



**Draft Minutes**  
**EIGHTEENTH MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM**  
**HOTEL BERN, BERNE (SWITZERLAND)**  
**29 SEPTEMBER 2006**

**Members of the Advisory Forum**

**Chair:** *Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle*, Executive Director, EFSA

Austria	<i>Roland Grossgut</i>	Ireland	<i>Alan Reilly</i>
Belgium	<i>Charles Crémer</i>	Italy	<i>Paolo Aureli</i>
Cyprus	<i>Constantinos Michael</i>	Luxembourg	<i>Felix Wildschutz</i>
Czech Republic	<i>Klara Zuzankova</i>	The Netherlands	<i>Evert Schouten</i>
Denmark	<i>Hans Peter Jensen</i>	Poland	<i>Jan Krzysztof Ludwicki</i>
Estonia	<i>Hendrik Kuusk</i>	Portugal	<i>Manuel Barreto Dias</i>
Finland	<i>Tuula Honkanen-Buzalski</i>	Slovakia	<i>Jan Stulc</i>
France	<i>Valerie Baduel</i>	Slovenia	<i>Ada Hocevar Grom</i>
Germany	<i>Andreas Hensel</i>	Spain	<i>José Ignacio Arranz</i>
Greece	<i>Krestos Vasileios</i>	Sweden	<i>Leif Busk</i>
Hungary	<i>Mária Szeitzné-Szábo</i>	UK	<i>Judith Hilton</i>

**Observers and Invitees of the Acting Executive Director**

Norway	<i>Kristin Faerden</i>	Bulgaria	<i>Tsvetanka Voynova</i>
Switzerland	<i>Michael Beer</i>	Romania	<i>Liviu Rusu</i>
European Commission	<i>Jeannie Vergnettes</i>		

**Staff of the European Food Safety Authority**

<i>Jan Bloemendal</i>	<i>Lesley Koschel</i>
<i>Dirk Detken</i>	<i>Djien Liem</i>
<i>Mathilde Garcia Gomez</i>	<i>Christine Majewski</i>
<i>Anne-Laure Gassin</i>	<i>Veerle Robberechts</i>
<i>Irene van Geest</i>	<i>Victoria Villamar</i>
<i>Herman Koëter</i>	

**1 Opening of the meeting**

- 1.1 Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle, newly appointed Executive Director of EFSA, opened the meeting, expressed her gratitude to be able to meet the Advisory Forum Members and said that she was looking forward to a very fruitful collaboration with the Forum.

**2 Welcome and introduction by the Swiss' Authorities**

- 2.1 Dr. Roland Charrière, Vice Director and head of the Consumer Protection Unit in the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH), warmly welcomed the Advisory Forum members to Berne. Mr. Charrière explained that the FOPH, being part of the Federal Department for Home Affairs, is the Swiss national authority in health matters, responsible – together with the cantons – for public health and the development of national health policy. On the areas mentioned, the Office conducts risk assessment, management and communication tasks. The FOPH also represents Switzerland in international organisations. Mr. Charrière wished the AF a very fruitful meeting.
- 2.2 Dr. Katharina Stärk gave a short introduction to the Swiss Federal Veterinary Office. This Office carries out the government's responsibilities as regards the veterinary field, which means all matters related to animal health and welfare but also concerning food safety of animal products (including hygiene legislation and enforcement, etc.).
- 2.3 The Chair thanked Mr. Roland Charrière and Ms. Katharina Stärk for their interesting and useful introductions and friendly and encouraging words. Catherine also thanked the FOPH for the invitation to have the meeting in Berne and their great hospitality.

**3 Introduction by Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle and agenda item 5: Update on progress at EFSA and adoption of the agenda (Doc AF 29.09.2006 – 1)**

- 3.1 In her speech, Catherine referred to the six recommendations of EFSA's Management Board which were made in response to the external evaluation of EFSA carried out in 2005. Recognising Risk Assessment as EFSA's core activity, EFSA wants to become globally recognised as the European reference body for risk assessment on food and feed safety, animal health and welfare, nutrition, plant protection and plant health. Delivering the best science at the right time and in the most appropriate manner is crucial for EFSA in that respect. In order to achieve this, EFSA aims to select for its Scientific Committee and Panels experts from the Member States with the highest expertise in their respective fields.

