

ADVISORY FORUM AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION UNIT

Parma, 21 February, 2013
EFSA/AF/M/2012/445/PUB/FINAL

Minutes

**FORTY SIXTH MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM
PAPHOS (CYPRUS), 5-6 DECEMBER 2012**

MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY FORUM

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

Belgium	<i>Benoît Horion</i>	Latvia	<i>Gatis Ozoliņš</i>
Bulgaria	<i>Boiko Likov</i>	Lithuania	<i>Zenonas Stanevicius</i>
Cyprus	<i>Popi Kanari</i>	Luxembourg	<i>Nathalie Welschbillig</i>
Czech Republic	<i>Jitka Götzová</i>	Malta	<i>Ingrid Busuttil</i>
Denmark	<i>Jørgen Schlundt</i>	Netherlands	<i>Antoon Opperhuizen</i>
Estonia	<i>Külli Rae</i>	Norway	<i>Kirstin Færden</i>
Finland	<i>Matti Aho</i>	Poland	<i>Jacek Postupolski</i>
France	<i>Rozenn Saunier</i>	Portugal	<i>Jorge Reis</i>
Germany	<i>Andreas Hensel</i>	Slovakia	<i>Zuzana Bírošová</i>
Greece	<i>Eirini Tsigarida</i>	Slovenia	<i>Ada Hocevar Grom</i>
Hungary	<i>Maria Szeitzné Szabó</i>	Spain	<i>Ana Canals</i>
Iceland	<i>Jón Gíslason</i>	Sweden	<i>Leif Busk</i>
Ireland	<i>Ray Ellard</i>	United Kingdom	<i>Andrew Wadge</i>
Italy	<i>Giancarlo Belluzzi</i>		

OBSERVERS

Croatia	<i>Zorica Jurković</i>	Serbia	<i>Vera Katic</i>
FYR of Macedonia	<i>Svetlana Tomeska Mickova</i>	Switzerland	<i>Judith Beck</i>
Montenegro	<i>Nedeljko Latinović</i>		

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY

Advisory Forum secretariat: *Saba Giovannacci, Jeffrey Moon and Saadia Noorani.*

<i>Stef Bronzwaer</i>	<i>Tobin Robinson</i>
<i>Anna Castoldi*</i>	<i>Alberto Spagnoli*</i>
<i>Djien Liem</i>	<i>Anne Theobald*</i>
<i>Ilias Papatryfon*</i>	<i>Bernhard Url</i>
<i>Olivier Ramsayer*</i>	<i>Didier Verloo*</i>

GUEST SPEAKERS

Food Standards Agency UK	<i>Alisdair Wotherspoon*</i>
Scientific Committee	<i>Tony Hardy*</i>

(*=by telephone)

1 WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE MEETING

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle opened the meeting and passed the floor to Dionysis Mavronikolas, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health. Mr Mavronikolas welcomed the Advisory Forum to Paphos, outlining Cyprus' activities in the area of food safety. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle thanked the Permanent Secretary for his opening speech and appreciated the good cooperative working arrangement between EFSA and Cyprus and looked forward to continued positive cooperation.

Apologies were noted from Austria, Romania, Turkey and the European Commission.

2 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The UK, Spain, Ireland, and Cyprus raised matters to be included under Agenda Item 4 and the Agenda was adopted.

3 STRATEGIC DISCUSSION ON EFSA'S WORK WITH MEMBER STATES

3.1 Update on EFSA's Multi-Annual Plan 2014-2016

Alberto Spagnoli presented an overview of progress on developing EFSA's multi-annual plan, indicating that the plan will span the years of 2014-2016 and will take into consideration the various strategies, the medium term plan agreed with the European Commission and also recommendations from the outcome of the external evaluation.

Sweden welcomed the work done and noted that the workload across the different domains seemed to be managed in different ways, such as Pesticides which relied on assessments from MS rather than panels, posing the question of whether it is

possible to put a price on each type of evaluation. Denmark raised the question of whether Industry should contribute to the cost of evaluations as happens in other non-food areas. Belgium suggested that the strategic priorities be used to influence research needs and Germany welcomed the development of Quality Management as a means of assisting transparency.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle noted the comments on research and raised the possibility of identifying specific funds for research projects and taking advantage of the Horizon 2020 developments to ensure food safety was adequately covered. Catherine also stated that a draft of the plan will be completed early in 2013 with further consultation with the AF in March 2013 before it is submitted to the Management Board.

