99th MEETING OF THE EFSA ADVISORY FORUM

04 March 2026: 9:00-12:45
05 March 2026: 9:00-12:00

EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY

Location: Web-conference

Members	Attendance
Austria (AT)	Johann Steinwider
Belgium (BE)	Axel Mauroy
Bulgaria (BG)	Donka Popova
Croatia (HR)	Sara Mikrut Vunjak
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)	Salma Elreedy
Germany (DE)	Andreas Hensel
Greece (GR)	Danai Papanastasiou
Hungary (HU)	Ákos Bernard Jóźwiak
Ireland (IE)	Wayne Anderson
Italy (IT)	Denise Giacomini
Italy (IT)	Alessandra Perella
Latvia (LV)	Vadims Bartkevičs
Lithuania (LT)	Snieguolė Ščeponavičienė
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
Portugal (PT)	Pedro Nabais
Romania (RO)	Monica Mariana Neagu
Slovakia (SK)	Petra Vanková
Slovakia (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 Tanković
Kosovo*	Hoxha Bekim
Montenegro (ME)	Vladimir Djaković
North Macedonia (MK)	Oliver Milanov
North Macedonia (MK)	Martin Josheski
Serbia (RS)	Tamara Bošković
Switzerland (CH)	Katharina Stärk
Türkiye (TR)	Mehmet Ali Ünverdi
European Commission (EC)	Anastasia Alvizou
European Commission (EC)	Athanasios Raikos
European Commission (EC)	Athanasios Angelou
External speakers	
European Commission (EC)	An Jamers
European Commission (EC)	Peter Korytar
VKM (Norway)	Gisle Solstad
BfR (Germany)	Andrea Haase
DTU (Denmark)	Henrik Caspar Wegener
EFSA Representatives	
Nikolaus Kriz (Chair)	Carlos Das Neves (Co-Chair)
Guilhem de Sèze (Co-Chair)	Bénédicte Vagenende (Co-Chair)
Barbara Gallani (HoD ENGAGE)	Victoria Villamar (HoU ENREL)
Sérgio Potier Rodeia (Team Leader Community Management)	Maria Azevedo Mendes (Advisory Forum Secretariat)
Andrea Laroni (Advisory Forum Secretariat)	Federico Achilli (Advisory Forum Secretariat)
Virginia Spurio Salvi (CORSER)	Ilaria Di Gennaro (CORSER)
Gloria López Gálvez (Speaker)	Valeriu Curtui (Speaker)
Alicia Paini (Speaker)	Estefanía Noriega Fernández (Speaker)
Sofia Batista Leite (Speaker)	Chantra Eskes (Speaker)
Jean-Lou Dorne (Speaker)	Claudia Roncancio-Pena (Speaker)
Beatriz Guerra Roman (Expert)	

Contents

Day 1

Item 1: Welcome and Adoption of the Agenda by the Chair

Nikolaus Kriz, Chair of the Advisory Forum (AF), opened the 99th meeting by welcoming all participants attending online. He explained that, due to concerns about the ongoing conflict affecting the wider Eastern Mediterranean region, namely Cyprus, where the meeting was originally intended to be held in person, the decision to switch to an online format was made at short notice.

He expressed gratitude to the participants for their adaptability and thanked significant efforts made by the Cypriot hosts in preparing for the meeting. Looking ahead to the 100th Advisory Forum scheduled for June, he announced the intention to hold it as hybrid in Cyprus, or, if circumstances require, in Parma instead.

The opening remarks framed the meeting around resilience and adaptability, stressing that despite disruption and uncertainty it is essential to keep moving forward. Drawing on lessons from the COVID period and a quote from Martin Luther King, the message emphasised continuity, cooperation and the ability of the Advisory Forum to adjust while maintaining its role in supporting a functioning and safe Europe.

Item 2: Welcome Address from the Cyprus Advisory Forum Member

Rebecca Kokkinofta, the Cypriot Advisory Forum Member, apologised for the shift to an online meeting, thanked attendees for their understanding, and expressed disappointment for not being able, under the recent circumstances, to host the Advisory Forum meeting in Cyprus. Speaking for the Minister of Health, she emphasised the importance of European cooperation in food safety, given Cyprus's unique location and challenges. She underlined that ensuring the protection of public health is intrinsically linked to the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union priorities, and food safety is a fundamental pillar for safeguarding public health. She highlighted Cyprus's ongoing collaboration with EFSA, the progress towards creating a Cyprus Food Safety Authority, and reaffirmed the commitment to scientific dialogue and public health. Rebecca concluded by wishing productive discussions and reiterating Cyprus's dedication to continued partnership with EFSA and EU Member States in order to further strengthen our common food safety system for the benefit of our citizens and future generations.

