

100th MEETING OF THE EFSA ADVISORY FORUM



10 June 2026: 9:00-16:45

11 June 2026: 9:00-12:30

Location: Parma, Italy

Members	Attendance
Austria (AT)	Johann Steinwider
Belgium (BE)	Fabien Bolle
Belgium (BE)	Axel Mauroy
Bulgaria (BG)	Lilyana Polihronova
Croatia (HR)	Sara Mikrut Vunjak
Cyprus (CY)	Rebecca Kokkinofa
Cyprus (CY)	Charitini Frenaritou
Czech Republic (CZ)	Jitka Götzová
Denmark (DK)	Dorte Lau Baggesen
Denmark (DK)	Martin Bahl
Estonia (EE)	Mari Reinik
France (FR)	Matthieu Schuler
France (FR)	Salma Elreedy
Germany (DE)	Andreas Hensel
Germany (DE)	Tewes Tralau
Greece (GR)	Idomeneas Markakis
Greece (GR)	Danai Papanastasiou
Ireland (IE)	Lisa O'Connor
Italy (IT)	Denise Giacomini
Italy (IT)	Alessandra Perella
Latvia (LV)	Vadims Bartkevičs
Lithuania (LT)	Snieguolė Ščeponavičienė
Malta (MT)	Mark Cassar
Netherlands (NL)	Godelieve Kranendonk
Norway (NO)	Tore Skeidsvoll Tollersrud
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

MEETING MINUTES
100th Meeting of the Advisory Forum



Observers	Attendance
Albania (AL)	Polikseni Drazho
Montenegro (ME)	Vladimir Djaković
North Macedonia (MK)	Martin Josheski
Switzerland (CH)	Katharina Stärk
Türkiye (TR)	Ersin Dilber
European Commission (EC)	Anastasia Alvizou
European Commission (EC)	Athanasios Raikos
European Commission (EC)	Frans Verstraete
European Commission (EC)	Veerle Vanheusden
External speakers	
EFSA Management Board Chair – BIOR (Latvia)	Aivars Bērziņš
VKM (Norway)	Gisle Solstad
BfR (Germany)	Marina Lechleider
CNSA (Italy)	Antonio Gasbarrini
ECHA	Ignacio de la Flor Tejero
ANSES (France)	Laurent Guillier
EFSA Representatives	
Nikolaus Kriz (Chair)	Barbara Gallani (Co-Chair)
Carlos Das Neves (Co-Chair)	Guilhem de Sèze (Co-Chair)
Bénédicte Vagenende (Co-Chair)	Victoria Villamar (HoU ENREL)
Sérgio Potier Rodeia (Team Leader Community Management)	Donka Popova (Advisory Forum Secretariat)
Federico Achilli (Advisory Forum Secretariat)	Marella Tassini (Advisory Forum Secretariat)
Lorenzo Barraco (Advisory Forum Secretariat)	Virginia Spurio Salvi (CORSER)
Kewa Palmer (CORSER)	Gisèle Gizzi (Speaker)
Cinzia Percivaldi (Speaker)	Sara Tramontini (Speaker)
Claudia Roncancio-Pena (Speaker)	Rita Ferreira de Sousa (Speaker)
Konstantinos Paraskevopoulos (Speaker)	Bernard Bottex (Speaker)
Giovanni Mancarella (Speaker)	Alexis Nathanail (Speaker)
Claudia Heppner (Speaker)	Fabrizio Abbinante (Expert)



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Day 1

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

EFSA's Executive Director Nikolaus Kriz, Chair of the 100th Advisory Forum (AF), opened the meeting by warmly welcoming participants in Parma and online. He framed the occasion as a milestone not only in numbers, but as a reflection of long-standing cooperation and shared responsibility across Europe.

He reflected on the path of the Advisory Forum from 2003 to today highlighting the development in cooperation and collective achievements.

Prof. Andreas Hensel (Germany) followed with a reflective and celebratory intervention, speaking as the longest-standing member of the Forum. He highlighted the Forum's role as a bridge between EFSA and national authorities.

The Chair proceeded to the adoption of the agenda, outlining the main items. He invited participants to confirm their agreement. Dorte Lau Baggesen (Denmark) proposed an item under AOB regarding Biopath. The hybrid format of the meeting was noted, with participation from 30 countries and the European Commission, and both in-person and online attendees were acknowledged. He also recognised recent appointments such as Donka Popova as new EFSA SNE and thanked Charitini Frenaritou from Cyprus for her commitment towards the Advisory Forum as she attends the last AF meeting before retirement.

Item 2: Management Board

Report from the MB and EFSA Strategy 2027-2034

The Chair of the Management Board, Aivars Berzins, presented EFSA's strategic outlook, emphasising the strong link between the Management Board and the Advisory Forum and inviting active engagement in shaping the next strategy beyond 2027. He outlined three key priorities - improving speed, fostering innovation, and strengthening cooperation - while stressing that faster risk assessments must not compromise scientific quality. Digitalisation, data use, and AI were highlighted as enablers, alongside the need for more structured and long-term collaboration with Member States. He mentioned that preparations for the new strategy are underway through an inclusive process, with an important role foreseen for the Advisory Forum.

In the discussion, Member States broadly supported the proposed direction. The Netherlands welcomed the presence of the Chair of the Management Board as a sign of alignment between governance bodies, while France raised two points on highlighting the importance of partnerships and France's continued commitment to contribute to these initiatives and to learn from the experiences, and on indicating the importance of information sharing and exchanges when facing urgent matters (such as the recent cereulide crisis), suggesting ad hoc meetings among EFSA and interested AF members to improve responsiveness during crisis. Spain reaffirmed its commitment to scientific cooperation with EFSA and other Member States. EFSA illustrated, through the cereulide case, that while formal EU crisis coordination mechanisms function well, the most effective collaboration occurred through timely informal exchanges with Member States, enabling efficient sharing of data and avoidance of duplication. EFSA concluded that the current system is robust but invited reflection on whether additional or complementary mechanisms could further enhance responsiveness without duplicating existing structures.

