97th MEETING OF THE EFSA ADVISORY FORUM

08 October 2025: 9:30-13:00
09 October 2025: 9:30-13:00

EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY

Location: Web-conference

Members	Attendance
Austria (AT)	Johann Steinwider
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 Götzová
Denmark (DK)	Dorte Lau Baggesen
Denmark (DK)	Martin Bahl
Estonia (EE)	Mari Reinik
Estonia (EE)	Piret Priisalu
Finland (FI)	Leena Räsänen
France (FR)	Matthieu Schuler
France (FR)	Salma Elreedy
Germany (DE)	Tewes Tralau
Greece (GR)	Danai Papanastasiou
Hungary (HU)	Ákos Bernard Józwiak
Ireland (IE)	Wayne Anderson
Italy (IT)	Denise Giacomini
Italy (IT)	Alessandra Perella
Latvia (LV)	Vadims Bartkevics
Luxembourg (LU)	Caroline Merten
Malta (MT)	Mark Cassar
Netherlands (NL)	Dick Sijm
Netherlands (NL)	Godelieve Kranendonk
Norway (NO)	Danika Grahek-Ogden
Poland (PL)	Jacek Postupolski
Portugal (PT)	Luis Lourenço
Romania (RO)	Monica Mariana Neagu
Slovak Republic (SK)	Petra Vanková
Slovak Republic (SK)	Kristína Lépesová
Slovenia (SI)	Urška Blaznik
Spain (ES)	Ana López-Santacruz Serraller
Sweden (SE)	Helena Brunnkvist

Observers	Attendance
Albania (AL)	Polikseni Drazho
Bosnia and Herzegovina (BA)	Sanin Tankovic
Kosovo*	Hoxha Bekim
Montenegro (ME)	Vladimir Djakovic
Montenegro (ME)	Mirjana Lekic
Republic of North Macedonia (MK)	Oliver Milanov
Republic of North Macedonia (MK)	Martin Josheski
Serbia (SR)	Tamara Boskovic
Switzerland (CH)	Katharina Stärk
Türkiye (TR)	Mehmet Ali Unverdi
European Commission (EC)	Anastasia Alvizou
European Commission (EC)	Athanasios Raikos
European Commission (EC)	Barbara Moretti
External speakers	
BfR (Germany)	Carsten Kneuer
EFSA Representatives	
Nikolaus Kriz (Chair)	Barbara Gallani (Co-Chair)
Bénédicte Vagenende (Co-Chair)	Guilhem de Sèze (Co-Chair)
Carlos Das Neves (Co-Chair)	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)
Lucian Farcal (Speaker)	Frank Verdonck (Speaker)
Cristina Alonso Andicoberry (Speaker)	Gorgias Garofalakis (Speaker)
Chantra Eskes (Speaker)	Alexis Nathanail (Speaker)
Mary Gilsenan (Speaker)	Sandra Rainieri (Speaker)
Camilla Smeraldi (Speaker)	Bernard Bottex (Speaker)
Francesca Avanzini (Speaker)	Joana Sousa Lourenço (Speaker)

Contents

Item 1: Welcome and adoption of the agenda

Nikolaus Kriz opened the 97th meeting of the Advisory Forum (AF) as the Chair by welcoming the participants of the AF joining the meeting online. 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 96th Advisory Forum** meeting were published on EFSA website.

Item 2: New Executive Director's strategic outlook

The Chair outlined EFSA's strategic focus on greater speed, innovation, and collaboration to keep pace with scientific and digital developments. In response, the Netherlands emphasised joint efforts and prioritisation across agencies, while Hungary highlighted the need for agility in data and AI, ecosystem partnerships, and social science integration. France highlighted two needs: to further strengthen collaboration with other EU agencies (namely ECHA and EEA) since chemical risks don't know regulatory borders, and to define priorities together in terms of scientific and health needs (and not based on mediatic and societal pressures). Germany stressed the need to an early and unified communication, while Denmark called for closer dialogue with industry and Spain advocated for social sciences in communication. The European Commission (DG SANTE) confirmed the alignment with EU priorities and upcoming collaborative initiatives.

