



Adopted Minutes
FOURTEENTH MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM
PALM BEACH HOTEL, LARNACA (CYPRUS)
30 SEPTEMBER 2005

Members of the Advisory Forum

Chair: *Geoffrey Podger*, Executive Director, EFSA

Austria	<i>Roland Grossgut</i>	Italy	<i>Paolo Aureli</i>
Belgium	<i>Benoît Horion</i>	Latvia	<i>Dace Santare</i>
Cyprus	<i>Constantinos Michael</i>	Lithuania	<i>Darius Reimeika</i>
Czech Republic	<i>Milena Vicenova</i>	Luxembourg	<i>Felix Wildschutz</i>
Denmark	<i>Hans Peter Jensen</i>	Netherlands	<i>Evert Schouten</i>
Estonia	<i>Hendrik Kuusk</i>	Poland	<i>Jan Krzysztof Ludwicki</i>
Finland	<i>Jouko Tuomisto</i>	Portugal	<i>Isabel Meirelles Teixeira</i>
France	<i>Paul Merlin</i>	Slovakia	<i>Jan Stulc</i>
Germany	<i>Andreas Hensel</i>	Spain	<i>Juan Manuel Ballesteros</i>
Greece	<i>Sotirios Kiokas</i>	Sweden	<i>Leif Busk</i>
Hungary	<i>Mária Szeitzné-Szábo</i>	UK	<i>Andrew Wadge</i>
Ireland	<i>Alan Reilly</i>		

Observers and Invitees of the Executive Director

Bulgaria	<i>Galya Kostadinova</i>	Switzerland	<i>Michael Beer</i>
Norway	<i>Kristin Faerden</i>	European Commission	<i>Jeannie Vergnettes</i>
Romania	<i>Liveu Rusu</i>		

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Staff of the European Food Safety Authority

<i>Jan Bloemendal</i>	<i>Herman Koëter</i>
<i>Antoine Cuvillier</i>	<i>Christine Majewski</i>
<i>Anne-Laure Gassin</i>	<i>Filomena Siravo</i>
<i>Irene van Geest</i>	<i>Ingela Soderlund</i>
<i>Torben Hallas-Moller</i>	<i>Katty Verhelst</i>
<i>Wolfgang Gelbmann</i>	

1 Welcome and introduction by the Cyprus' Authorities

- 1.1 Mr. Soteris Soteriou, Chairman of the Food Safety Board and Permanent Secretary of the Minister of Health, warmly welcomed, on behalf of the Ministry of Health, the AF members to Cyprus, the most eastern EU country.

Mr. Soteriou referred to the expanding world economy, liberalization of food trade, growing consumer demand and developments in food science and technology as factors which increased the responsibilities of National Authorities as far as the safety and hygiene of food were concerned. Then Mr. Soteriou informed the Forum on the high standard of monitoring and surveillance food control programmes which have been in place in Cyprus. They were essential to protect the health and safety of domestic consumers, as well as consumers at large, both within and outside the boundaries of EU.

Mr. Soteriou concluded his speech by informing the Advisory Forum about the Food Safety Board in Cyprus, newly established due to the accession of the country to the EU in May 2004. This Board would continue to define and consolidate its food safety strategy while pursuing to build its reputation as an authoritative and trusted source of information and data handling body on food safety issues. To enhance its role, the Food Safety Board would foster closer collaborative relations with the corresponding national Councils and Authorities in the enlarged Europe and notably EFSA. At the same time it would work closely with national and European institutions, research groups and organisations for setting up scientific networks and facilitate exchange of information and expertise.

- 1.2 The Chair thanked the Cyprus' authorities for opening the meeting, their great hospitality and their words of welcome.

2. Opening remarks by Markos Kyprianou, Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection (DG SANCO)

- 2.1 The Advisory Forum had the honour to welcome SANCO-Commissioner Markos Kyprianou to its meeting. The Commissioner started his speech by saying that he was content and satisfied with the progress EFSA had made so far. Of course the Commissioner recognised the problems every starting agency encountered - especially when it had to move location in the same time - but he stressed that despite these EFSA had done already excellent scientific work. He especially underlined the importance for EFSA to conduct its activities independently, since so many awaited that with great expectations following the food scandals some years ago.

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As future challenges for EFSA, Commissioner Kyprianou pointed out the food supplements and health claims dossiers. Also in that respect he very much backed EFSA's wish to further build up its in-house expertise. Furthermore the Commissioner made clear that EFSA's success relies also on the further development of Risk Assessment networks throughout the EU. In that sense he was enlightened to attend this Advisory Forum meeting and to note that it was really a forum where all RA bodies in the EU come together.

