



Adopted Minutes
SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM
HOTEL PRAHA, PRAGUE (CZECH REPUBLIC)
3 MARCH 2006

Members of the Advisory Forum

Chair: *Herman Koëter*, Acting Executive Director, EFSA

Austria	<i>Roland Grossgut</i>	Italy	<i>Paolo Aureli</i>
Belgium	<i>Charles Crémer</i>	Latvia	<i>Dace Santare</i>
Cyprus	<i>Constantinos Michael</i>	Lithuania	<i>Zenonas Stanevicius</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>Jorma Hirn</i>	Portugal	<i>Dias Barreto</i>
France	<i>Valerie Baduel</i>	Slovakia	<i>Jan Stulc</i>
Germany	<i>Andreas Hensel</i>	Slovenia	<i>Marusa Adamic</i>
Greece	<i>Sotirios Kiokias</i>	Spain	<i>Jose Ignacio Arranz</i>
Hungary	<i>Mária Szeitzné-Szábo</i>	Sweden	<i>Leif Busk</i>
Ireland	<i>Alan Reilly</i>	UK	<i>Andrew Wadge</i>

Observers and Invitees of the Executive Director

Norway	<i>Kristin Faerden</i>	European Commis- sion	<i>Jeannie Vergnettes</i>
Switzerland	<i>Michael Beer</i>		

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Staff of the European Food Safety Authority

<i>Jan Bloemendal</i>	<i>Lesley Koschel</i>
<i>Dirk Detken</i>	<i>Djien Liem</i>
<i>Irene van Geest</i>	<i>Christine Majewski</i>
<i>Marta Hugas</i>	<i>Veerle Robberechts</i>

1 Welcome and introduction by the Czech Authorities

- 1.1 Dr. František Sládek, Director General of the Czech Food Authority, warmly welcomed the Advisory Forum members to Prague. Mr. Sládek informed the meeting that food safety issues are of great interest in the Czech Republic and that the government recently had decided to establish a Food Authority. This Authority would closely follow the scientific studies and risk assessment EFSA is conducting and would be very much ready to translate the outcome of these towards the Czech society. Mr. Sládek also asked the Forum's attention for the Salima food trade show which would be held the coming week in Brno and finally wished the Members a very fruitful meeting.
- 1.2 Dr. Milena Vicenova, Advisory Forum Member for Czech Republic and host of this meeting, gave her colleagues more insight information on aspects of agriculture and food production in her country and on the way food authorities are organised. She made clear that her Food Authority had very much a coordinative role and she in particular asked attention for the Scientific Committees it had established related to food safety. Finally Milena stressed that the Czech Food Authority would put a lot of effort in risk communication and she informed the Forum of the tools it had available to assist on that.
- 1.3 The Chair thanked Mr. Sládek and Milena Vicenova for opening the meeting, their friendly words and interesting presentations and their great hospitality.

2 Introduction by Herman Koëter and adoption of the agenda (Doc AF 03.03.2006 – 1)

- 2.1 The agenda was introduced by the chair and adopted after some of the members had raised a few extra items under Standing Matters.

3 Minutes of the meeting 25 November in London and matters arising (Doc AF 03.03.2006 – 2)

- 3.1 The minutes of the Advisory Forum meeting of 25 November in London were approved without changes. They would be translated and published soon.

4 Update by Herman Koëter on progress at EFSA

- 4.1 Herman Koëter informed the meeting that following an open competition, the Management Board had nominated Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle as future Executive Director. Meanwhile, Ms. Geslain-Lanéelle had appeared before the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) Committee of the European Parliament (EP) in Brussels on 23rd February 2006. Taking into account the views of the EP, the EFSA Management Board

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would move to the next step and consider the formal appointment of Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle as EFSA's new Executive Director. Following receipt of her final appointment Catherine will start making all necessary arrangements for her move to Parma. Her arrival and start of duties was expected to be mid-2006. Herman told the meeting that he and EFSA colleagues were looking very much forward to welcome Catherine as the new Executive Director at EFSA.

