

Framework for interaction between the European Food Safety Authority and the Stakeholder Bureau

The scope of this document is to provide a framework for interaction between EFSA and the Stakeholder Bureau (the Bureau), one of the two permanent engagement mechanisms established under the [Stakeholder Engagement Approach](#). All interactions within this engagement mechanism will be guided by EFSA's core values of openness and independence.

1. Background

Since EFSA was created, stakeholders have contributed significantly to its activities. They have engaged with EFSA on the implications of its work for their own activities and also sought to ensure that the views of society at large are reflected in what EFSA does. Up to this point, EFSA's engagement with stakeholders has occurred primarily through EFSA's Stakeholder Consultative Platform established in 2005. In recent years, EFSA has recognised changes in societal expectations and a demand, from a number of interested parties for more transparency and closer involvement in the scientific process.

In that view, EFSA has carried out a comprehensive review of the way in which it engages with stakeholders, including consultation with the Management Board and the Stakeholder Consultative Platform. In addition, EFSA has carried out a research with organisations with a potential interest in EFSA's activities and a benchmarking exercise with other EU institutions and agencies. The results of this review have led EFSA to propose a new approach to stakeholder engagement.

In line with the strategic objective N.1 of the [EFSA Strategy 2020](#), where the Authority shall aim to prioritise public and stakeholder engagement in the process of scientific assessment, the overall purpose of the new framework for EFSA's stakeholder engagement is to provide stakeholders with a better understanding of its scientific decision making processes and to improve the quality of EFSA's scientific outputs and the extent to which they meet stakeholders' needs.

The Stakeholder Engagement Approach shall firmly adhere to the principles of authenticity, inclusiveness and balanced representation of views and interests, supported by targeted modalities that address the various stakeholder communities in an equal manner. These three principles guiding the approach are aligned with EFSA's key values, including in particular those of independence and transparency.

2. Scope of interaction

The Bureau is established as one of the permanent mechanisms for EFSA's engagement with stakeholders.

To ensure balance, the Bureau shall be composed of one representative from a registered stakeholder in each of the following seven stakeholder categories: consumers; environmental/health NGOs and/or advocacy groups; farmers and primary producers; business and food industry; distributors and HORECA (food service industry preparing and serving food and beverages), associations of practitioners working in fields relevant to EFSA's food safety and public health remit, and academia.

3. Working methodology

The External Relations function of EFSA (EXREL Unit) will coordinate activities in relations to the Bureau and provide administrative support, including drafting of the minutes and reports of the meetings and reporting back to the Bureau.

The Bureau will apply the following working methodology:

- a) The Bureau shall contribute to the preparation of the annual Forum and monitor the actions EFSA takes as a result of the Forum,
- b) The Bureau shall be chaired by EFSA's Executive Director,
- c) Members of the Bureau shall act in the interests of the stakeholder category that they represent rather than solely in the interests of the stakeholder organisation that they represent,
- d) The Bureau shall meet in person at least once a year. Additionally, dialogue among Members of the Bureau shall take place through virtual meetings or other means of communication,
- e) The Chair of the EFSA Management Board is invited to attend the annual meeting of the Bureau,
- f) Members of the Bureau will be selected according to the provision of Article 6 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),
- g) The costs of participation in the meetings organised by EFSA which foresee the participation of stakeholders will be borne by each individual stakeholder organisation,
- h) 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, the safety of consumers, animal health or welfare, plant health and the environment,
- i) Requests for financial support shall be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will need to be properly documented by the requesting organisation.

4. Objectives

This framework for interaction aims to meet the following objectives:

- 1) to advise EFSA on stakeholder engagement and provide its views on the Authority's engagement with stakeholders and on whether EFSA is engaging with stakeholders in a balanced way,
- 2) to provide input to EFSA at a high level with regards to societal concerns on health, environment, food production and other issues in the Authority's remit,

3) to improve understanding among stakeholders and consumers of EFSA's scientific risk assessment process, thereby improving trust in, and creating a sense of ownership over decisions taken.

5. Transparency requirement

Openness and transparency are fundamental aspects of EFSA and are enshrined as concepts in EFSA's regulatory framework (art. 38 of EFSA's Founding Regulation (EC) No 178/2002) and in the in the Decision of the Management Board establishing the Bureau.

The transparency of the work of the Bureau will be made available through the timely announcement of EFSA's upcoming activities related to the Bureau, as well as through the publication of agendas, participant' lists and the outcome of each of the meetings of this platform on the EFSA website.

A report on EFSA' interaction with registered stakeholders within the scope of interaction with the Bureau shall be presented annually to the Management Board.

6. Monitoring and review

A review of the effectiveness of EFSA's stakeholder engagement, including activities related with the Bureau, 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.