



European Food Safety Authority

Discussion Paper **EFSA ROAD MAP**

Introduction

The EFSA Work Programme for 2003 established the main direction that the Authority should take during 2003 in relation to the missions and tasks assigned to it under the provisions of the founding Regulation. Although the Work Programme provides a tool for building the annual framework for resource planning, budget allocation and its subsequent usage, it does not of itself create the overall strategic direction for the Authority. This paper presented by the Executive Director outlines to the Board the overall aspirational objectives of the Authority, which together with other management documents considered by the Board (Setting of Work Priorities, budget forecasts and Management Plans) should be considered as providing the platform for the Authority's annual and multi-annual work programmes.

OBJECTIVE 1

To establish EFSA as a source of high quality advice within and outside the EU.

1. Steps taken so far

Scientific Committee and Panels constituted end May 2003 and first EFSA opinion issued July 2003.

2. Steps to be taken

There is an ongoing need to develop the role of the Scientific Committee to take forward the science of risk assessment. EFSA needs to approach formally relevant international organizations where it can be directly represented and to discuss with the Commission EFSA support where the Commission represents the EU in international fora where risk assessment matters arise.

It is planned to complete this process by end 2003. EFSA is already establishing informal links with its counterparts in North America and already has links with the new entrant States and Norway through the Advisory Forum, which Switzerland will be invited to join. Maintenance of EFSA's international standing, once established, will clearly depend on its continued ability to provide high quality and timely advice.

OBJECTIVE 2

To establish strong and mutually valuable relationships with the Member States.

1. Steps taken so far

The Advisory Forum was established under the Executive Director's chairmanship in 2003 and has so far met on three subsequent occasions. It serves as a forum for coordinating the relevant activities of EFSA and the national authorities and to provide a network for exchange of information.

2. Steps to be taken

The Advisory Forum has already agreed to establish working groups on IT and risk communication. The objective of the former will be to strengthen the means of information exchange whilst the latter will have a particular role in improving coordination of information at the EU level.

Over time there is a need to develop a pattern of working which increases the help EFSA can provide to national authorities and vice versa.

OBJECTIVE 3

To operate as a model of transparency and openness.

1. Steps taken so far

The EFSA Management Board has web streamed all its meetings and EFSA already publishes documents as required by the Founding Regulation. In addition, the Management Board has already agreed proposals, which have been implemented, to place Management Board and Advisory Forum board papers on the web in advance of the relevant meetings. EFSA has arranged a series of press briefings on significant milestones in its development.

2. Steps to be taken

The October EFSA Colloque in Ostende will provide the basis for discussing with stakeholders further opening up of the risk assessment process. The emergent proposals will be put to the Board in December. The Scientific Committee is considering the same issue in parallel including the framing of the future scientific opinions.

The new Head of Communications for EFSA will be asked to prepare a communications strategy for EFSA with openness as a major feature. The new communications working group with national authorities will also have a key role

to play in ensuring the availability of EFSA's work in individual Member States. The revised EFSA website, which will be ready by end 2003, will again increase the transparency of EFSA's processes and findings.

OBJECTIVE 4

To provide a high level of service to EFSA stakeholders.

1. Steps taken so far

Introductory meetings have been held with BEUC for the consumers view and a wide variety of industry interests are being sought.

2. Steps to be taken

The Ostende Colloque will look not only at openness (see above) but further issues of stakeholder involvement in EFSA's work including risk communication. EFSA inevitably will not always provide advice which suits the interests of every stakeholder group but it is clear that EFSA can make generally welcome improvements to the previous arrangements by:-

- (i) Fostering an atmosphere of greater approachability to interested parties;
- (ii) Clear and public timetabling of risk assessments and adherence to these;
- (iii) Greater involvement of stakeholders in EFSA processes.

The intention is to make improvements in all these areas building on discussions with partners and learning by experience.

OBJECTIVE 5

To provide a high level of service to those tasking EFSA (the Commission, the European Parliament and Member States).

1. Steps taken so far

EFSA has agreed with the Commission the adopted 'saisine' text on the manner of tasking EFSA which is designed to help provide timely and useful advice to the Commission. This reflects the principles agreed by the Board in relation to prioritization. EFSA is seeking to alert the Commission, at present EFSA's only active tasker at the outset where it may not be possible to meet their deadlines and to seek to agree a revised timetable.

