



PROPOSAL FOR MANAGEMENT BOARD CONCLUSIONS OF THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF EFSA AND RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE REPORT

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION:

- Further the development of active networking with Member States and strengthening the involvement/cooperation with national competent authorities
- Enhance EFSA's internal organisation,
- Strengthen EFSA's relationship with its EU institutional partners
- Enhance impact and effectiveness of EFSA risk communications
- Define a strategic action plan for the next 5 years

INTRODUCTION

1. In December 2005 the evaluation of EFSA as carried out in compliance with Article 61 of EFSA founding Regulation¹ was finalised and reported to the Board by *Bureau van Dijk Ingénieurs Conseils* and *Arcadia International*. In January 2006 the report, with annex, was published on EFSA's website for public consultation which concluded on 28 February 2006. The Evaluation Report was also discussed by:

- the Scientific Committee,
- the Advisory Forum,
- the EFSA Stakeholder Consultative Platform and
- EFSA staff.

2. At the Management Board Away Day of 28 March, representatives of each of these groups presented their views and participated in the discussions of the Management Board. The Management Board was aware that the evaluation had been carried out at a time when the organisation had only been in operation for two years and was still very much in the process of establishing its working procedures. However, the Management Board also recognized the advantages of such an early review as it would allow procedures to be adapted and new strategies developed, as appropriate, at a time when procedures were not yet "carved in stone".

3. The Management Board Away Day discussions revealed that most of the issues of concern as expressed through the public consultation, or by any of the four entities referred to in paragraph 1, were very much in line with the issues raised in the report.

¹ Regulation 2002/178

Exceptions were comments made by Environmental NGOs which expressed concern about the scientific quality, transparency and impartiality of EFSA's GMO work, a concern that was not shared by the evaluators.

4. This document is intended to assist the Management Board by facilitating its final discussion of the Evaluation Report, to draw conclusions from it and agree on an action plan including possible recommendations to the European Commission.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE EVALUATION

5. The main results of the report were positive and find EFSA to be a thriving organisation where scientific excellence is uppermost, where in the main, the provision of scientific advice to the European Community legislative process is delivered within agreed deadlines and communication on food and feed safety is increasingly coordinated across the European Institutions, Member States and indeed internationally. The report notes that EFSA has only been operational for three years and has therefore achieved an enormous amount in a short time. The public consultation also revealed support among EFSA's institutional partners and stakeholders and showed that EFSA has a growing reputation as an open and transparent organisation which is delivering its mandate.

6. However the report also noted that like all young organisations EFSA is suffering from growing pains and needs to carefully assess its internal structures and procedures. It also focuses on EFSA developing further its networking with Member State organisations and other key players, and ensuring the continuing development of good institutional relations.

7. It is recognised that the report presents a snapshot in time and EFSA has moved on considerably since then. In fact, several of the findings have already been, or are currently being addressed (e.g. the move to Parma has been successfully completed; the procedure to establish a 9th Expert Panel on Plant Health is completed; a Communications strategy has been laid down in a document presented to the MB; a SC project on transparency has been initiated; and cooperation with Member States and stakeholders have been strengthened considerably by the increased involvement of the Advisory Forum in EFSA's scientific work and the establishment of the Stakeholders Consultative Platform). These, and other aspects are described, respectively, in the Management Plan for 2006, adopted by the Board on 24 January 2006, the Preliminary Draft Establishment Plan for 2007 adopted by the Board on 27 March 2006 and the Communication Strategy shared with the Board in its meeting of 24 January 2006.

8. The Evaluation report identified 8 priority areas for action in the coming three years as follows:

- Develop cooperation/active networking with MS bodies;
- Expand scientific staffing for the Panel Units and Scientific Expert Services (SES);
- Conduct successfully the EFSA relocation to Parma;

- Improve communication;
- Consolidate EFSA organisation at general level;
- Consolidate EFSA organisation at the scientific level;
- Ensure seamless adequacy between resources and activities; and
- Pay attention to good relationships with European institutions and stakeholders;

In addition it made 2 recommendations concerning both EFSA and DG SANCO as follows:

- Stimulate good practices, mutual respect and crisis exercises mainly between EFSA and DG SANCO; and
- Improve interactions with a view to increasing the timeliness of scientific opinions.