Action 1: Draft Multi-Annual Plan to be circulated to AF members ahead of March meeting for consideration and comment

3.2 Framework Contracts (FWC)

Ilias Papathyfon presented details of the multi-annual framework contracts programme including an overview of calls proposed for launch in 2013 and proposal for an internal task force to identify new areas for FWC and monitor their implementation. Ilias in particular emphasised the role that AF members and Focal Points could play in disseminating information on the contracts to improve the uptake.

Spain indicated the difficulty in promoting the FWC due to a lack of information on how they are designed to work and the process involved. Hungary raised the question of who the partner institutions would be and noted that 4 years is a long time in the life of an organisation to be involved in a contract. Finland expressed concern that the money for grants goes to private and not public institutions.

Ilias Papathyfon advised that the calls were open calls and available to all economic operators and not only Article 36 institutions. On the duration of the contract, Ilias noted that although a FWC may have a 4 year span, it does not imply that an institution participates in all specific calls under the contract and provided further information on the task force indicating that the aim is to map areas of preparatory work to support the work of the panels by identifying areas for launch of FWC.

Germany stated that collaboration with the MS should be increased and as the needs are different in each country, details from the Focal Points should be sought on what is required and duplication at EFSA and MS level should be avoided. Hubert Deluyker stated that it is necessary to take stock of the experience of how the Focal Points are working and this could be included in the review being carried out in 2013.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle noted that there was a need for further discussion on some of the issue raised in relation to a review of Scientific Cooperation between EFSA and the MS and the activities of the Focal Points. In relation to the FWC, Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle encouraged the AF members to disseminate information on FWC in a targeted manner.

Action 2: AF and Focal Points to disseminate information on Framework Contracts

3.3 Self Review of Scientific Networks

Jeffrey Moon and Saadia Noorani presented the work to date on the internal review of the scientific networks which centred on the use of a questionnaire for the network members and Advisory Forum members on experience participating in and nominating members to EFSA's networks respectively.

Sweden welcomed the survey and supported the proposals presented, noting that the involvement of experts and commitment to the networks from the different national organisations, which represent the Member State at the network meetings, was very positive. Sweden suggested that experts should be provided with a brief summary of what is to be expected of them when participating in a network. Germany supported this proposal and raised the issue of the difficulty in ensuring the right people were in the right place. Germany also suggested that a short 'executive summary' of activities of the networks, rather than reports and minutes, be provided to the Advisory Forum members.

Spain welcomed the findings of the survey which were consistent with the views from the national representatives. Spain noted that as it is the Member State being represented at the network meetings, support needed to be provided at national level for the experts attending the meetings and proposed that the Focal Points could have a role in this. Norway supported the view of Spain and emphasised the need for feedback from the attending experts. Belgium welcomed the presentation and felt that the experts were not clear on their role in the networks and did not always share information and report back at national level. Belgium stated the need for networking at national level.

Cyprus expressed concern on the difficulty of attending network meetings with a limited number of experts which did not cover all areas emphasising the need for ensuring the information from network meetings is well disseminated in small countries. The Netherlands noted that representation was a scientific representation and not a political representation. Italy also noted the difficulty of receiving feedback at national level from experts and the need for clarification on whether it was expert or MS being represented at meetings. Sweden suggested the possibility of other forms of meetings other than physical meetings, particular for well established networks where there was familiarity of both the work of the networks and members.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle suggested that network updates from scientific units can be provided to AF members at the same time as the Panel, and indicated that a draft report would be circulated to members for comment early in the new year, noting that the outcome showed that networks were adding value to the risk assessment process and were useful tools for cooperation and sharing information.

Action 3: Draft report on self review of networks to be circulated to AF members early in 2013 for comment

3.4 Harmonisation of Risk Assessment Approaches and Methodologies

Djien Liem presented an overview and update of the work programme of the Scientific Committee, including endocrine disruptors, guidance review, uncertainty in risk assessment and environmental risk assessment.

