policy in ensuring the integrity and independence of EFSA's work. Aivars also discussed the importance of partnership and risk assessment. He stressed the need for increased collaboration between EFSA and MS organizations to enhance risk assessment processes. He acknowledged the efforts of the Advisory Forum members in developing a partnership culture and emphasized the crucial role of these partnerships in solving various issues. Finally, Aivars addressed the speed of risk assessment, identifying several determinants that affect the process. He mentioned the readiness of information, the breadth and depth of scientific output, and the efficiency of the assessment process. In conclusion, Aivars expressed the MB's commitment to maintaining close interaction and exchange of views with the AF, thanking them for their efforts and support.

The discussion focused on the importance of partnerships and the speed of risk assessment. The Netherlands and France raised points about administrative hurdles and about the planning, which relates to the types of mandates, either at the national level or at the EFSA level, there could be a role to be played by committees such as SCOPAFF, suggesting that the MB could help reflect on these issues by connecting with national ministries. France also raised the point of "fit-for-purpose" risk assessment conclusions, which are closely linked to the quantity and quality of data for the risk assessment, to enable to be more conclusive: this should be considered under the umbrella of the quality of risk assessment. The MB Chair acknowledged these challenges and agreed to bring these remarks back to the Board, emphasizing the need for political support to allocate resources for European-level work. Germany proposed regular meetings between the MB and the AF, which the MB Chair supported, agreeing to discuss the format and feasibility with the new EFSA ED and the MB.

Item 4: Update on the implementing rules of the EFSA Independence Policy applicable to the EFSA scientific experts

Dirk Detken (EFSA) provided an overview of the recent updates to EFSA's independence policy. The policy, initially adopted in 2017, was reviewed by an external evaluator, who concluded that EFSA's approach was effective in preventing conflicts of interest and maintaining a positive reputation. However, some recommendations were made to improve clarity, consistency, and

efficiency. The policy was updated to align the confidentiality requirements for Article 36 organizations with those of EFSA's working group experts. This ensures that transparency and independence standards are consistent across all contributors to EFSA's scientific outputs. For Article 36 organizations performing preparatory work to EFSA opinions, the requirement for individual declarations of interest (DOIs) was abolished. Instead, EFSA will rely on the initial scrutiny that allowed these organizations to be included on the Article 36 list. This change aims to reduce the administrative burden while maintaining trust in the independence of these organizations. A new feature was introduced for ex-post checks on advisory and network members. This involves sample-basedchecks to identify any potential conflicts of interest, ensuring transparency and trust without imposing real-time checks on these lower-risk areas. Dirk emphasized the importance of guiding experts through the DOI process. A new, user-friendly guidance document was created to help experts understand and comply with the independence rules. Additionally, improvements to the IT tools, such as more intuitive drop-down menus, are being implemented to streamline the DOI process.

France and the Netherlands raised concerns about the duplication of DOI checks (by EFSA and by the employer) and suggested mutual recognition of independence check systems (if they have the same efficiency and objectives), in order to save time and resources. Dirk acknowledged these points and mentioned that with the new rules, in 95% of grants, EFSA would no longer do the DOI checks, as EFSA would rely on assessment from Member States (MSs). Germany raised concerns about the potential drawbacks of focusing too heavily on independence at the expense of expertise, arguing that sometimes the best expertise resides within the industry. Germany reflected on whether EFSA's stringent independence criteria might result in second-best scientific assessments and suggested that the balance between independence and expertise needs careful consideration.

Item 5: Update on the Advisory Group on Data

Akos Jozwiak (Hungary) provided an update on the recent activities of the Advisory Group on Data (AGoD), focusing on EFSA's approach to AI and innovation. He highlighted the establishment of an AI and Innovation Board to drive innovation and monitor pilot projects. Akos also discussed the PARC project's efforts in data sharing, standardisation, and ontology development. He emphasised the importance of MS engagement and the need for policy champions to drive effective data governance and AI implementation. The status of the Focal Point tailor-made activities proposal assessment process for what concern AGoD’s involvement was also outlined. Additionally, Akos shared insights from the Public Health Interagency Workshop, stressing the necessity of interoperability, data literacy, and the involvement of policy makers in AI initiatives. The presentation concluded with an update on the progress of AGOD's subgroups and their plans for upcoming meetings.

