European Food Safety Authority

ADVISORY FORUM AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION UNIT

Parma, 13 December 2011
EFSA/AF/M/2011/407/PUB/FIN

Minutes

FORTY FIRST MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM
KRAKOW (POLAND), 28-29 SEPTEMBER 2011

MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY FORUM

Chair: *Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle,* Executive Director, EFSA

Austria	*Roland Grossgut*	Latvia	*Gatis Ozoliņš*
Belgium	*Benoît Horion*	Lithuania	*Zenonas Stanevicius*
Bulgaria	*Boiko Likov*	Luxembourg	*Patrick Hau*
Cyprus	*Popi Kanari*	Malta	*Flavia Zammit*
Czech Republic	*Jitka Götzová*	Netherlands	*Evert Schouten*
Denmark	*Jørgen Schlundt*	Norway	*Kirstin Færden*
Estonia	*Hendrik Kuusk*	Poland	*Jan Krzysztof Ludwicki*
Finland	*Jaana Husu-Kallio*	Portugal	*Maria João Seabra*
France	*Rozenn Saunier*	Romania	*Liviu Rusu*
Germany	*Reiner Wittkowski*	Slovakia	*Ján Štulc*
Hungary	*Maria Szeitzné Szabó*	Slovenia	*Ada Hočevar*
Iceland	*Jón Gíslason*	Spain	*Ana Canals*
Ireland	*Raymond Ellard*	Sweden	*Leif Busk*
Italy	*Giancarlo Belluzzi*	United Kingdom	*Andrew Wadge*

OBSERVERS

Croatia	*Zorica Jurković*	European Commission	*Jeannie Vergnettes*
Switzerland	*Michael Beer*	US Food and Drug Administration	*Donald Prater (EFSA liaison officer)*

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY

Advisory Forum secretariat: *Saba Giovannacci, Jeffrey Moon and Torben Nilsson.*

Bernhard Berger	*Jane Richardson*
Per Bergman	*Tobin Robinson*
Stef Bronzwaer[1]	*Vittorio Silano* *(Chair of EFSA's Scientific Committee)*
Hubert Deluyker	*Laura Smillie*
Stefan Fabiansson[2]	*Andras Szoradi*[1]
Alexandre Feigenbaum[3]	*Victoria Villamar*
Marta Hugas[4]	

1 WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE MEETING

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle opened the meeting and passed the floor to Jan Orgelbrand, Deputy Chief of the Sanitary Inspectorate, who welcomed the AF members on behalf of the Polish EU Presidency. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle thanked Poland for its active contributions to EFSA's work as well as for hosting a number of important EFSA meetings during the Polish EU Presidency. She then welcomed the AF members, in particular the new AF alternate from France, and the Chair of EFSA's Scientific Committee. She also welcomed the EFSA liaison officer from the US Food and Drug Administration as an observer at this AF meeting and informed that apologies were received from Greece. Furthermore, she announced that Hubert Deluyker had been appointed as Director of Science Strategy and Coordination as of 16 October 2011, while Per Bergman had been nominated Director of Scientific Evaluation of Regulated Products (*ad interim*) and Claudia Heppner had been nominated Director of Risk Assessment and Scientific Assistance (*ad interim*).

2 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle informed that EFSA would like to present its preliminary Management Plan 2012 under a new agenda item 3.2. Denmark, Norway, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Finland, Bulgaria, and the United Kingdom raised matters to be covered under agenda item 4.5. The agenda was adopted with these amendments.

---

[1] Attended agenda item 4.4 (via telephone).

[2] Attended agenda item 3.3 (via telephone).

[3] Attended agenda item 4.2 (via telephone).

[4] Attended agenda item 4.3 (via telephone).

3 STRATEGIC DISCUSSION ON EFSA'S WORK WITH THE MEMBER STATES

3.1 EFSA's Science Strategy

Hubert Deluyker provided an update on the development of EFSA's Science Strategy 2012-2016, which would be discussed at the Management Board meeting in October 2011 and then published for public consultation. He invited the AF members to share their comments on the Science Strategy.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle invited the Chair of EFSA's Scientific Committee, Vittorio Silano, to share comments from the Scientific Committee. He shared suggestions on how to further develop and improve the strategy in order to address new developments and promote new approaches.

