

ConnexMe App

During the event participants could submit comments through the ConnexMe App and vote on each other's comments. The comment that received the most 'likes' was: *How about a Joint Programming Initiative in the area of food safety? JPIs have led to alignment of national research agendas in other areas and the MS work together to co-fund the research priorities.* At closure participants were asked to indicate one keyword of the day that was displayed on screen in real-time.



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KEY OUTCOMES

Stimulating new partnerships in food safety risk assessment research and strong case for public funding

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¹ http://ec.europa.eu/research/bioeconomy/pdf/food2030_conference_background.pdf
² http://ec.europa.eu/research/evaluations/pdf/archive/other_reports_studies_and_documents/hlg_2017_report.pdf
³ https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/tallinn_call_for_action_2017.pdf
⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/news/final-paper-strategic-approach-eu-agricultural-research-and-innovation>
⁵ <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.2903/sp.efsa.2016.EN-1007/epdf>
⁶ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/180207>
⁷ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press/news/180206>
⁸ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/corporate/pub/180207eu-ansa>
⁹ <https://conference.efsa.europa.eu/>

Background

In an environment of limited resources, EFSA convened the first Risk Assessment Research Assembly (RARA) to:

- build and support the case for future public funding of research in food safety;
- inform research agenda setting to ensure impact of food safety research;
- provide a platform for networking, facilitating new partnerships

This event fits wider strategic discussions on future research, including the [FOOD2030](#)¹ initiative, the “[Lamy report](#)”², the [Tallinn call for Action 2017](#)³ and the [Strategic Approach to EU agricultural research and innovation](#)⁴. These highlight the need for alignment of EU/National R&I investments and call for future research to be mission-oriented and impact-focussed to address global challenges. They call on the responsibility of policy makers, researchers, businesses and others in ensuring that research is a real priority in EU policy making and in increasing trust in research.

As part of EFSA's strategy on cooperation a major [Delphi exercise](#)⁵ had been undertaken to identify common food safety priorities. This led to the development of the EU Risk Assessment Agenda as a tool to address these priorities through joint projects, resourced through EFSA's programmes, and EU, regional and/or national funding programmes. This instrument showed great potential to help maximise the impact of research efforts, allow consortium formation and promote synergies.

Event

The Assembly was a dynamic and interactive event that attracted 200 participants from 40 countries (including funders and policy makers at the EU and National level, members of EFSA Advisory Forum, Focal Points and Scientific Committee, and research organisations and networks), many of whom participated for the first time in an EFSA event. The programme consisted of:

- “scene setting” keynote presentations from EFSA, European Commission and national food authority representatives;
- expert panel discussions on both strategic and operational elements of future programming; and
- an “ideas forum” where researchers “pitched”, directly and/or via posters, nearly 50 ideas for future research.

Detailed material relating to the RARA event, including an e-inventory of research ideas, presentations, posters, abstracts, speaker and panellist biographies are shared on [EFSA's website](#)⁶.

Key Outcomes

- **Coordination:** EFSA was acknowledged as a knowledge broker and was called upon to coordinate future efforts, building on its already established and large network of research organisations spanning the entire food chain.
- **Cohesion:** The need for more (and improved) future alignment of research programming and the mechanisms to facilitate this e.g. through development of a Joint Programme Initiative and/or European Joint Programme in the area of food safety. Additionally, other modalities need to be explored to facilitate the delivery of outcomes on shorter timescales.
- **Cooperation:** EFSA and its Advisory Forum declared their shared [commitment](#)⁷ to supporting the European Research Area (ERA), e.g. through
 - ▶ Stimulating new partnerships in food safety risk assessment
 - ▶ Formation of research consortia through the network of EFSA Focal Points
 - ▶ Being active partners in international cooperation
 - ▶ Training and enabling the mobility of researchers
 - ▶ Contributing to Open Data portals
- **Impact:** Future programming, particularly at EU level, need to demonstrate impact, and is likely to be framed within the context of the ‘*Sustainable Development*

Goals” with a clear view that food safety research will continue to be a vital element requiring that priorities and impacts need to be articulated in this context.

- **Networking:** EFSA and partners already work together through many active EU-wide platforms that can make a difference – large potential for synergies and enhanced impact.
- **Research:** Policy decisions need to be underpinned by robust science. EU agencies add value in the research knowledge cycle, through identification of research needs, advocacy, assessment of proposals and engagement with on-going projects, as outlined in recently published [paper](#)⁸ of the EU–ANSA agencies.
- **Synergies:** There is good mutual benefit for structured dialogue between funders, EU Agencies and the research community: enabling best use of expertise; keeping research agendas informed about knowledge gaps; ensuring wide geographical balance; and sustaining impactful research that feeds policy decision-making.
- **Funding:** a strong message on the need for increased public funding of food safety research to underpin risk assessments and identify emerging risks. Food safety is a public good that needs public investment.
- **Innovation** – from outputs to outcomes. Investment is needed in food safety research and innovation to stimulate the shift from re-activeness to pro-activeness.
- **Exploitation:** A strong call came out to have wider access to findings of on-going, and outcomes of concluded, food safety research projects to make sure these are effectively exploited.
- **Communication:** the ideas forum break-out sessions of RARA proved to fill a need for researchers to network and to meet policy makers to develop emerging ideas towards impactful proposals – a call for future similar and regular “brokerage” type events was made to continue the dialogue amongst funders, regulatory agencies and scientists. A next occasion will be the [EFSA conference 2018](#)⁹ – Science, Food, Society on 18-21 September in Parma (IT).