Germany acknowledged the significant work of AGOD but questioned why progress on interoperability had not advanced further. It was suggested that higher-level intervention might be necessary to achieve interoperability, emphasizing the need for support from the EC and MSs. The Netherlands echoed Germany’s concerns about interoperability and highlighted the need for higher-level intervention to address the challenges posed by different pieces of legislation and agencies. EFSA pointed out the difference between the health data space, which has a legislative framework, and the food data space, which lacks such a framework. It was suggested that a legal framework is necessary to facilitate cooperation and create a common food data space. France emphasized the importance of connecting environmental health data with human health data, advocating for a One Health approach to data collection and analysis. Denmark acknowledged the significant work of AGOD but highlighted the challenges of managing expectations and the need for realistic goals. Emphasis was placed on the importance of connecting AGOD's work with other initiatives and the need for better coordination.

In conclusion, there was a consensus on the importance of interoperability and the need for higher-level intervention to address legislative and coordination challenges. A legal framework is necessary to facilitate cooperation and create a common food data space, similar to the health

data space. The one health approach to data usage should be considered, connecting environmental health data with human health data. Managing expectations and realistic goal-setting are crucial for AGOD's success, along with better coordination with other initiatives.

Item 6: Risk Assessment Initiatives Hub

Sergio Potier Rodeia (EFSA) presented the new Risk Assessment Initiatives Hub, which integrates previous platforms into a single, user-friendly environment under EFSA Connect. This hub aims to enhance collaboration, avoid duplication of work, and identify common priorities. It includes features for risk assessment plans and collaboration proposals, allowing users to express interest and form partnerships. The platform also offers improved search functions and reporting mechanisms. The Focal Points' feedback highlighted the hub's user-friendliness, centralization, and potential for forming consortia. They appreciated the connectivity with the Article 36 database and the various implementation pathways for project ideas. Overall, the Focal Points viewed the Hub as a strategic tool for joint planning and program execution, supporting the establishment of partnerships.

France emphasized the importance of also including in the Hub information on the calls for data / information that are carried out between focal points when work is about to start on a mandate or a risk assessment, and whether to work together. France also expressed its concern about who has access to the Hub: the three databases had different access rules, so when we share national mandates at an early stage, it is done with confidence between AF members, which cannot be easily transferred if access were to be granted to all Article 36 organisations in all countries. The need for a database to avoid repetitive questions and to track metrics on collaboration was highlighted. Denmark expressed anticipation for the new Hub, noting that the previous systems had challenges. It was suggested that the Hub should allow for the sharing of immature ideas to facilitate long-term planning and collaboration. The Netherlands inquired about who would have access to the hub, promoting to include all MSs, AF members, Focal Point members, and Article 36 organizations. Ireland supported France’s point about the importance of information requests and suggested that a database would help avoid repetitive questions and track collaboration metrics.

In conclusion, there is a consensus on the importance of including information requests in the Hub to facilitate planning and avoid repetitive questions.

Action 1: MS to start using the new Hub for sharing risk assessment plans and collaboration proposals

Item 7: Focal Point Operational Framework 2023-2027

7.1 FP Health Check update

Barbara Gallani (EFSA) provided a short update on the ongoing Health Check on the Focal Point (FP) framework, with a focus on the upcoming workshop on the Health Check, scheduled for the 4th and 5th of November. The workshop aims to review the current FP framework, assess its effectiveness, and explore improvements to ensure it is fit for the future. The focus will be on evaluating the principal activities, the role of focal points in supporting cooperation, and planning long-term strategies to enhance collaboration and partnerships. Participants are encouraged to mark their calendars and actively engage in the discussions to contribute to the framework's evolution.