Germany questioned whether EFSA aimed at working with the best experts or with the best, independent experts.

Finland appreciated the description of the development of EFSA's workload and the need for prioritisation. Finland suggested that the strategy should define how the transparency will be increased and which role EFSA staff should have in the scientific work. Finland also emphasised the need to cooperate more with other scientific bodies and international organisations.

On transparency, the United Kingdom suggested that people should have an opportunity to see how EFSA's scientific opinions were reached by drilling down from the summaries to more detailed information. The United Kingdom agreed that the important links with the WHO-FAO-*Codex Alimentarius* should be further emphasised and suggested that flow charts could be useful to illustrate processes and links with EFSA's Strategic Plan.

Denmark said that the creation of EFSA had proven a fantastic success. This could be described better in the Science Strategy by highlighting the impact of EFSA on public health. It should also be clarified that EFSA provides scientific advice based on science made by research institutions in the Member States. Denmark found that the efficiency of EFSA's expert meetings could be improved and duplication of work conducted by the joint FAO/WHO expert committees should be avoided.

Belgium supported the comments made on transparency and the differences between EFSA and national research institutions. References in the Science Strategy to EFSA's new policy on independence and the recommendations of the AF discussion group on data collection would be appropriate and the important dialogue with the European Commission on medium term planning should be emphasised, for example it should be clarified in the strategy how the high increase in EFSA's workload related with regulated products would be addressed.

Hubert Deluyker suggested that the clarity of the document could be improved by grouping some elements, *e.g.* bringing the core values together, and referring to the medium term planning with the European Commission. He also acknowledged that EFSA should coordinate better with the joint FAO/WHO expert committees and improve the efficiency of the work on regulated products. In reply to Germany, he said that the best experts may not be independent, while somebody who is fully independent may not be an expert.

Austria reflected on the achievements in the area of food safety since the creation of EFSA and emphasised that EFSA has a very important role to play in the scientific evaluation of food safety data.

Hungary complimented EFSA on the document and emphasised the importance of the coordination with the FAO/WHO. Hungary further stressed that EFSA is a scientific institution, albeit not a research institution.

Sweden supported the comment from Denmark regarding the nature of EFSA's work and the need to reflect better in the document that EFSA is dependent on scientific work done by the Member States.

Germany proposed being clearer on EFSA's role in science by referring back to EFSA's mission in relation with consumer protection.

Italy appreciated the focus on transparency and responsiveness and underlined the need for evidence-based systems and training in risk assessment methodologies.

Norway found that transparency could be improved by describing the choices and assumptions made in the process behind EFSA's opinions better. Norway also asked about the position of nutrition in EFSA and commented that the Science Strategy was very broad, so there would be a need for prioritisation.

Poland said that while scientific data are not generated by EFSA, it is also science to interpret scientific data.

Finland suggested elaborating more on benefit assessments and linkages to nutrition, since EFSA's role is related with food safety and healthy diet.

Cyprus said that the title "Science Strategy" does not reflect all the issues in the document, *e.g.* efficiency and the better use of resources.

Vittorio Silano said that the heart of the Science Strategy is risk assessment, while EFSA also has a role in identifying research areas and emerging risks.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle referred to the useful activities with the AF on identifying research areas and concluded that EFSA's role in science should be explained further in the document.

Laura Smillie added that diagrams could be included in the document to illustrate what the strategy covers and what is covered by other core documents.

Hubert Deluyker said that once the strategy had been finalised, an implementation plan would be developed.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle added that EFSA aims at preparing a five-year work plan based on the Science Strategy and the Communications Strategy.

Action 1: AF members to submit possible comments on EFSA's Science Strategy.

3.2 EFSA's Management Plan 2012

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle presented EFSA's preliminary Management Plan 2012, highlighting the challenges and key priorities in 2012 as well as the operational context, including the renewal of eight Scientific Panels and the Scientific Committee, an external evaluation of EFSA, EFSA's 10th anniversary, and the move to the new seat in early 2012. She emphasised the opportunity to take stock and look ahead with a view also to establish a multi-annual financial framework.

Austria advocated for fees to be used to cover extra expenses related with the work on regulated products, not as part of EFSA's core budget.

