



European Food Safety Authority

SCIENCE

EFSA SECOND SCIENTIFIC COLLOQUIUM ON MICROORGANISMS IN FOOD AND FEED: QUALIFIED PRESUMPTION OF SAFETY – QPS 13-14 DECEMBER 2004, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

BRIEF REPORT

1. EFSA Science Colloquia aim to achieve a better understanding of the fundamental scientific issues related to risk assessment of food and feed and are organised in a way to provide ample opportunity for an interactive exchange of expert views.
2. About 100 participants attended EFSA's second scientific colloquium. The objectives of the colloquium were to have an open scientific debate on the scientific principles behind the Qualified Presumption of Safety (QPS) approach and to explore options on how the concept can be further developed for possible implementation by EFSA to safety assessments within the framework of current and proposed legislation.
3. The QPS approach is a system similar in concept and purpose to the GRAS (Generally Recognised As Safe) concept and represents a possible route to harmonisation of approaches for the safety assessment of microorganisms used in feed/food production. QPS is an attempt to provide a mechanism for approving microorganisms that are relatively safe while focussing fuller assessments on those microorganisms that are more hazardous. If introduced into Europe, QPS will permit the identification of what is required to make an adequate risk assessment. Importantly QPS is suggested as an operating tool within EFSA for risk assessment and priority setting and not as a tool for risk managers.
4. By means of 4 break-out groups on 1) traditional use of microorganisms; 2) taxonomy/body of knowledge; 3) role of molecular tools and 4) advantages and disadvantages of QPS as well as in plenaries the participants discussed lively the issues from various angles during two days.
5. Participants concluded that the scientific principles behind the QPS approach are valid and that QPS appears in principle to be applicable to food, feed and products. However there are a number of issues that need careful consideration and the introduction of the QPS approach into the European safety evaluation process must be a step-by-step process.
6. A working group of the EFSA Scientific Committee is currently revising the original DG SANCO working document on QPS taking into account the comments received by the Commission on that document during the public consultation period in 2003 and the suggestions and conclusions of the colloquium. A revised document together with a proposal on how the approach can be implemented will be forwarded to the Scientific Committee for adoption in summer 2005.
7. The summary report of the second colloquium will be published on the EFSA website in March 2005 and in the EFSA Science Colloquium Report Series in April 2005.