Action 2: MS to participate in the FP “Health Check” online workshop, on the 4th and 5th of November

7.2: FP TM activities: Overview of proposals received during 2025

Sergio Potier Rodeia (EFSA) provided an overview of the FP tailor-made activities for 2025, highlighting that 16 new proposals were received, with a total budget demand of €5.7 million. These proposals cover various areas, including data, knowledge information, capacity building, and

risk communication. He noted an increased interest from 29 different countries, indicating a growing engagement in these activities. The total budget allocation for tailor-made activities remains at €4 million.

During the discussion, AF members raised questions about the discrepancy between the projected and current budget allocation for tailor-made activities. EFSA clarified that the budget for tailor-made activities and grants are communicating vessels. Therefore, there might be adjustments over time impacting these two funding sources. For 2025, EFSA indicated that any other possible adjustments will not reduce the current budget for tailor-made activities and that the final decision will be made in the coming months. EFSA also emphasised the importance of collaboration and encouraged members to check the SharePoint microsite for proposals still looking for partners. He advised expressing interest by the end of July to ensure participation in ongoing proposals. The assessment of proposals is ongoing, with consultations with the AF Trio and AGoD in progress. The final decisions on prioritisation are expected before the end of September.
In conclusion, the meeting highlighted the ongoing assessment of proposals, the careful consideration of potential budget adjustments, and the encouragement for members to explore partnering opportunities to enhance collaboration and capacity building.

Action 3: MS to check TMA proposals which are looking for partners and seek participation as partners or observers

Item 8: Current Partnerships Opportunities

8.1 Introduction

Carlos das Neves (EFSA) presented several upcoming partnership opportunities, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and the need for stronger, more agile partnerships. He highlighted specific calls for proposals, including:

- Adult Public Perception Measurements: A call to survey different stakeholders on various topics, launching in June.
- Insect Trapping Methods for EU Priority Pests: A procurement call for developing surveillance methodologies, launching in September.
- Trainings on Systematic Literature Review: A call to enhance capacity building through training, launching soon.
- Coordination of Risk Assessment Training: Another capacity-building initiative, focusing on risk assessment training.
- EU-FORA: A significant contract to support the EU-FORA program, expected to launch in October.

Action 4: MS to apply and/or promote through their national networks, the calls presented at the meeting (list available here)

8.2 FPA launch – To identify Art. 36 organisations to be entrusted to improve methods for collection, management and analysis of scientific data

Fabrizio Abbinante (EFSA) provided details on a framework partnership agreement in the area of data collection and initiatives. He explained the division into two lots: one strategic, and one operational, focusing on food consumption and composition data. He also outlined the timeline for the call, with a launch planned for July and an award in January 2026.

France asked whether AI-assisted tools for the literature survey training would be included, and about the timing of launch of the call for proposals, expressing concerns about the call being launched and closing during the summer. Luxembourg sought clarification on the operational aspects of Lot 2, specifically whether it involved harmonizing existing data rather

than collecting new data. There were general discussions about the need for flexibility in the timeline to ensure broad participation and the importance of harmonizing data collection processes to improve interoperability.

8.3 Support Office for Pesticide Risk Assessment: an interim update

Manuela Tiramani (EFSA) provided an update on the SOPRA initiative, emphasising the need for collaboration and partnerships to enhance the pesticide review process. SOPRA project aims to support MSs from the assessment report preparation throughout the peer review process. She highlighted the importance of integrating MS expertise and resources to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

EFSA emphasised the need for collaboration and detailed planning to ensure the success of the SOPRA initiative, reiterating the significance of partnerships and the importance of MS actively participating in the SOPRA initiative, highlighting however several challenges for its operation. Furthermore, the EC acknowledged the challenges faced in the pesticide review process and expressed support for assisting the MS in the risk assessment of pesticides. It emphasised the need for a coordinated approach and the importance of leveraging existing resources and expertise within MSs. The EC also highlighted that, in consultation with EFSA, will explore any other potential solutions to support MS in conducting timely risk assessments of pesticides. France indicated that the reasons which led EFSA to propose SOPRA are structural reasons. Perhaps there could be other approaches to address them, with a burden for all parties as low as possible; the need is clear and France hopes that discussions can continue, even among AF members, to think of other possible approaches. Overall, the discussion underscored that while the SOPRA initiative is promising, it requires further reflection on the way forward on how to address this subject.