- 2.2 The Chair thanked the Commissioner for his kind words and supported that the Commission, EFSA and the national authorities would wish to continue to work closely together in the future.

3 Introduction by Geoffrey Podger and adoption of the agenda (Doc AF 30.09.2005 – 1)

- 3.1 The agenda was introduced by the chair and adopted

4 Minutes of the meeting 3 June in Luxembourg and matters arising (Doc AF 30.09.2005 – 2)

- 4.1 The minutes of the Advisory Forum meeting of 3 June in Luxembourg were approved.
- 4.2 The Czech brochure for Crisis management, mentioned under tem 12.1, was circulated in advance of the meeting.

5 Update by Geoffrey Podger on progress at EFSA including move to Parma and succession arrangements to Executive Director

- 5.1 Geoffrey Podger informed the Forum that most colleagues were based in Parma now and that the move would be finalised by mid October. Despite minor difficulties, in general it could be said that the move of the Authority has gone smoothly, that the Authority was received very well in Parma and that colleagues were happy to be in Parma.
- 5.2 Geoffrey Podger conveyed the wish of EFSA's Management Board as that the Advisory Forum members should consider seriously to apply for the position of Executive Director.

6 Final discussions on EFSA's Working Programme for 2006, based on comments and remarks received from the AF members (Doc AF 30.09.2005 – 3 / MB 4 10.03.2005)

- 6.1 The Advisory Forum concluded the discussions on EFSA's Working Programme for 2006. Written comments were in advance received from the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Latvia and the Slovak Republic.
- 6.2 In general the Forum supported EFSA's intentions for 2006 and the way in which they were prioritised. Also EFSA was able to take into consideration the vast majority of the points raised. Subsequent action points were that EFSA should circulate its PHARE programme among the AF Members and that it had to add paragraphs about the ad hoc Advisory Forum Working Group on the 'Input of National Authorities' and about the Communications Advisory Group established in 2005. Concerning its 'Register of questions', which could be found on the Internet, EFSA agreed that it would modify this in order to give the AF members and others insight and thus more transparency concerning the documents EFSA's SC and Panels are using in the course of their risk assessments.

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- 6.3 The Chairman said in response to the French comments on the role of in house scientific expertise, that it is important that EFSA builds up the necessary expertise to support the work of the Committee and Panels. In particular EFSA was able to inform the Forum that the types of issues to be considered by in-house scientists would be discussed beforehand with the Chairs of the Scientific Committee and Panels and made public. Such advice would not however be a formal opinion.
- 6.4 EFSA's Management Board would be informed about the remarks of the Forum, in order to take these into account during their process of approval of the plan at the MB meetings in December 2005 and January 2006.

7 State of play on the Aspartame – issue (Doc AF 30.09.2005 – 4, EFSA's press release, http://www.efsa.eu.int/press_room/press_release/1038/pr_aspartame_en1.pdf and Doc AF 30.09.2005 – 5, the note to the AF)

- 7.1 Herman Koëter and Torben Hallas-Moller informed the meeting on the state of play as regards the Aspartame issue. EFSA was informed in spring 2005 by the B. Ramazzini Institute, based in Bologna, Italy, on their first results of a study conducted on the carcinogenicity of the sweetener Aspartame.
- 7.2 Thereupon EFSA invited the institute to discuss their findings in a meeting which was also attended by the chair of EFSA's Scientific Panel on Food Additives, Flavourings, Processing Aids and Materials in Contact with Food (AFC). Based on the study and data it had available, EFSA did not consider it appropriate to suggest any change in consumers' diets relative to aspartame.
- 7.3 EFSA was however very much willing to reassess the sweetener and would keep the National Authorities closely informed. It would therefore forward the relevant data, which it had assured would be transmitted by the Italian Institute, immediately on receipt to interested authorities.

8 Report back on the CVO seminar held on June 21 in Parma

- 8.1 The EU Chief Veterinary Officers were gathered on June 21 in Parma by invitation of EFSA in collaboration with the UK and Italian authorities. The CVO's were mainly informed about the procedures EFSA has in place in order to conduct risk assessment independently while being scientifically sound based. The CVO's also got an overview of EFSA's activities it had foreseen for 2006.
- 8.2 The CVO's were pleased to have the ability to react on EFSA Working Programme and asked to get this possibility also in the future which was granted. It emerged also during the meeting that it might be worthwhile to inform the CVO's more often about the work the Advisory Forum is doing. This could be done both by EFSA and in particular by the members of the Advisory Forum in the various MS.

