

	<p align="center">Standard Operating Procedure</p> <p align="center">Ask EFSA</p>
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Scope	<p>This SOP outlines the functioning of the Ask EFSA Service, explaining how queries are managed through the whole process. It also points out the deadlines and procedures that the Ask EFSA Operator has to follow, as well as the commitments needed by other EFSA Units.</p> <p>Includes: Receipt, processing and closure of enquiries within 15 working days.</p> <p>Excludes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Access to Documents. • Complaints about EFSA. • Queries related to regulated products applications processed by the Applications Desk Unit.
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Special Requirements	This procedure is a controlled document maintained by Quality Management. It may not be deleted without comparable controls.
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Responsibilities	Handling of requests by Ask EFSA Operator.
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Forms	Please note that the Ask EFSA templates are uploaded in RAW. They are reviewed by the Ask EFSA core team on a regular basis to ensure they are fully up-to-date and to consider whether they are still relevant and/or any new template would be needed.
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Abbreviations and definitions


HoD	Head of Department
HoU	Head of Unit
MB	Management Board
EC	European Commission
ED	Executive Director

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QM	Quality Management
PAD	Public Access to Documents
RAW	Risk Assessment Workflow
LA	Legal and Assurance Services Unit
APDESK	Applications Desk Unit
First Level Requests	Enquiries concerning generic issues related to EFSA's activities or European Commission's issue
Second Level Requests	Enquiries concerning specific scientific issues

Procedure


	Previous SOPs in the process: N/A
Step 1 Ask EFSA Operator, All EFSA Units	1.0 Reception of Request.
Request received through RAW	<p>1.1 Ask EFSA Operator receives a request through RAW, either directly from the Requester or when APDESK changes the ownership of their requests.</p> <p>1.2 Ask EFSA Operator performs one of the following options:</p> <p>1.2.1 Change the ownership: Ask EFSA Operator sends the request to APDESK (for Regulated products applications related questions).</p> <p>1.2.2 Accept the request.</p> <p>1.2.3 Reject the request in the following cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received several times the same request and the Requester had already been informed in a previous reply that further correspondence on the same request will be stopped owing to its repetitive nature. Inappropriate request or content such as abusive language.
Requests received through other communication channels	<p>1.3 Reception of requests through other communication channels other than RAW e.g. emails, faxes or letters.</p>

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	<p>1.3.1 Emails, faxes and letters requesting information about EFSA should be forwarded, when relevant, by the recipient units to the Ask EFSA functional mailbox.</p> <p>1.3.2 Ask EFSA Operator acknowledges receipt of the query to the unit which has forwarded the request via the Ask EFSA functional mailbox.</p> <p>1.3.3 Ask EFSA Operator registers the request manually in RAW and processes it in the same manner as an Ask EFSA request received in RAW.</p> <p>1.4 Requesters asking queries about EFSA's work by phone should be advised to send their question online by filling in the Ask EFSA form.</p>
<p>Step 2 Ask EFSA Operator, All EFSA Units</p>	<p>2.0 Processing of Request and editing.</p>
	<p>2.1 Ask EFSA Operator processes the request.</p> <p>2.1.1 Ask EFSA Operator should double check in RAW via the search function if the Requester already submitted Ask EFSA requests in the past and will inform the Unit(s) involved in drafting the response accordingly for information.</p> <p>2.1.2 If the Ask EFSA Operator did not change the ownership of a request in RAW for regulated products applications related queries, either the receiving unit - informing the Ask EFSA Operator - or the Ask EFSA Operator him/herself should warn as soon as possible the APDESK Operator who will take care of the preparation of the answer and will send it back to Ask EFSA via the dedicated mailbox. Ask EFSA Operator will take care of sending the final response to the Requester.</p>