- 4.2 Herman informed the Members that the call for experts for the Scientific Committee and Panels had been closed on 17th February. More than 850 scientists had applied and there was a high standard of expertise and experience among the applicants. Although the number of candidates from the New Member States was lower than expected, their number was considerably higher than in 2003. The selection process had been started already and the selection procedure would be reviewed by three high profile senior European experts, who themselves did not consider applying for nay Panel or the SC. The AF members would have the possibility to react to the shortlist which they would receive later in March.
- 4.3 The Members were informed that the second meeting of EFSA's Stakeholder Consultative Platform, which would take place on 9th and 10th March, would be the first one led by the newly elected Chair Sue Davies. The meeting would be mainly dedicated to EFSA's Evaluation Report and issues emerging from it. It would also include updates from EFSA on Stakeholder activities during 2006 as well as on general EFSA issues, such as the new Executive Director, the renewal of Scientific Committee and Panels and the partial renewal of the EFSA's Management Board.
- 4.4 On ITX, Herman informed the meeting that EFSA had published Q&A's on the issue on 16th February. In these, it clarified that EFSA does not set upper limits with respect to the presence of substances found in foods and that this was also the case for ITX. It also recognised that ITX is an undesirable substance in foods. It advised however that ITX should not give cause for health concerns at the levels found in food as reported in the Opinion of the AFC Panel adopted on 7 December 2005.
- 4.5 The meeting was informed that EFSA's MB had approved an internal Audit Plan for EFSA. Also the Audit Charter and Audit Committee had been approved and an internal auditor had been appointed. It was foreseen that EFSA's auditor in 2006 would audit in particular the processes around EFSA's administration (HR, Finance, Accounts) stemming from findings of the Court of Auditors, while starting in 2007 the processes relating to the core activities of EFSA would be audited (scientific output and communications).
- 4.6 Finally, on the Art. 36 institutes, the Chair informed the meeting that it was putting together the list for approval of the MB, but that before doing so it would ask the Advisory Forum for its views. The meeting agreed that EFSA would contact individual AF Members in case institute(s) from his/her country would not be selected by EFSA for legal or other reasons, rather than share this information with the full AF. The final list, to be submitted to the MB for approval would also not reveal which institutes were not selected.

5 Presentation of the report '*Recommendations for Addressing Quantitative Microbiological Risk Assessments at European Level*' (Doc AF 03.03.2006 – 3a&b)

- 5.1 Marta Hugas, scientific coordinator of the Panel on Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ), presented this report which was prepared with the assistance of an external consultant. She

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informed the meeting that the report had shown that there was broad support in the European Commission and among Member States and scientists, to develop QMRA at European level. And also that EFSA was considered to be the appropriate organisation to organise this process.

- 5.2 The Forum supported the proposal to stimulate a more comprehensive global EU-level study on Campylobacter. Human campylobacteriosis is currently the most frequently reported zoonotic disease and the BIOHAZ Panel had earlier stressed the lack of suitable qualitative and quantitative data as regards the disease.
- 5.3 The Forum however warned that there were many economical factors that would have to be considered eventually by risk managers in terms of combating the bacteria. The Advisory Forum therefore recommended EFSA to inform the EU CVO's on the outcome of the QMRA report and EFSA's wishes as regards future research on (humane) campylobacteriosis.

6 State of Play on Nanosciences and Nanotechnologies as regards planned activities in Member States and EFSA (Doc AF 03.03.2006 – 4)

- 6.1 Previous to the meeting some of the Advisory Forum Members had asked EFSA to prepare a paper giving an overview of activities on nanosciences and nanotechnology especially from a science and risk assessment point of view.
- 6.2 The Paper prepared by Anne Theobald was presented by Djien Liem who explained that, although there was presently no international agreement on the definition of terms, a general consensus prevailed that nanoparticles are elements which measure less than 100 nanometers (nm) - which is a thousandth of the width of a human hair. It explained also that nanoparticles exhibit special difficulties for risk assessors because of their size but that they are already used in several utilities as food packaging, functional foods, pesticides, etc.
- 6.3 The EFSA document reported several initiatives at EU and international level and the AF meeting agreed with the outcomes of these stating that current risk assessment methodologies would require modification in order to deal with the hazards associated with nanotechnology. In particular the AF agreed that existing toxicological and ecotoxicological methods may not be sufficient to address all of the issues arising with nanoparticles.
- 6.4 The Advisory Forum agreed to serve as the platform for the coordinated exchange of information and views on nanotechnology and on ongoing research and activities at the national level. It also asked EFSA to consider organising an open meeting (e.g. colloquium) on how to progress at EU level as regards future risk assessments on food and feed produced by nanotechnology.

7 Views of the AF on the independent EFSA evaluation report (Doc AF 03.03.2006 – 5; http://www.efsa.eu.int/mboard/mb_meetings/1276_en.html)

- 7.1 The Forum had an extensive discussion about the independent evaluation report and, in this respect, on how EFSA currently is performing. All were of the opinion that EFSA had been evaluated too soon after its establishment. However, the general feeling was also that the report was positive about EFSA and members agreed with that. EFSA had been able to issue in short notice a remarkable amount of opinions of a high scientific level.