Item 3: "One Substance One Assessment" (1S1A) Regulations

3.1 1S1A supporting legislation and MS involvement

An Jamers (DG ENV) outlined the One Substance, One Assessment (OSOA) package, focusing on the *Re-attribution of tasks to agencies* and the *Data Regulation*. She explained the legislative context, objectives, and impacts on Member States (MSs) and agencies such as EFSA. Those regulations aim to strengthen coherence, efficiency, and transparency across EU chemicals legislation, building on the fitness check of the chemicals' legislation and of the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability, and reinforce cooperation among EFSA, ECHA, EMA, EEA, and the Commission. A key element is the establishment of the EU Common Data Platform on Chemicals (EU-CDPC), integrating data from around 70 legislative acts with differentiated access rules. MSs will maintain their current data hosting practices but also gain new obligations to notify planned regulatory activities and may voluntarily share data. DG ENV urged MSs to engage actively in coordination, participate in the OSOA expert group, improve internal national coordination, and contribute early to harmonisation, avoid duplication and inconsistencies, and delayed action on emerging risks.

The Netherlands expressed concerns that OSOA is too focused on safety and does not sufficiently address innovation, circular economy, or reuse of chemicals. They also questioned how data access across different national competent authorities would function, given legal constraints. DG ENV

replied that the platform consolidates existing data, includes information relevant to circular economy considerations, and enables cross-legislative data use while protecting confidentiality through the originator principle.

EFSA highlighted the challenges with data access and reuse in risk assessment, particularly when safety-relevant data exist outside submitted dossiers. He underlined gaps between food safety legislation and REACH regarding data sharing, noting the risk of either unnecessary resubmission or uncertainty due to inaccessible data. DG ENV acknowledged these issues and indicated that solutions would need to be developed during implementation of the platform, potentially through agreed practices.

France pointed to the complexity of national coordination across different actors, indicated the need to have the right experts participating in the various groups, and asked about the implications for EU and national research funders and how to encourage national research data to be integrated, even if it is voluntary to do so. Another question from France was whether the proposed budgets for data generation mechanism and the human biomonitoring study were additional new budget allocations, and whether the amounts were adequate. DG ENV responded that research projects are legally obliged to provide relevant data and MSs should reflect this in funding conditions. Additional EU budget is foreseen for ECHA, and the human biomonitoring study will be narrowly targeted, reusing established methodologies.

Finally, DG SANTE recalled EFSA's existing precedents on data protection, exclusivity, and reuse of safety-relevant data, stressing that such principles should guide the new framework, especially when public health protection is at stake.

3.2 Implementing the 1S1A relevant legislation: Impact on EFSA and MSs

Gloria López-Gálvez (EFSA) outlined the main implications of the OSOA-related regulations for EFSA and MSs. She reviewed three key instruments: the CLP revision, the Data Regulation, and the re-attribution of tasks to EU agencies. Under the revised CLP, EFSA may now be mandated to prepare harmonised classification and labelling (CLH) proposals (duty currently undertaken by MSs and industry) and is getting prepared for this new responsibility. She summarised the Data Regulation by describing how its activities (e.g. the Common Data Platform, indicators, human biomonitoring) have been grouped and assigned to lead EFSA Units. Regarding the re-attribution of tasks she noted amendments to the General Food Law, that strengthen cooperation between Agencies and MSs on the provision of opinions, data exchange and joint methodological development, while introducing reinforced measures to prevent or minimise divergent opinions; the updated rules also clarify procedures when divergences concern hazard identification, including the possibility for the Commission to request ECHA to develop CLH proposals. Looking ahead, Gloria stressed that OSOA requires more proactive MS engagement —early coordination, data contribution, participation in the OSOA Expert Group, and support harmonised approaches— reflecting not only a legal change but a cultural shift towards shared evidence and earlier alignment.

During the discussion, the Netherlands asked about the actual number of substances that lead to divergent opinions across frameworks and sought for clarification on the "mapping OSOA actors" at national level. France highlighted coordination challenges across multiple regulatory work programmes among EU agencies and asked how OSOA would improve early visibility and the need for coordination. France also mentioned the importance of the ongoing interactions with PARC, and at the national level, of reinforced interactions among bodies working on different chemicals regulations, in a OSOA approach Gloria explained that, although many substances are potentially cross-cutting, only a few have resulted in formal divergences, as most issues are resolved through early cooperation and data exchange; she emphasised that mapping is primarily a MS responsibility to improve internal coordination and identify contact points. Valeriu Curtui (EFSA) added that a file listing diverging opinions with MSs is available in the EFSA's website;[1] he also recalled past

[1] Cases of potential scientific divergence. https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2026-03/Cases-of-potential-scientific-divergence.pdf

divergence cases where delays arose because it was difficult to identify or reach the relevant national authorities outside the food and feed remit, underlining that the OSOA mapping would help addressing this practical challenge. EFSA concluded that OSOA builds on existing practices, aiming to prevent divergence through earlier cooperation, clearer coordination mechanisms and active MS involvement rather than creating parallel new processes.

