

35th Pesticide Steering Network meeting

12 May 2026

9:00-16:00 (CEST)

Minutes Agreed on 5 June 2026

Location: EFSA – Parma / Webconference

Attendees:

- Network Participants:

Country	Member State Organisation
Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• AGES
Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment
Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Croatian Agency for Agriculture and Food
Denmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Danish Environmental Protection Agency
Estonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agriculture and Food Board
Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finnish safety and Chemicals Agency (Tukes)
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ANSES
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Federal Office of Consumer Protection and Food Safety (BVL)
Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ministry of Rural Development and Food• Benaki Phytopathological Institute
Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Food Chain Safety Office (NEBIH)
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Latvia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• State Plant Protection Service of the Republic of Latvia
Lithuania	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The State Plant Service under the Ministry of Agriculture
Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ctgb
Norway	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Norwegian Food Safety Authority
Poland	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Institute of Public Health NIH - National Research Institute
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ministry of Agriculture and Sea – DGAV
Slovak Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Central Control and Testing Institute in Agriculture
Slovenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kmetijski inštitut Slovenije• The National Institute of Public Health
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• INIA-CSIC
Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Swedish Chemicals Agency• SLV



- **Observers:**
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Albania); Food Safety and Veterinary Institute (Albania); Food and Veterinary Agency (Kosovo); Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Turkey).
- **European Commission:**
European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety
- **EFSA:**
PREV: TIRAMANI Manuela (HoU), KARDASSI DIMITRA (chair), BERNASCONI Giovanni (chair), BATISTA LEITE Sofia, BINAGLIA Marco, CHIUSOLO Arianna, LANZONI Anna, MAZZEGA Silvia, PARRA MORTE Juan Manuel, SCATTAREGGIA MARCHESE Adriana, SUONTAUSTA Annamaija CASTELLAN Irene, FERREIRA DA COSTA Lucien, LAVAL Abdulshakur, LEUSCHNER Renata, VERANI Alessia, FRIEL Anja, GKOUNTOURAS Dimitrios, MIOČ Andrea, MIRON Ileana, THEOBALD Anne, BLAZEVIĆ Marija, CAPUTI Mariafrancesca, COLAGIORGI Angelo, DE LENTDECKER Chloe, DE MAGISTRIS Isabella, GINER SANTONJA Germán, KARDASSI Dimitra, KUBANSKI Gabrielle Giancarla Sharon, LOPEZ ROMANO Mariano, MAVRIOU Galini, MOLNAR Tunde Katalin, NOMIKOU Christina, SZORADI Andras, TAGLIANINI Elena, VIANELLO Giorgia, GRECO Luna, NAVE Stefanie, SCARLATO Alessia Pia
PLANTS: ALVAREZ Fernando, ARENA Maria, AUTIERI Domenica, KIENZLER Aude, SHARP Rachel Jane, VILLAMAR BOUZA Laura Maria, PADOVANI Laura, SERAFIMOVA Rositsa
FDP: DE BERARDIS Sara, FEDERICI Silvia, DECE Laura, DELFINO Alessandro, PALTRINIERI Laura
ENABLE: CAPPÈ Stefano
Risk Assessment Logistics Unit: ADAMO Margaux, POZZATTI Piera

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.
No apologies were received.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted with two additional points proposed by Member States (MSs) on notification of study database access and on experts' meeting reports communication.

3. ToR update



The Chair presented for information the recent update of the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Pesticide Steering Network, following a decision by the Management Board on the Network establishment.

The update formalises the creation of subgroups and integrates the ToR of the IUCLID PSN subgroup into the main Pesticide Steering Network ToR, within a single document.

The updated ToR has been made publicly available on the EFSA website: [Terms of Reference – Pesticide Steering Network](#).

It was clarified that this update is purely administrative and does not affect the scope, roles, or activities of the Network or its members.

4. Update on activities by the European Commission

The European Commission (EC) provided a comprehensive update on ongoing and upcoming activities linked to pesticide framework Regulation (EC) 1107/2009. Key highlights included:

- New or upcoming legal/regulatory requirements: Safeners and Synergists (Commission Regulation 2024/1487), ongoing revision of the Data Requirements (DRs) and Uniform Principles (UPs) regulations;
- Co-formulants in plant protection products (PPPs) and related on-going work on EU list of co-formulants and next steps;¹
- New CLP hazard classes (ED, PBT, vPvB, PMT)² and ongoing work to align and integrate these classes into Annex II to Regulation 1107/2009;
- Confirmatory information on water treatment processes and on-going process.
- PFAS active substances & TFA on-going activities. Notably, the EC mandated EFSA to:
 - o re-assess the toxicological reference values for TFA³;
 - o issued a second mandate to both EFSA and ECHA, focused on the formation of TFA in soil and water⁴.
- Food and Feed Simplification Package under Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 (and No 396/2005)⁵: biocontrol, possibility for unlimited approvals for active substances with exceptions, safeguards to maintain high level of protection, MRL based on monitoring data, no longer term "import tolerance" but "MRL based on a good agricultural practice in a third country".