Germany enquired if EFSA staff would take part in scientific evaluations.

Italy enquired what exactly was meant by the reference to prioritising further engagement of the national food safety agencies in work related to applications.

In reply to Germany, Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle clarified that the intention is to move towards a system where EFSA staff addresses routine risk assessment work, while EFSA continues to rely on its Scientific Committee and Panels for guidance documents and different scientific opinions. Addressing the question from Italy, she said that the intention is to involve article 36 institutions in preparatory work related with applications.

The United Kingdom supported a shift towards maximising science and communications, while reducing governance. Having the recent STEC outbreak in mind, there would be a need to reflect where the real public health impact is.

Hubert Deluyker said that the Science Strategy recommends addressing risk prioritisation with the European Commission.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle said that EFSA has to address questions from risk managers on regulated products, while also supporting broader public health issues.

The United Kingdom agreed, while emphasising the need to be clear in communications to risk managers on where EFSA and national food safety authorities as risk assessors believe the real public health risks are, *i.e.* where the resources should go.

Finland stated that the workload related with applications would continue to increase. EFSA's intention to involve Member States in handling this burden through grants and procurement was a strategic issue, since it would require Member States to take this work into account in national strategies. Hence, this issue would require further consideration by the AF.

Germany warned not to underestimate the importance of risk perceptions.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle informed that the dialogue with the European Commission on medium term planning would be completed by the end of 2011. Hence, the first AF meeting in 2012 could be dedicated to discuss how to address and share the work load and how to define priorities.

Action 2: AF members to submit possible comments on EFSA's preliminary Management Plan 2012 by 4 November 2011.

3.3 Data collection

Jeffrey Moon reminded the AF of the scope and terms of reference of the AF discussion group on data collection. Eight Member States had been involved in the work and the resulting technical report on data collection should be read in conjunction with two previous technical reports from EFSA on data collection.

The Austrian AF member, who had participated in the AF discussion group, presented the group's considerations and recommendations.

Germany thanked for the good organisation of the process, supported the recommendations of the AF discussion group, and stressed the need to assure data quality and clarify data ownership.

Sweden was very satisfied with the report, which identified important challenges in the area of data collection. Sweden supported the recommendations, favoured using existing structures for addressing the needs in the area of data collection, and supported the establishment of an EFSA-led task force to coordinate the work on data collection. In addition, a common ontology was proposed.

Finland referred to various legislative requirements for data collection that did not specify the required data quality and the anticipated data usage. These legislative shortcomings would need to be considered by the European Commission.

The Netherlands found the recommendations ambitious and recommended keeping an integrated approach to set priorities.

The European Commission said that the progress made so far was summarised well in the report and also some further questions for the European Commission were highlighted. The European Commission would continue assessing and streamlining the legal framework.

Belgium suggested that the origin of data would merit further reflection and noted that it is a shame that data collected by Member States and transmitted to the European Commission are often not used by EFSA due to insufficient quality standards. Belgium warned that the proposed task force on data collection should not duplicate existing networks.

Hungary urged for simple procedures and avoidance of double reporting.

Luxembourg agreed on the issues raised and flagged an additional issue regarding the translations of data descriptors.

Denmark advised EFSA to focus on data collection in support of consumer protection and clearly state its need for data for risk assessments, rather than relying on data collected for the sake of legislations.

Poland supported Hungary's comment and suggested discussing which data are needed for exposure assessments of different segments of the population to harmful substances.

Sweden commented that an analysis of what is required in different areas would add up to too much, so the primary responsibilities would need to be defined and legislations changed accordingly. In any case, more data would be needed.

Hubert Deluyker agreed that consumer exposure is important and said that exposure assessments are ongoing on a routine basis. The Member States would be granted access to an interactive tool to draw out exposure data and generate reports. However, often control data cannot be used for risk assessment purposes.

Spain said that the greatest problem is the lack of data. Data collection on a voluntary basis would provide little data, since no funding is available for non-mandatory data collection. Spain would appreciate work on harmonisation of data collection.

Jane Richardson agreed on the need for improved data quality and standardisation of terminology. She also suggested making best use of what is currently available through data warehousing.

