European Food Safety Authority

AHAW UNIT

Minutes of the 3rd meeting of the EFSA Scientific Network for Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare

Parma, 14 and 15 November 2011

Participants

Network representatives	Arvo Viltrop (EE), Edith Authie (FR), Helen Roberts (UK), Narcisi Valeria, Angelica Primavera (IT), Olga Ondrasovicova (SK), Kollar Eszter (HU), Taina Aaltonen (FI), Niall Ó Nualláin (IE), Ingfrid Naess (NO), Stinka Madara (LV), Ceulemans Kirstine (BE) Chobanov Georgi (BG), Fortomaris Paschalis (GR), Muñoz Hurrtado Beatriz (ES)
AHAW Panel members	Philippe Vannier, Moez Saana, Mo Salman
Invited speakers	Pascal Hendrikx
EFSA	Franck Berthe, Per Have, Ana Afonso, Denise Candiani, Milen Georgiev, Sandra Correia, Sofie Dhollander, Tomasz Grudnik (AHAW Unit), Jeffrey Moon (AFSCO), Jane Richardson (SAS)

1. Welcome and agenda

The meeting was chaired by Franck Berthe, head of the AHAW Unit.

The chair welcomed the participants.

The agenda was adopted.

2. Declarations of interest

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Declarations of Interests, EFSA encouraged participants to fill in the Annual Declaration of interest (ADoI). No conflicts of interests related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process or at the beginning of this meeting.

3. Follow-up activities from the previous meeting of the Network

In May 2011, it had been agreed that next network meeting planned for the fall 2011 would focus on data needs for risk assessment. It had also been suggested to include preliminary results from an on-going art. 36 grant[1] on data specification. The 3rd meeting of the AHAW Scientific Network responds to this.

At the May 2011 meeting of the EFSA Advisory Forum, Philippe Vannier and Franck Berthe presented the activities of the AHAW Unit, Panel, and Network. It was concluded that collaboration with member states need to be increased. Also, the discussion emphasised the

[1] CFP/EFSA/AWAW/2010/01 "Specification of data collection on animal diseases to increase the preparedness of the AHAW Panel to answer future mandates".: http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/art36grants/article36/cfpefsaahaw201001.htm

need to improve annual and medium-term planning. Finally, the meeting agreed that the question of confidentiality was to be addressed by EFSA and its interested parties.

The retrospective analysis of risk assessments that was performed in May was recognised to be a valuable exercise for the Network. It was agreed to further develop and expand the Network capacity in that regard. The exercise provides foundation for future cooperation.

In May, it had been agreed that Network members would upload their risk assessments and annual workplan on the EFSA IEP to foster networking.

4. AHAW Network Activities

Scientific opinions adopted by the AHAW Panel of EFSA, since May. 2011: Scientific Opinion on bluetongue serotype 8 (May. 2011), Scientific Opinion on bluetongue monitoring and surveillance (May. 2011), Hatchery waste as animal by-products (Jul. 2011), Meat inspection of swine (Aug. 2011), Epizootic Ulcerative Syndrome (Oct. 2011).

On-going activities include: Animal-based welfare indicators to asses welfare of dairy cows, pigs (December 2011), and broilers (June 2012), health and welfare of GM animals for food production (December 2011), Guidance on risk assessments in animal welfare (December 2011), Welfare of calves and beef cattle (March 2012), Electric requirements for waterbath stunning equipment for poultry (March 2012), Meat inspection of poultry (June 2012), bovine, domestic sheep, goats, domestic solipeds and farmed game (December 2013), Foot and Mouth disease (March 2012), Swine Vesicular Disease and Vesicular Stomatitis (March 2012),

Management plan 2012 includes work on diagnostic test for tuberculosis, Infectious Salmon Anaemia, leishmaniosis, West Nile Virus, Echinococcus multilocularis and E, granulosus, animal based measures (laying hens, beef cattle), fish transport.

The plan for grants and procurements includes: risk categorisation for aquaculture farms, methodological framework for risk assessments for potentially pandemic flu, transport of fish, update of Tick-borne disease database, various Systematic Literature Reviews on animal welfare and health, leishmaniosis.

Some examples were given, based on the inputs provided by the members in the IEP on past and ongoing activities on tuberculosis (TB) and foot and mouth disease (FMD). The example showed the potential benefits we may all get out of knowing each other's effort.

4.1. Activities of network members

Proposed practical exercise to collect information about: i) national activities in risk assessment in 2011/2012 (recently published RA but not in EFSA IEP platform), ii) any on-going activities, and iii) planned activities in 2012. The objective of the exercise was to define common areas of interest. Files and tables were distributed to the present network members to complete the above information. Some examples of common interest were discussed:

West Nile Virus (WNV) and African Horse Sickness (AHS): There is a project on-going in Spain on entomological surveillance of vector borne diseases. In the UK risk assessments are carried out on the likelihood of introduction of WNF and AHS. Italy is also carrying out surveillance activities on WNF. Greece briefed on their on-going surveillance activities on WNF in equines and wild avian species. EFSA gave a state of play on the on-going activities pertaining WNF.