Item 3: Update on Advisory Group on Data

Akos Jozwiak (Hungary) presented an update on the Advisory Group on Data (AGoD), covering recent meetings and key activities. He highlighted varying levels of artificial intelligence (AI) engagement across countries, ongoing challenges in data mapping and standardisation, and the need for more capacity building in AI literacy. He also discussed the relevance of the European Health Data Space as a model for a potential food data space, the importance of explainable AI in regulatory science, and the value of cross-cutting discussions among AGoD subgroups. He mentioned ongoing and new tailor-made data projects, the updated AGoD roadmap, and plans for a future data symposium focused on AI literacy and people readiness.

The Netherlands responded to the AGoD presentation by noting the impressive scale of the European Health Data Space and the importance of learning from such initiatives. The Netherlands reflected on the Dataflow project, acknowledging that it revealed many flaws in their national system and highlighted the complexity of managing numerous data flows and providers. They also emphasised the challenge of effectively utilizing all available information in an ecosystem approach, especially as more data sources, including industry, become involved, and expressed willingness to continue collaborating on these challenges. Akos agreed with that consideration, stating that the dataflow project confirmed known issues but now provides a structured way to address them. He emphasised using AGoD and EFSA coordination to identify common problems and solutions, especially around harmonisation and standardisation, and suggested leveraging new AI tools and pilot projects to tackle these challenges quickly. The Chair asked if the dataflow project addressed data ownership issues. Akos clarified that the project did not focus on data ownership but observed related issues, emphasising a shift toward data sovereignty—prioritising access, control, and confidentiality over traditional ownership. He committed to advancing this broader perspective in future discussions.

Item 4: Update on Advisory Group on Biomarkers of Effect

Lucian Farcal (EFSA) introduced the newly formed Advisory Group on Biomarkers of Effect (AGoB), which aims to provide advice in developing guidance on the use of biomarkers of effect in risk assessment. The group's early collaborative approach, bringing together different member states and agencies from the outset, was praised as a model for successful joint guidance development.

France sought clarity on two points: the number of applicants for the position of chair, highlighting the need for a strong scientific background but also the need to consider science-to-policy issues when defining reference values so a candidate from a risk assessment agency would be of interest, and on the process envisaged for a formal engagement of EMA and ECHA. EFSA explained that there was only one expression of interest from Greece, considered by AGoB as a good candidate for the position, as asked AF for his endorsement. EFSA further indicated that a joint mandate with EMA and ECHA is under discussion but not yet formalised. The European Commission, namely DG SANTE, clarified that they strongly encourage the development of a common guidance document on biomarkers of effect, supporting the creation of a joint mandate involving EFSA, EMA and ECHA, and mentioned that this topic will be discussed in an upcoming EC inter-service group meeting, with the aim of bringing this mandate forward.

Luxembourg asked for clarification on whether the guidance would follow the usual Scientific Committee process and how expert selection and conflict of interest screening would work. EFSA explained that the guidance is being developed under the Scientific Committee with standard adoption procedures, and experts can be involved through various mechanisms, including as representatives of the AF, members of the Scientific Committee's WG or as hearing experts.
The Netherlands pointed out the scientific and procedural challenges of linking biomarkers of effect to adverse outcomes and reference points. They also highlighted the difficulty of aligning across different agencies and legislative frameworks and encouraged the group to consider flexible approaches such as weight-of-evidence alongside traditional test guidelines. EFSA assured that the new guidance will be broad and practical, covering both established and newer approaches and drawing upon knowledge from other frameworks to ensure usability for risk assessors and applicants.

Finally, the Chair emphasised the value of the advisory group as a collaborative platform to develop guidance in this complex and evolving field, with the goal of achieving joint EU or even global standards. Testing this collaborative method is seen as vital for building consensus across agencies.

Item 5: Current Partnerships Opportunities

5.a Overview

The Co-Chair, Carlos Das Neves (EFSA), presented an update on the calls with partnership relevance with a launch date between the Advisory Forum in progress and the next one in December. He expanded on the only call without a dedicated presentation, which brings together developments of the EFSA geospatial data platform with climate-based analysis.