Hubert Deluyker suggested addressing data quality in the existing networks. He agreed that the work on standardisation should continue and found that a possible task force on data collection should be composed of experts.

Austria suggested that Focal Points could play a role in the area of data collection.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle concluded that while the regulatory framework would certainly have an impact, it should not limit the work on data collection. EFSA would come back with more concrete proposals based also on a medium term data collection plan to ensure that we collect what we need. She referred the further discussions on data quality to the existing networks in order to identify also possible gaps or areas where data are collected unnecessarily. This way, EFSA would build on what the networks have already identified regarding data quality. In addition, EFSA would identify an adequate forum for addressing cross-cutting issues.

The European Commission added that it would pursue the work on ensuring the coherence of the regulatory framework.

Hubert Deluyker briefly updated the AF on the work on the EU Menu project.

Action 3: AF members to propose nominations for the EU Menu Steering Committee by 2 December 2011.

3.4 Cooperation in the area of the Scientific Committee

Vittorio Silano presented the main results and foreseen future developments of EFSA's Scientific Committee. He concluded his presentation by sharing some reflections on how to ensure that EFSA guidance documents are useful and that risk assessment approaches are harmonised across EFSA and in collaboration with the Member States. He said that there are opportunities for further divulgation of new methodologies. Finally, he invited the AF members to reply to a questionnaire on the EFSA compendium of botanicals.

The United Kingdom observed that these reflections linked back to the discussion on EFSA's Science Strategy under agenda item 3.1.

Austria reflected on food safety achievements resulting from the many scientific opinions produced.

Sweden confirmed that the EFSA compendium of botanicals is useful and suggested that training sessions could be a valuable way to receive further feedback. Furthermore, Sweden proposed examining how EFSA's scientific opinions have contributed to decisions made by risk managers, *i.e.* to explore the transparency of the entire risk analysis process.

The United Kingdom added that scientific uncertainty always exists, but this should not drive the decision making.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle reflected on how to reinforce the role of the Scientific Committee in relation with scientific methodology and consistency of risk assessment guidance in specific areas. She referred the further discussions to the

Scientific Committee network on the harmonisation of risk assessment methodologies.

Action 4: AF members to reply to the questionnaire on the EFSA compendium of botanicals by 25 November 2011.

3.5 Risk communications guidelines

Laura Smillie presented the draft risk communications guidelines developed jointly between EFSA and the AFCWG.

Spain complimented the work and asked what communication on these new guidelines was foreseen in the Member States. Spain also proposed that the AFCWG could consider lessons learnt from communications during the recent STEC outbreak.

Denmark suggested strengthening the emphasis on the need for independent risk communications on risk assessments. In addition, Denmark proposed mentioning EFSA's communications with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and national authorities.

Norway commented that according to the official definition of risk analysis, risk communication takes place between different interest parties, including risk assessors, risk managers and stakeholders, at different stages in the risk analysis process. It should be clearly defined who is responsible for communicating a risk assessment and who shall communicate risk management issues.

The Netherlands echoed Norway's comment, since risk communications on risk management are different from risk communications on risk assessments.

Finland emphasised that if the substance is not right, risk communications do not work, so the experts are the most appropriate communicators.

Sweden found the guidelines clear and useful and complimented the inclusion of guidance on the use of social media.

Germany said that media want scientists to explain the risks. This increases trust in the messages, while political communications can have the opposite effect.

Italy agreed with Sweden and Germany and encouraged sharing of experiences.

Ireland added that the personal skills of communicators influence credibility. This aspect was not included in the guidelines.

The European Commission found the guidelines valid. However, all the examples dealt with crisis situations, while it would be useful to address routine communications as well and to insist more on the independence of the risk assessments.

Laura Smillie replied that the awareness raising on the risk communications guidelines would be addressed with the AFCWG and that shared communications training was being considered by the group. She took note of the other comments.

Action 5: EFSA to share the final version of the risk communications guidelines with the AF members.

4 OTHER MATTERS RAISED BY EFSA AND THE MEMBER STATES

4.1 STEC outbreak

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle introduced the discussion by saying that its purpose was to learn lessons from the recent STEC outbreak as an input to European reflections on the handling of the crisis.