EFSA then highlighted the development of the new strategy and stressed the importance of engagement from both MB and AF. The speaker highlighted that upcoming EU legislative proposals (e.g. on biotech, pesticides, and regulatory simplification) may significantly impact EFSA's workload and responsibilities, stressing the need for adaptability and close coordination with Member States, particularly to avoid duplication in areas such as pre-submission advice. They emphasised the Advisory Forum's key role in ensuring alignment and ongoing dialogue, while



underlining the importance of early engagement and a coordinated approach to future developments.

EFSA then clarified when and how the AF can contribute to the development of the next strategy, mentioning a dedicated workshop at the October Advisory Forum to ensure their input contributes to translating overall priorities into concrete actions, while also underlining the broader breath of the consultation process around the strategy.

Item 3: Focal Point Operational Framework

2026 Tailor Made Activities submission and FP Health Check: Task Force updates

Co-Chair Barbara Gallani introduced the work being done towards the establishment of a new Focal Point operational model as of 2028, re-confirming the network as the “operational arm” of the Advisory Forum and as a key tool for ongoing cooperation, data exchange, and capacity building among Member States and beyond. She underlined its strategic importance before handing over to Sérgio Potier Rodeia (EFSA) and Gisle Solstad (Norway).

Sérgio Potier Rodeia presented the current state-of-play regarding submitted Tailor Made Activities (TMAs), noting increased participation and competition for the budget available. Gisle Solstad then outlined a proposed evolution of the framework structured around three pillars - support, connect, and incubate. The proposal reinforces the need for a more structured, end-to-end support to science function, while maintaining focus on other existing core functions concerning information exchange, networking and partnerships, enhancing its overall impact.

The discussion received broad support for the proposed evolution of the framework, while drawing attention to several operational considerations. EFSA clarified that the MSCC function under the CEN has arrived to a stage of maturity that enables its evolution towards a separate function, with stable funding. It was also noted that the new Focal Point concept presented will be further refined in close consultation with Member States.

Germany expressed strong support noting possible uneven national capacities for taking on more technical roles and the risk of reduced funding undermining effectiveness. The Netherlands noted operational concerns regarding gaps in visibility and coordination across countries, pointing to the need for stronger mechanisms to ensure coherence and awareness of ongoing activities. France supported the overall approach while suggesting a stronger emphasis on the “connect” and “incubate” pillars on partnerships (including new forms of partnerships) and the importance of the “support” pillar to highlight the Focal Points’ interface with data-related structures, such as AGoD. Czechia sought clarification on the future implementation of MSCCs, including funding arrangements and potential constraints related to outsourcing communication activities. Denmark stressed the importance of flexibility to accommodate diverse national systems and highlighted the growing importance of data, suggesting that more structured approaches or new mechanisms may be required in the future. All these points will be brought to the attention of the Member States’ Focal Point Task Force for consideration when progressing with the more detailed design of the framework.

Item 4: Capacity Building in Food Safety

Strengthening Risk Assessment Capacity in Europe

The presentation, given by Gisele Gizzi (EFSA) and Marina Lechleider (BfR), focused on strengthening risk assessment capacity in Europe, highlighting it as a shared responsibility between EFSA and Member States. It emphasised the need for continuous professional development and introduced [xORA](#) as a key Member State-driven initiative that was supported by EFSA in its inception and initial deployment of the platform. xORA aims to improve access to and visibility of existing training opportunities through a common platform, with the longer-term ambition of becoming a central hub for the risk assessment community and contributing to a more coordinated European approach to training.



The discussion that followed highlighted a strong and shared concern among Member States regarding the growing shortage of risk assessors, while broadly endorsing the xORA initiative as a key part of the solution. Denmark opened the exchange by stressing that traditional “on-the-job” training models are no longer sufficient in the current context of limited resources and increased demand, framing xORA not just as a platform but as a collaborative space for addressing these challenges collectively. Croatia, Germany, and The Netherlands all expressed strong support for the initiative, underlining its added value in bringing visibility and coherence to existing training opportunities and enabling a more coordinated European approach. Germany emphasised that no single country could meet these needs alone and highlighted the long-term potential for xORA to evolve into an integrated system supporting career development for risk assessors. Switzerland followed with a practical example of the recruitment difficulties faced at national level, noting that recent vacancies had attracted very few suitable candidates, thereby underlining the urgency of coordinated action. EFSA then intervened to encourage participants to consider contributing national training programmes to the platform and to express interest in further engagement with xORA, thereby reinforcing a sense of collective responsibility.

France suggested for AF members who are engaged in academic programmes to link with xORA and encouraged those involved in higher education initiatives to explore existing European education frameworks, such as Erasmus Mundus, and the possible development of new curricula at EU level. Denise Giacomini (Italy) reported the Italian interest in the platform foreseeing an internal discussion within the art. 36 organisations to assess the opportunity of publishing ad hoc courses. She also reported that a project is underway with WHO EU Copenhagen and the WHO Collaborating Centre in Dublin for a One Health module training course, which, once ready, would be useful to share, as it represents an interesting development in One Health training, including in the integrated and collaborative risk assessment area.

Denmark also underlined that capacity building needs to cover both continuous professional development and formal academic training, potentially including the development of a European master’s programme. In response, the xORA team welcomed the strong engagement and encouraged Member States to contribute actively to the platform, positioning it as a strategic hub for defining future skills and competencies. The xORA team invited the AF members and EFSA to strategically discuss this topic further during the online xORA dialogue on 24th September. An invitation and the agenda will be sent in due course.