5.b Update on the EU FORA programme

Cristina Alonso Andicoberry (EFSA) provided an update on the EU FORA fellowship programme reporting continued strong participation. She reflected on the recently introduced pilot, under which EU FORA becomes more impactful from a capacity building perspective and offers higher partnership potential, reporting that the up-take has been very satisfactory. In addition to that, EFSA presented two soon-to-be launched calls under the EU FORA programme: one for the framework contract for the provision of the horizontal training modalities and, the second one, the annual call for the selection of hosting sites and fellows. For the latter, the pilot elements (importantly, the list of mini-projects) will be maintained.

Spain highlighted their strong support and satisfaction with the EU FORA programme, emphasising its value for developing future risk assessors. They noted their active participation in hosting and sending fellows, praised the consortium model, described national initiatives to welcome fellows, and reaffirmed Spain's ongoing commitment and appreciation for EFSA's efforts. The Netherlands expressed strong support for EU FORA, noting its effectiveness in promoting EFSA's work among Dutch institutions and highlighting the value of complementary capacity-building activities like tailor-made projects and educational initiatives.

Gorgias Garofalakis (EFSA) emphasised that EU FORA is an ideal programme for both large and small organizations, supporting capacity building and benefiting participants regardless of their experience level.

Concluding, the Co-Chair highlighted the need for continued and broader engagement in EU FORA, encouraged all member states to participate actively, and noted that the programme offers opportunities for both sending and hosting fellows, with a focus on supporting new generations and innovative approaches

5.c Joint programming on vector-borne diseases

Frank Verdonck (EFSA) presented a new four-year, €6 million grant initiative to coordinate and strengthen risk assessment of vector-borne diseases across EU member states, focusing on capacity building, developing a shared roadmap, and fostering collaboration tailored to regional needs. EFSA emphasised that Chief Veterinary Officers (CVO) strongly support the vector-borne diseases initiative, and highlighted the high level of interest and readiness among member states to participate.

Participants expressed some concerns about forming consortia for the vector-borne diseases call. There was some uncertainty over which organisations should take the lead within each geographical lot, and how to identify and coordinate with potential leaders. This led to calls for clearer communication and collaboration among member states, with suggestions to use CVO or direct contact between AF members to facilitate consortium building and avoid unnecessary competition.

France suggested direct contact between AF members and the need to focus on risk assessment in support of risk management (not on research) and made two remarks: the importance of sharing surveillance data (beyond data on geographic expansion of vectors, data on density of vectors and whether they bear diseases), and asked whether socioeconomic analysis, which is at the interface between risk assessment and risk management, could be addressed in the answer to the call. The Netherlands stressed the need to leverage expertise across regions, rather than being restricted by geography. Participants also sought clarification on eligibility, especially for countries located between regions or those outside the EU. Additionally, Luxembourg noted about overlapping initiatives and the challenge of integrating animal and human health perspectives, highlighting the need for a more coordinated, One Health approach.

EFSA clarified that forming consortia and choosing leaders is the responsibility of Member States, recommending national coordination. Organisations can apply to multiple geographical lots if they provide national-level risk assessment for vector-borne diseases, with CVO confirmation required.

EFSA confirmed that the initiative encourages broad participation, mapping of expertise, and coordination with existing projects like VectorNet to connect relevant experts. While acknowledging the challenge of overlapping initiatives and the importance of a One Health approach, EFSA emphasised that the current call is a pilot focused on animal health, with future integration of human health perspectives possible. EFSA encouraged participants to communicate actively, attend the upcoming webinar for guidance (https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/webinar-joint-programming-risk-assessments-vector-borne-diseases), and assured that smaller countries should feel empowered to take on leadership roles if able.

Item 6: Focal Point Operational Framework 2023-2027

Update on the tailor-made activities prioritised to be granted as of 2026

Sérgio Potier Rodeia (EFSA) provided an update on the Focal Point framework, highlighting ongoing high interest in tailor-made activities, the prioritisation process, and plans for a joint workshop to design the future operational framework, emphasising continued collaboration, simplification, and alignment with EFSA's strategic objectives

Member States provided practical and positive feedback on the Focal Point health check. The Netherlands sought clarity on workshop scheduling to manage their agenda, while Ireland commended the success of tailor-made activities and inquired about joining the future framework task force. Hungary highlighted the remarkable progress of the tailor-made framework and anticipated valuable discussions on lessons learned. Austria asked about the future of Member State Communication Coordinators, receiving confirmation from EFSA that support and funding would continue, with the goal of full participation and integration into the broader risk communication strategy.