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3.2 Performing its tasks independently and transparently are other key requirements for EFSA. It should be recognised, however, that EFSA will not be successful without the active participation of the Member States. This includes the involvement of experts at national as well as EU level. Sharing data and information and being well informed about each other's activities are essential as well. The Advisory Forum is EFSA's official network with the MS and Catherine expressed her wish to work closely with the Forum in further strengthening the scientific coordination and networking with the MS. The possible signing of the Declaration of Intent, later in the meeting, would be a major step forwards and Catherine also looked forward to the views of the Members on the agenda item on developing a Strategy for further collaboration and networking.

3.3 The agenda was introduced by the Chair and adopted after some of the members had raised a few extra items under Update and exchange of views on matters raised by the Member States (see agenda item 12).

#### 4 Minutes of the meeting 19<sup>th</sup> May in Vienna (Doc AF 29.09.2006 – 2)

4.1 The minutes of the Advisory Forum meeting of 19 May in Vienna were approved without changes. They would be translated and published soon.

5 See agenda item 3

#### 6 EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION AND NETWORKING WITH MEMBER STATES; DEVELOPING STRATEGY FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT (Doc AF 29.09.2006 – 3 / MB 20.06.2006 – 4 ADOPTED, Management Board Conclusions of the external evaluation of EFSA and Recommendations arising from the report; Doc AF 29.09.2006 – 4, Previous and current scientific cooperation with Member States and Doc AF 29.09.2006 – 5, Background on the legal tools for funding scientific cooperation with Member States)

6.1 Herman Koëter presented a Paper on 'Previous and Current Scientific cooperation with Member States'. This document introduced activities in EFSA in which the Member States have already been involved. He focussed on four areas: 1) on contracts with external experts or scientific research institutes for the preparation of scientific documents, 2) on the collaboration with Member States' experts for EU-wide collection and analysis of scientific data, 3) on the formal consultation of MS in the framework of specific authorisation processes and 4) on the exchange of information on newly identified or emerging subjects of common interest. The introduction and the comprehensive document made clear that cooperation with MS is currently not starting from scratch but that already a lot has been done, in the area of Science but also as regards Communications and IT support. Herman also stated that further cooperation should not hamper the independence of scientific Panels at EFSA as well as at national level, but that further increasing the exchange of information data, and collaboration on parts of risk assessments could further improve the final opinions. Therefore, it could be useful to make the contacts with the MS more structured and formalised.

6.2 Dirk Detken introduced a background document on the 'Legal tools for Funding Scientific Cooperation with MS'. The document showed generally three possibilities of collaboration from a financial point of view: 1) via public contracts, 2) via grants in accordance with article 36 of Regulation 178/2002 and 3) non-funded. Dirk presented the re-

quirements for applying the three mechanisms and the Commission in turn indicated that article 36 in particular was meant to support the collaboration between EFSA and the MS.