In this regard, EFSA promotes learning and professional development across Europe by offering a range of training opportunities tailored to stakeholders involved in EU food and feed safety. These initiatives are launched regularly, can be explored [here and will also be made available through the the xORA platform.](#)

Item 5: International Cooperation

EU Enlargement

The presentation by Cinzia Percivaldi (EFSA) provided an overview of EFSA’s EU enlargement activities, combining a review of achievements with priorities for the next phase. The initiative centres on integrating candidate countries into EFSA’s networks and strengthening capacities in risk assessment, communication, and crisis management.

Results presented highlighted both the scale and impact of the programme, including improved harmonisation of risk assessment practices, stronger crisis preparedness, and enhanced data sharing in areas such as zoonoses and chemicals. Cooperation has gone beyond formal requirements, with voluntary data exchange already taking place, alongside increased public awareness reflected in Eurobarometer survey results. The closing events in Montenegro were used to gather feedback and inform the design of the next enlargement Action, due to start in August 2026 for a period of 36 months. For 2026–2029, the enlargement programme will expand to include Ukraine and Moldova and benefit from an increased budget. While objectives remain stable,



the next cycle will introduce more diversified activities to foster capacity building in the region and stronger peer-to-peer collaboration.

Participants expressed strong appreciation for the EU enlargement programme, highlighting its tangible impact on cooperation and integration. Albania welcomed the sustained support and emphasised the value of recent regional meetings in strengthening collaboration. Türkiye underlined its long-standing alignment with EU food safety systems and its readiness to further integrate into EFSA structures. North Macedonia highlighted progress in data reporting and expressed a strong sense of belonging to the EU system already prior to accession.

Among Member States, Spain and Germany shared examples of existing bilateral cooperation with Ukraine and Moldova, demonstrating early engagement and willingness to align these efforts with the broader EFSA framework. Interventions from EFSA and Management Board leadership stressed the importance of better connecting and coordinating these initiatives to maximise impact and avoid duplication.

Item 6: Current Partnership Opportunities

6.1 Overview

Co-Chair Carlos Das Neves introduced the partnership segment as a concrete follow-up to the meeting's broader objective of "joining forces", highlighting upcoming collaboration opportunities under EFSA's Scientific Cooperation Plan. Those included four calls for proposal (grants) and one call for tender. He encouraged the Member States representatives to actively disseminate these opportunities nationally. Further to that, he gave the floor to two EFSA officers to introduce two of the forthcoming cooperation proposals; one on dietary exposure and the other on foresight activities to support plant health.

6.2 Foresight activities in support of plant health

Sara Tramontini (EFSA) presented EFSA's plant health foresight activities, describing the evolution from a technical horizon scanning exercise to a more structured, forward-looking and collaborative system.

The established workflow relies on automated web-scraping of scientific and media sources, followed by expert validation, and monthly dissemination to Member States and the European Commission to identify early "weak signals" of emerging risks. This is complemented by a rapid risk screening tool for non-regulated pests, supporting prioritisation of new potential threats. A key advancement is the integration into the EIOS platform, which connects plant, human, and animal health communities, enabling shared analysis, harmonised methodologies, and collective validation of signals across a growing network of international partners.

Looking ahead, the initiative is shifting towards a true foresight model, aiming to better connect risks, events, and consequences across sectors, expand access to EFSA tools for national authorities, and integrate additional data sources such as trade flows. Increased use of AI is expected to enhance signal filtering, while global risk drivers, such as climate change, conflicts, and systemic disruptions, could be incorporated into analysis. Anchored in a One Health perspective, the approach seeks to move beyond individual pest detection towards integrating complex, interconnected processes. The presentation highlighted that the strength of this work lies in sustained collaboration and partnerships with organisations such as JRC, WHO, and FAO.

France took the floor and expressed strong appreciation for the initiative, confirming its practical relevance and added value, highlighting the active engagement of ANSES experts involved in the project and underlining that the work has proven collectively useful, offering clear support for the horizon scanning system and its contribution to Member States. France wondered about the longer-term evolution of the horizon scanning system, asking whether it could be expanded to integrate signals from citizens and broader public sources. The French representative sought clarification on the relationship between EFSA's rapid risk screening tool and existing international standards,



particularly those developed by EPPO, asking whether the approach should be seen as complementary or methodologically distinct.

In response, EFSA clarified that the rapid screening tool is inspired by established frameworks but deliberately simplified to enable fast, transparent, and reproducible preliminary assessments, especially in contexts with limited data. On the question of data sources, EFSA confirmed that the system can technically integrate wider inputs, including social media, but stressed the importance of ensuring reliability and evidential robustness, particularly when informing risk management. The Co-Chair concluded by acknowledging the potential value of broader engagement while noting the challenges of validating unverified signals.

6.3 Future Partnership on dietary exposure assessment

Rita Ferreira de Sousa (EFSA) presented EFSA's proposal for a new partnership model on dietary exposure assessment, outlining both the current context and the rationale for change. She explained that exposure assessments have so far been conducted largely in-house due to their technical complexity, the need for direct access to EFSA's data warehouse, and the requirement for specialised methodological expertise. They further highlighted the inherently multidisciplinary nature of exposure science, which draws on fields such as nutrition, chemistry, agronomy, and statistics, and noted that formal training opportunities in this area remain limited across Europe, leading to a concentration of expertise within EFSA. At the same time, they pointed to a gradually evolving landscape, with improved accessibility of data, enhanced methodological documentation, and remote access to EFSA's data infrastructure has become possible, alongside growing interest from Member States in building capacity. In this context, EFSA proposed piloting a partnership with a single Member State or EEA organisation through the secondment of an expert, who would split their time between contributing to EFSA's exposure assessments and supporting capacity-building activities in their home organisation. The co-funded scheme was presented as an initial, exploratory step towards a more collaborative model.

