



European Food Safety Authority

Draft Minutes

FOURTH MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM

AGENCIA ESPAÑOLA DE SEGURIDAD ALIMENTARIA (AES), MADRID

10 SEPTEMBER 2003

Members of the Advisory Forum

Chair: Geoffrey Podger, Executive Director, EFSA

Austria	Roland Grossgut	Italy	Paolo Aureli
Belgium	Charles Crémer	Luxembourg	Patrick Hau
Denmark	Hans Peter Jensen	Netherlands	Willem De Wit
Finland	Jorma Hirn	Portugal	Isabel Maria Meirelles Teixeira
	Tuula Honkanen-Buzalski	Spain	Maria Purificación Neira González
France	Martin Hirsch		Pilar Farjas
Germany	Andreas Hensel		José Arranz-Recio
Greece	Christina Papanikolaou	Sweden	Leif Busk
Ireland	Alan Reilly	UK	Andrew Wadge

Observers and Invitees of the Executive Director

Czech Republic	Zuzankova Klara	Iceland	Elin Gudmundsdóttir
Hungary	Maria Szeitzne Szabo	Norway	Sissel Lyberg Beckmann
Poland	Krzysztof Pajaczek	EU Commission	Jeannie Vergnettes

Staff of the European Food Safety Authority

Christine Majewski	Anja Van Impe
Pilar Rodríguez Iglesias	Katty Verhelst

- 1. Welcome by the Spanish Authorities to the meeting in Madrid and an introduction to the AESA**
- 1.1 Maria Purificación Neira González, as Executive Director of the Agencia Española de Seguridad Alimentaria (AES), welcomed the Advisory Forum members and observers to Madrid and to the agency.

AF 04.11.2003 – 2

Draft Minutes 10 Sept 2003

- 1.2 Mrs Neira presented the development of AESA, and its mission, principles, objectives and structure. She informed the meeting that information about AESA can be found at www.msc.es/aesa.
- 1.3 Ana María Pastor Julián, the Spanish Minister of Health and Consumer Protection, briefly addressed the Forum. She stressed that the common goals of the Authority and the national authorities are: the protection of citizens, the reduction of food safety risk and working on such health matters with a high level of transparency to ensure that accurate timely information is given to consumers.
- 1.4 The Chair, Geoffrey Podger, thanked the Minister for her visit and congratulated her on behalf of the Forum for the establishment of AESA.

2. Introduction by Geoffrey Podger and the adoption of the agenda (Doc 10.09.2003 – 1)

- 2.1 The Chair expressed his thanks on behalf of all the participants for the Spanish Agency's hospitality including the dinner and the organisation of the meeting. The Chair then welcomed the members and new entry States.
- 2.2 The agenda was approved, subject to the addition of certain points at the request of Spain, France and the Authority.

3. Minutes of the meeting 4 July in Berlin and matters arising – (Doc 10.09.2003 – 2)

- 3.1 The minutes of the last Advisory Forum meeting were approved, subject to changes made by the UK and the European Commission. The document would be published on the Authority's website.
- 3.2 Following a question from Belgium regarding representation, the Chair informed the members that representation should be kept in line with the rules in Regulation 178/2002/EC. Only in exceptional cases, if neither the member nor the alternate could be present at the meeting, could another individual represent the Member State and only at the invitation of the Chair.
- 3.3 Ireland raised a question on the identification of European consumer opinion through survey work undertaken by national authorities and/or the Authority. The Chair informed the meeting that excellent work had been undertaken in Ireland. The members were requested to send to the Authority any other studies done on consumer opinions and surveys in order for the Authority to bring these together for a further discussion.

4. Update by Geoffrey Podger on progress in setting up the EFSA

The Chair updated the members of the Advisory Forum on the following topics:

- 4.1 The Authority is moving premises in early October to rue de Genève 10, 1140 Brussels. The Authority would ensure that the new contact details be distributed to the members in due time.
- 4.2 The members were updated on two senior appointments at the Authority. (1) Herman Koëter, Deputy Executive Director and Head of the Science. Mr Koëter

Draft Minutes 10 Sept 2003

will participate in future Advisory Forum meetings. (2) Anne-Laure Gassin, Director of Communications. Ms Gassin intends to visit some of the national agencies in order to meet her counterparts. Members were requested to inform the Authority if they would be willing to receive a visit.