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- 7.2 Missing in the report or failures raised in the report and supported by the Forum included:
- the GMO debate. The Forum felt that EFSA had to prepare answers on how to tackle critics raised by political and NGO-groups;
 - fees. The Forum asked for clarity whether these would become a financial source for EFSA and, if so, how would they be charged;
 - stakeholders. The Forum found that EFSA should continue putting emphasis on its relations with stakeholders and they felt that the report did not sufficiently encourage this;
 - transparency. The Forum stressed that EFSA should continue with making its scientific risk assessment procedures more transparent and
 - the importance of the creation of databases which in the Forum's view could not be overexaggerated.
- 7.3 The Advisory Forum agreed that its Members Hans Peter Jensen and Andrew Wadge would present the Forum's views on the Away Day of the Management Board on 28th March in London.

8 Discussion of the possibility of adding routinely an in-depth discussion of a (national) risk assessment issue to the agenda of the Advisory Forum meetings

- 8.1 Herman Koëter introduced this item by referring to the fact that since the Advisory Forum was established in 2003 it had met one of its main objectives of contact and networking. However, it seems timely now to add more substance to its agenda, in response to requests from several AF members that they would like to have more in depth scientific discussions on certain topics.
- 8.2 EFSA very much sees the advantages of involving the Advisory Forum more into its risk assessments and other scientific activities, in terms of sharing data, exchanging studies, informing about results, etc. The work of the INA-AF Working Group also pointed to this (see further on in the minutes).
- 8.3 The meeting agreed that both EFSA and the Member States should contribute actively to the preparation of future Forum meetings for discussion. Member States may wish considering collaboration on or contribution to certain scientific matters. Marine biotoxins and nanosciences and –technologies were possible issues mentioned which could be discussed in this manner and added to the agenda of future meetings.
- 8.4. It was agreed therefore that the AF secretariat would proceed on this basis and identify possible subjects for more in-depth discussions.

9 Discussion on possible consequences for EFSA as regards developments in the 2007-2013 EU budget (Doc AF 03.03.2006 – 6)

- 9.1 Herman Koëter gave some background information on the paper sent to the Chair of the European Parliament of which the AF members already earlier had received a copy. The letter raised concerns on possible consequences as regards developments on the financial perspective covering the period 2007-2013. In a common position from Council on the financial perspective, the budget had been severely reduced in Heading 3b which includes EFSA's budget. In real terms this could mean for EFSA a substantial reduction in the budget compared to 2006.

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9.2 Herman Koëter informed the meeting that he and other Management Team members as well as members of the Management Board were having meetings with MEPs in order to convince them of the seriousness of the issue. These efforts were very much supported by the Advisory Forum.

10 Report back on the third meeting of the ad hoc Advisory Forum Working Group on the Input of National Authorities into the work of EFSA's scientific Committee, Panels and other Expert Groups (AFWG-INA) (Doc AF 25.11.2005 - 5)

10.1 Herman Koëter and Jan Bloemendal reported back from the 3rd meeting of this Working Group which took place on 20th January. In this meeting the Group discussed 9 papers, prepared in collaboration with all the members of the WG. The Papers were addressing in-depth on how the Advisory Forum could facilitate and support risk assessments in EFSA and at national level. Tools elaborated were on the exchange of scientific information, the setting up of liaison groups at the start of risk assessments in order to exchange all data available, the combined application of scientific experts at EFSA and national level, the sharing of working programmes, etc.

10.2 The Working Group currently was working at the 'final' document, for its meeting on 31st March. Alan Reilly, one of the drafters of this document, explained to the meeting the progress made. It were to be envisaged that the document, with its recommendations, could be discussed at the next AF meeting on 19th May in Vienna.

11 Introduction to EFSA's 5th Colloquium on 'Development of Food-based Dietary Guidelines' (Doc AF 03.03.2006 – 7) and report back from the 4th on 'Principles of Risk Assessment of Food Producing Animals: Current and future approaches' (Doc AF 03.03.2006 – 8)

11.1 Djien Liem reported back from the 4th Colloquium and gave an introduction of the 5th. One of the conclusions of the 4th Colloquium on Risk Assessments of food producing animals was that critical data were often missing e.g. dose response studies. Although the lack of such data was not unexpected and the identification of data gaps is one of the purposes of risk assessment, they should be identified as well as their potential impact on the magnitude of the uncertainty and the outcome should be described and explained to the risk manager.

11.2 The Colloquium also looked into specific risk assessment of animal welfare. It defined that welfare comprises an animal health part (with measurables) and an animal behaviour part, the latter much more difficult to define in measurables and, consequently, as regards the assessments of risks. The Colloquium established a list of key welfare indicators which could be identified for all species.