- 6.3 The Members of the Advisory Forum extensively discussed the issue of further cooperation coming from the common goal of increasing the cooperation and networking between EFSA and the MS. It was decided to consider the introductions and comments made and to incorporate these into *Terms of Reference* for an ad hoc working Group composed of AF representatives and EFSA staff that should meet in the coming months. Taking into account the contributions of the Scientific Committee and others as well, this should result in a Strategy on Scientific Cooperation and Networking to be adopted late 2006. This Strategy document could also include a mission statement for the Advisory Forum.
- 7 'Declaration of Intent' concerning the Recommendations for the enhancement of the exchange of scientific information (Doc AF 29.09.2006 – 6a & b)**
- 7.1 As a follow up of the previous AF meeting in Vienna where the Members discussed and supported the report of the WG on the exchange of scientific information, a Declaration of Intent was tabled which, when signed by AF members, would constitute a formal commitment to increased cooperation and could thereby further support Members in gaining resources etc. This, however, would require resources in their countries for the implementation of these recommendations.
- 7.2 The Members were happy to adopt the document and saw fulfilling it as an important step for building closer links between EFSA and the national authorities. The AF suggested that the AF WG on the exchange of scientific information should reconvene to address the tools to implement the commitments. There should also be close collaboration of this working group with the AF WG on the Strategy as mentioned in 6.3.
- 8 Introduction to the Declaration of Interest (Doc AF 29.09.2006 – 7a, Guidance on Declarations of Interest**  
[http://www.efsa.europa.eu/etc/medialib/efsa/mboard/statutory\\_texts/internal\\_rules/409.Par.0004.File.d/declar\\_of\\_interestsmb161204-endorsed1.pdf](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/etc/medialib/efsa/mboard/statutory_texts/internal_rules/409.Par.0004.File.d/declar_of_interestsmb161204-endorsed1.pdf) & 7b, Declaration concerning Confidentiality)
- 8.1 Dirk Detken gave a brief introduction to the backgrounds of the declarations on Commitment of Independence, Confidentiality and Interest. The latter needs to be signed annually and Dirk in particular explained that the declaration of an interest, required for reasons of transparency, does not imply that a conflict of interest exists. Potential conflicts only can be detected after members have declared their intellectual and possible other interests.
- 8.2 The signed declarations will be made available on EFSA's website
- 9 Discussions on EFSA's draft Working Programme 2007 (Doc AF 29.09.2006 – 8 / MB 29.03.2006 - 3)**
- 9.1 Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle gave a general introduction of the Draft Working Programme for 2007. The document currently on the table was adopted by the Management Board at their meeting in March this year. Since then the decision however was taken to change the layout of the document rather significantly. The final document which should be

adopted by the Board in January next year, will be more activity based and give clearer insight on resources to be used for the various activities. Herman Koëter introduced the Science part of the Work Programme. He envisaged an upcoming year with a heavy workload again and in particular mentioned the continuing activities on the GMO dossiers as well as EFSA's role in the nutrition and health claims and the MRL work as part of the pesticides assessments.

- 9.2 Anne-Laure introduced the Communications programme and indicated that the action plan will focus on enhancing the impact and efficiency of EFSA Communications following on from EFSA's external evaluation and recommendations of the Management Board. EFSA will also seek feedback on its communications activities including a review on risk communications which will be conducted annually by EFSA's Advisory Group on Risk Communications. Christine Majewski explained the external relations which EFSA will continue to elaborate on. In particular she mentioned the relations with the European Parliament and the Council but also noted the Italian authorities to which EFSA has good contacts. Catherine ended the introduction by announcing a series of events in 2007 which EFSA will be engaged in. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rome Treaty will be celebrated in 2007 and EFSA will also celebrate next year its 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The events will take place in Parma in October and in Brussels in November. EFSA will invite and seek to involve the Advisory Forum in these activities.
- 9.3 Greece presented a paper containing comments on the draft WP. To make it more activity based was one of the remarks and the others were in line with the comments made by the Forum at the Vienna meeting. The Forum mostly referred back to this meeting, confirmed their remarks made then and especially highlighted the need for giving more attention to the possible use of the article 36 (EU Re 178/2002) network and to EFSA's role as regards nutrition. The Commission in addition mentioned that it would publish soon a consultation paper on the possibility of EFSA's charging fees for its risk assessment work.

## **10 Dates and possible venues of the AF meetings in 2007 (Doc AF 29.09.2006 – 9)**

- 10.1 Several offers were made to host one of the meetings of the Forum in 2007. Given the time constraints at particularly the last two meetings, EFSA would suggest to organize five meetings in 2007 instead of the originally proposed four. A new schedule would be distributed soon.

## **11 UPDATE AND EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON MATTERS RAISED BY THE MEMBER STATES**

- 11.1 The French Afssa presented a certification process of the quality management of collective expertise by which the French Standard NF X50-110 had been used. The French standard was shown as well as Afssa's experiences with it. Also further steps for optimizing the system were presented. The presentation was well received by the meeting. The results will be considered by EFSA's Scientific Committee when it will formulate recommendations on how to continue to improve the quality of the Authority's scientific work.
- 11.2 The German BfR introduced an inventory on Morphine in Poppy Seed it had conducted recently with the help of Advisory Forum colleagues from Austria, Hungary, Slovenia and the Slovak and Czech Republics. The report showed that some measurements such as the agriculture of low-morphine poppy plants and processing improvements had been successful in certain countries but also that in other parts of the EU the situation was less

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clear. Considering that exposure is still expected next season, the BfR called for an EU wide assessment on morphine and other alkaloids by EFSA.

