

23-24 September 2026

9:00-16:00/9:00-16:00

MINUTES – Agreed on 19 October 2026

Location: EFSA premises, Parma, Italy

Attendees:

o **Panel Members:**

Susanne HOUGAARD BENNEKOU, Ana ALLENDE, Josep CASACUBERTA, Laurence CASTLE, Tamara COJA, Amélie CREPET, Pikka JOKELAINEN, Thor HALLDORSON, Ron HOOGENBOOM, Helle KNUTSEN, Claude LAMBRE, Søren SAXMOSE NIELSEN, Dominique TURCK, Antonio VICENT CIVERA, Roberto VILLA, Holger ZORN.

Hearing Experts¹:

Josef Schlatter for agenda item 4.1

European Commission:

Athanasios RAIKOS - DG SANTE Unit E1

o **EFSA:**

Ad interim Head of Risk Assessment Services Department (ENABLE): Bénédicte Vagenende

Chief Scientist Office: Carlos das Neves (day 2, p.m.); Jean Lou Dorne (agenda item 3.1)

Head of Risk Assessment Production Department (ASSESS): Guilhem De Seze

Methodology and Scientific Support Unit (MESE): Claudia Roncancio Pena, Maria Bastaki (agenda item 5.1), Petra Gergelova (agenda item 4.1), Alessandra Giarola, Anais Leone (agenda item 3.1), Daniela Maurici, Alexis Nathanail (agenda item 5.1), Alicia Paini Agenda (item 3.1).

Corporate Services Unit (CORSER): Marco Lannutti, Riccardo Romagnoli (agenda item 7)

1. Welcome, apologies for absence Adoption of the agenda

The Chair welcomed the participants. Apologies were received from Angela Bearth. Søren SAXMOSE NIELSEN sent his apologies for the morning of the 23rd September. The agenda was adopted without changes.

2. Declarations of Interest of Panel members

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management, EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Scientific Committee members invited to the present meeting. No conflicts of interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process.

3. Update on new mandates

3.1 Update on ADME/PBK modelling mandate ([EFSA-Q-2026-00318-319](#)) and on project of harmonisation of growth curves

The Scientific Committee (SC) was updated on the activities of the Working Group (WG) Absorption, Distribution, Metabolism, and Excretion (ADME) & Physiologically Based Kinetics



(PBK) (ADME&PBK WG). The self-task mandate asks for development of guidance on ADME testing strategies and for the integration of toxicokinetic data into EFSA risk assessments, it also asks for guidance on qualification and evaluation of PBK models (M-2026-00072 - [Open EFSA](#)). In parallel the internal mandate will ensure to provide advice on ADME testing strategies and PBK modelling questions proposed by Panels and Units, and will be responsible for shaping the scientific content of training in ADME, toxicokinetics and PBK modelling (M-2026-00026 [Open EFSA](#)). The SC was informed that both activities will kick off on 1 October 2026, with a provisional timeline of finalisation of the two guidance documents by end of 2028.

The SC was also presented with a project that provides an update to the EFSA's 2012 EU-wide growth curves (published as external scientific report [here](#)) to ensure they reflect the current European population. The data collection from EU Member States (MS) and associated countries is largely completed, although several datasets still require clarification and several countries have yet to provide complete information. In parallel, harmonisation of the available datasets and approaches for addressing data gaps are underway. The updated growth curves are expected to support several EFSA activities, including human biomonitoring interpretation and PBK model development and application. Country-specific curves data should be prioritised where available; when necessary, an EU-wide curve can be applied. Extrapolation of the equation(s) to be introduced into the PBK modelling from the growth curves data (especially the "weight data in kg") needs to be done, selected and recommended. The SC also supported further consideration of the curves for age-dependent (or lifetime) PBK modelling, exposure assessment and human biomonitoring, alongside comparison with EFSA food-consumption data (by using the EFSA Comprehensive European Food Consumption Database, [Food consumption | EFSA](#)). Work is still ongoing and will be finalised by Q2 2027.