The Chair concluded that the meeting's focus on innovation and collaboration is essential for EFSA's future. He emphasised that increased funding from the Transparency Regulation should be used to benefit member states, not just EFSA, and that continued engagement and joint efforts are necessary to avoid isolation and strengthen the European food safety project. He also encouraged everyone to keep pushing collaborative initiatives and highlighted the importance of joining forces for greater impact.

Day 2

Item 7: Update on scientific activities

7.1 PFAS

7.1.a EFSA

Chantra Eskes (EFSA) presented an overview of the PFAS upcoming multi-agency knowledge-sharing event and invited all the participants to register. In response to a question, she confirmed that the trifluoroacetic acid (TFA) safety reference value assessment had completed public consultation, with comments under review and a detailed update planned for the November meeting.

7.1.b MS Initiative Group

Matthieu Schuler (France) provided an update on the Initiative Group's work, which operates through two groups: a Risk Assessors Team (RAT) (co-chaired by Germany and The Netherlands) and a Steering Board (co-chaired by France and The Netherlands). He highlighted the achievements so far: sharing information, identifying gaps, and common concerns like TFA, indicating that a roadmap for the Initiative's future work had been drafted by the Dutch AF member.

France mentioned that ANSES had recently finished its work (https://www.anses.fr/en/content/broadening-the-monitoring-of-PFAS) on a mandate that processed over 2 million data points for 147 PFAS, but acknowledged the challenge posed by thousands of PFAS substances. They stressed the need to avoid "bad surprises" by considering unknown or common metabolites and advocated for vigilance beyond PFAS, reminding the Forum not to overlook other persistent contaminants such as dioxins and PAHs. Matthieu concluded by inviting The Netherlands (Steering Board co-chair) to take the floor, especially regarding the roadmap for future work.

The Netherlands supported France's points, expressing appreciation for the high level of interaction, energy, and information sharing within the risk assessment team. They also highlighted the value of the Initiative but stressed the ongoing need for coordinated action due to remaining scientific and societal questions, including those from governments and the public. In addition, the Netherlands suggested that the roadmap for future work, currently being drafted, should be shared with Advisory Forum members for feedback at the next meeting.

The European Commission highlighted the significance of the Advisory Forum's PFAS initiative and the value of member state collaboration, viewing it as a strong example of what can be achieved through joint efforts. They reminded participants of the Commission's 2022 recommendation for member states and food business operators to monitor a wide range of PFAS in foods from 2022 to 2025. They stated that the collected data is expected by mid-2026, after which EFSA will be asked to summarize the occurrence data and consider whether an updated EFSA opinion on PFAS is needed. They expressed appreciation for the work of France and the Netherlands in leading this initiative.

Co-Chair Barbara Gallani (EFSA) acknowledged the extensive PFAS work at both European and international levels, noting the involvement of WHO and the potential for further global collaboration, including with organizations outside Europe. EFSA provided an update on the TFA assessment, confirming the public consultation had closed, 150 comments were received, and the final delivery is targeted for the end of February next year, with ongoing coordination between EFSA and ECHA.

France thanked the European Commission for the intervention, noting that the extensive data collection work in France includes increased efforts in the food domain and that the ANSES report and opinion will be published soon, with methodologies that could be useful for broader European monitoring. Regarding the last point Guilhem raised, about using the Initiative Group to collect research needs and to liaise with PARC (Partnership for the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals), France confirmed that data gaps and knowledge needs are being identified and shared within the Initiative Group, and that there is an existing connection with PARC, which is actively engaged on PFAS. France also mentioned the importance of acting quickly if new research needs are to be addressed by PARC, given the limited remaining duration of PARC.

7.2 New Compendium of Botanicals database

Alexis Nathanail (EFSA) introduced the updated EFSA's Compendium of Botanicals database, highlighting its expanded data, new functionalities and integration of toxicity data and predictive quantitative structure-activity relationship (QSAR) models to support risk assessment for botanicals and botanical preparations used in food and feed. The database remains open-source, and now offers enhanced search, filtering and data export features for users.