In relation to endocrine disruptors, the UK expressed concern that it seemed to be an unreasonable request from the Commission with such a short deadline. Denmark expressed similar concern and questioned how much discussion there was between the Commission's different Directorate General offices, noting that different criteria for environment and food should be avoided. Sweden also remarked on the different questions being put forward in the different fields of work and how the risk analysis process differed for the chemical inspectorate. Germany also noted that there was no harmonisation between regulations for the different domains.

Djien Liem advised that the composition of the working group was not finalised and that observers from relevant EU and International organisations would take part.

On the review of guidance documents, Germany expressed some concern on the impact of the work on national agencies and in order to avoid any duplication advocated linking the work of the Scientific Committee to what is happening in the MS. Djien Liem stated that the outcome of the SC work would not be new guidance, but priority setting for guidance development. Hubert Deluyker proposed that further thought should be given to the strategic role that the Advisory Forum could play in linking the work of the SC to MS activities.

Belgium proposed that an evaluation of the implementation of guidance, such as that for botanicals, at national level would be useful. Djien Liem agreed with this proposal.

3.5 Scientific Conference

Tony Hardy, chair of the Scientific Committee, presented an overview of the Scientific Conference that was held in Parma on 7th-8th November, highlighting the main areas of discussion.

Sweden, Italy, Norway and the UK commented on ‘fit for purpose’ risk assessment and the importance of framing questions to ensure that the outcome is of benefit to the risk managers.

3.6 Institutional Conference

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle provided a summary of the joint conference held in conjunction with DG SANCO in Parma on 13 November.

3.7 Chemical Mixtures

Tobin Robinson presented an update on EFSA’s work relating to chemical mixtures, detailing in particular activities relating to Pesticides, the WHO framework and involvement in the Multi-Agency Ad Hoc Working Group.

3.8 Systematic Review

Didier Verloo (by telephone) detailed the systematic approach being adopted by EFSA and explained the virtual library project.

3.9 Strategic Discussion Topics 2013

Jeffrey Moon presented the proposed strategic topics, based on suggestions from members, to be discussed at the Advisory Forum meeting in 2013.

The topics were agreed.

4 OTHER MATTERS RAISED BY EFSA AND THE MEMBER STATES

4.1 Feedback on the meeting with Member States on BPA

Anne Theobald and Anna F. Castoldi (both via telephone) presented a summary of meeting with Member State experts on BPA held in Parma on 29-30 October 2012.

The Netherlands noted the divergence in the risk assessment being taken by ANSES and EFSA in comparison with the more standard approach likely to be taken by EFSA and posed a question to France on the differences in the approach was being taken. Sweden stated that if the EFSA and ANSES approaches differed, there is a role for the AF to try to resolve the differences before the opinions were adopted. France welcomed the opportunity to be part of the discussions at the MS meeting in Parma and indicated that their risk assessment was not yet complete, but outlined the approach being taken, which was taking into account all routes of exposure (food, environment, indoor air, work place etc.) of population in France. France also noted that even if ANSES’s assessment was not finalised, teams from both agencies have had regular contacts on the methodologies and that the following week in Paris an event on endocrine disruptors would be a good opportunity to move forward with discussions. The

opportunity to include a representative of the US NTP in the discussions was also proposed by France.

Anna F. Casoldi explained the involvement of an ANSES staff expert in the EFSA working group on BPA toxicology and outlined the ongoing liaison between EFSA and ANSES.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle noted the need to cooperate at an early stage to avoid publication of diverging opinions and made a plea for cooperation with all MS in this area and the need for engaging in scientific discussion to avoid leaving contradictory advice to risk management. The UK supported this view stating the onus was on risk assessors using a non-standard approach to discuss with EFSA the reasons for taking such an approach and noting that EFSA's advice on low level effects was clear. Norway agreed with the UK.

Denmark and Finland commented on the use of a precautionary principle both at risk assessment and risk management level and advocated further discussion on this point.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle suggested that the AF come back to this topic and that experts on BPA from ANSES and EFSA meet to discuss the methodology and approach being taken by France.

Action 4: Meeting to be arranged with experts from EFSA and France to discuss before the adoption of the two opinions the methodological approaches on BPA risk assessment.

Action 5: France to share web link to information on meeting relating to endocrine disruptors.

