

48th AFCWG Meeting Report

Parma, Italy 5-6 November 2015

Participation

Apologies:

Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Ireland, Portugal and Slovenia.

New participants (replacements):

Jean-Sebastien Walhin - *Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain, Belgium*

Torsten Herold - *Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, Germany*

Elena Seite - *ANSES, France*

Anna Carlbom Hard - *National Food Agency Sweden*

External Speakers:

Leif Busk – *Advisory Forum member Scientific & Expert at National Food Administration, Sweden*

Claudio Mantovani - *Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale delle Venezie*

EFSA participants:

Stef Bronzwaer – AFSCO Head of Unit

Sergio Potier Rodeia – AFSCO, Focal points

Jeff Moon – AFSCO, Advisory Forum

Jose Tarazona - Glyphosate

Tilemachos Goumperis- Edible insects

Jan Op Gen Oorth – Media relations team leader

James Ramsay – ExRel Head of Unit

Simon Terry – EFSA risk communication team

Johanna Nemess – Publications

Overview

The meeting began just following an intense 1 ½ Crisis Simulation Exercise. During the exercise the Incident/Crisis Communications Guidelines were discussed and tested for gaps and relevant content. Evaluation forms for feedback were provided and comments should be sent to Shira/Tilemachos by 20 November. Feedback will be incorporated into the document and a final version will be shared early 2016.

Stef Bronzwaer, Head of the AFSCO Unit, welcomed the group the AFSCO Unit, commenting on the synergies with the Focal Points and Advisory Forum groups, that are also hosted in the unit. She welcomed members to the meeting and mentioned there would be a photograph made of the group (see below, available upon request). Shira proposed trying to take a photograph at each meeting to capture the various participants attending and locations. She described the objectives of the 48th meeting of the group, which were mainly:

- ❖ Familiarize the AFCWG with the AFSCO (Advisory Forum Scientific Cooperation) Unit, led by Stef Bronzwaer. The AFCWG is still under the Comms Department, but is now part of the AFSCO Unit.
- ❖ Explore ways for the AFCWG to have a closer alignment with the AF.
- ❖ Improve preparedness and understanding of scientific topics – introduction of a new formula: Science Meets Comms Master classes
- ❖ Review 2015 activities and discuss focus and activities for 2016

Science Meets Comms

Glyphosate

Jose Tarazona, the Pesticides Head of Unit, gave an overview of Glyphosate to explain what it is and why it is currently a controversial issue. He explained that Germany was assigned to be the rapporteur to assess the safety of Glyphosate and EFSA was performing a peer review of the assessment which had not yet been published. Another issue with Glyphosate is that the IARC (part of the WHO) had recently performed a risk assessment on the topic which seemed in contrast to the BfR's findings.

James Ramsay, the Head of Unit of ExRel gave an overview of the media coverage and EFSA's approach to the issue, which was mainly focused on targeted audiences.

Edible Insects

Tilemachos Goumperis presented his experience communicating with the media on EFSA's recent opinion regarding Edible Insects. He reflected on the challenges of staying on the message and explaining the focus of the opinion in a clear way. Jan op Gen Oorth shared the media coverage that resulted from the interviews and reflected the interest in this topic.

Intro to AFSCO and Closer Alignment with the AF

Leif Busk, the Advisory Forum member from Sweden, joined the meeting to lead a discussion on strengthening the alignment between the AF and the AFCWG. The members were asked in advance to discuss ideas with their AF counterparts as well as present their own ideas during a tour de table. A summary of the comments made during this open discussion is:

- The majority of the AFCWG members believe that **bringing the groups together more often** would facilitate the cooperation. The AF and AFCWG meetings could be organized at the same place at same moment, and/or training or exercises could be organized with both groups.
- Many members stressed the importance of cooperation/communication between the AF and AFCWG members at a **national** level.
- It is **important to identify the needs of the AF in** order to come up with a list of tasks or direction for the AFCWG, and therefore have a clearer mandate.

Action points/timeline to achieve closer alignment

- Give feedback of the discussion at the AF meeting in December (Leif Busk, with support from Shira);
- Draft a concept paper of recommendations for discussion in June in NL (Shira/Leif);
- Have a joint session with the AF/CWG in June, NL (perhaps a smaller working group) to refine the concept paper;
- Final plan of action for closer alignment agreed by the AF/CWG by the end of 2016 (validated in December AF meeting).

EFSA COMMS Update

Simon Terry gave an overview of upcoming communications activities. He also focused on the communications approach for EFSA's 2nd Scientific Conference which was held in Milan 14-16 October. Highlights were the success of using social media, especially tweets during the conference, and the use of live Webstreaming during the conference. His presentation can be found [here](#).

Key Country Issues

Thank you to everyone who contributed to these issues with their presentations. These were of great interest. Please let us know if there are any follow-up activities that should be presented on these topics at an upcoming meeting, or keep us informed through Yammer.

DR. CLAUDIO MANTOVANI– ITALY

- Risks related to bivalve shellfish consumption: application of participatory strategies for risk communication

KATARZYNA FLORYANOWICZ– POLAND

- Communicating on African Swine flu in Poland

ANNETTE LIJDSMAN – NETHERLANDS

- Experiences of the NVWA: Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority with the use of social media during a crisis (i.c. the bird flu-crisis in the Netherlands)

ANNA CARLBROM HARD – SWEDEN

- Results published about inorganic arsenic in rice and rice products. New advice to consumers

Please note: Spain and Germany sent Key country issues which were not presented, however you can find them on the DMS [here](#):

2015 Review and 2016 Priorities

Shira presented an overview of the Workprogramme 2015 and a status of achievements so far. Many activities have been finalized successfully, including the second edition of the Risk Communications Guidelines, a draft of the Crisis Communications Guidelines, the finalisation of the glossary which has been shared for translation, and successful exchange programs between Norway and EFSA.