The Netherlands recognised the botanical database as a significant resource for both EFSA and wider regulatory communities, drawing attention to international partnerships and expressing a keen interest in the technical details behind the predictive models used, with hopes for more quantitative methods in the future. France valued the database's practical design and sought clarification on whether its scope extended beyond impacts on human health (via novel foods and food supplements) to domains like human medicines and feed additives, while also asking about collaboration with EMA, mentioning the national experience of working closely with the national agency in charge of human drugs which has part of the data on the toxicology of plants. Austria welcomed the database and inquired about the frequency of updates, confirming its public accessibility. Hungary saw the database as a model for other fields and was particularly interested in future plans for automation and AI-driven updates, as well as the potential for evolving the database structure to support more advanced data analysis.

EFSA addressed the Member States' questions by first explaining that the predictive models used in the botanical database are internationally recognised, externally developed and used also by other international organisations, with detailed methodology and links provided in the user guide. EFSA noted that a scientific publication is planned to further clarify the technical aspects related to the QSAR models and the various endpoint outcomes. On collaboration, EFSA confirmed on-going discussions with EMA, stating that EFSA will be invited to EMA's Committee on Herbal Medicinal Products to inform the committee about the Compendium of Botanicals, explore shared interests, especially since some plants are relevant to both food and drug domains. He clarified that the database's current focus is on food and feed, but its information could be valuable for other uses. Regarding updates, EFSA also explained that the database will remain static for about a year to allow users to familiarise themselves and provide feedback through a future survey with relevant stakeholders. Based on this feedback, EFSA will decide on future updates and maintenance, potentially incorporating AI to streamline evidence gathering. He also confirmed that the database is fully open-access, and while it currently allows for relational queries within its interface, further enhancements will be considered after the feedback phase.

7.3 MS RA plans; mandates; public consultations; events; RA updates

7.3.a Overview

Co-Chair Guilhem de Sèze (EFSA) presented an overview of ongoing and upcoming EFSA and Member State risk assessment activities, highlighting key mandates, public consultations, and collaborative opportunities, with a focus on sharing relevant updates to foster connections and inform future work. After the risk assessment presentation, EFSA highlighted two mandates, one

on phasing out the 90-day oral toxicity study in rodents for enzymes and another on waiving dog studies for pesticides and agrochemicals, as key examples of EFSA's contribution to the European roadmap for phasing out animal testing. He emphasised the strategic importance of these initiatives, noting their alignment with broader EU efforts to integrate new approach methodologies across more than 15 legal frameworks, including those managed by EFSA, ECHA, and EMA. EFSA informed the participants that an update on their contributions would be provided once the Commission's roadmap is published, currently expected in the coming months, and encouraged participants to keep these developments in mind due to their potential to significantly change risk assessment practices.

Estonia described a national study prompted by concerns over excessive food supplement consumption, especially among groups taking multiple products, with preliminary findings showing high usage rates and potential risks of exceeding safe intake levels for vitamins like vitamin D. They also noted collaboration with Latvia and Lithuania on best practices for communicating supplement-related topics and expressed willingness to share study results with the Advisory Forum in the future.

France raised two main points: first, asking whether food supplement limits should be based on safe upper intake levels or on actual nutritional needs, leaving that as an open issue for further discussion; second, they commented on the short notice for an upcoming important workshop (on EFSA's Genotoxicity Guidance Revision), suggesting that more advance notice would be beneficial for better participation. France also informed the group about a future joint conference organised by ANSES, BfR, and DTU-Food, planned for late 2026, focusing on data and AI use in surveillance and risk assessment in food safety, animal and plant health, which will be organised back-to-back with an ILMERAC (International Liaison Group on Methods for Risk Assessment of Chemicals in Food and Feed) meeting.

EFSA acknowledged the importance of Estonia's study on food supplements, highlighting its relevance given rising concerns in both the EU and US about supplement overuse and related health risks. He supported the idea of sharing Estonia's findings with the Advisory Forum. After France intervention, Guilhem thanked them for the feedback on workshop notice timing and expressed interest in the announced 2026 conference on AI and data for risk assessment, committing to follow up for more details.

Spain provided two key updates: first, Spanish national food safety agency is preparing a scientific opinion on the risk-benefit balance of fish consumption, focusing on methylmercury and selenium, with results expected by March 2026. Second, the agency plans to celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2026 and will contact EFSA to organize a joint event in Madrid, inviting representatives from Member States, associates, and candidates.