France situated the proposal within the broader reflections on cooperation and partnerships discussed earlier in the meeting and underlined the importance of ensuring efficiency and avoiding duplication of work between EFSA and national authorities, while cautioning about practical considerations to ensure access to data hosted by EFSA. EFSA clarified that the current centralised approach is driven by structural constraints rather than strategic choice and reiterated its intention to progressively move towards a more collaborative model. The Authority also emphasised that the proposed scheme should be seen as a pilot, aimed at testing feasibility and enabling gradual learning, and highlighted the need for key enabling conditions, including appropriate data access, methodological alignment, and capacity development. EFSA also invited Member States to provide further feedback by mid-July 2026, stressing that the proposal remains open and should be co-developed with the network before moving to a formal call.

Item 7: Microbiome in regulatory science

Engagement of MS in Microbiome data for RA

The presentation from Konstantinos Paraskevopoulos (EFSA) provided an update on EFSA's work to integrate microbiome science into risk assessment through strengthened collaboration with Member States. It followed up on previously agreed actions, notably the launch of two project calls (on biomarkers and metagenomics), the creation of a dedicated knowledge community, and the organisation of a technical workshop. These initiatives aim to address key regulatory science gaps and build the methodological foundations needed to support the future use of microbiome data in risk assessment. A structured roadmap was presented, highlighting how these activities contribute to developing a coordinated European approach in this rapidly evolving field.

A central element of the initiative is the establishment of a focused knowledge community to facilitate exchange, alignment, and coordination among experts, alongside a technical workshop



later in the year covering both human and animal gut microbiomes and their interaction with external factors. Strong emphasis was placed on Member State engagement, with multiple entry points for contribution.

Germany highlighted that microbiome research, still heavily influenced by traditional microbiology science, often focuses on species composition, while for regulatory purposes the functional aspects - such as metabolic activity - can be more relevant. The German representative suggested framing the microbiome as a “functional system” rather than a collection of species, to better determine the significance of observed changes. EFSA agreed with this direction, noting that the field is increasingly integrating disciplines such as different omics technologies, bioinformatics and systems biology, and confirming that understanding functionality is essential for regulatory application.

France raised broader implications on the “translation” from research to regulatory approaches, and the need to consider risk-benefit analysis in microbiome-related assessments, as applications may involve both positive and negative effects, wondering whether the EFSA guidance on risk-benefit assessment needed to be updated. France also expressed ANSES interest in contributing to the organisation of the upcoming workshop. EFSA acknowledged these points, noting that while risk-benefit approaches will become increasingly relevant, fundamental methodological challenges remain and current efforts are focused on building scientific foundations. EFSA encouraged Member States to engage in ongoing project calls, join the knowledge community, and support the workshop, also underlining the importance of identifying experts capable of translating research into regulatory use.

Item 8: EFSA Horizon Scanning Activities

EFSA Horizon Scanning – report back

The presentation from Bernard Bottex (EFSA) outlined EFSA’s cross-cutting approach to horizon scanning, aimed at identifying issues (weak signals, trends, upcoming policy developments) that could impact EFSA’s future regulatory work. Efforts are ongoing to strengthen collaboration with Member States, building on existing national foresight systems and moving towards a more integrated European network.

A structured overview of collected signals was presented, grouped by their level of maturity. Some topics - such as climate-related impacts, ultra-processed foods, and digital influence on science - are already being addressed through existing frameworks. Others remain under analysis, including AI-generated scientific content, geopolitical pressures on supply chains, emerging quantum technologies, and the re-emergence of legacy pollutants. The system also filters out signals that fall outside EFSA’s remit or are sufficiently covered, ensuring focus on priority areas. The work feeds also into broader multi-agency foresight efforts and is used to support EFSA’s strategic planning.

The Netherlands expressed strong support for EFSA’s horizon scanning approach, noting that similar activities are well established at national level and offering to follow up with more detailed input. They also suggested strengthening cooperation with the European Medicines Agency (EMA), particularly on emerging topics such as quantum technologies. France cautioned that the concept of ultra-processed foods remains to be scientifically defined, requiring clearer definitions before regulatory use. The French representative also highlighted that geo-economic risks to food supply chains means looking at risks and benefits under high political pressure and may involve not only scientific but also cultural and societal dimensions, with implications for risk-benefit considerations. Spain added that national and international developments, including upcoming legislation and WHO work on ultra-processed foods, are advancing rapidly and should be closely monitored. Germany stressed the need for nuanced analysis of ultra-processed foods and offering concrete support by linking EFSA to national initiatives, including work on advanced materials and existing risk screening activities.



EFSA acknowledged the contributions and confirmed that enhanced cooperation with EU agencies and Member States would be pursued, including through existing coordination platforms. EFSA recognised the scientific uncertainty and reputational sensitivity surrounding ultra-processed foods and highlighted ongoing work by the European Commission (SAM, DG RTD, DG SANTE and DG AGRI), which is expected, inter alia, to provide greater clarity on definitions.

Item 9: Update on Communication

EFSA's communication campaigns in 2026/27

The presentation given by Giovanni Mancarella (EFSA) focused on EFSA's communication campaigns. Three main initiatives were highlighted: "Safe2Eat", targeting the general public to strengthen awareness and trust in the EU food safety system; "PlantHealth4Life", promoting awareness of plant health; and "NoBirdFlu", addressing biosecurity practices among professionals. The campaigns demonstrate both wide reach and measurable impact, contributing not only to awareness but also to behavioural change.

Particular attention was given to how campaigns are implemented and how they will evolve. Looking ahead, the next phase of Safe2Eat will place greater emphasis on food consumption behaviours, data-driven insights, and interactive formats such as gamification. The NoBirdFlu campaign was presented as an example of targeted, policy-driven communication translating scientific recommendations into simple, actionable messages. The presentation highlighted the importance of collaboration across the communication network, particularly through Member State Communication Coordinators (MSCCs).