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	<p>For First-Level Requests i.e. Requests that Ask EFSA Operator can handle directly without contacting Unit(s):</p> <p>2.2 Ask EFSA Operator deals with First-Level Requests when input from EFSA Units is deemed not necessary. Ask EFSA templates are often used in this case by the Ask EFSA Operator.</p> <p>For Second-level Requests i.e. Requests which need content input by relevant Unit(s):</p> <p>2.3 Ask EFSA Operator forwards the request to the relevant Unit(s) for assistance and requests a draft response within 5 working days from the date the request has been forwarded to the Unit.</p> <p>In order to ensure that the Ask EFSA contact points list is fully up-to-date, Units should inform the Ask EFSA Operator systematically every time there is a change of Ask EFSA main contact point/back-up in their Unit.</p> <p>When a request is received in a language other than English, the Ask EFSA Operator takes care of the translation of the text of the request into English and sends it to the relevant Unit in both languages (original and English).</p> <p>Exception cases:</p> <p>Exception in case of requests on Public Access to Document (PAD) or Complaint about EFSA: Ask EFSA Operator, after forwarding the request to LA Unit and receiving confirmation that the query is falling within their scope, informs the Requester that he/she will receive a response directly by the LA unit and closes the request.</p> <p>Exception in case of requests for additional feedback on a concluded procurement procedure: Ask EFSA Operator, after forwarding the request to the Procurement Team and receiving confirmation that the query is falling within their scope, informs the Requester that he/she will</p>
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	<p>receive a response directly from the Procurement unit within the 15 days foreseen within the Financial Regulation and closes the request.</p> <p>Exception in case of requests of political nature/having possible political impact e.g. coming from MEPs/MEPs assistants: Ask EFSA Operator forwards the query to EFSA Institutional Relations Team. Once confirmation is received from the Institutional Team that the query is falling within their scope, Ask EFSA Operator informs the requester that the Institutional Team will get back to him/her directly as soon as possible and closes the request.</p> <p>2.3.1 In case of requests touching upon various fields, Ask EFSA Operator forwards the request simultaneously to the concerned Units asking colleagues to keep each other in copy when providing their input to Ask EFSA Operator. Ask EFSA Operator will edit and finalise the response accordingly before sending it to the Requester.</p> <p>2.3.2 When a Unit requires additional time to provide their draft response, it should inform the Ask EFSA Operator and provide updates on the draft reply status.</p> <p>In very exceptional circumstances, for example in case of extremely complex questions, Units could negotiate a longer deadline with the Ask EFSA Operator. This deadline – which has to be agreed with the Ask EFSA Operator – should consider that EFSA’s final reply shall be delivered within a reasonable timeframe and shall not be in any case later than two months from the date of receipt of the request.</p> <p>2.3.3 If the Unit did not provide a draft response within 5 working days, Ask EFSA Operator sends, just after the 5 working days, a first reminder to the Unit, and a second one after 10 working days.</p> <p>2.3.4 When delays to respond to a Requester within 15 working days are anticipated, Ask EFSA Operator sends a pending reply</p>
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	<p>to the Requester reassuring that the request is being handled and a reply will be provided as soon as possible.</p> <p>2.3.5 When necessary, Ask EFSA Operator may need to ask for additional information to the Requester in order to be able to respond to their query. When Ask EFSA Operator sends the request for further information to the Requester, he/she will pre-inform that in the absence of a reply within 15 working days the request will be closed. This means also that the Ask EFSA Operator aligns the Ask EFSA deadline to the deadline given to the Requester (i.e. 15 working days from the date when the additional information is requested).</p> <p>Following this, there are two options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If no response is received from the Requester within 15 working days, Ask EFSA Operator closes the request and informs the Requester accordingly. • If the additional information is provided within 15 working days, Ask EFSA Operator extends the deadline for providing the response to the query of an additional 15 working days, starting from the date of the receipt of the additional information. <p>2.4 Ask EFSA Operator receives the input from the concerned Unit.</p> <p>If the query received is in a language other than English, when possible the Unit provides the draft answer to Ask EFSA Operator in the original language of the query. If not, Ask EFSA Operator will take care of translating the response. When needed, Ask EFSA Operator sends a request for translation to EFSA Linguistic Services.</p> <p>2.5 Ask EFSA Operator edits the answer.</p> <p>The Ask EFSA Operator edits the input received by the Unit in order to include the customer-service-oriented sentences that are</p>
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	<p>used in every responses issued by the Ask EFSA Service.</p> <p>Note: In case of disruptions affecting the Ask EFSA service, please refer to EFSA EPA Process for mitigation measures.</p>
<p>Step 3 Ask EFSA Operator</p>	<p>3.0 Reply to Request and Close of Request</p>
	<p>3.1 As a rule, Ask EFSA Operator replies to the request within 15 working days.</p> <p>For very complex requests (as mentioned at point 2.3.2), the Ask EFSA Operator will reply within 2 months. The Ask EFSA Operator always provides the response in the language of the Requester (for EU languages only).</p> <p>3.2 Ask EFSA Operator closes the request in RAW (when received through it).</p> <p>Should the Requester need further information or not be satisfied with the reply received, he/she should submit again a new query online using the Ask EFSA web form.</p>