

Proposal for a framework for interaction between the European Food Safety Authority and the Discussion Group on Food Chemical Occurrence Data

The scope of this document is to provide a framework for interaction between EFSA and the Discussion Group on Food Chemical Occurrence Data. All activities performed as part of this engagement mechanism will be guided by EFSA's core values of transparency and independence.

1. Background

Article 33 of the EFSA Founding Regulation requires the Authority to 'search for, collect, collate, analyse and summarise relevant scientific and technical data in the fields within its mission'. EFSA has established standard procedures to collate data on food consumption, as well as monitoring data on contaminants, pesticide residues, veterinary medicinal products' residues, antimicrobial resistance, zoonoses, food additives and food contact materials. The majority of chemical occurrence data that the Evidence Management (DATA) unit receives comes from annual monitoring programmes conducted in Member States. Relatively few data have been received from industry or academia.

Within the domain of food additives, the Commission has asked EFSA to re-evaluate the safety of food additives already permitted in the Union before 2009 and to issue scientific opinions on these additives. The re-evaluation must take into account the priorities, procedures and deadlines that are laid down in Regulation (EU) No 257/2010 of 25 March 2010 for drawing-up a programme for the re-evaluation of approved food additives in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1333/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council on food additives, as last amended.

To this end, the FAF Panel (Panel on Food Additives and Flavourings) has a need to collect data on additive usage in foods, and preferably analytical occurrence data, in accordance with the timetable for re-evaluation.

Within the domain of contaminants, EFSA's CONTAM Panel (Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain) may require data on levels of contaminants in food, when such data are not available in EFSA's contaminant occurrence database. This task represents an integral part of EFSA's data collection activities.

With the domain of food enzymes, Regulation (EC) No 1331/2008 requires that all food enzymes currently on the EU market as well as all new food enzymes shall be subject to a safety evaluation by EFSA and approval via a Community list. The CEP Panel (Panel on Food Contact Materials, Enzymes and Processing Aids) has a need for input data on process specific food categories and technical factors to allow a linkage between enzyme usage and food consumption data, in order to support the new methodology for estimating dietary exposure to food enzymes. To meet these requirements, a series of dedicated open calls will be issued requesting feedback and/or information on the pre-selected food categories and pre-defined technical factors on the food manufacturing processes involved.

The strategic objectives formulated in the EFSA Strategy 2020 - Trusted science for safe food¹ - includes specific aims to prioritise public and stakeholder engagement within the process of scientific assessment and to widen EFSA's evidence base and optimise access to its data. Within the framework of the EFSA Strategy 2020, a new stakeholder engagement and consultative approach (SEA) has been agreed² and implemented which defines the guiding principles which govern EFSA's engagement with stakeholders and presents examples of the various engagement platforms envisaged to foster partnerships with stakeholders.

The Discussion Group on Food Chemical Occurrence Data (formerly the Stakeholder Consultative Platform Discussion Group on Food Chemical Occurrence Data) falls within the remit of targeted platforms of the new SEA; namely Discussion Groups who can work with EFSA at a technical level to enable stakeholders' specialist knowledge to be used in specified areas such as data collection. However, in line with the SEA guiding principles, stakeholders should register with EFSA to be considered as members of this Discussion Group.

2. Scope of interaction

Registered stakeholders selected as members of the Discussion Group on Food Chemical Occurrence Data shall discuss and exchange information on the practical aspects and challenges regarding the provision of data on food additives, contaminants and food enzymes.

3. General objectives

This framework for interaction aims to meet the following objectives:

- a) Provide a forum for discussing openly the challenges encountered and the opportunities identified in relation to the provision of data to EFSA.
- b) Elicit members' knowledge and experiences in order to improve on the practical aspects of data collection and provision to EFSA and to determine solutions to issues identified.
- c) Promote and share EFSA's data collection activities and associated work programmes particularly within the field of food additives, food enzymes and contaminants.
- d) Share and discuss all relevant matters concerning how data is collected, processed, stored and used in EFSA scientific outputs.
- e) The Discussion Group will commit to the continuous improvement of the quality of data provided to EFSA and explore with EFSA opportunities for open data.

4. Working methodology

The Evidence Management (DATA) Unit of EFSA will coordinate the Discussion Group on Food Chemical Occurrence Data and provide administrative support including the drafting of meeting minutes.

The Discussion Group on Food Chemical Occurrence Data will meet at least once per year and registered stakeholders will be invited. To benefit fully from this Discussion Group, EFSA will select one member and one alternate member per registered organisation.

¹ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/corporate/pub/strategy2020>

² http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EFSA%20Stakeholder%20engagement%20approach_FINAL.pdf

As stipulated in Article 3 of the Decision on the criteria for establishing a list of registered stakeholders and the establishment of the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau³, non-registered stakeholders may be invited to the meetings of this Discussion Group based on the need for specific expertise or technical knowledge. Any involvement of non-registered Stakeholders will be communicated in a transparent and timely manner.

In case of need, topic specific web-conferences or targeted sessions can be arranged. The coordinator of the Discussion Group will also be the Chair of the meeting and be responsible for drafting the meetings' minutes and reporting updates back to EFSA.

The costs of participation in the meetings organised by EFSA will be borne by each individual stakeholder organisation.

Exceptionally, EFSA may contribute to financing the costs of those organisations that could not otherwise afford to participate in meetings. Financial contributions may only be awarded to stakeholder organisations which are non-governmental, not-for-profit, independent of industry, commerce and business and have as their primary objectives and activities the promotion and protection of public health and the safety of consumers.

Requests for financial support shall be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Representatives of the European Parliament and the European Commission may participate in meetings of this Discussion Group as observers.

5. Transparency requirement

Details of the meetings of the Discussion Group on Food Chemical Occurrence Data will be made available through the publication of agendas, participant lists and the outcome of each of the meetings on the EFSA website.

6. Monitoring and review

A review of the effectiveness of EFSA's stakeholder engagement, including activities related to the Discussion Group on Food Chemical Occurrence Data, shall be carried out every three years, as of the entry into force of the Decision of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority on the criteria for establishing a list stakeholders and the establishment of the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau (15 June 2016) and, at any time, upon request of the Management Board, Article 9.

³ Decision of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority on the criteria for establishing a list stakeholders and the establishment of the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Document18992.pdf>