The Chair of the Management Board opened the exchange by commending the visibility and quality of the campaigns across Europe, noting from direct experience that they effectively reach both citizens and professional audiences. At the same time, he raised a strategic question regarding whether these initiatives also strengthen citizens' awareness of EFSA itself, prompting reflection on how institutional visibility complements public-facing messaging. In response, EFSA clarified that campaign impact is already systematically evaluated through dedicated assessments and wider tools such as Eurobarometer, while emphasising that the ultimate objective is to build trust in the entire EU food safety system rather than promoting EFSA alone, an approach reinforced through co-branding with national authorities.

Spain provided a practical illustration of how campaigns translate into national-level action, describing a targeted university outreach initiative on fish consumption and risk-benefit considerations that successfully engaged students and stakeholders through collaboration between scientists, risk managers and communication experts. Cyprus complemented the discussion by expressing appreciation for EFSA's support and the value of coordinated campaigns in raising public awareness, while also raising a concrete question on the future use of PR agencies at national level. EFSA confirmed that the current model - combining central coordination with national flexibility - will continue, allowing Member States to adapt arrangements according to their needs.

In closing, EFSA reiterated the importance of sustained collaboration and encouraged wider participation across countries, acknowledging differences in capacity and engagement levels.

Closing remarks

The meeting closed with remarks from EFSA's ED, highlighting the strong level of engagement and interaction throughout the day, marking both the end of the session and the significance of the 100th Advisory Forum milestone. EFSA emphasised that the discussions - formal and informal - demonstrated the Forum's value as an active platform for exchange.

Participants were also briefly informed of the continuation of discussions on the following day.



Day 2

Item 10: Update on Scientific Activities & Upcoming Events

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

Co-Chair Guilhem de Seze, provided an overview of ongoing and upcoming risk assessment activities, highlighting the need for stronger alignment and coordination between EFSA and Member States. Drawing on insights from the Risk Assessment Hub, he presented examples of national activities - such as work on energy drinks, food contact materials, and microplastics - illustrating areas of overlap with EFSA's mandate and the importance of enhanced exchange. In particular, microplastics were identified as a key cross-cutting topic, linked to environmental exposure, microbiological risks and antimicrobial resistance, requiring coordinated efforts across Europe.

He then outlined EFSA's own work programme, including activities on biomarkers of effect, updates to risk assessment guidance, food contact materials, and risk-benefit analysis of fish consumption, as well as the ongoing evaluation of caffeine intake. He also highlighted public consultations (e.g. on botanicals and feed guidance), calls for data to support scientific assessments, and improvements in data collection processes. The presentation concluded with an overview of upcoming events across diverse scientific areas, emphasising their role in fostering collaboration and contributing to EFSA's future strategy.

Germany supported the move towards more continuous and automated information sharing, highlighting that notification systems would facilitate collaboration, and provided technical input on the upcoming caffeine assessment, stressing challenges related to evaluating chronic exposure and pointing to relevant national studies. France emphasised the need to move beyond existing mechanisms (such as calls for data) - which typically operate once mandates are already launched - towards earlier, "upstream" engagement at the stage when a potential mandate is under consideration by the risk manager. This would enable Member States to identify synergies and collaborate from the outset (or even decide not to begin the work); Germany reinforced this point, noting that early alignment on mandate design could help reduce later divergences between agencies.

EFSA acknowledged these contributions, recognising both the value of earlier coordination and the existence of tools already available, such as the Risk Assessment Initiative Hub. They highlighted structural constraints, including the role of national authorities in issuing mandates, and suggested that broader governance levels may need to be involved to enable upstream coordination. EFSA concluded that while mechanisms for cooperation are largely in place, they are not yet fully exploited, and committed to reflecting on how to improve their use.

10.2 Draft Mandate for the revision of the guidance on botanicals and botanical preparations

Alexis Nathanail (EFSA) presented EFSA's planned revision of its guidance on botanicals, published in 2009, highlighting its objective to replace fragmented, sector-specific approaches with a single, harmonised and cross-cutting framework. The revision will consolidate existing documents, expand the scope beyond food supplements to multiple regulatory areas, and introduce methodological improvements, including stronger characterisation, a tiered "risk driver" approach, integration of new approach methodologies (NAMs) as well as consideration of aspects such as allergenicity and matrix effects. The process, expected to last around two years, will involve close collaboration with EU agencies, Member States and stakeholders, with a strong emphasis on consultation and alignment throughout. In this regard, Member States may also contribute to the ongoing public consultation on the "Mandate on the safety assessment of botanicals and botanical preparations" by 03/08/2026.



The Netherlands welcomed the presentation and highlighted ongoing national work on methodologies for botanical risk assessment, expressing a clear intention to ensure alignment with EFSA's revised approach. This was acknowledged by EFSA as a concrete example of the type of cooperation the initiative aims to foster. France welcomed the planned collaboration with EMA, given the importance of the use of plants in both human and veterinary drugs, and raised a question about the safety assessment of plants used in traditional practices. EFSA clarified that this aspect is already embedded in the framework through the concept of presumption of safety and will be further refined in the revised guidance.

Denmark provided a practical regulatory perspective, emphasising challenges linked to the "grey zone" between food and medicinal uses of botanicals, including implications for international trade and imported products. EFSA acknowledged these complexities and reiterated its intention to improve clarity and coordination with EMA.

10.3 Triennial activity plan of the Italian National Food Safety Committee

Prof. Antonio Gasbarrini from Policlinico Gemelli presented Italy's evolving approach to food safety through the National Committee on Food Safety (CNSA), highlighting a shift from a reactive, risk-based model towards a preventive, health-oriented paradigm. The CNSA work programme is structured around proactive, integrated, and multidisciplinary actions, implemented through thematic working groups covering areas such as the Mediterranean diet, meta-inflammation, micro- and nanoplastics, endocrine disruptors, and the circular economy. The presentation highlighted emerging scientific priorities, including the interaction between diet, contaminants, and gut microbiota, and the need to address vulnerable populations.