Germany presented the results and timelines of the investigation of the outbreak, which had caused more than fifty deaths, related communications, consumer perceptions, and complexities encountered due to the many parties involved. Germany concluded that the outbreak resolution had been pursued directly and successfully in a relatively short period of time and highlighted the need to discuss the EU role in communications and coordination of crises that go beyond borders, since not all Member States would have the capacity to handle such crises.

Hubert Deluyker presented EFSA's response and lessons learnt from the crisis. He highlighted EFSA's support to microbiological investigations in Germany and France and the tight cooperation with the ECDC. He informed that while the trace-back activities had now been completed, trace-forward activities were still ongoing in order to allow risk managers to revise the consumer advice.

Spain thanked EFSA for support during the crisis and regretted the lack of direct communications from Germany to Spain in relation with the German alert on Spanish cucumbers. Spain deplored that this alert had been launched without laboratory confirmation, since the erroneous warning against Spanish cucumbers had caused severe damage to Spanish agriculture. Spain concluded on the need to learn from mistakes in the crisis handling, suggested a need for harmonising the approach to launching an alert, and asked the European Commission to give EFSA a coordinating role in crisis handling, since small Member States have limited capacities and big Member States can make mistakes.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle invited Spain to share a document with suggestions.

Bulgaria expressed concerns that if *E. coli* could penetrate the internal part of sprouts, washing of sprouts may not be a sufficient measure. Bulgaria proposed that EFSA should summarise lessons learnt also from other crises.

Denmark commented that *E. coli* contamination could easily be avoided, since the source is excreta used as a fertilizer. However, this would require a global agreement, for example this time the contamination originated in Egypt.

Finland agreed with Denmark's comment. Finland thanked Germany for sharing information during the crisis and mentioned that even a national food safety crisis would inevitably become a regional issue from a risk communication perspective, so there would be a need to ensure coherence. Finally, Finland questioned why EFSA had included consumer advice in its opinion, since this was a risk management issue.

Austria noted a need to correlate and harmonise EU and Member State approaches and manuals on crisis management and clarify responsibilities.

The United Kingdom expressed astonishment that consumers were less concerned about STEC than dioxins. Scientists would have to counter that perception that illustrated the challenges of risk communications. The United Kingdom further noted that future outbreaks could be prevented by irradiating seeds and that new tools, *e.g.* molecular biology, typing and sequencing, would be needed for source identification.

Germany took note of the criticism from Spain, but felt that it was not really justified, since in the crisis situation uncertainties were high and yet there was a need to act fast to protect consumers based on the best available knowledge at any given point in time. Germany would welcome further comments in writing.

Hubert Deluyker said that media often interrupted the work of the experts during the crisis and that sometimes the boundary between risk assessment and risk management needs to be blurred in a crisis situation. A joint training exercise would be useful.

Ireland reflected on how to prevent such a crisis from happening again and expressed sympathy for the Spanish concerns about when to launch an alert. Ireland also noted that much information spread through social media prior to the official communications.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle agreed that EFSA has a responsibility to work to avoid that such a crisis happens again. This work involves liaison with third countries.

Upon request from the European Commission, Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle confirmed that EFSA would prepare a document on lessons learnt.

Denmark agreed that EFSA could advise on what to do and suggested an independent investigation of the handling of the crisis to learn from mistakes.

Spain explained that its view on Germany's handling of the crisis was not intended as criticism, but rather as a different position.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle concluded that the European crisis preparedness would need to be upgraded, which could be very resource intensive, and that the role of the European Commission is very important, so further reflections on crisis prevention would involve the European Commission and Member States. EFSA would finalise a discussion paper enriched by these discussions on lessons learnt in support of the further discussions.

Germany shared the "Guide to Food Safety Crisis Management" of the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection for information. This guide from 2007 was being revised after the STEC outbreak.

Action 6: EFSA to share its document on lessons learnt from the STEC outbreak with the AF members.

4.2 Final report of the ESCO working group on non-plastic food contact materials

Alexandre Feigenbaum informed the AF that the final report of the ESCO working group on non-plastic contact materials had now been published. This work was presented at the 40th AF meeting. He shared the main conclusions of the report and invited the AF to comment on the proposed way forward.