Item 4: Focal Point Operational Framework

Task Force on the Focal Point Framework

Gisle Solstad (VKM – Norway and Chair of the Task Force) and Sérgio Potier Rodeia (EFSA) presented the work of the Task Force on the future Focal Point Operational Framework, explaining its mandate to support EFSA through a co-creation approach. They outlined the Task Force's methodology, focusing on analysing the current framework and identifying future functional needs The presentation highlighted the use of core functional lenses — support, connection and incubation — to assess how Focal Points can best contribute to speed, innovation and partnership under EFSA's strategic priorities. They also described the inclusive and iterative process, with regular Task Force meetings, consultations with Advisory Forum, Focal Points and other actors, and a roadmap aiming to deliver a revised operational framework by the end of 2026.

Following the presentation, France welcomed the work of the Task Force and underlined the importance of the reflection, noting that frameworks such as OSOA and One Health will increasingly require EFSA Focal Points to interact beyond the traditional EFSA domain, which may challenge their current scope and capacity and that this fact should be reflected upon in the Task Force. The Netherlands also expressed strong support for the approach, particularly the functional framing around support, connection and incubation, and highlighted the positive collaborative spirit of the Task Force, while noting that further detail would be needed as the work progresses. In response, Gisle thanked the MSs for their engagement and emphasised that the diversity of national contexts represented in the task force is a key strength, ensuring that the future framework remains practical and workable. Sérgio reinforced that the Task Force is advisory and co-creative in nature, that no predefined organisational model is being imposed, and that consultations with the Advisory Forum, Focal Points and other networks will continue to ensure alignment with both EFSA strategic priorities and Member State needs.

Item 5: Current Partnerships Opportunities

5.1 Overview

The Co-Chair, Carlos Das Neves (EFSA), presented the upcoming EFSA partnership opportunities, highlighting several calls where Member States' support and participation are encouraged. He drew particular attention to forthcoming activities on allergenicity and human biomonitoring, which respond to growing scientific and regulatory needs, as well as to calls on metagenomics and microbiome, noting that the microbiome work has been split into a pilot phase and a larger follow up project. He also briefly referred to routine calls on literature review support and a project on botanical substances in food supplements, underlining that full details are available via EFSA's website.

5.2 Human Biomonitoring at EFSA

Alicia Paini (EFSA) presented EFSA's preparatory work on Human Biomonitoring (HBM), highlighting its growing importance for chemical risk assessment and its relevance for the future EU wide HBM study under the OSOA framework. She outlined a planned procurement to assess the availability and usability of existing HBM data, address methodological challenges, including toxicokinetic modelling, and test application through pilot case studies. The project aims to develop practical workflows and recommendations to support the systematic use of HBM data in EFSA assessments and to inform future large scale HBM activities.

Following the presentation, the Netherlands asked whether the planned work would also consider the long-term value of storing human biomonitoring samples, noting that past HBM programmes had sometimes ended due to funding constraints and that archived samples could allow future re-analysis as scientific knowledge evolves. EFSA replied that the current project focuses on reviewing and assessing existing data and literature rather than collecting or storing new samples, given budgetary constraints, but acknowledged that the importance of sample preservation could be reflected as a recommendation. France welcomed the initiative and stressed the importance of close links with PARC and national public health institutions, noting that relevant expertise for HBM may sit outside the usual EFSA tender community and may require specific outreach to that community. EFSA confirmed that coordination with PARC is ongoing and that outreach to relevant institutions is planned to ensure alignment and awareness. In wrapping up, the discussion recognised the value of the preparatory project as a necessary step to clarify how HBM data can be interpreted and used in EFSA risk assessment, while underlining the need for coordination with existing European initiatives and realistic expectations given resource constraints.

5.3 Novel Strategy for Allergenicity Risk Assessment

Estefanía Noriega Fernández (EFSA) presented the open call (single framework contract with, indicatively, four specific contracts) to be launched in March to support EFSA in the development of a new strategy for fit-for-purpose allergenicity risk assessment of proteins in food and feed. She explained that for both clinically relevant cross-reactivity and *de novo* sensitisation, the project will deliver experimentally-validated, open source *in silico* prediction/appraisal tools, thresholds of allergological concern and a systematic tiered approach with a decision-making framework. The initiative aims to enhance the reliability, efficiency and harmonisation of allergenicity assessments across EFSA's remit, ultimately supporting better-informed decision-making.