7.3.b Upcoming mandate on microplastics

Mary Gilsenan (EFSA) announced that EFSA is expecting to receive a mandate on microplastics in food from the European Parliament, seeking Member State collaboration and expert input. Germany welcomed EFSA's new microplastics mandate and immediately offered to provide expert support, noting that they have researchers with long-standing experience in this field. The Netherlands highlighted several national and European initiatives, such as a major government-funded project and the Momentum consortium, and assured EFSA that the Netherlands would keep them informed and contribute expertise. Luxembourg asked whether the mandate would also cover exposure to microplastics through water and inhalation, suggesting these routes should be considered. France offered to nominate laboratory experts from ANSES for the working group and pointed out the ongoing challenge characterisation and assessment of the toxicity of micro- and nanoplastics, comparing it to previous work on nanomaterials.

EFSA acknowledged the valuable offers of support and expertise from Member States, emphasising the importance of coordination for the upcoming microplastics mandate. EFSA clarified that the scope is still being negotiated but currently focuses on food and welcomed suggestions to consider other exposure routes. EFSA proposed that, once the working group is ready to be established, EFSA would reach out through the Advisory Forum Secretariat to solicit expressions of interest to contribute to the WG and/or share information on relevant national initiatives. EFSA also reinforced the need for effective scoping and organisation, highlighting the Advisory Forum's role in facilitating collaboration and ensuring all relevant expertise and activities are brought together efficiently.

7.3.c Hexane as extraction solvent

Sandra Rainieri (EFSA) presented the ongoing EFSA re-evaluation of hexane as an extraction solvent, highlighting the call for data, collaboration with Member States, and the alignment with parallel regulatory assessments due to safety concerns and recent media attention.

Member States, including Slovenia, the Netherlands, and France, shared updates on their involvement in hexane assessments. Concerns were raised on regulatory processes, data provision, and potential impacts on laboratories, while Sandra acknowledged their input, emphasised the need for broad data collection from all stakeholders, and clarified EFSA's standard approach and ongoing collaboration with industry and regulatory bodies. France commended the early integration of the "one substance, one assessment" approach in the hexane re-evaluation and noted their ongoing monitoring of the restriction process and SVHC (Substance of Very High Concern) status initiated by Slovenia, also expressed its surprise that the mandate began with a general call for data rather than a more direct requirement from the EC for industry to provide updated toxicity data, given industry's vested interest and the UVCB (Substance of Unknown or Variable composition, Complex reaction products or Biological materials) nature of technical hexane. EFSA indicated that the process routinely starts with a broad call for data to gather as much information as possible, confirmed that industry associations are expected to contribute data, and reiterated the importance of collecting input from all stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive assessment.

7.3.d 2-Chloroethanol: Re-assessment of mutagenic potential and provisional dietary reference values

Carsten Kneuer (BfR) shared that recent research indicates 2-chloroethanol found in food is unlikely to pose a genetic risk at the levels consumers typically encounter. He emphasised the need for further studies and more data to confirm these findings and suggested that EU countries work together to improve monitoring and risk assessment. The presentation also touched on plans to publish the updated assessment soon and discussed the current status of EU-wide regulation, noting that while there are no immediate plans for harmonised regulation, the topic is under review by relevant committees.

7.3.e Talc: follow-up of re-evaluation as food additive

Camilla Smeraldi (EFSA) presented an update on the ongoing updated assessment of talc (E 553b) as a food additive, emphasizing its cross-sector relevance (food, feed, pesticides, medicines, cosmetics).

Talc (E553b) was previously re-evaluated by EFSA in 2018 under the frame of Regulation (EU) No 257/2010. No safety concerns were identified at the reported uses and use levels as a food additive, but uncertainties about characterisation of the material with respect to particle size and nano properties remained. Since the EFSA re-evaluation, recent IARC and ECHA classifications have been published, the latter proposing a classification as probable carcinogenic 1B (no route of exposure specified), even though evidence mainly concerns inhalation in animals and positive correlation between perineal use of talc and ovarian cancer in epidemiological studies in humans.