Upon request from Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle, he clarified that the reference to a network was not intended as an EFSA network of Member State representatives, but simply as a list of experts working in national institutions and the industry on non-plastic food contact materials.

Belgium noted that several thousands of substances had to be considered and that default values were used due to a lack of data. Hence, work would be needed to set correct exposure values.

Alexandre Feigenbaum explained that this was exactly the reason why the ESCO working group had been established following AF discussions in 2009. He added that it had been agreed at a meeting of EFSA's stakeholder consultative platform that the classification work should be carried out by the industry. He also mentioned that a tool is being developed by the FLAVIS research project for use by the industry and authorities.

The United Kingdom welcomed this important piece of work, saying that having a framework is extremely helpful to prevent crises and that applying thresholds of toxicological concern would be useful in this area.

Upon request from Hubert Deluyker, Alexandre Feigenbaum informed that the European Commission had participated in the ESCO working group and was

expected to follow up. Also Member States could consider where to apply the principles. He concluded that it would be important to seek joint action.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle suggested that some national institutions could be interested in supporting EFSA in this area and said that the role of industry experts would need to be considered further.

Vittorio Silano noted that the work was relevant and scientifically sound. An adequate regulatory framework would now be needed. He enquired about the intentions of the European Commission in this regard.

The European Commission replied that reflections on the next steps were ongoing.

Sweden wanted to know what was expected from the Member States.

Per Bergman and Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle concluded that EFSA would need to consider this issue further before informing the AF on the next steps.

4.3 Modernisation of meat inspection

Marta Hugas presented an overview of EFSA's work on meat inspection, which aims at identifying and ranking the main risks for public health, assessing strengths and weaknesses of the current meat inspection system, and recommending inspection methods fit for new hazards and adaptations of the current methods. EFSA's work addresses biological hazards, chemical hazards, and animal health and welfare. The opinion on swine had already been adopted, while opinions on poultry and other species would follow next year. A roundtable on meat inspection would be organised by the European Commission with the Member States on 14 December 2011. EFSA would present its work at this occasion.

The United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, Finland, Cyprus, and Spain welcomed the work.

Italy emphasised the need for EU monitoring plans for farms and independent surveillance of slaughterhouses. Italy reaffirmed the primary task of ensuring food safety by a public controller and welcomed simplification of the meat inspection procedure, while emphasising the importance of avoiding conflicts of interest between the slaughterhouse and the controller.

Finland enquired about decontamination and how experiences of third country had been considered.

Cyprus advocated for flexible sampling plans to prevent illegal use of drugs.

Marta Hugas replied that a background report on practices in other countries had been considered by the expert working group to assess the efficiency and safety

of different methods of decontamination. In addition, some experts had practical experience in slaughterhouse inspection in third countries. She confirmed that the intention was to produce a flexible system depending on Member State characteristics.

4.4 Expert survey

Bernhard Berger presented the results of EFSA's scientific expert satisfaction survey in 2011, which showed a very high level of satisfaction and an increased satisfaction as compared to the last expert survey in 2009.

The Netherlands congratulated EFSA on the results and suggested investigating the views of the non-respondents further, since the response rate was only 53 %.

Denmark expressed concerns over the inefficient use of the experts' time due to travelling and said that this leads to some frustration in some Member States.

Germany supported Denmark's comment and suggested increasing the use of telemeetings.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle confirmed that EFSA is taking action to reduce the time spent travelling and urged the Member States to see their experts' involvement in EFSA's work as a contribution to EU cooperation that would, hopefully, be beneficial for the Member States.

4.5 Other matters raised by EFSA and the Member States

Denmark presented ideas on a global microbiological genomic identification system, saying that whole genome sequence technology opens a new frontier in the detection and control of infectious diseases and could be applied in a global surveillance system.

The Netherlands, Germany and the United Kingdom were keen to collaborate.

Denmark informed that contacts had been made already with the European Commission to take the initiative further.

Spain asked which effect such a detection method could have had during the STEC outbreak.

Denmark replied that, in principle, the cucumber strain could have been excluded within hours. However, a database would be needed for the matching of samples and this database still needed to be developed.

Hubert Deluyker commented that a shift of mind set would be needed in order to generate the willingness to share strains.