Austria highlighted that, with regard to the new CLP hazard (environmental) classes and their integration into Annex II of Regulation 1107/2009, the DT50 value is calculated differently under the PPP framework compared to CLP Guidance, thus requiring additional work for RMS and/or applicants. This may require additional work for RMSs and/or applicants. Austria noted that these concerns had already been raised during the consultation on the relevant legislative revisions.

Germany informed the EC that an applicant requested a meeting to discuss the testing strategy for generating missing data to address the confirmatory information on water treatment processes and sought clarification on how such requests should be handled. The EC indicated that direct engagement between applicants and risk assessors is appropriate when discussions are technical or scientific in nature. For procedural matters, applicants should instead be referred to risk managers. A case-by-case approach was recommended, depending on the purpose of the meeting. The EC also clarified that RMSs are not expected to carry out interim evaluations of partial data submissions, but rather a single assessment once the complete dataset is available.

Germany further raised questions on how guidance documents and their updates would be managed in light of the proposed provision allowing unlimited approval periods for active

¹ https://food.ec.europa.eu/plants/pesticides/authorisation-plant-protection-products/assessment-plant-protection-products-ppps_en

² <https://echa.europa.eu/new-hazard-classes-2023>

³ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2024-00502?search=TFA&sort=lastUpdatedTime>

⁴ <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2025-00693?search=TFA&sort=lastUpdatedTime>

⁵ https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/simplification-legislation_en



substances. The EC explained that the omnibus proposal has been endorsed at Commission level but needs to be adopted by the EP/Council. Therefore, its implementation remains subject to further developments. The proposed amendment of PPP Regulation foresees the periodic selection of active substances with unlimited approval periods for full renewal or targeted reassessment (new provision – also applicable to substances with limited approval periods) based on new scientific and technical knowledge (e.g. availability of new guidance documents). Furthermore, product authorisations remain limited (maximum 15 years) and subject to review and renewal; and if MSs considered that also the active substances should be looked at based on new evidence/science the active substances re-evaluation can be triggered too.

5. Streamlining Reporting Table compilation through 'Connect EFSA': A proposal to reduce MSs workload

Sweden presented a proposal to streamline the compilation of the Reporting Table by replacing the current use of multiple documents (Excel and Word files) with a single, standardised Excel-based template covering all steps of the peer review process. The proposal aims to improve efficiency, transparency and traceability, and to reduce the significant manual workload currently required for transferring and consolidating comments across different formats. The presentation opened by outlining the main challenges currently faced, such as the handling of multiple documents with different layouts, extensive manual data transfer, formatting issues and inconsistencies, and difficulties in cross-referencing comments.

To address these issues, Sweden proposed using the output of the targeted consultation as a starting point, deleting irrelevant columns and adding new ones to create a single template covering all stages of the peer-review process. This would effectively combine all existing tables into one, allowing individual comments to be transparently followed from start to finish. Sweden suggested Excel as the format for the single template, noting that it enables sorting and filtering of comments and that, compared with the tables currently in use, the proposed approach would reduce the number of columns by twelve.

The proposal was supported by Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Netherlands and Norway. Germany expressed some reservations concerning the Excel format. Austria offered to test the proposed new approach on a substance. The representative of the European Commission also expressed support for a consolidated file/format that brings all comments together in a single source. Belgium noted, however, that a single file covering all sections might be too large to manage effectively and suggested that separate files/formats per section (e.g. physical-chemical properties, mammalian toxicology, etc.) might be more user-friendly.

EFSA recalled the outcome of a pilot project conducted in 2019, in which Excel was tested for the same purpose (see Peer Review Report of pydiflumetofen: <https://open.efsa.europa.eu/questions/EFSA-Q-2016-00357>). Based on feedback from applicants, MSs and EFSA, the pilot did not deliver sufficiently good results. The main limitations identified at that time included: the absence of the track-changes functionality in Excel; the difficulty in viewing very large tables with numerous columns on a single page or screen; the need for extensive formatting before printing or converting to PDF for sanitisation purposes; and character limits within individual Excel cells. Overall, the pilot confirmed that Excel is not a suitable format for handling text-heavy content.