These latest developments will have to be taken into account in the ongoing updated EFSA opinion, already under preparation, following the receipt of a mandate from the European Commission in 2021 requesting EFSA to follow up its previous re-evaluation opinion. The updated assessment will require a full nano-specific risk evaluation, reflecting advances in methodology and guidance since the last call for data published by the European Commission in 2018. Camilla emphasized the resource-intensive nature of this work and the need for multidisciplinary expertise.

After the presentation, the Netherlands referenced a national assessment on asbestos in talc used in makeup, stressing the importance of analytical techniques for detecting impurities and offering to share relevant reports with EFSA. EFSA welcomed this, confirming that food additive talc is required to be asbestos-free and expressing interest in any additional impurity data. The exchange underscored the need for collaboration and data sharing among member states to support EFSA's comprehensive risk assessment, especially given the resource-intensive nature of nano risk evaluations and the cross-cutting regulatory implications for talc.

Item 8: Enhancing crisis preparedness

Summary of the 2025 crisis preparedness activities & 2026 exercise

Bernard Bottex (EFSA) presented an overview of EFSA's recent and upcoming crisis preparedness exercises, focussing on the exercise currently running in Berlin and co-organised with BfR. EFSA called for Member States and agencies to express interest in co-organising the 2026 crisis preparedness exercise; the "co-organisation" implies contributing to the development of the scenario and hosting the event; EFSA offers a grant to cover the related costs. The thematic identified for next year's exercise is the disruption of the food and feed manufacturing or distribution system resulting from agroterrorism, a theme raised in the previous Advisory Forum, and encouraged interested parties to contact him by the end of November to join a small working group to brainstorm on possible scenarios.

After the presentation, Hungary highlighted a new Horizon Europe project on food defence and expressed interest in collaboration. Croatia voiced strong interest in hosting the next crisis exercise and confirmed they would follow up by email. France supported the proposed theme and, while not able to host the 2026 exercise, they offered to contribute. EFSA welcomed these expressions of interest, noted positive past collaborations, and encouraged further engagement, aiming to build an active consortium for the upcoming exercise.

Item 9: Update on Communication

9.1 NoBirdFlu | Joint EFSA/EC awareness-raising campaign on HPAI biosecurity

Francesca Avanzini (EFSA) presented the #NoBirdFlu campaign, aimed at raising biosecurity awareness among farmers, veterinarians, and workers in small to medium-scale farms. The campaign features a multilingual toolkit including posters, stickers, an infographic and a social media post- which has been published on EFSA's website in September 2025. The other deliverables, a detailed audience analysis and the development of a communication strategy for an EU wide campaign, will follow in December 2025 and March 2026 respectively. The Netherlands emphasised the need to adapt materials not just linguistically but also to the operational realities of each country. They also highlighted challenges in reaching all relevant audiences, including farm workers and ancillary staff, and noted that actual behaviours might differ from interview responses, suggesting the value of observational studies. The Netherlands also discussed the need for robust indicators to measure campaign effectiveness. Several Member States stressed the importance of close collaboration for dissemination and feedback, ensuring the campaign's strategies are tailored and impactful across different national settings.

EFSA confirmed that ongoing and future campaign phases will incorporate these insights to maximise impact and relevance.

9.2 2025 Eurobarometer on Food Safety in the EU: Overview of results, products and use of findings

Joana Sousa Lourenço (EFSA) announced the 2025 Eurobarometer survey results, showing that public awareness of food safety topics has grown significantly, with more people having heard about a wide range of risks. Pesticide residues continue to be the top concern among Europeans, but there has been a notable surge in worry about microplastics, which now rank highly in several countries. While television remains the most common source of food safety information, its influence is waning as internet and social media channels become increasingly important, especially for younger audiences. The findings highlight the importance of adapting communication strategies to evolving public concerns and media habits. Trust in scientists and doctors remains very strong, and confidence in EU institutions for food safety information is also high. Additionally, more respondents now recognise that EU institutions and scientific experts play a role in food safety decision-making.

AF participants responded positively, noting the survey's usefulness for shaping national communication. France indicated that there were some surprising results for their domestic level, with rather important evolutions in confidence towards some institutions, while the questions are stable over time, and wondered whether the observed shifts in public concern and trust could possibly be linked to the timing of the survey. In March-April 2025, it was a time in France of many debates about food safety and agriculture. France also asked if the survey includes questions about nutrition since food is also a source of benefits for health. In response to EFSA's comment that costs could be looked into, France agreed that costs, but also environmental impacts, could be parameters to be included in the future. . Spain is using the results to guide campaigns, especially on pesticides. The raw data is available for further analysis.