4. Scientific output(s) submitted for discussion/adoption

4.1 Draft revised guidance on default values – ([EFSA-Q-2024-00409](#))

The public consultation of the draft guidance on "Default values and uncertainty factors to be used by EFSA Scientific Committee and Panels in the absences of actual measured data" was closed in May 2026. An overview of the outcomes of the public consultation and the targeted consultation with EFSA Panels was presented to the Scientific Committee.

Overall, the draft guidance was well received and stakeholders recognised the value of the guidance's openness towards more advanced and scientifically grounded approaches. Major critical comments were presented and discussed in the plenary. These had been grouped into four broad themes reflecting the nature of the issues raised. EFSA's proposed responses and approach to address the comments were presented, with discussion focusing primarily on the harmonisation of terminology at the international level, the scientific basis underpinning default values and uncertainty factors, and the proposed default values for body weight and infant feeding.

The Scientific Committee supported the proposed approach to address the comments, while recommending some refinements. In particular, it was suggested to further clarify the recommendations regarding legislatively defined default values, and to elaborate on the definition of the reference point when extrapolating from a LOAEL.

Following the discussion, the Scientific Committee formally adopted the guidance. The guidance will be published by the end of the November.



5. Other scientific topics for information/discussion

5.1 Feedback from public consultations:

- Botanicals mandate

The SC was informed about the outcome of the public consultation, held from 8th June to 3rd August 2026, on the draft mandate for the revision of EFSA's Guidance on the Safety Assessment of Botanicals and Botanical Preparations 2009 guidance link [here](#)).

The consultation generated 70 comments from 18 submitters representing public authorities, academia, industry, consultancy and individuals. Overall, the feedback was largely positive, supporting the development of a single, updated cross-sectoral guidance document and the incorporation of modern methodologies. Comments provided valuable suggestions and scientific insights that will be further considered by the WG during the development of the guidance,. The SC therefore agreed that no amendment of the mandate was required.

The SC was also presented with the proposed composition of the new Botanicals WG, comprising experts with complementary expertise in domains relevant to the safety assessment of botanicals who represent various EFSA sectors dealing with the safety of botanicals. The SC endorsed the proposed composition of the WG and appointed Dr Tamara Coja (chair of the PPR Panel and member of the SC) as Chair of the WG for the update of the guidance.

- Protocol Risk Benefit Assessment of fish ([EFSA-Q-2025-00746](#))

The outcome of the public consultation on the protocol for the EC mandate on the Risk-Benefit Assessment (RBA) of fish consumption in relation to the combined presence of polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins and dibenzofurans (PCDD/Fs) and dioxin-like polychlorinated biphenyls (DL-PCBs), polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), inorganic arsenic, dimethylarsinic acid (DMA), inorganic mercury and methyl mercury in fish was presented to the SC.

The consultation last 2 months and EFSA received 27 comments, from 9 submitters (5 Countries), including national associations on fisheries, NGO, and one national agency. The comments were grouped into four general clusters according to the nature of the points made and of the submitter's perspective on the subject. The WG addressed the comments and amended the protocol that is expected to be published by the end of the year.

5.2 ECHA guidance for identification and naming of substances under REACH

The presentation informed the SC of EFSA's decision to expand the use of ECHA Guidance on Substance Identification (SID) across all regulated product areas and to assign responsibility for SID checks to the Front-Desk & Workforce Planning Unit (FDP) Unit. It was highlighted how late or inconsistent SID checks can delay the risk assessment process, reinforcing the need for an earlier and harmonised approach.

The next steps are to introduce SID checks at the dossier admissibility stage for pesticides and at dossier intake for non-pesticides. This will enable earlier engagement with applicants and authorities and help prevent delays in the assessment process. The proposed approach will support consistent substance identification across EFSA and contribute to the objectives of the One Substance, One Assessment approach.