African Swine Fever (ASF) and Classical Swine Fever CSF: Bulgaria and Estonia explained that since ASF is circulating in Russia it may present a threat and currently the potential risk for introduction is being assessed. Since CSF is also endemic in Russia, the risk this presents is currently being evaluated by Estonia. Also Slovakia considered ASF and CSF as

a high priority and published recently a national risk assessment report including risk assessments on these topics.

Welfare: Ireland has finalised several guidance documents, such as a code of practice on animal welfare for laying hens,-welfare of pigs, -managing injured livestock on farm, - welfare of horses; and an early warning/ intervention systems for animal welfare. Also Belgium has worked on an early warning system for animal welfare. France is currently working on a code of practice concerning animal welfare during slaughtering of cattle. The UK would be very interested in the outcomes of this assessment since it is also on their agenda.

4.2. Conclusions and recommendations of the practical exercise

During the discussion it became clear that several member states and EFSA have been, or are, working on similar topics and even similar questions. There may be a need for EFSA to organise technical meetings or workshops on topics of common interest.

5. Risk Assessment and needs for data

5.1. Needs for data for risk assessment in Animal Health and Welfare

EFSA presented the generic workflow for risk assessments carried out by AHAW, including the assessment of data needs, data availability and accessibility, data quality and evaluation of data gaps.

Three examples were given of previous risk assessments carried out by the AHAW Panel, namely the data collection for the Scientific Opinion on (1) bluetongue monitoring surveillance and (2) dairy cow welfare and (3) tail biting/docking. The approach for data collection was presented, as well as the identified data gaps and constraints encountered during the data collection.

In order to increase preparedness for future mandates, EFSA awarded an art. 36 project on data specifications to a European consortium. The project deadline is May 2012. It's objectives are to establish a typology of the risk questions in the area of animal health; to identify the sources of information and to develop a methodology for data collection including the definition of metadata standards for outcomes values to support data validation and quality assessment and to establish a methodological framework for the use of data in a scientific assessment.

Preliminary results concerning the classification of the different risk questions that were received by the AHAW Panel and the type of data needed to answer them were shown. The availability of the different data in the different Member States was presented. Difficulties with collecting this information were discussed, e.g. language problems, lack of standardisation, restricted access to data, lack of scientific pertinence, incompleteness of data, etc.

Preliminary conclusions are that data availability and accessibility often relate to the status of the disease targeted. Non aggregated data is seldom available (or sometimes difficult to access). Further, the lack of availability of data mainly concern prevention and control, surveillance and public health impact.

The different work packages aim to develop data collection models and to adapt data collection to specific risk questions. Possible actions for the future could be the organisation of workshops on the collection of data for specific diseases, including various Member States.

5.2. Member state example of data collection-France

Pascal Hendrikx presented a national (French) organisation of animal health surveillance systems; a standardised way of assessing these surveillance systems and the sharing of the data between the different partners:

- Organisation of animal health surveillance at the national level in France

The National platform for Animal Health Surveillance has a central role for the coordination of surveillance systems. It constitutes of several members (DGAl, ANSES, GDS France, COOP De France, SNGTV, ADILVA) and has as objectives to analyse surveillance systems and epidemiological information to facilitate risk analysis and management.

Currently the creation of an inventory of surveillance systems is on-going, working around priority themes, which may in the end lead to identifying potential gaps of data.

The analysis tool (OASIS) was developed to analyse the performance and the quality of the existing surveillance systems, enabling the identification of potential weaknesses and the proposal of recommendations for improving the surveillance systems. A questionnaire was developed to inquire about the methodology, the structure and the operation of the surveillance systems. With the use of a list of assessment criteria which are combined and weighted, the performance of the surveillance systems are described and the critical control points and other systems attributes are assessed. The Oasis tool is currently already used for 15 surveillance systems.

- Data management and analysis within the platform

National regulated diseases and other diseases are collected at different levels and are used by different users, which may lead to some incompatibility of data. That is why one of the objectives of the platform is to improve the sharing of the data between the members of the platform.

- Discussion

The Member States listed their top-3 priority areas to focus the activities on in 2012. Some examples of topics that were listed several times by different countries were: bee diseases (some examples of data needs: evaluation of toxicity of different pesticides and toxic reference values), wildlife diseases (some examples of data needs: migration of populations, population size, actual disease surveillance data), tuberculosis (data collection on health status, data on diagnostic tools), salmonellosis, use of antibiotics in veterinary medicines, disease categorisation, IBR-BVD, African Swine fever, WNF.

There is a need to exchange collected data, either with a long lasting data collection framework, or with databases developed for a specific opinion or for other short term purposes. One of the options could be that EFSA organises a technical meeting on these priority topics to exchange information and avoid duplication of efforts. The exercise of the prioritisation should be refined, however, to complete the response also of the missing members of the network and to refine and crosscheck the answers. It is necessary to also define the exact risk questions that are currently of interest in the different countries.

The example of the French inventory of data collections on a national level may be a good example to be carried out on a European level. These data inventories are however subject to fast changes and these potential changes should be taken into account when going down that route.

