In 2006 the European Food Safety Authority continued to provide a high standard of independent scientific advice and clear communication on risks associated with the food chain. It was a busy year, with EFSA issuing a total of 136 opinions, 7 scientific reports on zoonoses and assessment methods and approaches and 31 pesticide peer review conclusion documents.

2006 was also an important period of evolution and transition. New strategic orientations were set by the Management Board, based on an external evaluation carried out in 2005. EFSA began implementing the Board’s six key recommendations and continues focusing on these fields in 2007.

The Board particularly recommended enhancing co-operation and networking with Member States. Several initiatives have already been taken flowing from a Declaration of Intent endorsed by members of EFSA’s Advisory Forum, which formed the basis of a strategy for enhanced co-operation approved by the Board in December. These cover a range of activities such as efficient systems for the collection and exchange of scientific data as well as joint training courses in risk assessment.

EFSA continued to foster good working relationships with risk management bodies and networks at EU, national and international levels, as appropriate for an independent organisation operating within the European institutional framework.

The Stakeholder Consultative Platform, a key pillar of EFSA’s policy of openness and transparency, had its mandate extended by the Management Board in 2006 for a further three years after positive feedback from participants.

EFSA further strengthened its public outreach by web casting a number of conferences and events and organising several media briefings. To enhance the Authority’s effectiveness in risk communications, a new strategy was developed focusing on enhancing visibility, clarity and coherence. As part of this strategy, work was taken forward to launch a new EFSA website in 2007 featuring a more user-friendly structure and revised content.

The Management Board recommended reinforcing EFSA’s role in nutrition. Among its work in this field, EFSA will make a key contribution to implementing newly adopted European legislation on nutrition and health claims. EFSA made preparations for its forthcoming work on claims and organised an international conference in November 2006 to gather input and exchange views with a wide range of experts.

2006 was also an important year of organisational renewal, with the reconstitution of the Management Board, the Scientific Panels and Scientific Committee, and the appointment of Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle as EFSA’s new Executive Director. Moreover, the Authority modified its organisation chart following the recommendations of the external evaluation and the Management Board.

To further develop EFSA’s role and contribution to European food safety policy, the Authority is developing a medium and long term vision steered by the Board’s recommendations to enable it to adapt continuously to the changing European policy environment while responding rapidly to new issues and evolving scientific data and risk assessment approaches.

The four fields of EFSA’s scientific work:
- General requests for scientific opinions and advice on food and feed safety (from risk managers or by ‘self-tasking’)
- Risk assessment of regulated substances and products
- Monitoring and assessing specific biological risk factors for human health and animal diseases
- Improving European risk assessment approaches and methodologies
January
- External Evaluation report published on the EFSA website and public comments invited

February
- Technical meeting with NGOs on GMO issues to allow an open exchange of views
- EFSA and DG SANCO publish Eurobarometer survey results on risk perceptions with regard to food and feed safety

March
- Scientific Colloquium on “Development of Food-based Dietary Guidelines”

April
- Guidance document on maximising transparency in EFSA’s risk assessments endorsed by the Scientific Committee

May
- Press conference to communicate EFSA’s evaluation of a new study on aspartame, widely reported on in European media
- Forum with EU Member States to discuss strengthening scientific co-operation in risk assessment of GMOs

June
- Renewal of Scientific Committee and Panels, creation of new Panel on Plant Health
- Renewal of EFSA Management Board
- Key recommendations by the Management Board following EFSA’s external evaluation
July
- Formal appointment of the new Executive Director, Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle
- Scientific Colloquium on “Risk-Benefit Analysis of Foods”

September
- Declaration of Intent on enhanced exchange of scientific information signed by members of the Advisory Forum
- Recruitment task force set up with goal of recruiting around 130 staff by end of 2007

October
- Press briefing for Brussels-based journalists with EFSA Executive Director
- Launch of a weekly online bulletin on the Bluetongue epidemic in close co-operation with Member States
- Presentation at the European Parliament’s ENVI Committee by the new Executive Director discussing the recommendations of the Management Board
- EU-wide pesticide peer review: EFSA finalises the second stage of the review process

November
- Conference on Nutrition and Health Claims with 200 experts from Europe, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and USA
- Scientific Colloquium on “Cumulative Risk Assessment of Pesticides to Human Health”
- EFSA’s risk communications strategy endorsed by Management Board

December
- Strategy document for scientific cooperation with Member States endorsed by the Advisory Forum
EFSA Finances at a glance

EFSA’s continuing growth is reflected in the 2006 budget of EUR 40.2 million (with EUR 36.4 million committed), representing a 22% increase over 2005. However, the overall amount spent in 2006 was 90% of the available budget, after EFSA returned EUR 6.9 million to the general budget of the Communities. This under spend was a result of recruitment levels being lower than anticipated and the delayed implementation of Article 36 of EFSA’s Founding Regulation which enables the Authority to outsource parts of its scientific work.

The charts illustrate the allocation of resources per activity and the budget execution in 2006.

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