Day 2

Item 9: Horizon Scanning 2025 - first report

Bernard Bottex (EFSA) presented several key signals identified through the EFSA horizon scanning activities. First was clean chemistry, with a note of the environmental benefits of replacing synthetic chemicals with green alternatives, particularly in packaging and preservatives. He assured that existing regulations would ensure proper risk assessment of these chemicals. Next, the risks associated with organic farming, such as microbiological contamination due to the absence of pesticides, have been discussed. Bernard confirmed that tightened regulations for organic certification are already in place to address these concerns. The emerging trend of GLP-1 agonist drugs, initially developed for diabetes but now popular for weight loss, was then highlighted. Bernard explained that while these drugs impact nutritional needs, GLP-1 friendly labeling would not be authorized in Europe, mitigating potential market changes. He also mentioned the low demand for meat alternatives like insects and cellular products in Europe, which keeps these products expensive and does not affect current strategies. Regarding veterinary medicines for insects, it was clarified that insect welfare is outside current legislation and pathogens affecting insects are considered in novel food assessments. Bernard also highlighted the issue of carbon offsetting through monoculture and non-endemic species, which could introduce invasive species. Bernard concluded by addressing the ongoing revision of EU waste and packaging legislation, including the implications for using oceans for biopolymers and other applications. Next steps in terms of scanning activities include a multi-agency project to build relevant scenarios, with a workshop planned for November.

The Netherlands emphasised the importance of developing scenarios in foresight activities and highlighted the potential future significance of technologies like artificial meat, vertical farming, and precision agriculture. The need to consider societal movements towards legislation on topics like insect welfare was also noted. Luxembourg expressed satisfaction with the inter-agency collaboration on emerging risks and suggested including a timeline for follow-up actions on identified signals. Moreover, the country questioned the multiplication of terminologies related to signals, threats, opportunities, and innovations. France highlighted the importance of having a shared taxonomy and classification for signals and alerts, suggesting, for collective thought, the issue of having a same scale of outputs (which EFSA has a "traffic light" on status of work, there is also a need on the type of outcome at a given point of time). He also suggested to reflect on the granularity of events to be considered.

Germany highlighted the need to redefine waste, particularly in the context of feeding practices, noting that while waste can be used to feed fish globally, it is not permitted in Europe. The country also discussed the ongoing work on agroterrorism and food defense, emphasising the importance of including feed defense and tox defense, especially in the context of military actions. The need for traceability and resilience strategies was stressed. Finally, Germany pointed out the significant influence of technology on food safety, including methodologies to reduce waste and feed the growing population.

Item 10: Update on Scientific Activities

10.1.a EFSA

Carlos das Neves (EFSA) introduced the block on scientific activities by highlighting several ongoing and upcoming projects. He mentioned two new self-mandated guidances by EFSA: one on genotoxicity, which aims to harmonize existing documents and methodologies, and another on the implementation of nano guidances, focusing on harmonizing their application across different domains. Additionally, Carlos provided an update on the upcoming statement on the safety of cannabidiol, which will incorporate new literature and is expected to be adopted in the summer. He also discussed a mandate related to avian influenza, emphasizing the development of communication materials to raise awareness about biosecurity measures in poultry farms.

On EFSA mandates of potential MS interest, France indicated that for guidance on nanomaterials in food, France has its own guidance document but the aim is for convergence, to have a unique ahd shared guidance document.

Following the presentation, Sweden provided insights into an ongoing project at the Swedish Veterinary Institute. The project aims to develop a light method for expert knowledge elicitation (EKE) to complement EFSA's existing guidelines. This new approach is intended to be used in situations with time constraints, limited resources, and experts with limited training in EKE. The project is expected to report its findings by the end of the year.

Italy briefly described the "MitiClima" project, which evaluates the impact of global warming on the pathogenic bacteria and antibiotic-resistant genes in marine plankton communities and mussels. The study involves collecting samples from lagoon and marine sites, followed by genomic and metagenomic characterization. The project aims to simulate future scenarios and define a model for consumer exposure linked to muscle consumption, with an interim report expected in the first quarter of 2026.