Austria inquired when applicants and EFSA would start using 'Connect EFSA' for the submission of comments on DARs/RARs. EFSA clarified that the dedicated team had been working on other modules of the same platform and that has recently started the business/feasibility analysis of expanding the use of the tool to other users. The PSN will be informed about next steps and further developments. EFSA acknowledged that the current use of multiple file formats is not optimal for the preparation of the Reporting Table and highlighted ongoing work to improve the process. This includes exploring options to harmonise formats across tools, building on improvements already introduced. In particular, the layout and content of the Excel commenting table have been aligned



with those of the Word commenting table to facilitate the transfer of comments and data between formats.

EFSA further informed the PSN that additional enhancements—such as the inclusion of a justification field for the coordinators (when sending comments back to the experts for review) and the introduction of an e-mail notification system—will be deployed in 'Connect EFSA' on 21 May 2026. Finally, EFSA noted that a 'Connect EFSA' user satisfaction survey has recently been launched to gather feedback and user insights. All users were encouraged to participate in the survey, which will remain open until 29 May 2026.

Actions:

- EFSA took note of the proposal and will continue working to improve the Reporting Table compilation process, taking into account the PSN feedback. In particular, EFSA will keep the PSN informed about the possibility of providing support for merging comments from MSs, EFSA and applicants over the summer, as well as the feasibility of integrating EFSA and applicants' comments into the 'Connect EFSA' tool.

6. Toward realistic timelines in EU Regulations and Guidance Documents

Germany (BVL) presented reflections on the increasing misalignment between existing regulatory timelines and the growing procedural and technical complexity of active substance evaluations. Challenges were highlighted in relation to the admissibility check, which has become more demanding due to transparency related requirements (e.g. notification of studies, personal data and confidentiality checks), IUCLID technical verifications, and frequent dossier resubmissions by applicants, leading to repeated checks by RMSs. Furthermore, there are uncertainties regarding the handling of low quality dossiers that might lead to non-admissibility decisions.

Further challenges were identified for the preparation of the DAR/RAR, where higher assessment standards and expanded documentation requirements are not matched by adapted timelines. Germany (BVL) proposed to examine which issues could be streamlined in the assessment reports (e. g. omit the tables "lines of evidence" in Vol. 1) and asked for further proposals by the MSs. Germany also suggested that clarity during the peer review phase could be improved by systematically including the dossier submission date and the IUCLID UUID in calls for comments. Furthermore, the high workload associated with reporting tables and the assessment of additional information was noted, with a proposal to clarify "need-to-know" versus "nice-to-know" information.

During the discussion, EFSA (FDP) clarified that the focus of admissibility checks remains on completeness and technical compliance, while acknowledging the additional workload introduced by the Transparency Regulation.

EFSA recalled available support measures, including guidance documents, IUCLID validation tools and admissibility teleconferences, and explained that dossier resubmissions do not require restarting the admissibility check from scratch. It was further noted that justifications may be accepted for unresolved quality warnings, and that automation of parts of the NoS check is being explored.

EFSA took note of the presentation and subsequent discussion and indicated that internal reflections on efficiency improvements are ongoing, and the topic may be revisited in future PSN discussions.

Actions:

- EFSA will continue internal reflections on improving efficiency in the peer review process, taking into account the challenges raised, and may revisit this topic in future PSN discussions.



7. Update of the Administrative Guidance

EFSA presented the state of play of the update of the Administrative Guidance on submission of dossiers and assessment reports for the peer-review of pesticide active substances and on the maximum residue level (MRL) application procedure⁶.

The draft was shared with the PSN members on 17 April 2026 and a consultation was opened from 20 April to 12 May 2026. The update includes clarifications, in particular on the preparation of dossiers and assessment reports, the introduction of three new appendices for MRL applications, and an extension of EFSA support to MSs both at the pre-submission phase and during the risk assessment.

EFSA outlined the next steps: following the closure of the consultation, EFSA will compile and address the comments received and provide replies in a commenting table within approximately 2–4 weeks. MSs will then have five days to review EFSA's replies and flag any remaining issues. Finalisation of the guidance is expected within 1–2 weeks thereafter, with publication foreseen by the end of June or early July 2026. The PSN and the PAFF Committee will be notified after publication.

France recalled that, as agreed in previous meetings, major modifications to the guidance should be brought to the PAFF Committee for endorsement. EFSA clarified that the PSN consultation represents the standard step in the process and that escalation to PAFF remains possible if significant issues are identified. The European Commission confirmed a case-by-case approach, whereby minor or non-controversial updates follow a simplified procedure, while more substantial or contentious changes may require further discussion and endorsement at PAFF level. MSs were invited to flag any such concerns during the consultation phase.