It further recognised 4 topics for the Management Board to take into account in its strategic planning:

- Defining a three-year plan on completing EFSA's establishment including the execution of all provisions of Regulation 178/2002;
- Assess whether the relatively low weight given to nutrition issues should be increased;
- Develop a vision and a roadmap of what EFSA will be in the next 10 years; and
- Explore the relationship between science and policy.

9. The Board fully supports the findings in the report and the views expressed during the consultation process. The Board's recommendations focus on EFSA's continuing to build its reputation as the reference point for risk assessment related to food and feed safety in Europe. It emphasises the importance of ensuring that EFSA continues to provide risk managers and stakeholders with excellent, timely, accurate and helpful scientific opinions, prepared in a transparent way and communicating outcomes effectively to all interested parties and the public at large.

10. Therefore the Board has 5 main recommendations :

- Further the development of active networking with MS and strengthening the involvement/cooperation with national competent authorities
- Enhance EFSA's internal organisation
- Strengthen EFSA's relationship with its EU institutional partners
- Enhance impact and effectiveness of EFSA risk communications
- Define a strategic plan for the next 5 years

PRIORITY AREA NO.1:

DEVELOP ACTIVE NETWORKING WITH MEMBER STATES AND A STRONGER COOPERATION WITH NATIONAL COMPETENT AUTHORITIES IN EFSA'S ACTIVITIES

11. The Board appreciates current initiatives and developments of the Advisory Forum and its Working Group on Information Exchange by National Authorities aimed at achieving a high level of coordinated information exchange and cooperation of EFSA with national competent authorities.

12. The Board recommends that:

- collaboration with national competent authorities be fostered through further development of the activities of the Advisory Forum and its working groups. In particular the Board recommends that EFSA focuses the activities of the Advisory Forum towards greater collaboration on: (i) exchanging and sharing scientific data and information, (ii) developing harmonized methodologies for risk assessment and (iii) sharing best practices in order to reinforce both the credibility and coherence of scientific opinions.
- EFSA develops further its dialogue on its work programmes and those of the national competent authorities to identify and prioritise joint initiatives and to avoid duplication of effort;
- EFSA ensures that the Member States are fully informed of the activities of the Scientific Committee and Panels and are able to contribute scientific information at the earliest stages to their work.
- EFSA continues to foster collaboration on communication activities with the Member States through the Advisory Forum's Communications working group and in particular through the pre-notification of communication materials in advance of release.
- EFSA makes the fullest use of its other networks, within the frame of article 36, to share scientific information and open dialogue.
- The practical infra-structure for the greater involvement of the Member States is given the highest priority and appropriate resources within EFSA. In this respect the Board encourages EFSA to ensure that the EFSA Extranet which facilitates exchanges of scientific and communications information is developed into a fully functioning and active tool.

PRIORITY AREA NO. 2:

ENHANCING EFSA'S INTERNAL ORGANISATION

Consolidate the EFSA Organisation

13. As indicated in the evaluation report, EFSA is no more a small team but has become a medium size organization in need of a more coherent organizational structure and more formalized ways to function as well as adequate supporting tools. In view of further growth and developments expected in the next five to ten years with EFSA reaching cruising speed and new tasks arising from EU existing and planned legislation, it is felt that EFSA should be geared towards greater effectiveness and efficiency through a somewhat revised organisation structure and development of a high performance-culture based on management tools and systems and should attract and retain a high quality work force.

14. The Board recommends that EFSA management implements without delay the following :

- EFSA revises its organization chart in order to enhance the sense of common purpose, improve clarity of roles and streamline decision taking and reporting lines.
- The structural improvements should be accompanied with enhanced clarity of roles and responsibilities of departments and individual, in particular through clear(er) assignments, work and information flows and meaningful and more consistent job descriptions. Decision and reporting lines should be clearly spelled out so that the organization can ultimately provide sustained leadership
- EFSA develops management tools and processes so as to facilitate day to day management. These should include by mid 2007 a further refinement and improvement of performance indicators so as to be increasingly oriented towards measuring the quality of EFSA outputs. As appropriate the possibility of benchmarking with comparable organizations in the food safety area should be investigated.