After the presentation, the Netherlands strongly welcomed the initiative, expressed clear support for EFSA's approach to advancing allergenicity risk assessment, and indicated that Dutch organisations were interested in applying, praising both the ambition and scientific direction of the call. Denmark also welcomed the project and raised a practical question on how partnerships are expected to work under a single framework contract composed of several specific contracts, seeking clarification on interaction between the different work streams and joint applications over time. In response, EFSA clarified that there will be one single open call for the full framework contract, covering all four specific contracts, and that consortia are expected to bring together complementary expertise across *in silico*, *in vitro* and *in vivo* strategies to assess both clinically relevant cross-reactivity and *de novo* sensitisation, in order to ensure coherence across the project phases and deliver an integrated tiered approach. In wrapping up the discussion, the session confirmed strong Member State interest in the project, broad support for EFSA's direction on allergenicity, and recognition that the framework contract approach provides a coherent and scientifically robust pathway to modernise allergenicity risk assessment.

Item 6: New Approach Methodologies (NAMs)

6.1 EC road map for phasing out of animal studies and EFSA NAM activities

Sofia Batista Leite, Chantra Eskes and Jean-Lou Dorne (EFSA) presented EFSA's ongoing work and strategic direction on New Approach Methodologies (NAMs), focusing on their role in supporting the transition towards more modern, efficient and animal-free approaches for next generation risk assessment of chemicals. To address a European citizens initiative asking to stop animal testing (>1M signatures), European Commission put in place a series of actions including the development of a roadmap towards phasing out animal testing for chemical safety assessment. This roadmap covers 15 legislative areas and has been developed with the relevant agencies (EFSA, ECHA and EM) and other relevant stakeholders. Within the chemical safety assessment, a wide range of approaches, including waivers, non-testing strategies, in silico models, in vitro methods and mechanistic approaches are used to support hazard identification and characterisation alongside traditional animal-driven approaches. EFSA highlighted that NAMs are embedded in guidance documents, working groups and tools across units, while animal studies remain the main reference

where required, and noted its involvement in OSOA-related work on prioritising regulatory needs and improving validation of new methods. EFSA then outlined its forward-looking strategy for NAMs, framing them as central to next generation risk assessment, mechanistic and increasingly quantitative risk assessment, including dose–response assessment using NAMs for the derivation of health-based guidance values. Ongoing internal and collaborative projects, notably with the PARC consortium and the OECD, were presented as key to structuring, harmonising and integrating NAM data into regulatory systems. In addition, concrete case studies have been highlighted to illustrate progress, while underlining the continued need for harmonisation, validation, guidance development and training to enable wider and more consistent use.

Following the presentations, the Netherlands raised several strategic questions. They asked whether EFSA foresees clear milestones or time horizons for replacing animal testing for specific endpoints, noting that other jurisdictions have defined timelines for certain tests. It was also asked whether EFSA could increase visibility and reporting on the practical use and needs of NAMs, similar to ECHA's reporting, and whether stronger European level coordination of national NAMs programmes could be encouraged to avoid fragmented efforts.

In response, Sofia explained that EFSA supports the approach of the European Commission in the roadmap to avoid fixed deadlines, instead setting short-, medium- and long-term ambitions, given the complexity and cross-legislative nature of the transition. Nonetheless, EFSA has been proactive to foster progress on developmental neurotoxicity and waiving of certain animal studies, while stressing that implementation depends on scientific readiness and Member State support. She stressed that alignment, validation and maintaining protection levels remain essential conditions for replacing animal testing. Jean-Lou complemented this by explaining that many NAMs are still at different levels of maturity, and that EFSA's current priorities is to bring the most advanced project outputs into practical use, while allowing less mature approaches to be further developed in the research domain. He highlighted the importance of case studies, collaboration with PARC and OECD, and stepwise implementation of these NAM approaches in practice.

Regarding the publication of research needs in the regulatory arena, Co-Chair Carlos das Neves highlighted that EFSA has published a NAMs roadmap few years ago and recently an editorial on research needs. Not having the frequency of the ECHA's KARC reports, EFSA tries to align with the sister agency on the topics.

EFSA added that the Member States already have channels to increase visibility of national NAMs activities, notably through EFSA platforms such as the Risk Assessment Initiatives Hub and FAIR data mechanisms, which can help share ongoing work and avoid duplication.

Wrapping up the discussion, EFSA underlined that the transition to NAMs is already underway in practice, but requires gradual, evidence-based implementation, improved coordination and sustained collaboration between EFSA, Member States, the Commission and research partners, rather than prescriptive timelines.

6.2 Proposal for a Qualification System for NAMs within EFSA's Remit

Claudia Roncancio-Pena (EFSA) presented an overview of the EFSA-funded NAMs4NANO Project (GP/EFSA/MESE/2022/01_Lot 1), which aims to develop a qualification system to speed up the regulatory implementation of non-guideline NAMs. The project was outsourced to a consortium of EU Member States and non-EU organizations, with BfR (Germany) leading this task. She explained that qualification aims to assess the reliability, relevance and regulatory fitness of methods for specific contexts of use, helping bridge the gap between research outputs and risk-assessment needs. Drawing on the EFSA-funded NAMS4NANO Project**,** she illustrated how a structured qualification framework can support decision-making, reduce uncertainty and accelerate uptake of NAMs, while maintaining scientific robustness and alignment with regulatory requirements.