No major issues were raised at this stage.

8. MetaPath and DER/MSS Composer – Practical Use, challenges and support needs

The Swedish Chemicals Agency (KEMI) introduced the agenda item by highlighting recent initiatives to integrate MetaPath and the associated DER/MSS Composer tools into RMS tasks for preparing assessment reports. Prior to the PSN meeting, KEMI submitted several inquiries regarding the quality assurance and validation processes for metabolism studies.

EFSA responded to these queries and presented findings from an EU survey conducted shortly before the PSN meeting, in which 13 MSs provided insights regarding regulatory and procedural matters. Key survey results included:

- A low adoption rate of MetaPath and limited application of QA checks for MSS/DER xml files across MSs.
- The perceived benefits are currently minimal, as most respondents did not identify substantial added value.
- Main challenges highlighted were:
 - Technical and operational difficulties (such as installation issues and XML file compatibility).
 - Ambiguity concerning requirements, scope, and timing.

⁶ European Food Safety Authority, 2021. Administrative guidance on submission of dossiers and assessment reports for the peer-review of pesticide active substances and on the maximum residue level (MRL) application procedure, EFSA supporting publication 2021:18(3):EN-6464. 90 pp. doi:10.2903/sp.efsa.2021.EN-6464



EFSA further noted that approximately 50–60% of XML files submitted via IUCLID cannot be opened with MetaPath, indicating significant quality and compatibility issues. EFSA outlined ongoing development initiatives of IUCLID-based solutions that aim to replace current MSS/DER Composer workflows, facilitating a future transition to direct data entry within IUCLID and automated transfer to MetaPath.

EFSA referred to available training materials and guidance on its website (<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/applications/pesticides/tools>).

Action:

- EFSA noted the feedback and will consider improvements to guidance materials and technical support mechanisms regarding MetaPath.

9. New methodology for HCD and implementation activities

EFSA presented the new methodology for the use and reporting of historical control data (HCD) in the context of pesticide risk assessment.

HCD are data derived from studies conducted under the same or similar conditions as the toxicity study under assessment (index study). Their submission is a data requirement for pesticide active substances established under European legislation (Commission Regulation (EU) No 283/2013). However, current practices for compiling, reporting and using HCD are not harmonised, and experience to date has shown heterogeneous reporting (often insufficient) and use of HCD, leading to inconsistencies in the peer review. This situation highlighted the need for clear and harmonised recommendations for the regulatory use of HCD.

To address this need, EFSA's Panel on Plant Protection Products and their Residues (PPR) developed a [Scientific Opinion](#) on the "Use and reporting of historical control data (HCD) for regulatory studies", adopted in June 2025.

The Opinion proposes a stepwise, quantitative and reproducible framework covering three main phases: (1) planning, (2) evaluation of HCD, and (3) use of HCD for index study interpretation. Statistical analysis and integration of HCD into the assessment of the index study form an integral part of the framework. The practical application of the methodology requires close interaction between toxicologists and statisticians. Templates are also provided, designed to improve harmonisation of data submission and facilitate regulatory interpretation. While the approach entails additional resource needs, notably statistical expertise, it is expected to enhance transparency, scientific robustness and regulatory confidence.

Regarding regulatory follow up, EFSA outlined that implementation is envisaged to follow a phased and supportive approach, allowing sufficient time for Member State assessors to be trained and for the development of a dedicated tool necessary for practical application. A possible implementation date of **1 January 2028** is currently under discussion with risk managers, with the aim of allowing adequate preparation time for all stakeholders.

As regards implementation activities, following the adoption of the Scientific Opinion, the methodology has been presented for awareness-raising and initial dissemination in several fora, including among others an [EFSA webinar](#) (October 2025) and PAFF (May 2026).

For the next steps in 2026, EFSA plans to focus on key supporting activities, including dedicated training and the development of a user-friendly tool. The training programme, organised by EFSA with the support of Open Analytics and the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) under project EFSA/2024/OP/0011, is designed to translate the methodological principles into practical regulatory application. It consists of online pre-training sessions and two rounds of hands-on physical trainings (June and October 2026), covering both (eco)toxicological and statistical aspects through conceptual lectures and case studies. Invitations for the first training round have been circulated to MSs, with a registration deadline of 20 May 2026. A second round



will be announced after the summer. MSs were encouraged to participate in one of the two training rounds.