Furthermore, Valeriu Curtui (EFSA) provided an update on the assessment of styrene in food contact materials. EFSA was asked to evaluate the genotoxicity of styrene and, during the assessment, it learned that the Dutch Health Council (DHC) was also working on styrene. Despite initial communication challenges, a meeting was held where both parties agreed there was no divergence in their conclusions when considering the context of their assessments. EFSA's opinion, concluding no genotoxicity via oral exposure, was adopted in May 2025 and will be published soon. EFSA emphasised the importance of better coordination and information sharing among MSs to avoid similar issues in the future, including the need for better mechanisms to share information on planned risk assessments that may impact EFSA and other agencies like ECHA and EMA.

10.1.b Member States (MSs)

Cyprus presented their risk assessment plan on dietary exposure to copper. Due to, high copper concentrations found in liver samples and of copper's cultural and historical relevance, Cyprus decided to conduct a detailed risk assessment using data from approximately 1300 food samples collected between 2019 and 2024. The assessment will use deterministic risk assessment models and food consumption data from a national dietary survey funded by EFSA. The goal is to evaluate copper exposure from various food sources and its potential toxicity, considering copper's essential role and background exposure. Cyprus will complete the chronic exposure assessment for copper using the Cyprus SGL's deterministic model ImproRisk. They will use food consumption data from a national dietary survey funded by EFSA and perform risk characterization using health-based values. An interim report is expected in the first quarter of 2026.

Slovakia is conducting a project on food safety supported by whole genome sequencing (WGS) to type zoonotic bacteria from food samples. The initial phase focuses on sequencing selected isolates of Salmonella, Listeria, Campylobacter, and E. coli, including serotyping, identification of virulence and antimicrobial resistance genes, and phylogenetic analysis. Priority is given to isolates related to human diseases. The project aims to link data from different sectors, such as public health and environment, within the One Health approach. Slovakia confirmed that the data will be shared within the EFSA database.

The Netherlands presented their work on the risk assessment of highly pathogenic avian influenza virus (HPAIV) in dairy products. They focused on identifying treatment methods to make milk and dairy products from infected farms safe for consumption. Pasteurization was found to be effective, while thermisation was not. The virus is stable at general storage conditions, and exposure through raw milk is likely. The main risk group includes people involved in the milking process. Further work is needed on other exposure routes such as manure, meat, and animal byproducts. France and Luxembourg provided comments, emphasising the importance of adopting a One Health approach and of reducing the chance for virus mutation by reducing exposures (for example, occupational exposures), and sharing information on related research.

France provided an update on several activities: (1) e risk assessment conducted to establish Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) for Delta-Methrin in kiwi fruits. This assessment was initiated to support urgent national decisions under Article 53 of regulation EC 1107/2009, addressing a specific situation raised to the Ministry in charge of agriculture. (2) France highlighted an ongoing assessment of workers' exposure to hazardous chemicals in the cut flower sector. This assessment follows a the formal recognition of causal contribution of child cancer linked to occupational pesticide exposure. The focus is on evaluating exposure throughout the entire production chain, from production to customer, and may include conducting exposure studies to gather necessary data. (3) France mentioned recent work on isoflavones in food, particulaly in school catering.(4) A final point was about a new mandate to ANSES on natural mineral water treatment following the "Nestle Water" case in France which led to a Senatorial Commission enquiry. French authorities advocate for a consideration at European level of this question of what type of treatment can be accepted for "natural mineral water", therefore as part of the mandate, there will be benchmark of practices around Europe, by launching a multi-lateral request, among others via the network of EFSA national focal points.

In response, the EC representative noted that he would inform the relevant colleagues who work with the directive on natural mineral water to see if there are any plans for joint actions or follow-up at the European level.

10.2 Update on activities on contaminants

a. Dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in food

Luisa Ramos Bordajandi (EFSA) presented the progress on updating the assessment of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in food in view of the new toxic equivalency factors established by WHO in 2022. EFSA invited MSs to contribute to the public consultation, which is foreseen between November 2025 and February 2026. During the public consultation, a webinar will be held aimed at presenting the outcomes of the updated draft assessment. Participation of MS to the webinar is encouraged. The updated risk assessment is expected to be finalised by April 2026.