Andrea Haase (project coordinator, Germany) presented the work carried out under the EFSA-funded NAMS4NANO Project, focusing on the first preliminary proposal developed[2] which considers nanoparticles risk assessment as first area of possible implementation. She explained that nanomaterials present specific scientific and regulatory challenges, but also unique opportunities for applying NAMs, particularly where traditional test guidelines are lacking or not fully suitable. Andrea highlighted the gap between the large number of NAMs developed in research projects and their limited regulatory uptake, and introduced qualification as a pragmatic tool to support regulatory use of non-guideline methods alongside validation. She outlined a proposed qualification framework, including criteria for relevance and reliability, and described how it is being tested through case studies and stakeholder engagement. She concluded that qualification could help bridge the gap between innovation and regulation, supporting scientifically robust and timely use of NAMs while maintaining high protection standards. Targeted discussions were held since the starting of the project in 2023 to further improve the qualification proposal and develop an implementation plan, involving agencies and organisations such as EMA, ECHA, SCCS, EC JRC, US FDA, OECD, MALTA Initiative Board, EPAA, and EFSA NanoNetwork. All this work will be instrumental to refine the qualification proposal, which is expected to be finalised in 2027.

In the discussion, the Netherlands strongly welcomed the approach, expressing high confidence in the scientific leadership of the project and support for qualification as a realistic way to bridge innovation and regulation. The Co-Chair Carlos das Neves underlined that qualification responds to real regulatory constraints, where full validation and legislative change are lengthy processes, and stressed the value of case by case, context driven solutions that maintain scientific scrutiny. Guilhem de Sèze (EFSA) welcomed the proposed qualification pathway for NAMs, describing it as a promising and pragmatic approach aligned with EFSA's partnership model, and asked whether qualification could evolve into a long term, shared system involving Member States, notably through a standing expert group operating as a collaborative structure rather than an ad hoc EFSA process. In response, Claudia clarified that the qualification framework is still under development and testing, with the current focus on refining the proposal and implementation plan through case studies and stakeholder feedback, rather than establishing a permanent governance structure at this stage. Andrea complemented this by explaining that dialogue with key stakeholders is ongoing, including testing of the framework beyond nanomaterials, and that future evolution towards more structured, collaborative arrangements could be considered once the approach is consolidated and its practical value demonstrated. In wrapping up the slot, EFSA highlighted broad support for the qualification concept, recognition of its potential to accelerate the use of NAMs while safeguarding robustness, and the importance of continued dialogue with Member States and partners as the framework is finalised.

[2] Haase A, Barroso J, Bogni A, Bremer-Hoffmann S, Fessard V, Gutleb AC, Mast J, McVey E, Mertens B, Oomen AG, Ritz V, Serchi T, Siewert K, Stanco D, Usmani SM, Verleysen E, Vincentini O, van derZande M, Cubadda F, 2024. Proposal for a fit for purpose qualification system for New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) in the food and feed sector. EFSA supporting publication 2024:21(9):EN-9008. 96 pp. doi:10.2903/sp.efsa.2024.EN-9008

Day 2

Item 7: Update on Scientific Activities & Upcoming Events

7.1 MS Risk Assessment (RA) Plans, Mandates, Public Consultations and Events: Overview and Updates

EFSA explained that the purpose of this session was to highlight activities of particular relevance to the Advisory Forum, both from Member States and from EFSA itself. The intention was to raise awareness, support coordination, and allow for early exchange of views.

Germany was highlighted for its work on nanomaterials, nutrition mandates, including work on insect protein allergenicity with EFSA planning further collaboration on these topics. EFSA noted the update of the EU database on processing factors for pesticide residues, crucial for assessments and monitoring, while the Czech Republic's efforts in tracking microplastic contamination in drinking water were outlined as relevant to broader EU discussions.

EFSA highlighted its rapid risk assessment of cereulide in infant formula, following the request for urgent advice received from the European Commission, and ongoing work on microplastics in food, water, and air, stressing the need for strong coordination and clear questions in these high-profile tasks.

DG SANTE praised the effectiveness of the EU crisis management framework during the cereulide incident, which relied on EFSA's rapid risk assessment to enable swift and well-coordinated regulatory action. In response to the situation, the Commission initiated formal discussions, shared information among Member States, and, after identifying the source as arachidonic acid oil from China, acted quickly by proposing reinforced import controls, especially in light of insufficient information from Chinese authorities via INFOSAN. The Commission also indicated ongoing reflection on whether more comprehensive risk assessments may be required in the future, particularly to address issues such as accumulation or chronic effects.