- 4.3 The Chair informed the meeting that the Authority was rapidly increasing its staff base from 20 people earlier in the year to over 50 by the end. Given budgetary availability the number of staff should rise to over 100 in the course of 2004. The Chair expressed his thanks to those members who had agreed to second their staff as national experts to EFSA. The aim as to have personnel from as wide as possible geographical distribution.
- 4.4 The Chair informed the meeting that although some information concerning questions from the Commission for scientific opinions had been received this was still not detailed and therefore the Authority was still not able to predict accurately the nature and volume of its workload through 2004 and beyond. The Chair informed the members that the work programme for 2004 had to be presented to the Management Board at its December meeting. In the meantime, the work programme for 2003 was on the Authority's website and included a guideline for the completion of the work of the 8 Scientific Panels and Committee.
- 4.5 The Authority was recruiting staff members with a range of scientific skills while still leaving enough flexibility in case of changes in workload and focus.

5. Update on establishment of Working Groups (Doc AF 10.09.2003 3 and 4)

- 5.1 Christine Majewski introduced this agenda item based on documents 3 and 4, by explaining the terms of reference of (1) the working group on Communications which would consider communication and in particular risk communication on matters within the remit of the EFSA, and (2) the working group on IT which would consider the practical aspects of building IT links between EFSA and Member States' national agencies.
- 5.2 The Chair stressed that the working group on Communications should provide recommendations but would not be given a mandate to communicate in case of a food crisis. The Authority would remain responsible for core announcements. National agencies would remain responsible for their own communications but in line with the Regulation the co-ordination of risk communications between the Member States, Commission and EFSA would remain the goal.
- 5.3 The members agreed the Terms of Reference of both working groups, subject to a small amendment to those of the risk communications groups.

Draft Minutes 10 Sept 2003

6. Update on SEM (Semicarbazide). State of play and lessons learnt from the recent interest in this matter (Doc AF 10.09.2003 – 5)

- 6.1 The Chair introduced this agenda item by informing the members about the emerging issue of Semicarbazide and the way in which collaboration between the national authorities, the industry concerned, the Authority's staff and members of its Scientific Panel on Food Additives, Flavourings, Processing Aids, and Materials in Contact with Food (AFC panel) had enabled an overview of current data to be made and initial findings to be published. The Chair further explained that the matter was still under review and that the Authority was actively seeking further data and information in order to be in a position to provide more detailed advice to risk managers and stakeholders.
- 6.2 The results of studies on genotoxicity commissioned by EFSA would be shared with the Advisory Forum, as soon as they had been received from the scientific institute undertaken these for EFSA.

7. Update on Acrylamide

- 7.1 Both the UK and the Netherlands informed the Forum that research was being undertaken, e.g. under the 6th Framework contract. The Forum agreed to distribute any information on this amongst the members.
- 7.2 The Chair informed the Forum that a meeting had been organised to bring together experts on research into acrylamide in November under the Authority's chairmanship.

8. Crisis Management Arrangements (Doc AF 10.09.2003 - 6)

- 8.1 Christine Majewski updated the Forum on the arrangements for crisis management, as presented in document 6.
- 8.2 The members agreed to the arrangements in document 6 and were requested to inform the Authority on any further measures they wish to see developed in the short term. The members also agreed that there remains a need for appropriate arrangements and tools to be put in place at European and national level in order to manage a crisis. The Crisis Management Plan that was being developed by the Commission was awaited eagerly by the members of the Forum.

9. Arrangements for the EFSA Colloque in Ostend, 23-25 October 2003 (Doc AF 10.09.2003 – 7)

- 9.1 The Chair informed the Forum that the Authority had organised a colloque from 23 to 25 October in Ostend, Belgium. The issues on the table would range from opening up the risk assessment process to discussions around other areas of particular concern to consumers and industry. The Chair informed the meeting that he intended to bring forward a set of proposals to the Management Board on 3 December based on the outcome of the Colloque. The intention would be to brief the Advisory Forum at its November meeting so that any comments could be taken forward to the Management Board.

Draft Minutes 10 Sept 2003

- 9.2 The meeting agreed that one of its members should participate and also brief the November meeting.

10. Further call for experts for membership of the Scientific Committee and Panels

- 10.1 The Chair updated the Forum members on a possible further call for experts for membership of the Scientific Panels. In line with Article 6 of the Decision concerning of the establishment and operations of the Scientific Committee and Panels, ¹the number of members of a Panel should be sufficient to fulfill its mandate but shall not exceed 21. Five of the 8 Panels did not have full membership. The Chairs of the Committee and Panels would be asked by the Executive Director to consider if new members were needed. Should there be a need for a further call for scientific experts, the Authority would use this opportunity to have a better balance in the Panels in terms of nationality and gender.
- 10.2 Should the Authority launch a further call, the Advisory Forum members would be requested to encourage national experts to come forward. The procedure would have the same steps as the previous call with similar involvement of the Forum members.