6. Data Collection activities

6.1. EFSA data collection activities

Jane Richardson presented the objectives of the EFSA data collection activities.

The data transfer standards were explained. The data submission requirements need to be explained to data providers and developed with a long term view and design that reduces the requirements for updates and new versions. Data should be preferably collected at the lowest level of granularity, which allows answering the maximum of scientific questions.

Preferably, data bases should have a generic structure and Extensive Markup Language (XML) should be used. Based on this principles, EFSA has developed the Standard Sample Description (SSD), which is a generic data model for food and feed.

'Foodex' multiple hierarchies were explained. It allows to make different classification of data by using the same datasets.

The Data Collection Framework (DCF) was briefly presented. It is based on XML technology. The DCF is an Internet Web Application and can be accessed from Internet using a simple Web Browser (Explorer, Firefox, etc…) Data can be submitted manually or web based and is described in the EFSA guidance.

On-line validation is carried out in three validation steps and based on validation rules (automatic validation protocols).

Several data monitoring programmes are currently supported in EFSA, e.g. the EFSA Comprehensive EU Food Consumption Database.

Other data collection currently on-going within the article 36 framework were mentioned.

The concept of Data Warehouses was explained. Data warehouses allow accessibility and dissemination within EFSA. An example was given within the animal health remit, namely the tick and tick-borne disease database.

6.2. Advisory Forum discussion group on data collection

Jeffrey Moon presented the report of the discussion group on data collection. The purpose of establishing the discussion group was to highlight areas of data collection where greater attention was needed and to make proposals for potential improvement to address the concerns. The participants of the discussion group identified areas for potential improvement in the way that data collections were planned and data accessed, transferred and managed within and between the MS and EFSA.

The report that was presented should be read in conjunction with two previous reports that were used as references: (1) the EFSA report on data collection- Future Directions ((2010) and (2) the report on Processes and Quality Assurance Elements on Data Collection Programmes with Member States- Supporting Publications (2011).

The main concerns identified by the discussion group were the differences in food classification; the lack of long term planning for data collection; the lack of harmonisation in ways data collected across different domains; the quality control that was not consistent and duplication of effort being made in making returns; the difficulty of access to data held by EFSA; the lack of interoperability between systems; the lack of central coordination for data returns; inconsistent legal framework for data collection in different domains and the information technology that was not well developed for exchange of information.

Recommendations were given, namely on the development of a 3,5 year medium term data collection plan, establishment of quality checking and control procedures; the development of guidance for analysis of the data and dissemination of the results; work towards

harmonisation of data collections within MS under the relevant units responsible in EFSA harmonised transfer of data and protocols to reduce the resource burden in providing data. The following recommendations were given especially for the commissions' consideration: Improved coordination at Commission level to avoid double data transmission is essential and the organisation of data collected in the area of chemical contaminants, plant health, animal health and food additives should be improved where there is a lack of clear central guidance, and more legal clarity should be provided.

The next steps will be to organise further discussion within the Advisory Forum on proposals for implementation of the recommendations.

6.3. Data collection activities in Member States

The network members briefed the other participants on the on-going data collection activities in their institutions. They explained how these data collection activities are organised and what their role is in these activities. The members were asked how data collection activities are linked to the actual risk assessment. The interaction between the data collectors and the actual users of the data, i.e. the risk assessors is of different nature in the different institutions. The need to have the interaction with the data analyst was recognised to be of key importance to make sure that datasets are interpreted and used appropriately for risk assessments, and sometimes this interaction is weak. Furthermore, already before designing the database, one should decide what to get out of the database, and not only on which data to collect.

The members were asked why and how data on animal health can be shared. They agreed that sharing is beneficial for all partners involved. It may lead to improving the quality of the data collection system, by taking into account comments of other partners and increasing the transparency how data was collected. However, the fear of getting extra control measures or other economical reasons often leads to lack of transparency. Sharing is often not happening because people do not like to be criticised.

The network members were asked what constraints they have with data accessibility. They agreed that language barriers can play a role in difficult access to data. Further, private data from industry or farmers can sometimes be difficult to be obtained due to economic reasons.

7. Main conclusions and recommendations

- There is a need to improve communication between the network members. The network needs to be notified when mandates are received, when opinions are adopted, or art. 36 calls for tenders are launched. Similarly, network members agreed to inform each other when a new risk assessment is performed.
- The exercise showed that clusters of topics of common interest can be identified. It was agreed to propose technical meetings on such topics in order to discuss risk questions, methodological approaches and availability of data in member states. Tuberculosis was identified as a first topic of common interest and a technical meeting should be organised early 2012.
- Data collections are often carried out to fulfil legal obligations and available data do not necessarily "fit for purpose" of risk assessment. There is a need to clearly specify which data is needed for sound risk assessments.
- An inventory of available and accessible data collection systems may be useful, but in its static form it may not be an ideal tool due to fast changes in data collection activities.

- EFSA has a vast experience in collecting data. Data collection on animal welfare may need to be strengthened. A standardised process for submitting data from the Members States is needed.
- A workshop will be organised next spring to address the critical issues that occur in risk assessments, and one of these issues is data collection.