

17th MEETING OF EFSA STAKEHOLDER BUREAU

VIRTUAL MEETING, 17 OCTOBER 2025



INTRODUCTION

Dr Nikolaus Kriz, the new EFSA's Executive Director since September 1, 2025, opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees, while conveying apologies from the Chair of the Management Board, who was unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict. He confirmed the Chair's participation at the upcoming Stakeholder Forum on 24 November in Brussels. Mr Kriz also welcomed a new member representing the consumers' category, Mr Samuele Tonello (BEUC), in replacement of Ms Emma Calvert who recently left the organisation.

He outlined his five-year vision for EFSA, concentrating on three specific areas: *Speed*, *Innovation*, and *Joining Forces*.

- Regarding *Speed*, EFSA is focusing efforts on reducing risk assessment time, specifically for applications and pesticides. The goal is to avoid "premature applications" (requiring intensive resources and time) by encouraging pre-submission interaction with stakeholders to achieve "mature applications". For the pesticide area, EFSA is investigating the possibility of offering pre-submission advice to Member States that lack the resources to perform this work themselves.
- Regarding *Innovation*, the focus is on utilising Artificial Intelligence (AI) safely and ethically to manage the data explosion and increasing complexity of risk assessment. While AI tools, such as Large Language Models (LLMs), are currently used for sifting literature, all material leaving EFSA must undergo validation and expert judgment to avoid the "black box phenomenon". This development is guided by the EU AI Act, which mentions regulatory sandboxes for experimentation.
- *Joining Forces* involves EFSA acting as a networking hub to connect and assist member states, thereby enhancing EFSA's overall value to EU citizens.

Stakeholder Feedback: Angeliki Lysimachou, the NGO representative, welcomed the focus on avoiding premature applications but requested clarification on the specific mechanisms EFSA or Member States would employ to prevent the acceptance of incomplete dossiers from the outset. Lorraine Maltby, the representative of Academia, raised concerns regarding AI, stressing the importance of expert judgment and the need for safeguards, given that AI can generate misleading information.

FOLLOW UP ON THE FEEDBACK RECEIVED REGARDING ENGAGEMENT PROCESSES WITH REGISTERED STAKEHOLDERS

This section of the agenda was divided into three parts:

1. The first part focused on a preview of the upcoming 8th Stakeholder Forum, scheduled for November 24 in Brussels this year.
2. The second part addressed the current internal reflection carried out by EFSA on the effectiveness of its engagement mechanisms with registered stakeholders.
3. The third part provided an overview of EFSA's upcoming engagement and communication activities.

8th Stakeholder Forum Overview

EFSA's Engagement Officer Clémentine Lallier provided an overview of the 8th Stakeholder Forum, a one-day in-person event taking place in Brussels on November 24, 2025. The theme is "*Advancing risk assessment together: faster delivery and uncompromised safety*" aiming to collectively explore how to improve the speed of food safety risk assessment while maintaining the highest safety standards. For the first time, National Coordinators from pre-accession countries will be welcomed alongside registered stakeholders. The day will feature a morning plenary session with keynote speakers (including DG AGRI and the Danish EU Presidency) and a panel discussion, followed by three afternoon parallel breakout sessions dedicated to Guidance Documents, Data and AI tools, and Product Preparedness

Stakeholder Feedback: Angeliki Lysimachou, the NGO representative, reported that several NGOs felt they were not sufficiently represented at the previous forum and questioned the added value of their attendance. Laurent Oger, representing the industry category, expressed concern that the panel discussion topic was overly broad, encompassing systemic changes, and requested that the session be more specifically focused on EFSA's mandate and the actions of its stakeholders.

Stakeholder Engagement Approach Review

EFSA's Engagement Officer, Margherita Guidi presented the latest update on the internal reflection regarding the stakeholder engagement approach, driven by the new strategy cycle and the Transparency Regulation. The internal review concluded that the current approach, including the seven stakeholder categories set in 2016, remained fit for purpose. Identified areas for improvement include: enhancing internal processes to improve dialogue; clarifying the distinction between applicants and SMEs within the "business and food industry" category and exploring better ways to collaborate with academia concerning preparedness and innovation. The frequency of Stakeholder Bureau meetings (twice per year) was deemed appropriate.

Stakeholder Feedback: Lorraine Maltby, Academia representative, observed that engagement from the academic community is currently lower than that of NGOs, noting that the academic group is not functioning at present, and expressed her willingness to hold a separate offline discussion to address this issue.