In parallel, EFSA plans to start the development of a dedicated tool to support consistent and reliable regulatory application of the methodology. Tool testing with applicants and MSs is envisaged in 2027, together with systematic collection of stakeholders' feedback through surveys and interviews, allowing refinements prior to any possible regulatory application.

EFSA also informed the Network that additional support mechanisms could be put in place also after the forthcoming implementation, including a dedicated toxicology/statistics helpdesk and ad-hoc support during peer review, as needed. To ensure cross-pillar coherence, EFSA is liaising with ECHA and contributing to relevant OECD activities, including work on Virtual Control Groups.

Overall, EFSA emphasised that the approach has been designed to be scientifically robust, feasible for MSs and aligned with regulatory needs, with no immediate mandatory application foreseen. Regular updates on progress will continue to be provided to the Pesticide Steering Network and PAFF.

Action:

- MSs are invited to register by the deadline of **20 May 2026** for the upcoming online pre-training session and hands-on training workshop (June 2026 round) to build capacity for the new HCD methodology.

10. EC roadmap phasing out animal testing - EFSA/ECHA Workshop

EFSA presented the European Commission roadmap on phasing out animal testing in chemical safety assessments, developed over two years in response to a European Citizens' Initiative. The roadmap was developed by the European Commission (DG GROW and DG ENV) through an inter-service group involving multiple Commission DGs, as well as EFSA, ECHA, and EMA. The work was supported by three dedicated working groups (human health, environment, and change management) and included broad stakeholder engagement (e.g. EPAA, PARC, industry, MSs, NGOs, and research bodies), with extensive consultations contributing to the final document.

The roadmap is currently under Commission approval, with publication expected in late May or early June. The document consists of a Commission Communication outlining policy background and the actions that are expected by the Commission and the relevant stakeholders and an attached staff working document with specific recommendations for different endpoints. It is applicable to 15 legislative areas and aims to schedule and accelerate the phasing out of animal testing, integrating ethical considerations and scientific advancements. One of the main principles is the Next Generation Risk Assessment (NGRA), which promotes a more mechanistic assessment, including the integration of risk assessment for human health and the environment.

Implementation will be led by a steering team from the Commission, with agency-specific bodies to assess and promote non-animal methods. An inter-agency working group is proposed to foster cooperation among EFSA, ECHA, and EMA, and a list of actions is included to support MSs and agencies in adopting non-animal approaches.

EFSA emphasised that implementation would require strong collaboration across institutions and stakeholders. To further explore the practical application of the roadmap in the area of pesticides and biocides, EFSA will organise a joint workshop with ECHA in October 2026.

Action:

- EFSA will organise a joint workshop with ECHA (October 2026) to further explore the practical implementation of the roadmap in the area of pesticides and biocides.



10.2 Alternatives to Animal Testing in relation to Data Requirements under Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009

EFSA highlighted divergent interpretation among MSs of how data requirements can be fulfilled, particularly regarding the acceptance of non-animal approaches. In the case presented, the RMS had requested that all data requirements be addressed through studies conducted in accordance with the current data requirements. EFSA clarified that, although the default legal position is to fully address the data requirements, this does not necessarily imply the generation of new animal studies.

EFSA outlined that, particularly for vertebrate testing, well-justified waivers and non-testing approaches can be considered on a case-by-case basis. These may include weight-of-evidence approaches, the use of publicly available literature on degradation or transformation of components, bridging from other regulatory dossiers, as well as pharmacokinetic modelling and read-across. EFSA explained that such approach had not been accepted by the RMS, mainly due to limited expertise in assessing alternative methodologies and concerns about legal compliance.

EFSA further explained that the regulatory framework already allows non-animal approaches where scientifically justified and that testing on vertebrate animals should be undertaken only when no other methods are available. EFSA also explained that upcoming updates to the data requirements further reinforce a stepwise approach, requiring a weight-of-evidence analysis and consideration of non-animal methods before conducting in vivo studies. EFSA emphasised that lack of familiarity with alternative methods should not, in itself, justify the generation of animal studies and invited discussion on how MSs could strengthen expertise in this area.

During the discussion, Member State representatives noted that waivers should be scientifically justified on a case-by-case basis. It was highlighted that alternative approaches are possible but require robust justification, and that neither existing nor updated data requirements introduce automatic assumptions of safety for substances of biological origin. Participants discussed the importance of harmonisation across MSs, the need for training and capacity building on non-animal methodologies, and the role of structured early dialogue and pre-submission advice to support applicants in designing appropriate testing strategies.

EFSA informed of ongoing reflections on training opportunities and collaboration with other agencies and stakeholders to support assessors. The discussion underlined that moving towards greater use of alternative methods represents a broader shift requiring flexibility, shared expertise and continued coordination between EFSA, MSs and other actors.