2. Steps to be taken

EFSA will need to seek actively feedback from its taskers as to their view of its performance (Allowance will however have to be made for the fact that EFSA is not a straightforward service provider and that its authoritative advice will not always be welcome to the tasker). In relation to the Commission as tasker,

EFSA's intention is to develop further the already constructive relationship with the Commission's interface unit and bilateral relations with individual Commission staff so as to avoid misunderstandings and harmonize processes as far as possible. A major uncertainty for the future is the demand for EFSA's services from its three tasking Authorities which is likely to result in EFSA meeting any unexpected increase in its work by reprioritization on the lines already agreed by the Board.

OBJECTIVE 6

To play an effective role in EU-wide food crises and scares.

1. Steps taken so far

The Board has already held an Away day discussion on this view and EFSA's has input to the Commission's draft crisis management plan to reflect this. EFSA has already initiated discussions in the Advisory Forum over liaison with National Authorities in an emergency.

2. Steps to be taken

Both the series of discussions outlined in the previous paragraph need to be intensified if EFSA is to formally take over its role in crisis management by, say, November 2003. EFSA's planned staff increases – and in particular the coming into post of the Deputy Executive Director and Head of Communication – will materially increase its capacity to respond effectively as will the redesigned EFSA website. A successful outcome to the Ostende discussions on stakeholder involvement in risk communication will also materially raise the quality of our response. Media training is being made available to EFSA's external scientific Chairman and to senior EFSA staff. EFSA is inevitably at some risk in this area until it has a sufficient depth of scientific and communications staff to provide full cover against any contingency, arguably not now before 2005.

OBJECTIVE 7

Identification and characterization of emergency risks.

1. Steps taken so far

EFSA has asked all its independent scientific committees to bring to its attention possible emerging risks. In addition, the Scientific Committee is looking at further possible ways of identifying risks e.g. through the letting of a research contract. Industry is a key partner for EFSA in this area and it is encouraging that the food processing industry took the initiative in bringing to EFSA's attention the recent issue in relation to semicarbazide. In addition through standing items on the

agenda of the meetings of the Advisory Forum a mechanism for emerging problems to be brought to the attention of EFSA from Member States and vice versa.

2. Steps to be taken

There is no guaranteed method of identifying every emerging risk. It is clear however that EFSA and national authorities need to work closely together with the scientific and industry communities to seek to identify developments of potential concern. This will require further effort by all parties.

OBJECTIVE 8

To integrate the new entrant States into EFSA's work.

1. Steps taken so far

EFSA already has the new entrant States in membership of the Advisory Forum and of the scientific panels. The first EFSA staff member from a new entrant State (Hungary) is about to be recruited.

2. Steps to be taken

As the Board have recognized there is a need to increase the number of members of EFSA's independent scientific machinery from the new entrant States. Some opportunity to accomplish this will be afforded by the renewed call for the Scientific Panels but it is also intended to seek candidates from these countries as participants in Panel working groups. EFSA will continue to seek staff members from throughout the EU.

OBJECTIVE 9

Collection of relevant data.

1. Steps taken so far

EFSA is of course collecting data from across the EU relevant to its consideration of individual issues. Little progress has however been possible to implement Article 34 of the Regulation which envisages the more comprehensive and routine collection of EU-wide data. The situation is further complicated by the creation of an EU disease control agency since the Regulation establishing EFSA was agreed.

2. Steps to be taken

Under Article 33 of the Regulation, EFSA's role is essentially triggered by the publication of a Commission report indicating what EFSA should seek to undertake in this area. For whatever reason this Report is now overdue. EFSA is

currently seeking to recruit an epidemiologist to work in this area, as well as providing specific epidemiological support to EFSA scientific staff. It is difficult to see how further progress can be made in advance of the Commission being in a position to indicate their requirements.

OBJECTIVE 10

To operate as an effective, efficient organization with a well-qualified and motivated staff drawn from the whole of the EU.

1. Steps taken so far

The Management Board is itself the guardian of the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. Additionally, we are considering internal audit on the Authority's financial procedures which will be reported back to the Board. EFSA is currently about to introduce an internal quality management scheme which will start by addressing key procedural issues. EFSA is establishing a Code of Good Administrative Behavior which will also be presented to the Board. In a separate paper also presented to the Board, it is indicated that EFSA has been successful so far in attracting high quality staff with an appropriate nationality and gender balance. Staff morale will be improved by the impending move to 10 rue de Genève.

2. Steps to be taken

It is essential that future staffing keeps pace with the volume and diversity of the workload. However, as previously indicated this remains difficult to forecast and EFSA is likely to need to plan on the basis of redeploying resources internally and in consequence recruiting most of its staff from those who have a relatively broad background of experience and interest. The Board will need to return to this issue as budget requests are formulated.