9 State of play on the BSE in goat opinion (Doc AF 30.09.2005 – 6, the opinion http://www.efsa.eu.int/science/biohaz/biohaz_opinions/990_en.html and Doc AF 30.09.2005 – 7, its press release http://www.efsa.eu.int/press_room/press_release/995/pr_bse_goats_en1.pdf)

- 9.1 Wolfgang Gelbmann, member of the TSE/BSE unit within EFSA, kept the Forum abreast on the latest developments concerning the BSE found in a French goat. The monitoring programme on BSE in goats and sheep, which the Commission is managing across the

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EU, and which it has intensified after the confirmation of the case, had not detected any new case at the time of the meeting.. This was in itself positive and might indicate that the chance of finding new BSE contaminated goats had decreased significantly.

- 9.2 Wolfgang also informed the panel that the BIOHAZ panel was still unable to carry out a Quantitative Risk Assessment (QRA) on TSE safety of goat products since crucial data as surveillance data and data from pathogenesis were missing. However the Forum was told that EFSA has received a mandate from the EC for a QRA on sheep TSE, which was indicated to be more feasible to conduct
- 9.3 Anne-Laure Gassin informed the Forum briefly about the Communications aspects. She especially underlined how important it was that risk assessors and risk managers worked closely together on these very sensitive issues.

10 State of play concerning the assessment of Para Red and other unauthorised dyes (Doc AF 30.09.2005 – 8; the AFC panel’s opinion)
http://www.efsa.eu.int/science/afc/afc_opinions/1127_en.html

- 10.1 Torben Hallas-Moller informed the Advisory Forum on the review on illegal dyes, EFSA had issued recently. The amount of data available yet was unsatisfactory to perform a proper risk assessment, but the AFC panel could already state that there were also valid health arguments for keeping the dyes out of the food chain.
- 10.2 On proposal of the Advisory Forum, EFSA would suggest to the AFC panel considering if the ‘Margin of Exposure’ approach was feasible in relation to their work on illegal dyes. This approach, described in the opinion of the Scientific Committee, would need first to be adopted by the Scientific Committee.

11 Developments concerning EFSA’s Stakeholder Consultative Platform and the Colloque to be held in November this year (Doc AF 30.09.2005 – 9 & 9a)

- 11.1 Christine Majewski updated the Advisory Forum on EFSA’s activities with its stakeholders. Firstly, the Stakeholder Consultative Platform which would have its inaugural meeting on 6th and 7th October 2005 in Parma. The setting up of the Stakeholder Consultative Platform responded to the wish of the stakeholder organisations to have a more institutionalized way to interact with EFSA and that had been discussed and agreed upon with EFSA at the two last annual colloques that EFSA had organized.
- 11.2 Equally, it responded to the wish of EFSA to strengthen its links with stakeholder organisations. The Platform would advise EFSA’s Executive Director with regard to general issues regarding the work of EFSA and, in particular, the impact of its work on stakeholders. The members of the Platform were organisations representing consumers, food operators active in the whole food chain – e.g. farmers and other primary producers, the food industry, the food trade and NGOs active within the mandate of EFSA.
- 11.3 Further more, EFSA is organising its 3rd Stakeholder colloque will take place on 9th and 10th November in Parma. This colloque would follow a series of annual colloques that started in 2003 and that aim at allowing interested parties to interact with EFSA and to discuss stakeholder-related issues that were relevant to all parties involved. The aim of this 3rd stakeholder colloque would be to further discuss with interested parties the future of EFSA in the context of its current external review. Christine invited the Advisory Forum members to attend the colloque.

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12 Results of the consultation on the Guidance Document on Genetically Modified Microorganisms (GMM)

- 12.1 Herman Koëter informed the Forum on the provisional results of the consultation on the GMM Guidance Document. About ten sets of comments were received so far, from various parties. Also some of the Advisory Forum members had already submitted their remarks. Herman stated that he was grateful for the comments received yet, as they were seen as very useful.
- 12.2 The results of the consultation could be discussed at one of the next Advisory Forum meetings.

13 State of play regarding the art. 36 network (Doc AF 30.09.2005 – 10, the art. 36 questionnaire)

- 13.1 Herman Koëter introduced the item on the network with scientific institutes throughout the EU, which EFSA was establishing. EFSA had developed a questionnaire to assist Member States with the selection of appropriate candidates and to facilitate EFSA's processing of the information to be used in the preparation for the list of competent organisations to be submitted to EFSA's Management Board. Member States were requested to complete the questionnaire for all nominated competent organizations and return it to EFSA through their Permanent Representations to the EU.
- 13.2 Herman informed the Forum that the first applications already were received, but he also recognized that this needed quite some preparation and coordination in the MS and therefore informed the Forum that EFSA had decided to extend the deadline for application to 1 December 2005. The MS' Permanent Representatives to the EU would be informed about this in due course.
- 13.3 As general advice, he told the Members that in case they had reservations whether certain institutes, scientific committees, etc. in their MS would be eligible and be put forward, they should be given the benefit of the doubt. All applicants fulfilling the criteria will be forwarded to EFSA's Management Board for final approval.