11.3 The Colloquium on the Development of Food-based Dietary Guidelines has as objective to debate the state-of-the-art of scientific approaches being the basis for harmonized EFSA guidance to assist Member States with the development of national food-based dietary guidelines.

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12 Report back on the results of the Eurobarometer project (Doc AF 03.03.2006 – 9a&b; http://www.efsa.eu.int/about_efsa/communicating_risk/risk_perception/catindex_en.html)

12.1 Irene van Geest presented the results of the Eurobarometer project. This survey was jointly commissioned by EFSA and DG SANCO and conducted in the 25 Member States from 2 September to 6 October 2005.

12.2 Irene in particular pointed out the following findings:

- consumers' perception of food is positive and food safety concerns are not top of mind;
- major food crises of the past (eg BSE and dioxins) are not cited by consumers as being top concerns today;
- there is a high level of awareness of EU food safety regulations (>60%);
- nearly 6 out of 10 agree that public authorities' decisions re food risks are science-based;
- 1 in 2 agree that public authorities do a good job in informing citizens regarding food risks.

Irene also mentioned that consumers' opinions were more divided concerning progress made in food safety over the last 10 years, with important country differences noted. Nevertheless, consumers believe that public authorities' actions with regard to food safety are appropriate.

12.3 The Chair reiterated the suggestion made in the Communications Working Group that EFSA could facilitate the organisation of meetings in Member States – jointly between the National Authorities and EFSA - to present/debate findings in the Eurobarometer report, in light also of country-specific research and experiences.

13 Confirmation of meeting dates and venues for 2006 (Doc AF 03.03.2006 – 10)

13.1 Whilst the dates and venues of the first three meetings of the AF in 2006 were agreed earlier, the AF now fixed the date for the last regular one which would be on 30th November in Helsinki, Finland. Back-to-back with the AF meeting a meeting of the CEO's of national food safety agencies is scheduled provisionally for 1st December with a joint dinner of CEO's and AF in the evening of 30th November.

14 STANDING MATTERS

14.1 Irene van Geest reported back from the meeting of the AF Communications Working Group that was held on 2nd February in Parma. Next to a discussion of the Eurobarometer results and the regular issues on the agenda, the WG also were informed of recent developments on the Extranet.

14.2 Djien Liem updated the Forum on the last developments in EFSA as regards scientific work on Avian Influenza and Aspartame. On AI, the Forum was asked once more to forward all technical details they have available concerning the possible spread of virus via migratory birds. The Advisory Forum was also informed that EFSA and the Communications WG were preparing a compilation of statements made on avian influenza, which would be shared with the AF.

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- 14.3 On Aspartame, EFSA informed the meeting on the communications plans it was preparing. France and the UK reiterated their proposal to assist EFSA and expressed their doubts on the ability of assessing properly the data provided by the Ramazzini Institute.
- 14.4 Germany informed his colleagues of an opinion the BfR institute had issued lately concerning possible risks of the consumption of poppy seeds containing or contaminated with higher than usual levels of opiates. More countries (Austria, Hungary) were aware of the matter and might jointly want to take further steps to prevent misuse of poppy seeds as a potential narcotic drug.
- 14.5 EFSA informed the Forum that it recently had a meeting with environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to discuss scientific and procedural issues related to the risk assessment of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Following presentations given by representatives from both the Authority and the NGOs present, participants engaged in an open discussion. Although differing views and approaches were expressed, some of which are fundamental in principle, all agreed that the debate had certainly been worthwhile.
- 14.6 UK, Belgium and others reported on the research they were conducting on Benzene in soft drinks. Also EFSA was following the issue closely. Some countries expressed their wish to collaborate on the matter.
- 14.7 The Advisory Forum was informed on possible recent findings of BSE like agents in sheep (2 in France, 1 in Cyprus). Detection had not been finalised yet, but first results had shown that indeed sheep may become naturally infected with BSE as well. EFSA told the meeting that the BIOHAZ panel and the Expert Group on BSE/TSE were following the issue closely.
- 14.8 Sweden informed the meeting about the first case of BSE it had detected today in a 12 year old cow.
- 14.9 France updated the meeting on findings of Avian Influenza (AI) which had occurred recently. Taking into account the way French citizens treat poultry and its products, Afssa currently saw no extra concerns as regards the public health. The meeting agreed that it would be helpful if EFSA could issue a new statement on the possible consequences of AI for food safety.

15 Closing of the meeting

- 15.1 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 Czech Food Authority for their kind hospitality.