11. Critical Appraisal Tools (CATS) in ecotoxicology

EFSA presented the development, testing, and implementation of the Critical Appraisal Tools (CATs) for ecotoxicology studies. It was recalled that this project is not new to the Network, as EFSA had already introduced the initiative and provided updates on the progress of the testing phase during previous meetings.

EFSA explained that the CATs provide a structured approach for assessing the reliability and relevance of individual studies. The tools are intended to improve transparency in assessments and enhance consistency across evaluations of the same study types for different active substances. The project currently covers four ecotoxicological domains (Aquatic organisms, Brood studies with honey bees, Non-target arthropods and Birds and mammals risk assessment) and provides 8 test-specific CATs.

The CATs were developed by a consortium of well-known risk assessment bodies involved in regulatory peer-review activities. The initial proposal for the CATs was published by EFSA in 2023 as Larh *et al.*, 2023. Following publication, a testing phase was initiated to evaluate the suitability of the tools for regulatory use and to engage ecotoxicology experts from MSs in the process. The



testing phase lasted approximately six months and involved the use of real-case studies. Regular meetings were organised, to collect feedback from participants and discuss proposals for improving the tools and incorporate current regulatory practices into the final versions of the CATs. At the conclusion of the testing phase, a general meeting was held during which the updated approach was discussed and agreed. EFSA informed participants that a Technical Report (TR) on the updated CATs is now being prepared for publication and its publication triggers the implementation of the tools in the regulatory process as agreed during the general meeting.

It was also noted that EFSA is currently developing additional CATs in the area of endocrine disruptor (ED) assessment.

EFSA explained that the CATs are based on the CRED methodology. The tools for reporting the appraisal are Excel-based and are accompanied by dedicated handbooks for guiding the assessor in the evaluation.

A practical demonstration of the CATs was provided using the tool developed for modified exposure studies with aquatic organisms. EFSA demonstrated how assessors enter general study information, including evaluator details, study date, GLP compliance and then proceed with the appraisal of the study against predefined criteria. The CATs are protected to ensure that users can only enter information in designated evaluation fields, thereby preserving harmonization and preventing the introduction of non-standard/agreed criteria.

EFSA further demonstrated that the tools automatically calculate overall reliability and relevance classifications once the evaluation is completed and refreshed. The resulting outputs can be directly transferred into assessment summaries. In addition, the CATs contain dedicated sections where evaluators can record expert judgement and provide rationale where deviations from the automatic appraisal are necessary, thereby ensuring transparency of the assessment process.

The tools also include quality control checks and user-friendly functionalities intended to support consistency between assessments and assessors. During the discussion, it was mentioned that future developments could include a web-based version of the CATs and potentially the integration of artificial intelligence functionalities to further improve efficiency and consistency.

The governance of the CATs was also discussed. EFSA clarified that, although the CATs are currently considered consolidated documents, they are intended to remain "living documents." For the time being, governance is managed by EFSA. MSs using the CATs during assessments are encouraged to document issues, limitations, or additional considerations through the expert judgement sections embedded in the tools for the time being and report to EFSA any issue following the link provided in the updated documents. EFSA indicated that future revisions would take account of feedback from MSs and evolving new if any assessment practices, with the objective of continuously improving and updating the CATs over time.

No additional comments or questions were raised by MSs following the presentation and demonstration. The publication of the technical report and the updated tools is on-going and will be publicly available by end of May 2026.

12. Fit for purpose approach for the environmental risk assessment Low concern actives (GRANT)

EFSA informed on the published report on the fit-for-purpose and innovative risk assessment for low-concern pesticide active substances and uses⁷.

⁷ Vryzas Z, Arts GHP, Dalakouras A, Fragkoulis G, Guijarro B, Karazafeiris E, Karpouzas D.G, Menkissoglu-Spiroudi U, Papadakis EN, Papadopoulou K, Patino-Ropero MJ, Polst B, Alonso-Prados J-L, Steenbergh A, Tsaloumi S, Tsampoula A, 2025. Fit-for-purpose and innovative risk assessment for low-concern pesticide active substances and uses. EFSA Supporting publication 2026:EN-9791. 42 pp. doi:10.2903/sp.efsa.2026.EN-9791.



Clarifications were requested on whether the published report should be considered ready for use or whether further elaboration of the results is foreseen. Interest was expressed in the potential usability of the likelihood descriptors for expert knowledge elicitation.