15. EFSA's Management Board's recommends that its own role be further developed in line with the changing needs of the growing Authority. The start up phase in which the Board was proactively developing internal rules and the administrative framework within which EFSA should function is now in place. The Board report notes the recognition of this in the report and will itself seek a closer involvement in the policy decisions and direction of EFSA through such activities and subject specific Board working groups and steering committees.

16. The Scientific Panels and Scientific Committee renewed in June 2006 are expected to continue providing scientific and technical advice in response to questions raised by the European Commission, the European Parliament, Member States and on its own initiative. The capacity of the Scientific Committee and Panels is defined by the availability of its expert members which

is limited to 6-8 plenary meetings per year. The Management Board is aware that the current workload have 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).

17. In order to achieve the necessary increase of scientific output of EFSA despite these limitations, the Board recommends that by December 2006 a document be made available for its consideration defining the strategic orientations for the organisation of the scientific work. This strategy should consider in particular the main following issues :

- EFSA milestones and objectives aimed at finding a better balance in the distribution of work over the Scientific Panels, the Scientific Committee and EFSA's scientific staff.
- a proposal to increase the maximum size of the Scientific Expert Panels and the number of independent experts of the Scientific Committee.
- a proposal for requesting adjustments in the size and disciplines covered in the various Panels, including options to redistribute the tasks of the AFC and CONTAM Panels over three new Panels.
- a further involvement and expansion of the Scientific Expert Services in providing horizontal scientific support to the Scientific Panels and Committee in various areas such as data collection, exposure assessment, toxicology and epidemiology.
- steps to improve and make more transparent EFSA's procedures for handling and acceptance of questions and for adoption of opinions, and considers ways to improve the work conditions and the recognition of the work carried out by the members of the Scientific Panels, Scientific Committee and their working groups.
- increasing the transparency of its risk assessment procedures, its scientific judgements and the way it selects the experts for the Scientific Committee, the respective Panels and Task Forces and their working groups.
- Outsourcing of work to the national authorities, notably through the implementation of the network provided for in Article 36 of EFSA's Founding Regulation.

Recruitment Process of Staff

18. The Board recommends that:

- the dialogue between EFSA and Commission enables an appropriate allocation of resources and adaptation of the workload imposed by the Commission on EFSA to a level commensurate with the resources available in 2007 and until its full establishment.
- EFSA continues to reinforce its staff recruitment process in full compliance with applicable rules, taking into account the findings and recommendation of control bodies (European Court of Auditors, Commission Internal Audit Service).
- EFSA develops a medium-term strategy with respect to the functioning of the SES, taking into account: (i) expected priority areas of work, (ii) required areas of expertise and (iii) Panel units in need of temporary specific support and addressing the expected overall size of the SES, work units and tasks other than

supporting the SC/Panel Units (e.g., organization of science colloquiums, setting up and maintaining data bases, possible scientific self-tasks).

Ensure Seamless Adequacy Between Resources and Activities

19. A revised planning was developed based on the experience of the first years of activity, the continued expansion of EFSA and the recommended consolidation of its structures and activities. Therefore, the revised planning incorporates a less steep increase of both financial and human resources, takes into account the foreseeable new tasks to be devoted to EFSA in the short term while taking into account the extra burden of the relocation to Parma (connections to and from, frequency of missions, organisation of meetings, salary weightings). It ends up with a lower number of staff (375 rather than 400) and a reduction of EUR 88 million compared to the initial planning (a total of EUR 450 million instead of 538 million over the period 2007-2013) and adheres to the new financial perspectives period ranging from 2007 to 2013.

20. It is worth mentioning that the revised planning is only based on the European community contribution. It is possible that in the future there may be recommendations for some aspects of EFSA's work to also attract fees from applicants wishing EFSA to undertake a scientific evaluation. The Commission is currently preparing a report on the feasibility of a Co-Decision proposal for EFSA to charge fees for some of its work. The Board recommends that it is involved at the earliest stages in the discussions on the possibility of fees and that no decision is made until (i) full consideration has been given to the possible negative impact on EFSA's independence and working methods and (ii) the assessment about the level of fee revenue it could generate has been done.

21. The allocation of resources, both financial and human will be benchmarked against the experienced workload on the one hand and the priorities, working program and action plans set up for each year on the other hand. In practice, the current system based on clear definition of the job profiles and justified requests for financial means will be further substantiated.

