



European Food Safety Authority

PROPOSAL FROM THE SECRETARIAT ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE EFSA SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE AND PANELS

1. At its meeting in June 2005 the Management Board requested the development of a document addressing issues related to the functioning of EFSA's Scientific Committee and Panels, including the handling of work flow, outsourcing of work and possible overlaps of the Panels' respective mandates.
2. At its meeting on 27 October 2005 the Management Board discussed EFSA document MB 27.10.2005-3 regarding issues related to the functioning of the Scientific Committee (SC) and Scientific Panels,. A draft of this document was shared with the SC at its 14th plenary meeting in September and the final document was discussed at the 16th plenary meeting of the SC in December. In addition, the document was also shared with the Advisory Forum at its meeting on the 25th of November.
3. In order to facilitate the discussions at the December plenary meeting of the SC, the Secretariat prepared a note with questions to collect views from the members of the SC on the mandates of the Panels, the size of the Panels, the handling of overlapping work mandates, the organisation and possible outsourcing of the work. The Members of the SC made various valuable suggestions for improvements of the work flow, a more even distribution of the work across the Panels and a better coverage of the disciplines needed for the work to be conducted. The Chair of the SC gave an oral presentation of the discussions of the SC at the Board meeting of January 24th. Following this presentation, the Board expressed an interest in receiving a written note to facilitate the Management Board's discussions and deliberations. Following the January meeting of the Board, the Chair of the SC prepared a position paper which was subsequently discussed at the 17th plenary meeting of the SC on 15-16 February 2006.

The position paper of the Scientific Committee on “Issues related to the functioning of the EFSA Scientific Committee and Panels” is a separate document MB 29.03.2006 – 7 annex Functioning of the EFSA Scientific Committee and Panels

4. At the meeting of the Management Board in January, the Board was also informed that, based on the discussions in the SC and Panels and on the Final Report of the Evaluation of the Authority, EFSA would develop a proposal for changes of its various scientific functions including those of the SC and Panels for consideration and possible endorsement by the Management Board at its meeting of 28/29 March 2006.

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This proposal would also address the possible resource implications of the suggested changes of procedure.

PROPOSAL FOR CHANGES OF SCIENTIFIC FUNCTIONS OF EFSA TO FURTHER INCREASE EFFICIENCY, TRANSPARENCY AND WORKING CLIMATE

5. In order to adapt the scientific functions of EFSA to the current work load, the following measures are proposed:

a) Management of the workflow

The current workload has already reached (or exceeded) the maximum capacity of the Scientific Panels, the Scientific Committee and the other Scientific Expert Working Groups (e.g. BSE/TSE, Zoonoses and PRAPeR). In line with the suggestions made by the SC EFSA proposes the following measures to facilitate the management of the workload, and further increase efficiency and transparency of the various scientific functions of the Authority:

- Introduce time-management tools to objectively monitor the work load of the Scientific Panels and Scientific Committee;
- Initiate steps to achieve a more even distribution of work in the area of the AFC and CONTAM Panels by the creation of three new out of the 2 existing Panels;
- Rather than the “one-size-fits-all” approach as currently applied, allow a minimum level of flexibility in the size of the Scientific Panels and Scientific Committee based on their mission and required scientific disciplines needed to adequately do the work and .
- Consequently, slightly increase the size of the SC and one or two Panels to achieve the objectives indicated in the position paper of the Committee.
- Consider jointly with the Commission when it would be appropriate for EFSA to provide scientific advice in other ways than as a Scientific Opinion of the SC/Panel e.g. to consider which questions, currently asked under Article 29 of Regulation 178/2002 (for which an opinion could only be delivered by a Panel), could also be dealt with the more flexible Article 31 of the same Regulation (which could also be dealt with by EFSA experts).
- Accelerate the establishment of the network of institutions in Member States competent for systematically collaborating with EFSA in the context of Article 36 of the Founding Regulation.
- Improve and make more transparent EFSA’s current procedures for handling and acceptance of questions, and for adoption of opinions.

b) Operational strategy for expert meetings in Parma

In view of the current high workload and to ensure that the Authority would maintain to be sufficiently capable of handling emerging issues in the future, EFSA proposes the following measures as suggested by the Scientific Panels and Scientific Committee in relation to expert meetings in Parma:

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- Reduce expert travel time to Parma, by:
 - ✓ allowing working group meetings of short duration to be held at locations outside Parma or Italy (provided they comply with predetermined criteria);
 - ✓ introducing optional working from home for experts in line with current DG-RTD's procedures applied for "remote contribution"; and by
 - ✓ introducing optional expert participation in expert meetings by means of telephone or video conference or similar tools. It is further proposed that generally all plenary meetings will be held in Parma.
- Facilitate the work through a more favourable special indemnity for experts attending meetings of the Scientific Panels and Committee and their working groups as well as other scientific expert working groups with a similar work process. This would comprise an increase of the special indemnity from € 300 to € 400 and a per diem of € 150 independent of the location of the meeting. A non-flexible ticketing regime shall be implemented to account for the increased budget needed to cover the raise in the special indemnity
- Issue an updated Expert Compensation Guide and Policy on Expert Meetings before the new Scientific Panels and Committee will be established in May 2006.

c) *Implementation of tools to provide a professional and/or moral recognition of the work carried out by the experts for EFSA*

EFSA endorses the proposals made by the Scientific Committee to show its appreciation for the energy and time spent by experts in their work for EFSA as follows:

- Issue a harmonized certificate, on request, for any interested expert working for the Scientific Panels, Committee or their working groups, explaining the duration and nature of the work carried out by that expert for EFSA.
- Develop appropriate tools for further dissemination of EFSA's scientific opinions and reports in line with the plans outlined in the Management Plan 2006 and with consideration of the proposals made by the Scientific Committee in its position paper.
- Continue, jointly with the Commission, the formalisation of the use of a template for feedback from the risk managers on the usefulness of EFSA's scientific opinions.