For 2016 the new objectives were defined as:

- Deepen alignment with AF to better serve their needs and objectives;
- Identify and collaborate on key EU food safety priorities;
- Develop an approach to communicating about diverging views and opinions including improved preparedness to align/harmonize communications activities and messaging;
- Continue to build on project approach to best leverage expertise and resources.

Projects for 2016 were identified as:

- Launch of EU Insights – Survey on Risk Perception with EU- wide comms plan (topic to be selected by AF in December), survey launched early 2016, comms plan developed by mid-2016;
- Finalise plan for Closer Alignment with Advisory Forum by end of year/discussion in June in NL;
- Develop plan for improved Preparation for Diverging Opinions and Views – work with external consultant for recommendations and mechanism to improve – develop protocol for improved approach by end of 2016;
- Finalize and disseminate Crisis/Incident Communications Guidelines by early 2016;
- Third edition Risk Communications Guidelines including new case studies and Chapter on Communicating Uncertainty by Q3 2016;

- EFSA to coordinate Teleconferences as needed on 'hot topics' –especially regarding media inquiries and alignment/sharing LTT's
- Start-Up phase of Global Platform of Food Risk Communications Network.

EU Insights Brainstorm

The AFCWG members were divided into 3 groups to brainstorm on the potential topic of most interest to perform an EU-wide risk perception survey and build an accompanying communications plan. The members had been asked prior to the meeting to gather input as well from their AF counterparts. The results of the brainstorm provided good ideas and some common issues were identified. The next steps are for the AF to make the final selection of the topic. The survey will be executed in early 2016.

The main outcomes of the 'EU Insights' brainstorm were:

Group 1 – **Pesticides**, **AMR** and **Food Supplements**

Group 2 – Risk vs Hazards – what is the difference?, Heavy metals in Food, **Pesticides** with GMO's, **AMR**, Novel Foods

Group 3 – How Consumers make informed choices (on dietary advice, food hygiene, etc), **Pesticides**, **Food Supplements**, Endocrine Disruptors

AMR, **Pesticides**, and **Food Supplements** were the top topics identified in either 3 or 2 groups. Another topic of interest was understanding consumers and their understanding of food safety – and how they make choices. We could consider addressing these issues in a future EU Insights as the results could be helpful for communications to understand the right channels to use and type of messaging.

The AF will be presented with the identified topics and should come with a final selection in December.

Any other Business

- Johanna Nemess presented on how to approach the translation of the second edition of the risk comms guidelines, for further information please contact her at Johanna.Nemess@efsa.europa.eu

- Longer meetings in 2016 (Start before lunch?) – Shira asked about the possibility of starting in the morning on the first day, and continuing until lunch on the second day to allow more time for presentations and valuable discussion time. The members agreed with this approach as most people arrive the night prior to the meeting. From now on meetings will start on Day One in the morning rather than at lunch time.

- Nomination of new members by the AF - there was an agreement that from now on the national AF member would nominate new AFCWG members if the need arises. For current members this is not necessary. Members could nominate alternates themselves and ask for permission for other substitutes to attend AFCWG meetings on a case-by-case basis. Shira and Jeff will review the policy and share with AFCWG/AF members for implementation.

- Global Roundtable next steps – Shira gave an overview of the recent Global Roundtable to explore the need for an international platform for food risk communicators. Please find the report of the meeting [here](#). Next steps are to meet with a small working group to define the ‘terms of references’ and activities of such a network.
- Feedback of Astrid Bjerkas’ Guest Scientist stay at EFSA – in the absence of Astrid Bjerkas, Astrid Tvedt gave a short overview of the success of this exchange and encouraged others to leverage the expert exchange program.
- We will compile the hash tags used by your organisation on twitter and other relevant social media channels. This will be shared with recommendations on the DMS.
- Shira to note that she will collect feedback on the Crisis Comms Guidelines; to be sent to her by 20/11 –most of you have sent or given valuable feedback during the training. The guidelines will be shared with you early 2016.

Next Meetings 2016:

- 1-2 March, Paris, FR
- 7-8 June, Utrecht, NL
- 4-5 October, Bratislava, Slovakia

Action Table

Action	Who	Timeline
Share the overview of the hashtags and other social media channels with members to follow and retweet	EFSA	December 2015
Nomination of new AFCWG members by AF	EFSA – Shira and Jeff to discuss best protocol, consistent with FP	January 2016
Send the Word version of the Risk comms guidelines to be translated	Johanna Nemess	December 2015
Share EFSA’s communications calendar of upcoming activities in coming 3 months with AFCWG members; EFSA to create a calendar where MS can also include relevant activities	EFSA	January 2016
Give comments and feedback on the Crisis/Incident Guidelines; EFSA to finalise	AFCWG Members/EFSA	End of November Finalised early 2016

Draft work programme of the 2016 and share with members for feedback	Shira	January 2016
Share topic selected for the EU Insights Survey with AFCWG members and launch survey	Shira	December 2015
Draft action plan for closer alignment with the AF	Leif to feedback to AF at December meeting Shira/Leif draft plan Discussions and meeting with AF at June meeting in NL Final plan Q4 2016	2016

[ALWAYS ADD THIS TABLE AT THE END OF A DOCUMENT]

Document history	
Document reference	Version
Prepared by	Name
Reviewed by	Name
Last date modified	Date