

EFSA's Independence Policy 2017 and implementing rules

- Background
- What is meant by a conflict of interest?

- Basic principles of EFSA's approach to Independence
- What's new with EFSA's Independence Policy 2017?

Background

In June 2017, EFSA's Management Board adopted a new Independence Policy, providing a clear framework for the way in which the Authority manages the interests of its scientific experts and others with whom it works in the course of its activities.

The new Policy builds on EFSA's experience of managing interests over the last 15 years as well as on input received from stakeholders, the European Parliament and the general public. It is designed to strike the appropriate balance between attracting the best experts to work with EFSA while protecting it against undue influence.

Underpinning the Independence Policy is a set of rules that detail how EFSA will implement the Policy in practice and that provide guidance to scientific experts and others on how to declare relevant interests and how they will be assessed by EFSA to prevent conflicts.

The rules also outline the enforcement measures EFSA will take in case the rules are breached and how transparency will be ensured throughout the process.



What is meant by a conflict of interest?

"Any situation where a person has an interest that may compromise, or be reasonably perceived as compromising, his or her capacity to act independently and in the public interest in relation to the subject of the work performed at EFSA"

Basic principles of EFSA's approach to Independence

- Prior to working with EFSA, all experts must submit Declarations of Interest (Dols) that are assessed and published on our website.
- Dols must be updated by experts at least once a year and every time a declared interest changes.
- Dols are screened to identify potential conflicts related to an expert's professional activities and financial interests.
- No participation in EFSA scientific groups under any circumstances for experts employed by industry or NGOs.
- No participation in EFSA scientific groups under any circumstances for experts with financial investments linked to business operators directly or indirectly impacted by EFSA's outputs.
- Annual compliance and veracity checks carried out by EFSA on a sample of experts' Dols.
- Regular external evaluations or audits carried out by the European Court of Auditors and the Internal Audit Service of the European Commission .



What's new with EFSA's Independence Policy 2017?

- Two-year "cooling-off" periods from any scientific EFSA activity for experts employed by industry or NGOs.
- Two-year "cooling-off" periods for a wide range of other professional interests if they overlap with the type of work the expert will carry out for EFSA.
- Requirements for experts to declare the financial impact of their interests on their total earnings.
- Sliding scale of restrictions depending on an expert's financial declaration, up to a two-year "cooling-off" period from any scientific EFSA activity.
- Publication of a register of activities of Management Board members after they fulfil their mandate with EFSA.
- Publication of the list of EFSA's partner organisations, such as national and international authorities, universities or research institutes.
- Requirements for pesticide experts from national authorities in the Member States to be subject to the same transparency measures and Dol screening rules as experts on EFSA's Scientific Panels.
- Strengthened enforcement measures for breaches of the independence rules, up to a ban on working with EFSA for 10 years.