Item 10: AOB

There were no AoB raised by the participants.

The Chair closed the session inviting all the members to take part in the 98th meeting of the Advisory Forum, which will take place on 3 and 4 December in Denmark.

ACTION POINTS

Agenda Topic	Action Point No.	Action	Deadline/Notes
3.Update on Advisory Group on Data (AGoD)	1a	MS to nominate additional participants and communicate interest to AGoD	Open deadline
	1b	MS to report domains for the upcoming data flow mapping exercise	To be announced (2026)
	1c	MS to register interest and plan participation in the 2026 Data/AI Symposium, including subgroup meetings and agenda contributions	Once officially announced
5.b Update on the EU FORA programme	2a	MS to provide feedback and suggestions to strengthen the partnership dimension and national dissemination of the EU-FORA fellowship programme	Open deadline
	2b	MS to promote the upcoming call nationally	Once launched
5.c Joint programming on vector-borne diseases	3a	MS to align with the CVO and secure a statement from the CVO confirming the organisation's role in risk assessment of vector-borne diseases and communication with national risk managers	Open deadline
	3b	MS to encourage national Art.36 organisations conducting risk assessment on vector-borne diseases (with evidence to be provded in a written statement by the CVO) to prepare applications, preferably as consortia, and apply for the grant	Deadline: 15/01/2026
	3c	MS to attend webinar on joint programming for risk assessments in vector borne diseases	Webinar: 04/11/2025; Registration until: 29/10/2025
6. Update on the tailor-made activities prioritised to be granted as of 2026	4a	MS to express interest and join as partners in prioritised tailor-made activities #1 (data mapping tool) and #7 (EURO-PAR-FISH), during the current open period	Mid December 2025
	4b	MS and EFSA to prepare for and participate in the joint Advisory Forum and Focal Points workshop on co-creation of the next focal point operational framework	Workshop: 04–05/11/2025; Registration until: 29/10/2025
Item 7: Update on scientific activities 7.1.a EFSA	5	MS to register and attend the PFAS workshop	Workshop: 17/11/2025; Registration until: 24/10/2025

7.1.b Initiative Group on PFAS	6	MS leading the Initiative Group on PFAS to share the roadmap for future work of the group	Next AF – 03 - 04/12/2025
7.2New Compendium of Botanicals database	7	EFSA to conduct a survey with relevant stakeholders regarding the use, improvements and updating with new information of the botanicals database	First half of 2026
7.3 MS RA plans; mandates; public consultations; events; RA updates 7.3.a Overview	8a	Estonia to share results of the food supplement study in a future AF meeting	Once completed
	8b	France to provide more details and formal notice for the 2026 joint conference on AI and data in risk assessment in a future AF meeting	Once the date is formalised
	8c	Spain to share with EFSA the scientific opinion on the risk-benefit balance of fish consumption	March 2026
	8d	Spain to reach out to EFSA to explore organising a joint event in Madrid for their 25th anniversary	
7.3.b Upcoming mandate on microplastics	9a	MS to propose experts	Once requested
	9b	MS to share national activities on micro and nano plastics in food to Elena.ROVESTI@efsa.europa.eu	Once available
7.3.c Hexane as Extraction Solvent	10	MS to submit any available data on hexane use, residues, exposure, and toxicology to EFSA before the call for data deadline https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/call/call-data-re-evaluation-technical-hexane-used-extraction-solvent-preparation-food-and-food Contact point in EFSA daniele.comandella@efsa.europa.eu	Deadline: 12/12/2025 (extended)
7.3.e Talc: follow-up of re-evaluation as food additive	11	The Netherlands to send their national report on asbestos in talc for consideration	Action completed
8. Summary of the 2025 crisis preparedness activities & 2026 exercise	12a	MS to express interest to co-organise with EFSA and host the 2026 External Crisis Exercise on food manufacturing/distribution disruption	End of November 2025
	12b	MS interested in contributing to the scenario development to contact EFSA	End of November 2025
	12c	Hungary to share information about the Horizon Europe "Defence Food" project for potential collaboration	Once available