- 11.3 Germany also informed the meeting on research about the presence of Coumarin in Cinnamon. The inventory had shown that by certain consumption patterns the IDI recommended by EFSA could be easily exceeded. The BfR therefore suggested to study the issue more in-depth.
- 11.4 Spain requested that a short questionnaire on nutrition should be circulated to all AF members for getting insight into who is doing what on this subject in the MS.
- 11.5 Ireland asked to facilitate cooperation between IR, GE, SW and UK on the fortification of food with folic acid given that all four countries are currently working on this topic. Also EFSA might be interested to join this discussion.
- 11.6 The Netherlands informed the meeting that it would start exposure research on pyrrolizidine alkaloids in milk products and honey, due to the presence of Ragwort in feed. The VWA would keep EFSA and the Forum updated on the outcome.
- 11.7 Norway informed the meeting that the Norwegian Scientific Committee had produced a document on the principle of Thresholds of toxicological concern (TTC). EFSA and the MS were asked to give any comments they might have to the document which would be sent to EFSA for publication on the AF Extranet shortly.
- 11.8 Afssa reported on the situation that occurred repeatedly during the summers of 2005 and 2006 in Arcachon lagoon (south-west of France) - a large shellfish producing area - where oysters were banned for human consumption due to the presence of marine biotoxins. Since EFSA has started an evaluation of marine biotoxins assessment methodologies including alternative testing methods, Afssa would like to be closely involved.
- 11.9 Afssa also raised the issue of TSE strain typing in small ruminants which in two recent cases had been unclear from the French point of view. Herman Koëter responded that unclear results of strain-typing were often related to poor sampling. EFSA had made recommendations for improved sampling methods.
- 11.10 Austria reported on findings end 2004, of considerable amounts of cyanide in bitter apricot kernels which were intended for direct human consumption. Since these products could be consumed in high amounts (anticancer), AGES considered that, based on an EFSA opinion of 2004, this could be problematic for children, ill and elderly people (reduced detoxification systems). New findings in 2006 resulted in actions at national level. The issue would be discussed in the DG SANCO expert group on 'Agriculture contamination'. Austria would put its risk assessments and exposure data on the AF Extranet.

**12. UPDATE AND EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON MATTERS RAISED BY EFSA**

- 12.1 Herman Koëter reported back on the developments as regards the imported rice contaminated with GM rice named: LLRICE 601. EFSA's GMO Panel had delivered a statement on the possible risks of the rice which assisted risk managers, and notably the Commission and Standing Committee in addressing this issue. For future (emerging) cases, however, Herman would like to encourage the AF Members to inform colleagues earlier on risk assessment activities undertaken in the MS.

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- 12.2 As regards Bluetongue, Herman Koëter informed the meeting that EFSA would start a Working Group which will report frequently on the epidemiology of the disease. The creation of this WG was recommended by the meeting of Chief Veterinary Officers and EFSA was currently inviting the most appropriate experts for being members of the group. The Forum was asked to facilitate and provide the names and technical data which might be relevant.
- 12.3 Anne-Laure Gassin informed the Forum that the next meeting of the Communications AF WG would be preceded by a work shop on Crisis Communication. Both activities would take place in The Hague on 24 and 25 October, hosted by the VWA.
- 12.4 Herman Koëter updated the meeting on the Nutrition Conference EFSA will be organising from 8-10 November in Bologna. The organisation committee was still looking for an expert from the MS which could express the expectations from the EU Member States as regards EFSA's efforts on the Nutrition and Health Claims dossier.
- 12.5 Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle informed the Forum on two vacancies; one in EFSA's Management Board recently published by the Commission and one in EFSA's Advisory Group on Risk Communications for which the AF Members were asked to indicate names of possible candidates for consideration by EFSA.

**13 Closing of the meeting**

- 13.1 The Chair closed the meeting by thanking the members and observers for their positive and constructive approach. She also thanked the interpreters, the Authority's team and the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health for their assistance, contributions and kind hospitality, respectively.