In the discussion, Denmark welcomed the presentation while highlighting the challenge of translating the strong scientific case for prevention into sustained political support, noting that preventive actions often receive less priority than crisis-driven responses. Prof. Gasbarrini reinforced the scientific basis for prevention, particularly through the role of the microbiota and the long-term impact of dietary habits. EFSA built on this by stressing the need to bridge emerging scientific areas - such as microbiome - into regulatory practice, with the upcoming workshop identified as a key opportunity, and emphasised the importance of early coordination to avoid fragmented approaches in developing methodologies.

Spain shared a concrete example, presenting new national legislation on school meals aimed at promoting healthier and more sustainable diets. EFSA's Executive Director proposed strengthening bilateral cooperation with CNSA through dedicated exchanges, which was welcomed by Italy. Italy also highlighted ongoing and planned communication initiatives on diet and food safety at national and international level.

10.4 Scientific activities from the AESAN Scientific Committee

Ana Lopez-Santacruz (Spain) presented AESAN's recent scientific activities and international cooperation, highlighting Spain's strong contribution to EFSA-related work and its focus on how scientific knowledge is produced, shared and translated into policy. Key examples included a national conference in Tenerife addressing the social dimensions of food safety, where four scientific reports were presented on population-specific nutritional risks, all made available in Spanish and English and shared via EFSA platforms. She also described an EU-Latin America cooperation project aimed at strengthening compliance with food safety standards in agri-food trade, alongside practical exchanges hosted in Madrid to foster institutional learning and capacity building. Ana further outlined AESAN's role in organising international events focused on risk assessment processes, underlining that diverse national approaches can collectively strengthen the European system. She noted Spain's active hosting of EFSA-related meetings, workshops, and emerging risks initiatives, as well as the renewal of AESAN's Scientific Committee. The presentation also referenced AESAN's 25th anniversary as a milestone celebrating its long-standing commitment to food safety and collaboration.

Guilhem de Seze (EFSA), Co-Chair of the session, opened the discussion by thanking Ana for her comprehensive presentation and highlighting the breadth and intensity of AESAN's scientific



activities. The Co-Chair also stressed that Spain's work clearly illustrates how national scientific outputs contribute to the European system, and expressed appreciation for Spain's strong engagement, both in producing scientific knowledge and in hosting EFSA-related events. EFSA emphasised the importance of demonstrating cooperation "in action", noting that participation in each other's initiatives strengthens both practical collaboration and the shared identity of the European risk assessment community. The Netherlands offered congratulations to Spain on the 25th anniversary of AESAN. The Dutch representative also expressed strong support and encouragement to continue on this path, recognising the quality and dynamism of AESAN's work.

In closing, EFSA echoed the positive feedback on behalf of the group, reiterating congratulations to AESAN for its achievements and for the extensive programme of anniversary activities. EFSA also underlined the importance of such collective efforts in projecting a unified European approach to food safety, describing agencies as operating as a "single team" both in practice and in their public image.

10.5 Update on PFAS

10.5a MS Initiative Group on PFAS

Before the presentation, the Co-Chair of the session, Benedicte Vagenende (EFSA), shared EFSA updates on current scientific and regulatory developments on PFAS, highlighting a rapidly evolving regulatory and scientific landscape with multiple parallel workstreams. EFSA outlined ongoing work on trifluoroacetic acid (TFA), including the finalisation of revised reference values in light of developments at ECHA, alongside a joint EFSA-ECHA environmental risk assessment expected to continue into the following year. Further elements included ongoing data collection activities, a Commission audit on PFAS (that may lead to an updated mandate from the European Commission), and upcoming scientific events addressing PFAS, especially a scientific session during the Dioxins congress (13-18 Sept. 2026) in Riva del Garda (Italy), where EFSA invited the EU MS initiative group on PFASs to provide a presentation on their activities.

On behalf of Dick Sijm (The Netherlands) who is now chairing the Steering Board of the EU Member States Initiative Group on PFAS but who was unavailable on the day of the meeting, Matthieu Schuler (France) presented the coordinated effort to tackle the complexity of PFAS, described as a "puzzle" due to their diversity and widespread presence. The Initiative is structured around a Risk Assessors Team (RAT) focusing on scientific analysis and a Steering Board (SB) addressing strategic aspects, with priority areas including PFAS transfer along the food chain and the extension of toxicological assessments beyond the PFAS-4 group. He noted that PFAS are not the only "group" of persistent pollutants and that much can be learned from experience with chemicals families like PCBs, PAHs, dioxins, etc.

Matthieu Schuler further reported on progress within the Initiative, emphasising broad participation from Member States and EU agencies (EFSA, ECHA, EEA), as well as international organisations, including WHO, and the importance of collaboration for developing shared methodologies and data. Strategic discussions have covered mixture risk assessment approaches, systematic reviews, priority setting, and national experiences, as well as the identification of localised contamination hotspots. At the scientific level, work is ongoing at ANSES (France) on large monitoring datasets and the development of toxicological reference values, and at RIVM (The Netherlands) on harmonising approaches to mixture risk assessment.

In the discussion, the Netherlands expressed appreciation for the presentation and acknowledging the importance and complexity of the work.