Action 5.a: EFSA to inform MS about the launch of the public consultation of the draft assessment and the date of the webinar.

Action 5.b: MS to encourage submission of comments to the Public Consultation from the relevant entities in their MSs.

b. Smoked Food

Elena Rovesti (EFSA) presented the mandate on assessing the safety of smoked foods produced using conventional smoking processes, focusing on identifying contaminants consistently found in smoked foods. Specifically, this mandate will assess the components assessed to be of concern in the evaluated smoke flavouring primary products as well as other contaminants of potential health concern of conventional smoking processes, in particular polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH). Therefore, the mandate covers all contaminants which might be present in conventionally smoked fish, meat, cheese, but also spices and salt. EFSA invited MSs to contribute data on occurrence and smoking processes through the call for data, emphasising the importance of this data for the dietary exposure assessment planned for early 2026.

France inquired whether the assessment excludes the possibility of newly formed components due to smoking. Germany questioned the rationale behind the assessment, expressing concerns about the implications of evaluating traditional food processing methods and the potential impact on consumer behavior and public perception. Denmark inquired whether the focus of the smoked foods assessment is solely on chemical contaminants. It was mentioned that in Denmark, there are also discussions about traditional smoking methods concerning microbiological hazards, such as bacterial or parasitic contamination.

The EC explained that the mandate for assessing smoked foods was initiated following concerns raised during discussions about the safety of smoke flavorings. The eight smoke flavorings were not reauthorised due to genotoxicity concerns. MSs requested a comparative risk assessment between these smoke flavorings and conventional smoking processes. However, developing a methodology for such a comparative assessment was found to be unfeasible within a reasonable timeframe. Consequently, the EC requested EFSA to assess the safety of foods smoked using conventional processes. The aim is to ensure that smoked foods are as safe as possible by potentially regulating contaminants found in these foods, following the principle of keeping levels as low as reasonably achievable through good smoking practices. The EC emphasised that the intention is not to prohibit traditional smoking methods but to improve food safety.

Action 6: MS to provide EFSA with occurrence and process data on smoked foods, including smoked spices and salt as these could be used as alternative for the use of smoke flavourings

c. Upcoming activities for engagement

Chantra Eskes (EFSA) provided an overview of the ongoing and upcoming mandates within the contaminants team, highlighting the need for engagement and data collection from MSs. She mentioned several public consultations planned for 2025 and 2026, including topics such as Delta 8 THC, plant lectins, emerging novel BFRs, and dioxins. She emphasised the importance of data collection for various mandates, including conventionally smoked food, matrine and oxymatrine in food, phomopsins in feed and food, semicarbazide in food, thebaine and oripavine in poppy seeds, and organophosphate flame retardants in food and drinking water. The data is crucial for conducting accurate risk assessments and ensuring food safety.

Action 7.a: EFSA to inform MS about the public consultations and data needs.

Action 7.b: MS to:

- engage with relevant MS entities to contribute with current data needs
- encourage submission of comments to the up-to-come Public Consultation from the relevant entities in their MSs.

10.3 Update on activities on PFAS

a. EFSA activities

Manuela Tiramani (EFSA) presented the increasing concern regarding PFAS pesticides. She highlighted that 59 PFAS pesticides have undergone peer review, with many not approved due to their properties. The main concern is the persistent metabolite TFA, which can be found in soil and groundwater. EFSA is working on setting reference values for TFA, with a statement expected by February 2026. Additionally, the Commission is considering a joint mandate to EFSA-ECHA to assess TFA formation and exposure in soil and groundwater based on shortcomings that have been identified in some assessments and research, in particular due to limitations with OECD 307.