Upcoming Engagement and Communication Activities

Barbara Gallani Head of EFSA's Communication and Partnership Department (ENGAGE) provided an overview of EFSA's communication strategy. Major campaigns include the successful continuation of the "*Safe to Eat*" campaign (now in 23 countries) and the "*Plant Health for Life*" campaign. A new campaign, "*No Bird Flu*" (Avian Flu), was launched in September 2025 following a technical report highlighting the need to raise awareness on biosecurity actions. EFSA also monitors performance via the annual strategy survey and is working with stakeholders via focus groups on plain language summaries, utilizing AI for accessible communication.

Nikolaus Kriz highlighted that despite EFSA's extensive efforts toward proactive communication and transparency, the number of reactive Public Access to Documents (PADs) requests was not decreased; on the contrary, it had increased.

AGENDA ITEMS REQUESTED BY STAKEHOLDERS

Forthcoming Guidance Documents (GDs) and anticipated timelines

EFSA's MESE Team leader Daniela Maurici detailed the work programme of the Scientific Committee for cross-cutting GD development. EFSA uses a process starting with a scoping document, which is published for public consultation to gather views and refine the terms of reference before developing guidance. Two new GD priorities were identified for 2026/2027: a GD on the establishment/application of relative potency factors (RPFs), and another defining a tiered approach for ADME (absorption, distribution, metabolism, and excretion) studies and the inclusion of kinetic data in risk assessment. Furthermore, EFSA is collaborating with sister agencies, including ECHA and EMA, to co-create new guidance, such as the mandate on developing guidance for biomarkers of effects in regulatory risk assessment.

Stakeholder Feedback: Laurent Oger (Industry) found the trend of using scoping papers upstream to prepare Guidance Documents (GDs) to be a "very positive development," and praised the increased collaboration with sister agencies (ECHA and EMA) on relevant documents.

Phasing out Animal Testing (NAMs)

EFSA's Scientific Officer Sofia Batista provided an update on EFSA's significant involvement in the European Commission's roadmap to phase out animal testing, initiated in response to a Citizens' Initiative. The roadmap aims to accelerate the development, validation, and implementation of Non-Animal Methods (NAMS). The work is applicable to 15 different EU legislations, five of which fall directly under EFSA's remit. The central goal is to achieve a human-centric and animal-free safety assessment while ensuring a high level of protection that is "not negotiable". This involves developing scientifically relevant methods that bring mechanistic understanding and are integrated with environmental safety.

Stakeholder Feedback: Angeliki Lysimachou (NGO) reiterated appreciation that the level of protection was not negotiable and emphasised that this protective standard should even be increased, noting that this applied equally to environmental protection and biodiversity.

Cumulative Risk Assessment (CRA) for Pesticides

Luc Mohimont presented the latest developments in cumulative risk assessment (CRA) for pesticide residues, an initiative governed by the EFSA/SANTE Action Plan. The process involves prioritisation to identify vulnerable organ systems. EFSA is focusing on retrospective CRA for the seven priority organ systems identified (including the Nervous System, Thyroid, Development, Reproductive Function, Kidney, Liver and Haematopoietic system). The overall objective is to finalise the retrospective assessment of all seven priority systems by 2030. Future activities include developing prospective CRA (evaluating

the impact of future authorisations) and defining a program of work for integrating non-dietary exposure into cumulative aggregate risk assessment.

Stakeholder Feedback: Laurent Oger (Industry) inquired about the possibility of using the generic CRA methodology, developed in the data-rich pesticide context, in other food sectors. EFSA responded that while the methodology itself was generic, its practical implementation required a data-rich context, which was frequently lacking in other food sectors.

AOB & MEETING CLOSURE

Nikolaus Kriz closed the meeting by reiterating the anticipation of seeing stakeholders at the November forum and mentioning ongoing work regarding a possible EFSA event on artificial intelligence (AI) and big data for the following year. Other items noted for follow-up included reigniting the NGO Roundtable and outlining consumers organizations' priorities.

