



European Food Safety Authority

Report of the Management Board Team Building Day - 17 June 2003

Participants - Members

- Angeliki Assimakopoulou
- Giorgio Calabrese
- Robert Coleman
- Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle
- Matthias Horst
- Deirdre Hutton
- João Pedro Machado
- Pirkko Raunemaa
- Bart Sangster
- Stuart Slorach
- Patrick Wall

EFSA Staff

- Antoine Cuvillier
- Helen Kinghan
- Christine Majewski
- Geoffrey Podger
- Katty Verhelst

Other participants:

Beate Gminder	European Commission	Guest speaker
Jaana Husu-Kallio	European Commission	Observer
Jamie Shea	NATO	Guest speaker

1. The Team Building Day held in November of 2002, provided an ideal informal occasion for those able to attend to get to know one another and form a common view about the Authority's scope and general direction. Following the success of this first meeting the Board decided to hold another informal Team Building Day on 17th June 2003, in order to consolidate the progress made in November and during the early part of 2003, and to focus on a key matter which could provide the basis for in-depth discussions. The theme chosen was:

The Role of EFSA if a Food Safety Crisis were to arise.

2. As before the indicators of success were:

- Each board member has been interacting with each other Board member
- Common view on deliverables in mainstream activities mentioned in the Regulation in relation to the topic considered

3. The Management Board was addressed by two speakers. Beate Gminder DG SANCO, the spokesperson for Commissioner Byrne opened the meeting focusing on her experience of food safety scares and Jamie Shea, NATO who closed the meeting with a colourful description of his significant experience in dealing with crisis situations particularly during the Kosovo war. Both presentations outlined the practical and political pressure placed upon an organisation during a crisis and in particular, the need for efficient media relations, in order to ensure that clear accurate messages are made available to the public without delay.

4. The Board formed two working groups to consider the following:

- i. The need to clarify who is responsible for what – in practice and legally,
- ii. What would in practice happen at EFSA if the Commission needed scientific and/or technical support in a crisis?
- iii. Consideration of likely key scenarios and types of problems that may arise – need to look at these to see what EFSA will do in a crisis,
- iv. What is the state of play on discussions on these matters in the Advisory Forum and with the Commission? Update on this and implications for EFSA,
- v. Who are the key players in a crisis and what are their roles?
- vi. What is it that EFSA has done or can do, that will improve the confidence of consumers, or at least, if a crisis arises, reduce the risk of unnecessary concern?
- vii. Risk communication – how does this work in a crisis? How can this be co-ordinated with the Commission, consumers, Member States, industry, other players e.g. EP, WHO, FAO, Third countries?
- viii. Consideration of the interaction with risk managers at EU and MS level,
- ix. Link points from the previous Team Building Day to this one.

Conclusions

5. The Board fully recognised the need for efficient and effective collaboration between EFSA, the Commission, Member States and key stakeholders if a food scare were to arise. It found that it would be important for the Commission to draw up in collaboration with EFSA, a workable Crisis Management Plan as required by the founding Regulation. Once agreed, it would be important for all concerned parties to stay

in their roles and carry out their responsibilities in order to avoid overlap and possible confusion.

6. The Board believed that it is important that the publication of information during a crisis is carefully co-ordinated so that a fully cohesive and accurate picture is given to the public. In order to do this, it was concluded that EFSA would need to ensure coordination of the information it provided and this could best be achieved by directing communication through a single point at EFSA.

7. The Board believed that as a crisis arises it is unlikely that individual members would have up-to-date information, but even so, the press or other interested parties may approach them. It was agreed that it would be important for members to refer questions to a suitable point in EFSA so that all information emanating from it could be co-ordinated by a single point. However, it would also be important for EFSA to supply contact information to members as part of its own internal crisis strategy so that members are able to refer queries to the appropriate person to handle enquiries should a crisis arise. The Board also felt that during a crisis members would need to be kept informed as matters developed.

8. In relation to information concerning the progress of discussions with the Commission, the Management Board would like to be kept informed about the development of the Crisis Management Plan from the Commission. Once this document is at an advanced stage, the Board may wish to consider participating in a simulation exercise between EFSA, the Commission and other interested parties in order to ensure that the plan is practical and appropriate.

9. The Board believed that it would be important for EFSA to participate as early as possible in discussions with the Commission when a potential crisis is emerging and, where relevant, other stakeholders and the Member States. Once a crisis had been identified, EFSA would need to participate as a matter of course in the Crisis Unit itself

10. The Board felt that EFSA should place some priority on developing effective working relationships with the key media on routine matters as well as in times of crisis. It believed that it is important that communication activities enable the relevant media to be familiar with EFSA, its role and responsibilities and methods of working during its routine work. The Board felt that this would enhance the effectiveness of communication if a crisis were to arise. Equally, EFSA needs to build similar relationships of trust with key stakeholders, notably consumers, and that the Colloque would help identify a strategy to go some way to achieving this.

11. The Board felt that during a crisis, the Member States, through the members of the Advisory Forum, would play an important role in identifying and communicating appropriate information to their own populations. It would be important to build close collaboration on communication activities with the Member States and develop a solid platform of trust between the national agencies and EFSA. At the same time EFSA would

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need to be conscious of the need not in any way to undermine the confidence that has been build so far by the new national food agencies.

Report Agreed at Brussels, on 16th September 2003

Dr Stuart Slorach
Chair