



**FOOD AND FEED SAFETY AND THE USE OF ANIMALS:
PROGRESS REPORT ON INITIATIVES TO
IMPLEMENT THE EFSA POLICY**

INTRODUCTION

1. During its meeting of 22 June the Management Board took note of document MB22.06.2004-5 on “Food and feed safety and the use of animals”. The Management Board agreed and supported a pro-active animal welfare policy, provided that this policy would be based on sound scientific principles. The Board also agreed that the safety of food and feed would remain the highest priority. The Management Board requested to be kept informed of any progress in the area and suggested that the EFSA Secretariat would develop a follow-up document detailing the steps of the process.

PROGRESS

EU legislative and guidance documents on experimental animals and animal welfare.

2. Following the June Management Board Meeting the EFSA Secretariat took on the task to develop a comprehensive overview of all current EU legislative and guidance documents that address experimental animals and animal welfare issues. The draft report was presented to and discussed by the scientific EFSA staff in October and will be shared shortly with all Panels, the Scientific Committee and all Working Groups with the request to: (i) confirm that all relevant legislative and guidance documents are included in the report and (ii) indicate if the requirements and guidance provided in these documents are systematically applied used in the work of the respective expert groups. Following this evaluation the report will be finalized and an effort will be made to harmonise the application of the various guidance and legislative elements across all EFSA expert groups. The final document will also be made available on EFSA’s webpages and shared for information with the Advisory Forum and Management Board.

Scientific Committee discussion

3. In October 2004 document MB22.06.2004-5 on “Food and feed safety and the use of animals” was extensively discussed by the Scientific Committee. The following general remarks were made:

- There are several projects in the 5th and 6th Framework Programme of DG RTD dealing with alternative and non-animal testing.

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- The GMO Panel has proposed a self-task addressing the limitations and advantages of animal test methods for whole foods and providing guidance on alternative approaches for assessment of long-term exposure to whole foods.
- Any EFSA activity in this area should clearly distinguish between farm animals intended for human consumption and laboratory animals for toxicity testing.
- The Panels should not consider it their task to become involved in the development and validation of alternative methods to animal tests used for risk assessment purposes.
- The Scientific Committee was in favour of developing in-house expertise on alternative methods to animal testing and to keep Panels informed of internationally available alternative approaches for hazard characterisation.
- It was suggested to organise in due time a scientific colloquium to discuss opportunities and limitations of alternative approaches to animal testing (taking into account reduction, replacement and refinement aspects) in the field of food and feed related risk assessments. Prior to such an event it may be helpful to have a consensus document identifying ways on how to proceed.

4. The Scientific Committee concluded that the animal welfare is an important subject for the Authority that should be considered in the work of all expert groups. The Scientific Committee suggested that a working group be established of EFSA in-house experts and external experts. The Working Group could start making an inventory of all current EFSA activities that strongly relate to animal welfare and prepare a consensus document for discussion at a future plenary of the Committee identifying ways how to incorporate animal welfare approaches in EFSA's tasks and missions while maintaining the highest level of science in all its activities related to food and feed safety.

Scheduled activities

5. The following activities are scheduled for the near future:
- Establishing a small Working Group on animal welfare approaches in risk assessment;
 - Finalise the report on all current EU legislative and guidance documents that address experimental animals and animal welfare issues and arrange for a harmonized application of the various guidance and legislative elements across all EFSA expert groups.
 - Providing all EFSA expert groups with up-to-date scientific information on internationally accepted alternative approaches and promising developments;
 - Make an inventory of all current activities of the Panels, the Scientific Committee and ad hoc expert groups that relate to animal welfare and publish this overview on EFSA's web pages. Current activities include (but are not limited to): the GMO Panel self-task on animal studies of whole foods and feeds; the initiative on QPS; stimulation of voluntary data sharing where appropriate (e.g., in the

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- FEEDAP Panel); the work on thresholds of toxicological concern; the transparency of risk assessment project; and benchmark dose approaches.
- Adequate information sharing and dialogue with NGO's and other organizations (e.g., Council of Europe) active in the area of animal welfare;
 - Information sharing with other (inter)national organizations, institutions and regulatory bodies, in particular those that develop methodology for safety assessment (such as OECD and OIE), those that are involved in the validation of alternative methods (such as EC.JRC.ECVAM) and those that require (animal) tests (such as the Commission).
 - The organization of a scientific discussion (as EFSA Science Colloquium) as a means to stimulate new research activities in the field of risk assessment methodologies and approaches, in particular those that include alternatives to animal testing.