10.5b ECHA's update on the REACH Restriction on PFAS

Ignacio de la Flor Tejero (ECHA) presented the state of play of the EU-wide PFAS restriction under REACH, outlining its broad scope covering all PFAS substances and the extensive consultation process. He then outlined the opinions of ECHA's scientific committees: the Risk Assessment Committee (RAC) concluded that PFAS pose significant risks to human health and the environment



due to their persistence and other hazardous properties, and supported an EU-wide restriction, while indicating that any derogations granted should be subject to strict risk management measures to minimise emissions. The Socio-Economic Analysis Committee (SEAC), in its draft opinion, considered that a ban with use-specific derogations is the most appropriate EU measure to address the identified risks, based on socio-economic proportionality. SEAC supported RAC's recommendation to implement additional risk management measures to ensure PFAS emissions are minimised in case derogations are supported by the decision maker.

Ignacio de la Flor Tejero further highlighted issues of relevance for food safety authorities, including PFAS use in active substances and food contact materials. He emphasised the scale and complexity of the process, involving extensive stakeholder input and international engagement. Looking ahead, he indicated that the final SEAC opinion is expected by the end of the year, after which both committee opinions will be transmitted to the European Commission to inform the legislative phase.

In the discussion, France took the floor to emphasise the complementarity between the REACH restriction process and ongoing scientific risk assessment work at EFSA and Member States. It was highlighted that, while the restriction aims to prevent future exposure, scientific efforts must continue to address existing contamination, underlining the need for close coordination across regulatory and scientific domains. ECHA acknowledged this perspective, agreeing on the importance of alignment between restriction activities, EFSA work, and broader EU legislation, and reiterating the significant workload and complexity involved.

10.6 Joint Scientific Conference on Data and Artificial Intelligence for Surveillance and RA in Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health

Laurent Guillier (ANSES) introduced a forthcoming international conference on the use of data and artificial intelligence (AI) in risk assessment and surveillance for food safety, and in animal health, and plant health. He explained that the initiative responds to the rapid increase in data availability and the accelerating deployment of AI methods across related sectors, alongside growing expectations for faster, evidence-based decision-making and a developing EU regulatory framework on trustworthy AI. The conference, co-organised by ANSES, BfR, DTU - food and National Institute of Food and Drug Safety Evaluation (NIFDS, Republic of Korea), with EFSA involvement, aims to provide a collaborative platform to critically examine the applications, benefits, and limitations of AI. Its programme is structured to move from conceptual discussions on AI definitions, validation, explainability and trust, to practical considerations, with a particular focus on ensuring transparency and robustness in regulatory decision-making contexts. The conference will also present practical applications, including surveillance systems, AI use in risk assessment, and a range of case studies covering both successful and less successful experiences, ensuring a balanced and realistic perspective. He concluded by emphasising that the initiative should be seen as a step towards longer-term cooperation and methodological innovation, underlining that harnessing AI effectively will require continued collaboration, scientific rigour, and trust.

EFSA closed the exchange by expressing appreciation for the initiative and highlighting its strong relevance to EFSA's own work on AI.

10.7 EFSA Conference 2027

Claudia Heppner (EFSA) presented the preliminary concept and draft structure of the EFSA Conference 2027, which will take place in Parma from 29 September to 1 October 2027, coinciding with EFSA's 25th anniversary and the high-level launch of the EFSA 2034 strategy. The conference is intended both to honour EFSA's past achievements and the contributions of its partners, and to look ahead by engaging stakeholders in the future implementation of EFSA's strategic directions. The preliminary programme foresees a two-day event split over three days, combining high-level sessions, interactive breakout discussions linked to six potential thematic pathways, and a final synthesis of the outcomes. Advisory Forum members were warmly invited to attend the conference.



Croatia warmly welcomed the conference concept, while the Netherlands expressed strong support and interest, particularly from the perspective of Article 36 organisations.

Item 11: Update on Advisory Forum Discussion Groups

Advisory Group on Data

Dorte Baggesen (Denmark) presented an update on the work of the Advisory Forum Group on Data (AGOD), outlining progress across its four subgroups (data management, innovation, tools and ecosystems, and people and capacity). She highlighted efforts to ensure that outputs remain practical and applicable for Member States, including work to improve the usability of FoodEx2 and to streamline data submission processes. She also referred to ongoing work on position papers covering topics such as interoperability, AI in regulatory science, and capacity building, which are expected to be finalised and shared with the wider EFSA network. A key focus of the presentation was the “people and capacity” dimension, where she emphasised that advancing data-driven risk assessment depends not only on technical skills but also on organisational culture, leadership and governance. In this context, she invited Member States to contribute practical examples of capacity-building initiatives, including lessons learned, to support a shared understanding across the network.

Dorte further linked AGOD’s work to broader developments, including the recognition of data-related roles within the evolving EFSA system and the need for stronger coordination between scientific, technical and organisational functions. She also introduced an upcoming symposium in Dublin on “people readiness for AI”, addressing both technical and societal aspects of AI adoption. In addition, she presented early reflections on a European “food data space”, with initial use cases focusing on improving incident management and aligning food classification systems across frameworks.

EFSA’s Executive Director opened the discussion by reflecting on the concept of a European food data space, drawing a comparison with the European Health Data Space. While recognising its potential, he questioned its feasibility, pointing to structural differences between health and food systems and highlighting the fragmentation of food safety data across domains such as environment and supply chains. He raised concerns about whether sufficient coordination and critical mass exist to support such an initiative. Dorte Baggesen responded by acknowledging the complexity and confirming that the concept remains at an exploratory stage, noting ongoing interest at European Commission level but underlining that its development will require long-term alignment across multiple stakeholders. EFSA further clarified that AGOD intends to progress work through upcoming discussions, including engagement with DG SANTE and drawing lessons from existing initiatives, and emphasised a stepwise approach based on concrete pilot use cases.