Ireland welcomed the Commission's coordination and EFSA's swift response, highlighting the key role of EFSA's clear and robust risk assessment in unifying company and national positions, particularly through its use of uncertainty factors and modelling methods. Austria also expressed appreciation for EFSA's swift risk assessment and the effective collaboration with the Commission, and Member States. They emphasised the value of clear scientific guidance, the need for consistent risk communication in sensitive cases, and proposed further investigation into uncertainty factors for various population groups. The Netherlands commended EFSA for its transparent and adaptable risk assessment methodology, which enabled national authorities to tailor assessments for different groups while upholding scientific rigour. Luxembourg, referring to the rapid outbreak assessment, raised concerns about challenges in defining human cases and discrepancies in response timelines between EFSA and ECDC, suggesting improved coordination in future.

DG SANTE acknowledged these Member State inputs and confirmed ongoing discussions about the need for more comprehensive risk assessments, with updates expected at future Advisory Forums. The session concluded with an emphasis on learning from these experiences to enhance routine risk assessment processes across Member States.

Co-Chair Guilhem de Sèze proceeded by presenting three current areas of EFSA's work relevant to the Advisory Forum. Firstly, he discussed the mandate on Bovaer (3-nitrooxypropanol), a feed additive designed to reduce methane emissions from dairy cattle. Recent concerns from Denmark about potential digestive and metabolic effects in cows prompted the European Commission to request a fresh assessment, with EFSA gathering data and aiming to deliver its opinion by 30 June. Secondly, he outlined EFSA's work on food safety culture, which involves examining how organisational values, beliefs and behaviours impact food safety outcomes. The project focuses on identifying tools to assess the maturity of food safety culture, exploring how these metrics can inform risk assessment, and evaluating their application across different sectors.

Ireland has published national guidance on food safety culture, supporting EFSA's work. EFSA stressed the need for strong information sharing between risk managers (Heads of Agencies) and AF, and the Co-Chair welcomed further contributions from Member States.

The Co-Chair also provided an overview of EFSA's ongoing surveillance of avian influenza and related risk assessments following recent outbreaks reported in US cattle. He noted that, according to ECDC, the risk to exposed workers in the EU is considered low to moderate, and low for the general public, with no confirmed human cases in the EU.

The Netherlands reported that viral material had been detected in milk on one Dutch farm, although no live virus was found, and monitoring continues. EFSA reassured that milk and dairy products remain safe due to effective pasteurisation, adding that EFSA is preparing a major avian influenza awareness campaign, building on a pre-campaign launched the previous year, with a focus on intermediaries such as veterinarians and technical advisers.

The Netherlands requested clarification about the roadmap concerning animal use in pesticides and biocides. It was confirmed that the roadmap refers to the phasing out of animal testing, not animals themselves, with a focus on alternative methods.

Following the announcements on forthcoming EFSA events, France then reminded the Advisory Forum about a joint conference being organised by ANSES, BfR, DTU Food, and EFSA, which will centre on data and the use of artificial intelligence in surveillance and risk assessment. The conference is scheduled for 29–30 October in Paris, with EFSA already actively participating in its preparations. Further information may be provided at the next AF meeting.

7.2 Global Pathogen Analysis Platform (GPAP)

Professor Henrik Wegener introduced the Global Pathogen Analysis Platform (GPAP), a consortium-led initiative supporting advanced genomic surveillance and research for the One Health domain, with a special focus on low and middle-income countries. GPAP is designed to be user controlled, open-source, and uses AI for analysis, upholding data privacy and WHO's sharing principles.

Following the presentation, participants engaged in a robust discussion centred on data usage, privacy, and the platform's integration with existing national systems. EFSA raised the issue of whether user-uploaded data would be used to further train the platform's artificial intelligence models, especially in cases where the data are not made public. Professor Wegener assured that only public data is used to train the platform's AI by default, and any use of private data requires user consent.

Participants discussed the GPAP, with Hungary expressing interest in deeper engagement, inviting the GPAP team to present it to an EFSA AGoD and Portugal emphasising the need for effective cross-border data sharing. Professor Wegener clarified that GPAP is intended as a service platform, not a reporting system, so compliance with data sharing remains the responsibility of national authorities. Ireland learned that while some GPAP tools are active, the fully integrated platform will be launched next year. The session ended with participants expressing strong interest in GPAP's role for surveillance and risk assessment, and a willingness to continue collaborative discussions.