EFSA confirmed that the report is already usable and may already support applicants, while noting that further consolidation is expected. Possible future EFSA outputs may integrate additional tools and input from ongoing activities, including OECD work. Further developments will depend on the outcome of the Omnibus discussions and alignment with consolidated guidance.

It was recalled that the original mandate envisaged a public consultation followed by a Panel statement; however, this approach has evolved to allow consolidation of additional relevant activities. Future work is expected to expand the scope to additional compartments in line with terrestrial guidance.

Belgium reported that the document has already been applied in practice in the evaluation of the first double-stranded RNA active substance, and confirmed that the published content is already useful, while acknowledging the need for further refinement based on experience.

Questions were raised on practical implementation within EFSA peer review and on harmonisation across MSs, given the reliance on expert judgement. EFSA explained that the structured framework aims to support harmonisation and consistency, while recognising the inherent limitations of expert judgement.

13. Any Other Business

1) MRL and Interactive Pesticide Residue Platform (IPReP)

France raised questions about clock stop communication procedures, clarification teleconferences with applicants and the use of the IPREP platform for residue-related discussions.

EFSA clarified that PDF clock stop letters are no longer uploaded to DMS but are shared via secure links to the applicant and RMSs, allowing them to download the documents within a specified timeframe. EFSA also noted that the folder structure has been slightly revised to improve harmonisation and system security. Regarding clarification teleconferences, EFSA explained that these are proactively offered for complex cases, linked to data requirements or where MRL clock stops are reiterated, aiming to support applicants and ensure a shared understanding of data requests among all relevant stakeholders. Feedback received from the applicants so far has been positive.

EFSA noted that IPReP focuses on targeted topics in pesticide residue risk assessment. Recent topics include a flowchart aiming at clarifying the data requirements for processing studies, now included as Annex in the administrative guidance. This flowchart is currently open for validation, and EFSA invited MSs to review it and provide feedback in the respective IPREP channel.

Two other topics proposed by MSs were also highlighted:

- German proposal on criteria for indoor and outdoor residue trials, which has already been advanced through MSs consultation (with input from 22 experts covering 20 MSs);
- Belgium proposal on criteria for bridging residue trials across different formulations, for which it was clarified that bridging is only possible where supporting data are available. A call for data remains open in the IPREP channel and will be followed up by email, with the possibility of a dedicated MSs consultation.

MSs were encouraged to remain actively engaged, share data, and contact EFSA for clarification or support. EFSA acknowledged that Teams notifications may not always be effective and confirmed that follow-up emails may be used where needed. Finally, EFSA emphasised that IPReP



should remain an interactive platform and confirmed its intention to provide regular updates and improve planning and timing to allow sufficient time for MSs input and internal consultations.

Action:

- MSs were invited to review and provide feedback via the relevant IPREP channel on the processing flowchart included in the administrative guidance, reflect on the outcome of the consultation regarding indoor and outdoor criteria for residue trials and indicate whether further follow-up discussions or actions are considered useful and to provide data where available to support bridging between different formulations used in residue trials.

2) New EFSA initiative on precision application techniques

EFSA presented a new activity on **Precision Application Techniques** as a major emerging challenge for pesticide risk assessment. It was highlighted that these technologies lead to heterogeneous and highly targeted exposure patterns, which are not adequately captured by current regulatory assumptions. EFSA explained that existing environmental and human health risk assessment methodologies are largely based on uniform application scenarios and may therefore need to be revised or complemented to appropriately address these new application modes.

To address this challenge, EFSA proposed the establishment of a **dedicated subgroup under the Pesticide Steering Network**, primarily composed of MSs experts and EFSA staff, with the objective of working in a flexible and collaborative manner.

The subgroup is expected to focus initially on three key areas:

1. Developing a problem formulation to clarify relevant exposure pathways and receptors;
2. Identifying priority methodological challenges and potential approaches for the risk assessment of precision application techniques;
3. Identifying data gaps and further information needs to support future regulatory developments.

The work will build on existing initiatives, in particular those led by the **EU Precision Application Task Force (BVL - EUPAF⁸)**, with the aim of translating available technical and scientific knowledge into a form suitable for regulatory use. It was also clarified that drone applications will be addressed separately under a different mandate.

The discussion confirmed strong support from MSs and the European Commission. In response to a question from France, EFSA clarified that the core subgroup would consist of Member States and EFSA, with the possibility of involving wider stakeholders (e.g. industry and farmers) at a later stage if considered appropriate. The importance of harmonisation across Member States and of a proactive adaptation of the regulatory framework was also emphasised.

Action

- EFSA will launch a call for nominations to MSs to establish the subgroup and define the required expertise, as soon as possible.