France then broadened the perspective by stressing that food data should not be considered in isolation. The French representative highlighted the need to integrate them with environmental data systems managed by EEA, in order to enable more comprehensive exposure assessments across air, water and soil pathways, while also asking about how to structure food data since the ultimate aim is to link them with health data. EFSA supported this view, noting the importance of ensuring interoperability and complementarity with existing platforms such as the Common Data Platform for Chemicals and the Health Data Space, rather than duplicating efforts. EFSA also linked the discussion to ongoing work on data governance and cross-agency coordination. The session concluded with a practical follow-up, inviting Member States to provide input to AGOD - particularly examples on capacity building and feedback on draft documents - by the end of the summer.

Item 12: AOB



Dorte Baggesen (Denmark) introduced the BioPath initiative as a proposed EU-level project aimed at supporting innovators - particularly startups and researchers - in navigating the novel food authorisation process. She explained that, while the EU framework is robust, it is often complex and resource-intensive, leading to delays, inefficiencies, and, in some cases, discouraging innovation. BioPath is conceived as a digital support platform operating upstream of the formal submission process, designed to guide applicants in determining regulatory scope, understanding data requirements, and preparing more coherent and complete dossiers. The objective is to improve the quality of submissions and reduce the need for follow-up clarifications, thereby enhancing the efficiency of the risk assessment process without interfering with EFSA's formal evaluation role.

Dorte emphasised the collaborative nature of the initiative, noting that its success depends on demonstrating a shared need across Member States and strong European engagement. She invited Member States to express support, provide feedback, and agree to be listed as "supportive Member States" in the funding application to the Novo Nordisk Foundation, clarifying that this would not entail formal commitments. She also highlighted the urgency of the timeline, with a submission deadline of 10 July, and indicated that a follow-up request for input would be circulated after the meeting.

In the discussion, EFSA expressed support, highlighting that the initiative complements existing pre-submission advice mechanisms and addresses a recognised gap in the system. EFSA encouraged broad Member State participation and suggested drawing on experience from other sectors to ensure sustainability. Among Member States, Switzerland expressed immediate support and willingness to participate, while Spain acknowledged the relevance of the initiative but indicated the need for internal reflection before confirming support. Dorte Baggesen clarified that only expressions of interest are required at this stage and confirmed to follow up.

Closing remarks

Helena Brunnkvist (Sweden) delivered a personal farewell message, reflecting on her four years of participation in the Advisory Forum. She expressed appreciation for the quality of discussions, the collaborative spirit of the group, and the professional relationships developed, including informal exchanges that contributed to a strong sense of community. She informed participants that she will leave her current role at the Swedish Food Agency as of 1 August to take up a new position at the Swedish Medical Products Agency.

Sergio Potier Rodeia (EFSA) closed the session with an operational update on upcoming Advisory Forum activities, confirming the next meetings and their format. The meeting of 7–8 October 2026 will be held partly virtually (day one) and partly as a dedicated workshop on EFSA's strategy (day two). He also announced the final meeting of the year, scheduled for 2–3 December 2026 in Dublin, linked to the EU Council Presidency and planned as an in-person (with hybrid option) gathering.

In his closing remarks, Nik Kriz, EFSA's ED, thanked the chairs and participants for their contributions and quality of the discussions. He emphasised the value of the Advisory Forum as a collaborative network, where Member States and EFSA jointly engage on complex scientific and strategic issues, thereby strengthening the European food safety system. He also underlined the importance of in-person participation in Parma and the role of informal interactions in fostering trust and cohesion across the network.



ACTION POINTS

Agenda Topic	Action Point No.	Action	Deadline/Notes
4 – Strengthening Risk Assessment Capacity in Europe	1.1	MSs and EFSA to share training initiatives via the xORA platform	By respective deadlines
	1.2	MSs to express their interest in further discussions on capacity development with xORA Steering Board	By respective deadlines
6.1 - Current Partnership Opportunities - Overview	2	MSs to consider applying and/or promoting through their national networks, the EFSA calls presented at the meeting (list available here)	Respective deadline for each call
6.3 - Future Partnership on dietary exposure assessment	3.1	EFSA to send reminder to MSs to provide feedback	End June 2026
	3.2	MSs to provide feedback on EFSA's proposal for a new partnership model on dietary exposure assessment to afsecretariat@efsa.europa.eu	Mid July 2026
	3.3	EFSA to further develop the partnership model on dietary exposure, in co-creation with Member States	Mid September 2026
7 – Engagement of MS in Microbiome data for RA	4.1	MSs to apply to join the knowledge community. Individual experts to send CVs with short expression of interest letter/email to Konstantinos.PARASKEVOPOULOS@efsa.europa.eu	03 July 2026
	4.2	MSs to apply to the microbiome (metagenomics) project call that is still open	12 August 2026
	4.3	MSs to register to the microbiome colloquium on Nov 23-24 (see here for pre announcement) and to express interest to contribute to the event	TBC
9 – EFSA's communication campaigns in 2026/27	5	MSs to flag interest in joining EFSA campaigns (if not already done via other channels) via afsecretariat@efsa.europa.eu	By respective deadlines

MEETING MINUTES

100th Meeting of the Advisory Forum



10.1 - MS Risk Assessment (RA) Plans, Mandates, Public Consultations and Events: Overview	6	MSs to review and submit comments to ongoing EFSA public consultations (list available here)	By respective deadlines
10.2 - Draft Mandate for the revision of the guidance on botanicals and botanical preparations	7	MSs to provide comments on the public consultation related to the draft mandate for the revision of the guidance on botanicals and botanical preparations	03 August 2026
11 - Advisory Group on Data	8.1	AGoD to develop the food data space concept, including through discussions with the European Commission and the Data Space Support Centre	By respective deadlines
	8.2	MSs to provide input to AGoD - particularly examples on capacity building and feedback on draft documents	31 August 2026
12 - AOB	9	Denmark to send follow-up email on supporting the BioPath initiative and MSs to indicate their interest in being listed as partners in the proposal by 10 July 2026	After the meeting