7.3 Preliminary results of the Risk Assessment of Copper in Cyprus: A Holistic Approach

Rebecca Kokkinofta (Cyprus) presented the preliminary results of a risk assessment on copper exposure, combining dietary exposure assessment with human biomonitoring to provide an integrated evaluation. She highlighted that copper is of particular interest to Cypriot researchers, as Cyprus owes its name to its rich copper deposits and historic trade activity. The assessment was triggered by findings of elevated copper levels in bovine liver and reflects copper's dual role as both an essential micronutrient and a potential toxicant. Dietary exposure was estimated using national occurrence data and EU Menu consumption data, showing that chronic exposure remains below the health-based guidance value for more than 99% of the population, with higher exposure

observed mainly in infants and toddlers due to consumption of fortified baby food. To support and contextualise these findings, Cyprus conducted a pilot human biomonitoring study in adults and children, measuring urinary copper levels. The results were consistent with published European background levels and showed no evidence of unusual copper burden in the Cypriot population. Overall, the combined approach strengthened confidence in the risk assessment and highlighted the value of integrating dietary modelling with biomonitoring data.

Following the presentation by Cyprus, the Netherlands intervened to ask whether copper levels in tap water had been assessed, noting that infant formula was a key contributor to exposure in infants and querying whether the contribution was driven mainly by the powdered product or by the water used for reconstitution. In response, Rebecca explained that available information suggests that both sources may contribute, but that, in the Cypriot context, the powder itself is considered the main contributor to copper exposure in infants. It was also emphasised that drinking water is routinely monitored by the State General Laboratory for copper and other metals, in line with legislation, with no deviations observed.

In conclusion, the preliminary report from Cyprus based on combined dietary and biomonitoring data indicate copper exposure is within EU background levels and does not raise public health concerns.

7.4 Consumption of Food Supplements in Estonia: report

Mari Reinik (Estonia) shared results from a national survey on food supplement use, focusing especially on infants and children. Over 2,000 respondents participated, and the findings showed that supplement consumption is widespread, with vitamin D being the most commonly used. Some consumers, including children, were found to exceed recommended intake levels, sometimes due to the simultaneous use of multiple supplements. Moreover, exceedances of the tolerable upper intake levels of vitamin D in children were likely due to the administration of doses intended for adults. The survey also highlighted extensive use of botanicals, including plants with known adverse effects, which has prompted ongoing national discussions on regulation. These findings emphasised the need for improved data, clearer risk communication, and targeted public health actions.

EFSA welcomed the Estonian presentation and announced the preparation of a new project to collect data on food supplement consumption, labelling, and exposure scenarios. EFSA also requested further details from Estonia regarding their questionnaire design and lessons learnt, and Mari agreed to share methodologies and experience to support their work.

Denmark commented on the strong alignment between Estonia’s findings and their own national dietary survey. They highlighted the challenges posed by the widespread, largely unregulated use of food supplements, and the perception among consumers that “more is better.” Denmark stressed the importance of effective risk communication and exchanging national experiences.

The Netherlands announced a forthcoming national survey on herbal supplement use, commissioned by the Ministry of Health, and ongoing research, including PhD projects, to better understand botanicals' effects in food supplements. They underlined the importance of continued collaboration, especially with the Heads of Food Safey Agencies (HoA).

The Co-Chair summarised the discussion by confirming that food supplement consumption remains a shared challenge among Member States. The exchange of national experiences is welcomed, and continued cooperation with EFSA is encouraged to support improved data collection, risk assessment, and communication efforts across Europe.

7.5 Climate change and how it is impacting food safety in Europe

Ana López-Santacruz (Spain) presented a series of scientific opinions developed by the Spanish Agency for Food Safety and Nutrition (AESAN) on the impact of climate change on food safety, covering foodborne pathogens, food security, food allergy and mycotoxins. She explained that the

work is based on systematic reviews of available scientific evidence and highlighted the need for adaptation and mitigation strategies, increased research and the integration of climate considerations into food safety risk assessment. She also informed the Forum of a national conference organised in Spain to present these findings to stakeholders and promote cross-sectoral dialogue.

Following the presentation, EFSA welcomed Spain's work and recalled that EFSA has already been integrating climate change considerations into its activities across food safety, animal health and plant health. EFSA underlined that climate change not only modifies existing risks but also drives changes in agricultural practices and technologies, which may give rise to new risks requiring assessment. France noted that, in line with the points raised, ANSES is also developing their "2030 ambition" strategic vision, in which climate change has been identified as a key cross-cutting priority. France also explained that this theme is already being addressed across multiple areas of work at ANSES, including issues such as water reuse and other climate-driven changes affecting food safety, and underlined the timeliness and relevance of the presentation in that context.

7.6 AESAN 25th Anniversary and Satellite Events Update

Ana López Santacruz (Spain) informed the Advisory Forum about the 25th anniversary of AESAN, outlining a series of commemorative activities planned for 2026, including national and international conferences, seminars and institutional events. She highlighted an international conference in Madrid in May on models for producing risk assessments to support risk management, with participation from EU and Latin American partners and contributions from EFSA, the European Commission and Codex. She also announced a national high-level event later in the year with participation from EFSA leadership and WHO, and noted that Spain will host several EFSA panel and network meetings across different locations as part of the anniversary programme.