The SC agreed with the proposal, and clarified that the ECHA Guidance, in its current form, will not be applicable to enzymes. For pesticides, the SC suggested that responsibility for the SID check should remain with the Rapporteur Member State (RMS). The SC was informed that a webinar is planned for Q1 2027 to train the RMSs on the ECHA SID Guidance. The aim of the webinar will be to raise awareness of the Guidance and provide practical support to RMSs in carrying out the SID check at the dossier submission stage.



5.3 Building SC work-programme 2027-2029:

- **Discussion on proposals for new cross-cutting Guidance documents received via Panels/Units consultation**

The consultation with Units and Panels for building the new SC work-programme 2027-2029 was launched in May at the 130th SC plenary. Proposals were collected from May to September from Units/Panels for new cross-cutting guidance development to possibly filling gaps. A preliminary internal discussion of proposals received was held for an initial feedback from Head of Units.

Proposals for new cross cutting GDs development were received from FEZ, CONTAM, FEEDAP and PLH Panels. AHAW, FAF, PPR, BIOHAZ, GMO, and NDA Panels expressed no need for new cross-cutting guidance development. The proposals were briefly presented to the SC and discussed:

FEZ Panel: Guidance on evaluation of toxins produced by contamination during fermentation of microorganisms. This topic has been identified as a cross-cutting activity relevant to food enzymes, feed enzymes, novel foods, and BIOHAZ.

There is an ongoing EFSA procurement in this area. An inventory of related activities across EFSA should be carried out and an opinion could be drafted to present the current state of the art, followed by consideration of a dedicated guidance document. The proposal for guidance will be re-discussed once the procurement and the preparatory work for the opinion will be finalised.

CONTAM and FEEDAP Panels:

Guidance on benchmark dose modelling of human data (already submitted in the former consultation). There is an ongoing project on "BMD Analysis for Epidemiological Studies: A Comprehensive Research Project" ending in 2028. Results will be considered for the development of the guidance and the proposal will be re-discussed once the project is completed.

Guidance on the scientific use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for EFSA's risk assessments.

This proposal for guidance is not related to text processing, but for every step of the risk assessment, e.g. risk assessment processes inputs and outputs, such as biological relevance of BMRs, organ weights, data extraction, risk of bias assessment. This is relevant to all EFSA Panels and warrants discussion considering the rapid evolution of AI.

PLH Panel:

Guidelines and tools for scientific use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in biological risk assessment generic opinions at EFSA. Two broad areas appear particularly relevant: (i) AI applications for evidence acquisition and evidence synthesis, including data search, extraction, analysis and risk-of-bias assessment, as well as systematic literature review; and (ii) AI applications in quantitative risk assessment and modelling, including predictive modelling, climate suitability assessment, prioritisation and decision-support systems.

These topics are potentially relevant to all EFSA Panels and warrant discussion, considering the rapid evolution of AI, also together with MS partner institutions.

The SC discussed the last two proposals and agreed that, due to very rapid developments in the AI area, a guidance is not at present an optimal solution. EFSA is working internally on



the Strategy for use of AI in science, and is developing an AI Code of Conduct for experts, due by end of 2026.

In addition, EFSA aims at identifying an appropriate communication channel to ensure that the AI-MS initiatives can be known in EFSA and if possible re-use it.

A SC workshop will be organised in the first part of 2027, to provide feedback to experts on the AI Code of Conduct and to brainstorm about the use of AI in science.

In the end, the PLH Panel also proposed to organise a thematic workshop on “Climate suitability assessment approaches for new and emerging pests and diseases of plant and animal health concerns”. This topic could take stock of the results and tools of the EFSA SEED project (Spatially Explicit Environmental Data) and be also eventually extended to ECDC particularly for acclimation in Europe of new disease vectors. The proposal will be considered by EFSA for 2027.

- **Finalisation of the evaluation of existing Scientific Committee cross-cutting guidance documents for possible update/revision to be included in the work-programme**

The SC was presented with the results of the evaluation of cross-cutting guidance documents older than five years, conducted to assess the need for revision.