14 Dates and venues of the AF meetings in 2006 (Doc AF 30.09.2005 – 11)

- 14.1 The dates for the meetings in 2006 had been set on: 2 + 3 March, 18 + 19 May and 28 + 29 September while the proposed dates for December (7 + 8) still had to be decided. The meetings would take the form of a dinner on the evening of the first day followed by a formal meeting on the second day. The respective hosts of the meetings: the Czech Republic, Austria, Switzerland and Finland were very much thanked for their hospitality.

15 STANDING MATTERS

- 15.1 Anne-Laure Gassin reported back from the Advisory Forum Communications Working Group held at the Ministry of Health in Budapest on 14 June this year. Anne-Laure informed the meeting on the Training course on Risk communications which would take place mid October in Parma and to which the Communications Working Group members, but also the Advisory Forum members themselves, were invited. Lectures would be given by internationally recognised professionals in risk communications and issues would be worked out in break out groups. The Task Force on risk communication requirements had held its first meeting in Budapest and decided to exchange communication materials on a regular basis and to focus

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more in particular on the Extranet.

Anne-Laure also informed the Forum on the exchange of ideas the group had on the communications implications concerning the BSE in goat issue. Having scientific experts attending the meeting, the group discussed several approaches to get these kinds of complicated messages across.

- 15.2 Sweden, Norway and Germany informed the Advisory Forum about some incidents taken place in their countries lately, most probably caused by lead or other metals leaked into juices from imported ceramic ware. The countries concerned questioned the current levels as been set in EU legislation and asked EFSA to conducts risk assessments on this. At the meeting it was agreed that the three countries and EFSA in a Working Group chaired by the Commission would look at a feasible mandate for this.
- 15.3 France informed the Advisory Forum on a problem with marine biotoxins in shellfish, which had been present for a while in the south-western part of the country. AFFSA suggested that EFSA consider its proposal to lead on a Risk Assessment (RA) on marine biotoxins under the umbrella of EFSA's Scientific Committee with third countries such as Australia and New Zealand involved. Also Germany would like to take part and expressed its wish to expand the study to other fields where problems with marine biotoxins might occur.
- 15.4 Cyprus asked EFSA and the Commission to identify who is responsible for the issue of informing the consumers on the amount of phytosteroids and phytosterols in foods. Cyprus wondered whether it would be possible for consumers to judge the amount of these hormones in foods to be consumed safely, given the increasing number of products containing these substances.
- 15.5 Herman Koëter updated the Forum about the opinion on Avian Influenza issued lately by EFSA's Animal Health and Welfare Panel and which can be found on EFSA's website. The opinion addresses possible ways to limit the spread of the virus and in collaboration with the Biohazards panel it also refers to the risks of spreading of the virus via the consumption of food.
- 15.6 Portugal reported on a case of radiation in bottled water, which had caused a real media storm and a lot of difficulties with the industry. Due to quick and alert actions the Portuguese authorities were able to nip the crisis in the bud.
- 15.7 The Netherlands reported on findings of dexamethason in cattle feed. To solve the problem, the Dutch authority had to use investigation results from the public prosecutor which had caused legal complaints afterwards. NL was interested in similar experiences in other MS.
- 15.8 Ireland informed the Forum on a notification it had made about the contamination with ink materials of infant milk. According to the UK, the factory concerned had solved the problem by changing its packaging procedures.
- 15.9 France informed the Forum that it was about to issue an opinion on salmonella contaminated bottles to be used in hospitals and nurseries. Furthermore it announced to put forward the liquid 'noni juice' as discussion item for the London-agenda.

16 Any Other Business

- 16.1 Christine Majewski was happy to inform the Advisory Forum that EFSA, with the very valuable contributions of the IT and Communications AF Working Groups, has made significant progress with the establishment of the Extranet. She concluded that the Extra-

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net was about to be ready to be used and suggested to execute this in a step-by-step approach. This would mean that firstly only documents would be put on the Extranet, while being announced and forwarded by email in the meantime, while in a following stage also discussion forums etc. would be started.

- 16.2 It was hoped that for the next meeting of Forum that documents could be placed on the Extranet. Members would receive guidance and instructions beforehand on how to use the Extranet and also their login names, passwords, etc. which would be distributed so that members could gain access to the system.

17 Closing of the meeting

- 17.1 The Chair closed the meeting by thanking the members and observers, for their positive and constructive approach, the interpreters, the Authority's team and the Cyprus administration for their kind hospitality.
- 17.2 The next meeting would take place on 24 and 25 November in London, UK. The details for this meeting would be communicated as soon as possible.