22. Productivity gains and efficiency savings can be obtained within the consolidation phase by improving management and IT tools, through streamlined procedures and a rigorous search for efficiency in both the operational and support services. They will allow for absorbing more work while containing both the work force and the financial means.

23. The Board recommends that :

- EFSA further investigates, in co-operation with the Commission the merits of a complementary fee based funding.
- EFSA sets up a management tools allowing better follow-up of the activities, priorities and ensuing allocation of resources.
- EFSA strives for productivity gains and efficiency savings.

Issues Related to EFSA's Seat in Parma

24. The additional expenditures related to the relocation to Parma are twofold i.e.; the connections to and from Parma not only for the staff missions but also for the experts participating to the meetings and the salary weightings which represent a 12 % increase on the staff remuneration. The procedure for the renewal of the expert panels was finalised early June without the location of Parma having apparently created significant shortage of applicants. However, and in line with the proposed organization of the work of the panels, the recourse to alternative like video conference and/or expert tele-working schemes will be developed as appropriate. One challenges of the Parma location is the distance with the European Parliament and the Commission. It would therefore be useful to have small functional office in Brussels in order to enhance the co-operation with these institutions.

25. The Board recommends that :

- EFSA conducts an evaluation on the additional expenditures related to Parma
- EFSA develops a meeting approach which balances needs and includes alternative possibilities for expert meetings through videoconferencing and/or tele-working schemes (by October 2006)

PRIORITY AREA NO.3:

STRENGTHENING EFSA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

Relationship with the Commission and European Parliament

26. The Board places the highest priority on the development of good working relations with EFSA's institutional partners and building appropriate dialogue with stakeholder groups with a legitimate interest in the work of EFSA.

27. The Board recommends that :

- EFSA seeks a more formalised basis for its relations with the European Parliament through an exchange of letters to identify how the two bodies can interact and maximise collaboration. EFSA's profile in the European Parliament should be strengthened through its presence on a regular basis in the Environment Committee and other relevant committees covering EFSA matters. In addition the Board recommends that EFSA's Executive Director regularly presents the work of EFSA to the European Parliament and seeks members' views on EFSA priorities and work programme.
- In relation to its contacts with the Council, EFSA meets with the Presidencies both before and during their terms to identify how EFSA can facilitate the work of the Council without compromising its independence from the political process.

28. The Board recognises that EFSA's main customer is the European Commission and that EFSA's primary function is to provide the scientific basis to

food law as defined in Regulation 2002/178 in support of Community policies in this field.

29. The Board notes that EFSA and the Commission have already done much to develop appropriate working practices in relation to the formulation of questions, timelines of requests for Opinions, clock stopping and other matters referred to in the Evaluation Report but there are some areas where improvements are needed.

30. The Board recommends that:

- EFSA continues to foster good working relations with the European Commission through regular dialogue at the highest level and also at the working level. The Board encourages EFSA and the Commission to hold regular high level meetings to identify strategic objectives, to brief one another on upcoming hot topics and to ensure a seamless risk assessment risk management interface between and enhance cooperation on risk communication activities.
- EFSA and the Commission seek ways to improve the practical aspects of reducing unrealistic expectations or bottlenecks. However on a broader principle the Board recommends to the Commission that it ensures that EFSA is consulted in a timely manner on legislative texts and other reports or recommendations which may have an impact on EFSA's work and/or resources. This will enable EFSA to plan for future work loads, request in time adequate resources to cover any increase in work load and help avoid inconsistencies in legislation in relation to EFSA's working methodologies.

Relationship with Third Countries, International Organisations and Stakeholders

31. The Board also recognises that EFSA's growing reputation as a centre of excellence for science in food and feed safety brings it more and more into the international arena. As a European Community body EFSA's role is scoped in many areas by agreements between the European Community and international and third country bodies and also its founding Regulation.

32. The Board recommends that

- EFSA presents an international strategy to the Board for its agreement which takes into consideration the many existing agreements and arrangements and which at the same time provides EFSA with a basis for a more considered and planned approach to its international relations.
The Board also encourages EFSA to continue to develop its pre-accession programme and other collaborative work in the wider Europe.

33. The Board recognises the positive start that EFSA has made to developing its relations with its non-institutional stakeholders through a range of initiatives.

