



European Food Safety Authority

SPEECH

**18th Meeting of the EFSA Advisory Forum
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Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle

Executive Director of the European Food Safety Authority

Enhancement of the exchange of scientific information amongst the Advisory Forum Members and EFSA

Dear Colleagues

It is with great pleasure that I am here in Berne today at the kind invitation of the Swiss Authorities in my new capacity as the Executive Director of EFSA. As a Board member from 2002 until recently I was closely involved in the establishment and shaping of the Authority on the one hand and on the other I was able to view EFSA's activities as you do from the point of view of a Member State.

I am now presented with an extraordinary opportunity to take this young and important European body forward into a new phase of its development. EFSA of course has already achieved a lot and its extensive Work Programmes, and the future demands on EFSA found in EU legislation indicate just how much more we have to do.

Not only does EFSA have a new Executive Director but also earlier this month we had the first meeting of the newly constituted Management Board which elected Dr. Patrick Wall as its new chair and we have the newly formed Scientific Panels and Committees. I have also arrived at a time when the External Evaluation of EFSA has been completed and now we have the 6 key recommendations from the Board to guide us and I would like to thank Advisory Forum members for your active contribution to the development of these.

We are clearly entering a crucial period in EFSA growth and establishment and one where new activities and direction are important. My goal is for EFSA - through the activities of its staff, its scientific committee and panels, and most importantly, the close involvement of the Advisory Forum and the national food authorities that you represent - to become globally recognised as the European reference body on risk assessment on food and feed safety, animal health and welfare, nutrition and plant health. This will also need of course the support of the European institutions and stakeholders with whom I also intend to have a close dialogue.

Risk assessment is EFSA's core activity. It is crucial for me that EFSA upholds the highest scientific standards delivering the best science at the right time and in the most appropriate manner. In the Committees and Panels we have indeed been lucky to be able to select high quality scientists coming from the Member States. But to enhance their work we need to be able to have access to European level data and information, and this can only be obtained through scientific collaboration and cooperation with Member States.

This is why I would like to emphasize to you that I am committed to working closely with you and your authorities as full partners so that we can build strong networks, sharing data and information. I also believe that by sharing information, being well informed about each other's activities we can avoid unnecessary duplication of effort in risk assessment and improve the coherence of the EU food safety system.

I also wish to ensure that we maintain the highest standards of transparency and independence in the risk assessment process. While independence is important to our credibility I also want to ensure that we do not become isolated and therefore it is important for me to work closely with risk managers to ensure a seamless interface and coherence between all parts of the risk analysis process.

You have of course received the 6 key recommendations from the Board. We have already started to work on these – today of course we will focus particularly on how we can build scientific cooperation and collaboration through scientific networks which is my top priority. For me the Advisory Forum is more than 4 or 5 meetings a year - it has to be an active body with constant contact and exchanges. I would like to work closely with you to assess work priorities, to identify priorities for cooperation activities, so that we can really start to create important and valuable networks to assist all participants.

I would also like to inform you of my wish to work closely with the Advisory Forum to build and plan the medium and long term future of EFSA. I look forward to future discussions with you on how we develop a

shared vision for EFSA which includes the strong involvement of member States in its activities. I would like to see with you how we can build the role of Advisory Forum members in each Member State so that you can be the focal point for EFSA's activities and act as an ambassador for EFSA with the key players in the food chain at national level.

The proposal to be discussed today , and I hope for signature, of the Declaration of Intent is indeed an extremely tangible example of the great willingness around this table to work closely together and do our best to serve the interests of citizens of the EU in sharing information and pooling resources.

I look forward to discussing my plans with you further in the meeting today and also I would like to meet with you bilaterally to listen to your views and I would of course be delighted to visit you in your national authorities, if you would be kind enough to allow me.