



European Food Safety Authority

INTERNATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

Discussion on the role of AF Members as EFSA contact points in the Member States

EFSA's main link with the National Authorities in the Member States is via the Advisory Forum. The AF's tasks and responsibilities are prescribed in Article 27 of EFSA's founding Regulation 178/2002 (Annex 1). The Regulation lays down the nature of the composition of the Forum i.e. that it shall be composed of representatives from competent bodies in the Member States which undertake tasks similar to those of the Authority and that it shall ensure close cooperation between the Authority and the competent bodies in the Member States. It also allows for flexibility if matters of animal health and welfare are under discussion or where plant health matters are being considered by the Forum.

Up until now EFSA has relied on the members of the Advisory Forum to be the conduit for information to and from EFSA to the National Agencies, Authorities, Ministries in each Member State and vice versa. EFSA informs the Forum about particular items which may be of interest at the national level, and the Members inform EFSA and each other about developments in their respective countries. On all occasions this is directed through the Forum Member. In the future the Extra-net will be an additional tool in helping with the sharing and dissemination of information.

However, increasingly food and feed legislation gives EFSA a role in co-ordinating scientific matters with Member States e.g. requests for safety evaluations or other risk assessment activities carried out by, or with Member States. Indeed EFSA has contacted Members now on a number of occasions to find the correct contact person under one piece of legislation or another or requested that Members forward documents to the relevant official or office. EFSA is aware that on some occasions the Members of the Advisory Forum may not represent the Agency, Authority or Ministry that is implicated in such legislation and therefore it is possible that Members find this additional administrative burden excessive. The types of issues that EFSA covers are indeed farm to fork and the remit of the agencies represented in the Forum may inevitably not be this wide. It is important that EFSA is able to ensure a speedy and efficient link directly with national responsible agencies or authorities on such matters not only in times of normal activity but in particular when a crisis occurs

The question therefore arises whether it is possible or desirable for AF Members to be the coordinators for all the various scientific activities that EFSA may address to them or if Members would prefer other administrative mechanisms to facilitate the exchanges of data and information. In the Risk Management area such activities are

undertaken in Brussels by the Permanent Representatives of each Member State but no similar mechanism exists for EFSA and the national authorities.

EFSA would therefore like to open a discussion on this matter with Members to see whether there is a desire to change the present arrangements or whether they are considered to meet the need.

ANNEX I

Article 27 **Advisory Forum**

1. The Advisory Forum shall be composed of representatives from competent bodies in the Member States which undertake tasks similar to those of the Authority, on the basis of one representative designated by each Member State. Representatives may be replaced by alternates, appointed at the same time.
2. Members of the Advisory Forum may not be members of the Management Board.
3. The Advisory Forum shall advise the Executive Director in the performance of his duties under this Regulation, in particular in drawing up a proposal for the Authority's work programme. The Executive Director may also ask the Advisory Forum for advice on the prioritisation of requests for scientific opinions.
4. The Advisory Forum shall constitute a mechanism for an exchange of information on potential risks and the pooling of knowledge. It shall ensure close cooperation between the Authority and the competent bodies in the Member States in particular on the following items:
 - (a) avoidance of duplication of the Authority's scientific studies with Member States, in accordance with Article 32;
 - (b) in those circumstances identified in Article 30(4), where the Authority and a national body are obliged to cooperate;
 - (c) in the promoting of the European networking of organisations operating within the fields of the Authority's mission, in accordance with Article 36(1);
 - (d) where the Authority or a Member State identifies an emerging risk.
5. The Advisory Forum shall be chaired by the Executive Director. It shall meet regularly at the invitation of the Chair or at the request of at least a third of its members, and not less than four times per year. Its operational procedures shall be specified in the Authority's internal rules and shall be made public.
6. The Authority shall provide the technical and logistic support necessary for the Advisory Forum and provide the Secretariat for its meetings.
7. Representatives of the Commission's departments may participate in the work of the Advisory Forum. The Executive Director may invite representatives of the European Parliament and from other relevant bodies to take part.

Where the Advisory Forum discusses the matters referred to in Article 22(5)(b), representatives from competent bodies in the Member States which undertake tasks similar to those referred to in Article 22(5)(b) may participate in the work of the Advisory Forum, on the basis of one representative designated by each Member State.