34. The Board recommends that :

- EFSA continues to foster strong relations with its stakeholders through the continuation of the Stakeholder Consultative Platform, bi-lateral meetings, the annual stakeholder colloque and its regular consultations of important scientific

and other reports both on the web and at meetings. The Board further recommends that EFSA develops transparent and consistent methodologies for consultations and programmes in advance more clearly the areas on which it intends to consult and by which method.

PRIORITY AREA NO. 4:

ENHANCE IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS OF EFSA RISK COMMUNICATIONS

35. At the 25th meeting of the Management Board held 29 March in London, the Board reviewed and endorsed EFSA's risk communications strategy and plans. The

The Board acknowledges that EFSA's Communications strategy as well as the 5 strategic directions laid down in the 2007 Management Plan address many of the key points raised in the EFSA Evaluation. In this context, the Board would like to underline in particular several recommendations to guide future developments of EFSA's Communications activities.

36. The Board recommends that:

- EFSA further explores, before the end of 2006, opportunities for establishing closer links and articulation of communications with intermediaries, and notably with national food safety authorities. In addition to collaboration in further dissemination of EFSA's scientific advice, projects relating to public perception research or media information could be envisaged. EFSA develop, in collaboration with the European Commission and Member States, common consumer research methodology in order to assess and monitor over time public perception regarding food and feed safety and the role of public authorities in this domain.

37. The Board Recommends that :

- EFSA pursue initiatives to better meet the needs of non-technical audiences. To this end, the work initiated by EFSA in Spring 2006 to redesign its website should be given priority in order to make the content more accessible and easier to read and understand by non-scientists.
- EFSA develop an action plan to further leverage the Authority's corporate mission and scientific expertise by November 2006 which could include: the organisation of information seminars on collaboration with third parties, notably for the media; publication of scientific articles in peer-review journals; collaboration with a scientific publishing house to expand outreach; participation in major conferences and scientific events etc... Such activities would also allow the opportunity to further promote and explain EFSA's mission, role and work programme.
- EFSA continues to enhance its collaboration with Member States through the Advisory Forum and the European Commission, highlighting also the need for

an open, two-way dialogue. The Board urges EFSA and the European Commission to liaise in a timely manner on all emerging issues in order to coordinate advice given at EU level by risk assessors and risk managers, involving other parties as appropriate (eg Member States, other agencies such as ECDC etc...). In doing so, the Board upholds the view that EFSA's role is to provide scientific information about risks associated with the food chain including, where desirable and needed, advice to allow consumers to make their own informed choices about the foods they select.

PRIORITY 5 :

DEFINING A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS

Action Plan for the Completion of the Establishment of EFSA

38. In order to provide full transparency on outstanding implementation aspects of EFSA's establishment including its preparedness for the execution of all provisions of its founding Regulation 178/2002, the Management Board and EFSA management could jointly prepare an action plan with a detailed time table for all mile.

39. The Management Board recommends that:

- EFSA prepares a proposal for an action plan which includes: (i) the expected date of reaching the target number of staff, (ii) target dates for the implementation of various management tools including internal control standards, standard operating procedures and time-management tools, (iii) target dates for the full establishment of the various data collections and networks, (iv) target dates for being prepared in terms of infrastructure and adequate resources for all tasks defined in Regulations known today, and (v) the expected dates of having established and defined cooperation agreements with international organisations, food safety agencies in non-EU countries and other institutions, as appropriate.

Level of involvement of EFSA in nutritional issues

It is clear that the changing political and policy environment places a greater emphasis on the relation between diet, nutrition and health.

The Board recommends that:

- EFSA clarifies its role in the area of nutrition and health taking into account the changing legislative framework on nutrition, health claims and the growing public interest and political debate on these matters.
- EFSA takes into consideration the views of the European Commission, Council and European Parliament as well as its key stakeholders in order to develop its policy and long term strategy in this area

Long-term vision of EFSA's role and functions

The Management Board recognises the need for a long-term vision and strategy plan covering at least 10 years.

The Board recommends that:

- EFSA develops its vision for the Boards consideration on what it could or should be in 10 years from now. This should include a roadmap of expected events influencing EFSA's role and position, such as further enlargement of the EU, cooperation with non-EU countries, anticipated priority areas of concern, level of involvement of national food safety agencies in EFSA's work, connections with the European Parliament and expected evolution of risk assessment/risk management links.