Key takeaways from the 16th EFSA Stakeholder Bureau Meeting

- *EFSA's strategic vision for the coming 5 years:* this vision concentrates on three specific areas: Speed (to deliver risk assessments faster) , Innovation (using AI safely and ethically to manage the data explosion and increasing complexity of risk assessment), and Joining Forces (EFSA acting as a networking hub).
- *8th Stakeholder Forum planning:* The upcoming 8th Stakeholder Forum (November 24, 2025) will focus on "Advancing risk assessment together: faster delivery and uncompromised safety" and will, for the first time, include National Coordinators from pre-accession countries.
- *Stakeholder Engagement Approach Review:* The internal review concluded that EFSA's current engagement approach, including the existing seven stakeholder categories, remained "fit for purpose". However, specific improvements were needed, such as clarifying the distinction between applicants and SMEs within the industry category and enhancing collaboration with academia on preparedness and innovation.
- *Upcoming communication and engagement initiatives:* EFSA is continuing its major campaigns ("Safe to Eat," "Plant Health for Life") and has launched a new campaign on Avian Flu ("No Bird Flu").
- *Scientific Priorities and Methodology:* Two new Guidance Document (GD) priorities were identified for 2026/2027: guidance on relative potency factors (RPFs) and guidance defining a tiered approach for ADME (absorption, distribution, metabolism, and excretion) studies. Industry positively viewed the increased use of scoping papers for preparing GDs upstream
- *Reducing Animal testing (NAMs):* EFSA is heavily involved in the European Commission's roadmap to phase out animal testing (NAMS), emphasising that while accelerating the development of Non-Animal Methods, the high level of protection is "not negotiable".
- *Cumulative Risk Assessment (CRA):* EFSA is working on retrospective CRA for pesticide residues, aiming to finalise the assessment of all seven priority organ systems by 2030.

ANNEX 1: AGENDA

DRAFT AGENDA 17TH STAKEHOLDER BUREAU MEETING

ONLINE MEETING - 17 OCTOBER 2025 (14:00 – 16:00)

Time	N	Item	Speakers
14:00-14:15	1	Welcome to the meeting	Nikolaus Kriz <i>EFSA's Executive Director</i>
Follow up on the feedback received regarding engagement processes with registered Stakeholders			
14:15-14:35	2	8th Stakeholder Forum , to be held on 24 November 2025. – draft programme.	Clémentine Lallier <i>Engagement Officer, ENREL</i>
14:35-14:50	3	Stakeholder Engagement Approach Review - latest update.	Margherita Guidi <i>Engagement Officer, ENREL</i>
14:50-15:05	4	Upcoming Communication activities	Barbara Gallani <i>Head of Engagement, Cooperation and Partnership Department (ENGAGE)</i>
Agenda items raised by stakeholders			
15:05-15:20	5	Forthcoming Guidance Documents (GDs) and anticipated timelines – work programme for cross cutting GDs.	Daniela Maurici <i>Team Leader – Scientific Committee (MESE)</i>
15:20-15:35	6	Phasing out animal testing: EFSA 's work to implement EC roadmap.	Sofia Batista <i>Scientific Officer – Pesticide Peer Review Unit (PREV)</i>
15:35-15:50	7	Cumulative Risk Assessment of pesticide residues: latest developments.	Luc Mohimont <i>Senior Scientific Officer Pesticide Peer Review Unit (PREV)</i>
15:50-16:00	8	AOB & Closing remarks	Nikolaus Kriz

ANNEX 2: PARTICIPANTS LIST

STAKEHOLDERS

Name	Category
Samuele Tonello	Consumers - Member
Angeliki Lysimachou	NGOs and Advocacy Groups - Member
Stephen Lennon	Farmers and Primary Producers – Alternate
Laurent Oger	Business and Food Industry – Alternate
Alice O'Donovan	Distributors and HORECA - Member
Lorraine Maltby	Academia – Member

EFSA

Name	Position
Nikolaus Kriz	Executive Director
Barbara Gallani	Head of Communication and Partnership Department (ENGAGE)
Victoria Villamar	Head of Engagement and External Relations Unit (ENREL)
Daniela Maurici	Team Leader – Scientific Committee (MESE)
Sofia Batista	Scientific Officer – Pesticide Peer Review Unit (PREV)
Luc Mohimont	Senior Scientific Officer (PREV)
Sara De Berardis	Team Leader, Front Desk & Workforce planning Unit (FDP)
Clémentine Lallier	Engagement Officer, ENREL
Margherita Guidi	Engagement Officer, ENREL
Christophe Wolff	Policy Officer, ENREL

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Name	Position
Anastasia Alvizou	Deputy Head of Unit, E.1, DG SANTE, European Commission
Athanasios Raikos	Policy Coordinator, E.1, DG SANTE, European Commission