Several guidance documents are already under revision (those on genotoxicity testing strategies and use of weight of evidence approach in risk assessment etc), while others have been considered to remain up to date (e.g. uncertainty in scientific assessment, risk assessment of substances in food intended for infants below 16 weeks of age etc).

The guidance on the use of Threshold of Toxicological Concern (TTC) in food safety assessment (2019, link [here](#)) and the 2012 opinion on the TTC concept (link [here](#)) were flagged for consideration for an update, taking into account recent development in the area. Due to the internal workload, the discussion of the Terms of reference for the new self task mandate to update the TTC guidance has been postponed to autumn 2027.

5.4 Expert’s mutual feedback exercise: results from the dialogues with SC experts

The SC was presented with an overview of the outcomes of the dialogues held by the Panel coordinator and the Head of Unit with each SC member to exchange views on mutual collaboration, the SC’s way of working and the organisation of plenary meetings.

Overall, the feedback received from SC members was very positive. Experts expressed appreciation for the support provided by the WG coordinators to scientific discussions, the preparatory work for the working groups and plenaries and the proactive support during the meetings. It has also been acknowledged the efficient meetings organization. Targeted consultation of draft documents with Units and Panels following SC discussion was considered useful for ensuring that the draft guidance is fit for purpose before the launch of the public consultation. It was recommended that during plenary meetings the discussion focuses on main issues while detailed points are addressed at working group level. The possibility of holding more in-person Working Group meetings for controversial topics, as well as continuing work on mechanisms for stakeholder involvement, was also recommended.

The SC Secretariat has proposed that Panel coordinator or WG coordinators present ongoing work and draft documents under consultation to relevant Panels upon request. This would facilitate exchanges with Panel members and give them the opportunity to raise questions directly with the experts involved in the drafting and coordination of the work. SC members



also suggested that thematic workshops include participants from Panels with the appropriate subject-matter expertise and that vice-chairs be considered for participation where their expertise is relevant.

In addition, SC members suggested some minor changes to the way documents are presented ahead of SC discussions and supported increased engagement with stakeholders during guidance development, while maintaining independence, transparency and applicable legal safeguards. Existing mechanisms include for example public consultations, technical hearings, clarification teleconferences, calls for data (see also [here](#)). EFSA will consider whether these mechanisms could be used earlier and communicated more clearly throughout the development of the guidance documents.

Finally, the SC agreed to organise a thematic workshop in the context of One Health in April 2027.

5.5 Building EFSA strategy 2034

EFSA is currently developing the EFSA Strategy 2034. The strategy will guide the agency's work and implementation for the 2028–2034 period and is scheduled to be officially launched during the “Safe Food, One Future Conference” in Parma, Italy, from 29 September to 1 October 2027, which also marks EFSA’s 25th anniversary. The draft strategy is expected to be opened for a broader public consultation in **early 2027**, ahead of its final presentation in late 2027.

6. Feedback from the Scientific Committee/ Scientific Panels/EFSA/ EC

6.1 Overview of the ongoing work-programme of Food Contact Material (FCM) and Food additives and Flavorings (FAF) Panels with specific focus on cross cutting issues relevant for the SC

- Ongoing work-programme of Food Contact Material (FCM).

Claude Lambrè, chair of the FCM Panel, presented the ongoing workprogramme. The Panel's remit of activities covers substances and materials used in food-contact applications, plastic recycling processes and selected processing aids such as extraction solvents and decontamination substances. Five WGs are established covering FCM substances, plastic recycling, phthalates, extraction solvents and decontamination substances.

Several substance-specific assessments include potassium salicylate, cork, wood fibres, butanoic acid, amorphous butanoic acid and subtilisin are currently ongoing. The Panel has developed a guidance on hazardous bisphenols and derivatives, in collaboration with ECHA, with the aim of defining toxicological data requirements while balancing animal testing against non-animal methods. The guidance was adopted in September and its publication is expected shortly.