Item 8: Update on Advisory Forum Discussion Groups

Advisory Group on Data

Akos Jóźwiak (Hungary) provided an update on the work of the Advisory Forum Discussion Group on Data (AGOD), outlining recent meetings, ongoing subgroup activities and future priorities. He reported progress across the AGOD subgroups, including work on data interoperability, data management, capacity building and innovation, with several position papers under development, notably on interoperability, AI literacy and the use of artificial intelligence in food safety regulatory science. Akos highlighted increasing Member State experience with AI-enabled tools and more agile approaches to data and IT development. He then described ongoing discussions on the potential development of a European food data space, identifying priority use cases such as faster incident management and improved alignment of food classification systems. Finally, he informed the Forum about planned next steps, including a mapping exercise of existing reporting and data flows, preparation of a data symposium on people and organisational readiness for AI, and the AGOD annual report.

The Netherlands intervened proposing to have the AGoD presentation on the second day of the Advisory Forum meeting also in the future to allow more time to prepare it and share it in advance.

Item 9: AOB

Denmark recalled that the presentation on EFSA's scientific training plan had been postponed due to agenda changes and stressed that capacity building remains a high priority for several Member States. They underlined the growing need to strengthen and renew the European risk assessment community and expressed a clear interest in deeper Member State involvement, partnership and co-creation with EFSA in this area. They proposed a dedicated discussion at a future Advisory Forum meeting and suggested preparatory exchanges in advance.

France supported this suggestion and proposed exploring ways to better link capacity building with EFSA–Member State partnerships, for example by involving junior scientists within partnership activities, alongside senior experts, to build their experience while contributing to assessments.

In response, Co-Chair Guilhem de Sèze acknowledged the importance of the issue and confirmed that capacity building is already embedded in partnership approaches, particularly for regulated products, while recognising the need to further reflect on structured opportunities for developing expertise.

Barbara Gallani (EFSA) recalled earlier Advisory Forum work on capacity building and noted that several tools are already in place, including EFSA's scientific training programme, the EU-FORA fellowship scheme and the use of Seconded National Experts. She emphasised the need to assess what has worked well, identify remaining gaps, and better exploit existing mechanisms, including SNE opportunities, to support Member State capacity.

Carlos das Neves (EFSA) complemented these remarks by highlighting that Member States can already articulate their training and capacity needs within EFSA's training cycle and partnership frameworks, including upcoming cycles, and encouraged MS to proactively flag such needs so they can be integrated into EFSA planning.

The Czech Republic informed the Advisory Forum about an upcoming conference on adaptation to climate change, to be held in April in Brno alongside an agri-food fair. It was noted that the event will address links with food safety and food security, include a policy dimension with participation from EU institutions, and that EFSA' ED has been invited as a speaker. They indicated that the invitation and registration details would be shared with Members.

Cyprus took the floor to thank participants for their understanding regarding the circumstances that prevented the meeting from taking place in Cyprus as planned. They expressed appreciation for the positive engagement of the Advisory Forum and reiterated Cyprus's willingness to host a future meeting, subject to the situation allowing it.

The Chair closed the session inviting all the members to take part in the 100th meeting of the Advisory Forum, which will take place on 10 and 11 June.

ACTION POINTS

Agenda Topic	Action Point No.	Action	Deadline/Notes
5 - Current Partnership Opportunities	1	MSs to apply and/or promote through their national networks, the calls presented at the meeting (list available here)	Respective deadline for each call
7.1 - MS Risk Assessment (RA) Plans, Mandates, Public Consultations and Events: Overview and Updates	2.1	MSs to contribute and submit data to EFSA's calls, including the ones on Bovaer and the risk assessment for bees (list available here)	Respective deadline for each call for data
	2.2	MS to review and submit comments to ongoing EFSA public consultations (list available here)	Respective deadline for each public consultation
	2.3	EC (DG SANTE) to provide a written update to AF members on the absence of feedback/information from INFOSAN during the cereulide incident	
7.4 - Consumption of Food Supplements in Estonia: report	3	Estonia to share with EFSA the questionnaire, methodology and lessons learnt from its national survey on food supplement consumption	
7.5 - Climate change and how it is impacting food safety in Europe	4	Spain to share published scientific opinions and conference materials	
7.6 - AESAN 25th Anniversary and Satellite Events Update	5	Spain to circulate invitations and final programmes for international and national events	Ahead of the events
8 - Advisory Group on Data	6	AGoD to publish the Annual Report 2025	
9 - AOB	7	EFSA to reschedule presentation on EFSA training plan and capacity-building initiatives	Ahead of the next AF meeting