3) Co-formulants

⁸https://www.bvl.bund.de/DE/Arbeitsbereiche/04_Pflanzenschutzmittel/01_Aufgaben/02_ZulassungPSM/05_psm_EUPAF/psm_EUPAF_node.html



EFSA informed the Network on the on-going internal discussions at EFSA/EC level regarding third-parties' data submission on the full composition of co-formulants. This information is typically requested by the RMS/EFSA during DAR/RAR preparation and/or peer review process and may be submitted directly by the respective suppliers or manufacturers, since it often contains commercially sensitive information. Legal and practical implications of such practise are currently being considered by EFSA/EC such as: the accountability for the dossier and any identified data gaps, the status of suppliers as non-formal legal interlocutors; and the burden and responsibility associated with sanitisation and confidentiality decision-making.

EFSA will keep the Network informed of further developments on this topic.

4) Belgium : Notification of Study Database Access

Belgium raised the question of whether it is possible to access the Notification of Studies (NoS) database, or to request an extract from EFSA, for a specific active substance for which a MS is not acting as RMS, and therefore it is outside the context of an admissibility assessment of an IUCLID dossier.

The question was raised in the context of an application received for an emergency authorisation for an active substance that is no longer authorised in the EU (spirotetramat). The non-renewal of this substance resulted from a withdrawal or lack of support of the renewal application, rather than the identification of unacceptable effects during the evaluation. In such cases, no information is available on the reasons of the withdrawal, or on whether studies may have been conducted that revealed potential concerns preventing renewal. It was noted that, in principle, applicants are required to notify all initiated studies; access to an extract of the NoS database for the substance concerned could therefore allow verification of whether relevant studies had been notified.

For the specific case concerned, EFSA clarified that the provisions of the Transparency Regulation did not yet apply and, consequently, no information would be available in the NoS database. The question was therefore raised mainly with a view to similar situations in the future.

EFSA indicated that the issue would likely require legal advice before any access to the NoS database could be considered.

Belgium was invited to submit a request via the **AskEFSA service** (<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/applications/askaquestion>), after which a written follow-up would be provided.

5) Germany : Experts' meeting reports communication

Germany raised a point regarding the handling and communication of expert meeting minutes. First, it was noted that there is currently no systematic notification when final high level reports are published, which makes it difficult for national experts to track outcomes in a timely manner. They therefore suggested introducing a simple notification mechanism, such as an email, to alert MSs when reports become available. Also Germany reported cases where expert meeting outcomes were modified after their initial publication without explicit communication to the participants. This creates uncertainty as to which version should be considered final.

EFSA clarified that expert meeting high-level reports are systematically published within 15 working days from the end of the meeting, however, there is currently no standard practice to send notification emails to MSs when reports are published. It is also uncertain whether administrative colleagues (RAL) could implement such targeted notifications, though this possibility could be explored.

EFSA also explicitly asked Germany to provide concrete examples/cases where changes occurred after publication of the expert meeting high-level reports, in order to investigate the issue further.



Action

- EFSA to assess the feasibility of introducing a notification mechanism (e.g. automated email alert) to inform MSs when expert meeting high-level reports are published.
- Germany to provide concrete examples of cases where expert meeting minutes were modified after publication, to allow EFSA to investigate the issue.

6) Availability of documents

Some MSs raised the issue of availability of meeting documents and requested that they be uploaded to EFSA's SharePoint sufficiently in advance to allow adequate preparation.

EFSA makes every effort to share documents in a timely manner while the majority of meeting materials are already made available in advance. However, EFSA acknowledged the importance of further improvements and will continue to work towards ensuring earlier availability wherever possible.

14. Conclusions

At the close of the meeting, it was noted that the discussions had been rich and productive, with a high number of presentations and constructive exchanges covering a wide range of scientific and procedural topics. The significant contributions of EFSA colleagues, MSs, and the European Commission were acknowledged. It was further highlighted that the regulatory landscape is evolving rapidly, including developments such as the increasing role of non-animal methodologies and ongoing updates to data requirements. Feedback provided by MSs throughout the meeting, including comments on processes, tools, and peer-review practices, was taken into account and will be considered when defining next steps, with the aim of improving efficiency, enhancing collaboration, and refining key elements such as reporting tables and workflows.

The intention to further involve MSs in ongoing and new activities, in order to ensure continued engagement and alignment, was reiterated. Finally, participants were invited to participate in the next Pesticide Steering Network meeting, which will take place in **Parma in October 2026 (physical/hybrid)**, with encouragement for in-person participation to support interactive discussions.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and the meeting was then formally closed.