The Scientific Committee was informed of the FCM Panel's technical report on substances of very high concern (SVHCs) included in the Plastic Union List. The report presents a methodology for reviewing whether the hazardous properties of authorised substances may warrant further consideration and illustrates its application to substances currently included in the list.

In relation to Recycling of plastic for contact uses, the Panel is assessing mechanical PET, and is expecting a Commission mandate to assess novel recycling technologies; limited process expertise remains a challenge.



In relation to phthalates and replacement plasticisers, for most substances data availability for the different areas of exposure is limited or lacking. A pilot exposure assessment, as requested by the mandate, is being conducted for one prioritised plasticiser covering dietary exposure, dietary exposure from FCM, non-dietary exposure and overall exposure (based on HBM data and via aggregation of exposure). A technical report is expected to be endorsed by the Panel by end of 2026.

Regarding extraction solvents, the Panel is re-evaluating hexane, whose previous safety assessment dates back 1994, and a call for data has been published. The finalisation of the assessment is expected in November 2027. A separate guidance document is being developed because no dedicated guidance exists, with the main issue being how to address unavoidable low-level residues and potentially genotoxic contaminants in extraction solvents.

- **Food Additives and Flavourings (FAF) Panel work-programme**

The SC was presented with the FAF Panel ongoing work-programme. The remit of the Panel covers the new food-additive and flavouring applications under the common authorisation procedure, the re-evaluation of additives authorised by 20 January 2009, the assessment of flavourings already in the Union list. It also covers the follow-up assessments of food additives where data gaps remain after the re-evaluation and the development and maintenance of sectorial guidance documents. The Panel is supported by four working groups covering additive re-evaluation and follow-up, sweeteners, new food-additive applications and flavourings, chaired by EFSA staff.

Examples from recently completed work included scientific opinions on two naturally derived blue food colours, an opinion setting an acute reference dose for glycerol (E 422) in slush beverages after clinical reports of toxicity in children, the re-evaluation of sucralose (E 955) and the salt of aspartame-acesulfame (E 962).

Regarding new applications, the Panel is assessing applications involving botanical sources, fermentation and enzymatic manufacturing. New applications require substantial data on manufacturing, identity, toxicity and dietary exposure. There has been an increase in the number of dossiers withdrawn by the applicants after clarification meetings and other speed-of-risk-assessment initiatives.

Among the priorities that are currently being dealt by the Panel, there is the re-evaluation of cyclamate (E 952), talc (E 553b), acetaldehyde [FL-No 05.001] and nitrous oxide (E 942), the latter three cross-cutting with EChA. The FAF Panel will request an advice from the SC WG on genotoxicity on whether the standard data requirements should automatically apply to naturally occurring substances such as ribonucleotides, gluconic acid, lactic acid and acetic acid. The Panel needs a consistent approach that also recognises that these substances are normal components of the body or diet. The advice is expected to be delivered in October 2026 and will inform on the need for *ad hoc* calls for data to cover the genotoxicity endpoints of food additives that remain to be re-evaluated.

Regarding consultation of the cross-cutting WG on particles risk assessment, the panel is currently performing several follow-up assessments on a number of food additives that containing small particles and that require practical implementation of the horizontal guidance on risk assessment of nanoparticles.

Finally, the SC received an update on the monitoring activities carried out on food additives and flavourings. These activities are stemming from a requirement in the



food additives and flavourings regulations setting an obligation for the Member States to monitor the use of these substances. The first pilot exercise for the collection of use levels data has led to the publication of a report in April 2026 containing the information collected from the Member States on Green S (E 142), tartrazine (E 102), Ponceau 4R (E 124), caffeine [FI-No 16.016] and pulegone. The second pilot monitoring exercise is still ongoing and will include the collection of data on BHT (E 321), sorbic acid and sorbates (E 200 ; E 202), coumarin, hydrocyanic acid and theobromine [FI-No 16.032], with publication expected around March 2027.

7. Any other business

The SC was presented with a live demonstration of the new MEET tool, used by EFSA to organise meetings and sending invitations to plenary meetings and WG meetings.

End of the meeting