Norway presented the opinion of the Steering Committee of the Norwegian Scientific Committee for Food Safety on negative and positive health effects of n-3 fatty acids as constituents of food supplements and fortified foods, which had been published on 28 June 2011 and shared through the Information Exchange Platform. The evidence presented in the opinion showed that it was possible to obtain positive health affects in the Norwegian population from intake of eicosapentaenoic acid and docosahexanoic acid, including from food supplements, without any appreciable risk of negative or adverse health effects.

Sweden suggested that further research would be required to study negative effects on certain biomarkers.

Germany announced that an updated version of the EU Food Safety Almanac was now available in English and German.

Ireland presented the Baccus project on combating food crime by strengthening law enforcement cooperation and requested the assistance of the AF members in passing this information on to the right people at national level.

Finland agreed on the need to tackle food fraud and shared information on the work of the Finnish Food Safety Authority (Evira) in this area.

Italy offered to provide further information on the Baccus project upon request.

The Netherlands informed that the migration of lead and cadmium from tajines, *i.e.* a type of Moroccan crockery used for cooking, had been tested. In most cases, the migration significantly exceeded the currently applied legal limits. The issue would now be discussed with the national risk managers and could possibly lead to a request to EFSA.

The Netherlands also informed that dapsone had been found in animal feed on a pig farm in the Netherlands. According to Commission Regulation (EU) no. 37/2010, this substance may not be administered to food producing animals. The investigation revealed that dapsone was present as a contamination of the veterinary drug sulfamethoxazole. The extent of dapsone contamination was below the limit of 0.1 % impurity considered acceptable for sulfamethoxazole by the European Pharmacopoeia. However, if dapsone is genotoxic, no contamination would be allowed. The Netherlands had therefore brought its findings to the attention of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) in order for EMA to consider whether or not to qualify dapsone as a genotoxic carcinogen.

Finland announced that the 10th anniversary of risk assessment in Finland would be marked by a seminar in Helsinki on 26-28 October 2011.

Bulgaria thanked EFSA for having accepted a new mandate from Bulgaria and the European Commission to provide scientific advice on foot and mouth disease.

The United Kingdom announced the publication of the Annual Report of the Food Standards Agency's Chief Scientist.

The United Kingdom explained its position regarding BSE and the relaxation of measures on processed animal protein in animal feed.

The United Kingdom requested an update from France on the new opinion on bisphenol-A (BPA) published by the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety (ANSES) on 27 September 2011.

France presented the new opinion on BPA that indicated some observed effects in animal studies and recommended identifying and testing substitutes for BPA. The opinion was open for comments from the scientific community until the end of November 2011. It would then be finalised in the beginning of 2012. However, risk managers had already decided to ban BPA in food products from 1 January 2014.

The United Kingdom challenged the French opinion that was diverging from previous FAO/WHO and EFSA opinions and suggested that an important study from 2011 showing no effects in humans had not been considered by ANSES.

Austria advocated for caution regarding the use of unknown substitute products.

Upon request from Per Bergman, France confirmed that ANSES had considered a number of studies that were not considered by EFSA.

Denmark said that if EFSA had excluded a study signalling uncertainties about effects on the learning abilities of animals, the reasons should be explained.

Sweden mentioned that the AF has a role in sorting out scientific divergence.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle concluded that EFSA would look into the matter in order to explain the differences and take into account the most recent studies. In accordance with article 30 of EFSA's Founding Regulation, EFSA would also work with France to either resolve the scientific divergence between the opinions of EFSA and ANSES or produce a report explaining the differences. EFSA would keep the AF informed.

5 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Germany found that EFSA's request for an institutional declaration of interests from national food safety authorities receiving project funding from EFSA is not appropriate, since all their tasks are in line with EFSA.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle agreed to consider a simpler mechanism for national food safety authorities and all institutions on the article 36 list. She suggested that the Focal Points could assist with this.

Germany reminded that the next AF meeting would take place in Wiesbaden on 30 November - 1 December 2011.

CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

Before closing the AF meeting, Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle thanked Poland for hosting the AF meeting. She also thanked the AF members and observers, the Chair of EFSA's Scientific Committee, the interpreters, and EFSA staff.