Chantra Eskes (EFSA) continued with a debrief on the meeting held by the WHO Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on PFAS Assessment on 24-27 February 2025, to which EFSA attended as observer. The meeting discussed Phase 1 of the assessment which aimed at 1) identifying the key PFAS and health effects of ingested PFAS through a landscape review of the key health effects and environmental (e.g. drinking water) or dietary occurrence evidence, and (2) develop methodology (e.g. systematic review general approach and template) for phase 2 derivation of HBGV values for PFAS, based on key health effects for key PFAS identified under activity 1. Furthermore, EFSA was requested in the context of PARC WP5 to provide a list of priority substances for which data gaps were identified. Such substances should not be already part of a regulatory requirement, should not be associated to an industry, and the suggested studies should be feasible. Therefore, food and feed contaminants appeared as appropriate candidates. The CONTAM Panel, CONTAM Team

and EC DG SANTE were consulted. Based on the priority list obtained, the CONTAM Panel suggested PARC WP5 to investigate PFASs, and in particular derive Relative Potency Factors of PFASs that mostly contribute to human exposure, regarding their effects in reducing antibody responses at low doses.

France mentioned that there was a presentation to the PFAS Initiative of PARC's activities on PFAS and that this presentation could be shared with the AF, if there is an interest. It was mentioned that ANSES (France) had declined to work on a mandate to establish a toxicological reference value for TFA, to rely instead on EFSA's ongoing work. France also noted that for every PFAS, not just for TFA, risk managers have to use temporary values, relying on what is available, and that for TFA, in the absence of finalized reference values, they rely on interim management values for TFA; there are several such values which are of interest to be shared.

Action 8: EFSA to inform MS about the WHO webinar to take place in fall 2025

b. PFAS international conference

Jorge Numata (BfR) updated the plenary on the international conference "PFAS – Challenges and Scientific Perspectives in Human Health Risk Assessment", organised by BfR on 8-10 October 2025 in Berlin. The main topics are Targeted and Untargeted Analytical Methods, External and Internal Exposure, Toxicokinetics, Toxicity, In Silico Methods and New Approach Methodologies. Furthermore, there will be a satellite meeting of the Risk Assessors Team (RAT) of the TMA EU MS PFAS initiative group in the morning of 8 October 2025. MSs have been encouraged to register and participate in the conference.

France emphasised the importance of addressing PFAS as persistent contaminants, similar to what has been done for PCBs and to learn from the approaches used for PCBs and other families, and highlighted the need for a homogeneous approach to handling the risks there are numerous exposure routes for PFAS, including food, water, and consumer goods.

Action 9: MS to register for the upcoming PFAS conference in Berlin on 8 to 10 October

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Action reference	Who	Agenda topic	What
Action 1	MS	6 - Risk Assessment Initiatives Hub	MS to start using the new Hub for sharing risk assessment plans and collaboration proposals
Action 2	MS	7.1 - FP Health check update	MS to participate in the FP "Health check" online workshop, on the 4th and 5th of November
Action 3	MS	7.2 - FP TM activities: Overview of proposals received during 2025	MS to check TMA proposals which are looking for partners and seek participation as partners or observers
Action 4	MS	8 - Current partnership opportunities	MS to apply and/or promote through their national networks, the calls presented at the meeting (list available here)
Action 5.a	EFSA	10.2.a - Dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs	EFSA to inform MS about the launch of the public consultation of the draft assessment and the date of the webinar
Action 5.b	MS	10.2.a - Dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs	MS to encourage submission of comments to the Public Consultation from the relevant entities in their MSs
Action 6	MS	10.2.b - Smoked Food	MS to provide EFSA with occurrence and process data on smoked foods, including smoked spices and salt as these could be used as alternative for the use of smoke flavourings
Action 7.a	EFSA	10.2.c - Upcoming activities for engagement	EFSA to inform MS about the public consultations and data needs
Action 7.b	MS	10.2.c - Upcoming activities for engagement	MS to: ▪ engage with relevant MS entities to contribute with current data needs • encourage submission of comments to the up-to-come Public Consultation from the relevant entities in their MSs
Action 8	EFSA	10.3.a EFSA activities	EFSA to inform MS about the WHO webinar to take place in fall 2025
Action 9	MS	10.3.b PFAS international conference	MS to register for the upcoming PFAS conference in Berlin on 8 to 10 October