11. Update on the ideas for an Advisory Forum ‘Event’ in 2004 (Doc AF 10.09.2003 – 8)

- 11.1 Christine Majewski introduced this item by proposing to hold a first Advisory Forum ‘event’ towards the latter part of 2004. The main part of the meeting would be scientific and the theme and nature of this meeting would need to be agreed by the Forum’s members themselves. The intention would be to consult with the members of the Forum and also ask for input from the Chair and members of the Scientific Committee.
- 11.2 The Forum would take a prominent role in the event as one of its main objectives was to introduce the work of the Forum more widely. The Chair proposed that the members form a small task force to guide the planning for the event. Members were asked to put forward ideas for the ‘event’ indicating their interest in being part of the task force. Germany and Spain volunteered at the meeting.

12. Dates for meetings – 2004

- 12.1 The members agreed to have the Advisory Forum meeting in 2004 on the following dates :

13 February (hosted by Ireland)
6 April (hosted by Finland)

¹ Adopted by the EFSA Management Board 6 November 2002

1 June

28 September (hosted by Italy)

- 12.2 The Chair expressed his thanks to those countries who offered to host one of the future Forum meetings.
- 12.3 Following the request of some members, consideration would be given to holding future meetings on a Monday or a Friday.
- 12.4 The Authority would provide information on the location and any possible changes for the remaining meetings in 2003.

13. Update and exchange of views

- 13.1 Spain tabled a paper which they introduced on nutraceuticals, and opened a debate on these by questioning whether or not the necessary tools exist to conduct an evaluation, and stressed the need to assess the health risk of these products.
- 13.2 The concerns raised by Spain were shared by the Forum. The Commission informed the meeting that legislative proposals had been made by the Commission and negotiations were under way. A draft regulation on nutrition and health claims made in relation to foods was in the Council and the Parliament. In addition, a text that relates to the addition of substances to food and food fortification was being prepared by the Commission, and in the field of medicine and food; changes were underway for traditional herbal medicines.
- 13.3 The Chair thanked Spain for initiating the topic. While the discussion proved that the increased use of these products seemed to be an issue all over Europe, the members agreed that this could not be addressed overnight. Therefore, the Chair suggested that the following would be a way forward:
 - 1) all should contribute through the proper channels to the discussions of risk managers,
 - 2) members to exchange information on studies done at member state level and on individual products that were on the market, taking into account the commercial confidentiality,
 - 3) the Chair to report back to the Scientific Committee and to look into the possibility of having a synthesis of the existing data.
- 13.4 Norway informed the Forum that they had received 4 reports on the use of dietary supplements. Since these products were being evaluated, Norway said that it would appreciate contributions from members on the matter. The risk assessment phase was due to be completed in November and the results distributed to Forum members.
- 13.5 France raised its concern about the 190 dossiers in the area of products for animal

Draft Minutes 10 Sept 2003

- feed with temporary authorisation but which need a new assessment in accordance with Council Directive 87/153/EEC fixing guidelines for the assessment of additives in animal nutrition. Following France's suggestion to have the work done at Member State level, the Chair suggested that the outcome of the Standing Committee meeting in September would enable a view to be reached on the matter.
- 13.6 France brought the members' attention to the difficulties of collecting data and assessing risks in the area of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). No threshold exist and he stated that members may wish to consider the need for discussions on this at Community level. The Chair suggested that the results of the SCOOP Task on this should be considered first and these could then be taken into account when scientific advice was given by EFSA.
- 13.7 Spain advised the meeting of its work on total dietary studies. Since various members were about to initiate similar work, the Chair requested that members exchange information between themselves on this matter and work together in terms of definitions, terminology and methodology.
- 13.8 The Chair updated the Forum on the work of the BIOHAZ Panel which was looking at 2 BSE issues: (1) the UK would recommend to the Ministers that it would be acceptable on public health grounds to replace, in two stage, the Over Thirty Months rule, which had been in operation in the UK since 1996, with BSE testing of cattle older than 30 months, (2) it was envisaged that the BIOHAZ Panel would want to look at the results at European level of BSE in sheep for scrapie. Although BSE had never been found to be naturally occurring in sheep, there was a concern that scrapie might be masking BSE. Considering that the issue was sensitive in countries which use a lot of sheep meat, the Chair informed the meeting that this would be assessed in the Panel.
- 13.9. Germany informed the meeting about an unusual problem where Salmonella bacteria have been found in tea which could be given to children
- 14. Any other business**
- There was no other business.
- 15. Close of meeting**
- 15.1 The Chair closed the meeting by thanking the members for their positive and constructive approach, the interpreters, the EFSA team and especially the staff of the AESA for their hospitality and for having organised the meeting so successful