4.2 Future of Grants

Stef Bronzwaer introduced the topic of the future of grants, giving feedback from discussions held with the Focal Points. Olivier Ramsayer (by telephone) presented details of financial possibilities under the current financial regulations and Alisdair Wotherspoon of the UK Food Standards Agency (by telephone) shared experience from the SafefoodERA, highlighting potential problems with administering grants.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle noted that the discussions would be useful as a basis for future work in the area of Scientific Cooperation, due to be discussed at the June 2013 meeting.

The Netherlands welcomed the possibility of EFSA providing direct grants for research to be done by the MS with the possibility of longer timeframes.

Belgium noted that there may be some difficulties faced by smaller organisations preventing them from participating in the grant schemes. Ireland noted difficulties in administration of the grants. Cyprus stated there needed to be a means to allow smaller countries as well as large countries to participate in grants schemes. The Netherlands agreed and welcomed clarification on what a new grants structure would involve and how it would differ from that of DG Research.

Hubert Deluyker suggested that as a number of research projects have been proposed for prioritisation and submitted to DG Research ahead of Horizon 2020, it may be possible to identify some for direct funding under the grants scheme and this could be discussed further in preparation for the meeting in March 2013.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle concluded that there would be detailed discussions on research at the next AF meeting in March, with a move towards a medium term approach with larger projects taking note of the need to plan on a multi-annual basis allowing small organisations to participate.

Action 6: AF members to consider research topics identified for prioritisation for Horizon 2020 as part of discussions planned for March 2013

4.3 Other matters raised by EFSA and Member States

4.3.1 Transparency in Risk Management.

Following discussions at the Heads of Agency meeting on 4 December, the UK presented a paper that was discussed at that meeting on transparency in risk management, calling for more transparency in how decisions are being made and its relationship to transparency in risk assessment.

Germany, the UK, Belgium, Spain noted how the process during crises situation was different from that at other times. Sweden shared experience of how this is done at national level. Germany noted discussions held at national level on the precautionary principle and how there is a missing link of the perception of the consumer between risk assessment and risk management, suggesting that this could be an area where further research would be beneficial.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle welcomed that the AF was informed about the draft paper from the Heads of Agency meeting and expressed a need for continuing the initiative for risk assessment to express uncertainties in a way that is useful to risk managers. The UK was asked to provide further updates on the paper in the future.

Action 7: UK to keep AF members informed on further work of Heads of Agencies on Transparency in Risk Management.

4.3.2 Transparency in Food Additive Risk Assessment

Spain presented details of assessment on food additives, raising concern on the difficulty that applicants have in getting feedback on assessments.

Davide Arcella (by telephone) provided additional information on the application process and the progress towards making all data associated with the Food Additives Intake Model (FAIM) available.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle concluded confirming that the relevant data would be available by the end of 2013 and in the meantime any difficulties on specific assessments would be dealt with on a bilateral basis.

4.3.3 Whole Genome Analysis

Ireland proposed that the Advisory Forum discuss the topic of whole genome analysis and the needs for establishing data on microorganism identification which can be shared. Denmark and The Netherlands supported the proposal advocating the establishment of a shared access database.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle suggested this topic could be considered as part of the discussions on identifying research needs in preparation for the AF meeting in March.

4.3.4 Food Composition Tables

Cyprus shared information on the recently completed publication on food composition tables, which will have an English translation available from the end of 2012.

5 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Netherlands proposed that there should be more involvement of the MS in preparing the discussion topics for AF meetings and suggested Host countries take a more active role. Italy, Sweden and Denmark supported the proposal, with Denmark suggesting shorter presentations with more time allocated to discussions on complex issues. France suggested that sharing of priorities/hot topics in the Member states in order to gain visibility and assist in collaboration on sharing data and workload.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle welcomed the suggestions and agreed to consider the proposals in preparing the agenda for the March 2013 meeting to be held in Ireland. Catherine also proposed that the matter be given further consideration in the context of discussions on Scientific Cooperation which were planned for the June 2013 meeting of the Advisory Forum.

Action 8: AF members to propose topics for inclusion on future AF meeting Agenda for detailed discussions.

CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle thanked the Cypriot AF member for hosting the meeting in Paphos, the AF members and observers for their active contributions. Catherine also thanked the AF Secretariat and EFSA staff who contributed from Parma for their support.