



EFSA RISK COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY AND PLANS

September 2006

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At the 21st Management Board meeting of October 27 2005, the Management Board asked for EFSA's communications strategies to be discussed at an upcoming meeting. It was agreed that EFSA would develop a paper for review by the Board outlining its risk communications strategy and taking into consideration the recommendations on external communications made by the independent consultancy in charge of the EFSA evaluation carried out in 2005¹. At the 25th meeting of the Management Board held 29 March 2006, the Board reviewed a document outlining EFSA's risk communications strategy and plans². Following an initial discussion by the Board, the document was then presented to the Scientific Committee, the Advisory Forum, the Advisory Forum Working Group on Communications, EFSA's Advisory Group on Risk Communications and the Stakeholder Consultative Platform.

2. EFSA's overall approach to risk communications has met with broad support from all parties and the Authority is now submitting to the Management Board for endorsement a final document taking into account feedback and input obtained through this consultative process. In its review of the conclusions of the external evaluation of EFSA, the Management Board acknowledged that EFSA's Communications strategy addressed many of the key points raised. The formalisation of EFSA's Communications strategy and its endorsement by the Board are a first step in the implementation of the Board's recommendations arising from the evaluation report to "enhance the impact and effectiveness of EFSA Communications" (Priority area n°4)³.

II. EFSA RISK COMMUNICATIONS: BACKGROUND AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

3. The European Food Safety Authority was created following a series of food crises (eg BSE, dioxins...) which undermined consumer confidence in the safety of the food chain and led to serious public and political concern regarding the capacity of existing authorities to fully protect consumer interests. It was therefore decided to establish a new scientific advisory body charged with providing an *independent and objective source of advice on food safety issues* while the European Commission, European Parliament and Member States retained responsibility for risk management.

¹ http://www.efsa.europa.eu/etc/medialib/efsa/mboard/122.Par.0004.File.dat/final_report_evaluation1.pdf

² http://www.efsa.europa.eu/etc/medialib/efsa/mboard/mb_meetings/1314.Par.0010.File.dat/mb_communicationstrategy_24meet_en_1.pdf

³ http://www.efsa.europa.eu/etc/medialib/efsa/mboard/mb_meetings/1542.Par.0005.File.dat/mb_externalevaluation_26rdmeet_en_4_1.pdf

4. The principal objective set out in the White Paper on Food Safety⁴ for the creation of a future European Food Authority was to “... contribute to a high level of consumer health protection in the area of food safety, through which consumer confidence can be restored and maintained.”

► Effective risk communication based on the highest level of scientific expertise is required to achieve this goal.

5. The legal basis for the role of the European Food Safety Authority in risk communications is established in Regulation (EC) N° 178/2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety (O.J. N° L 31 of 1 February 2002)⁵.

6. The regulatory requirements relating to EFSA’s role in risk communication are as follows:

- To ensure that the public and interested parties receive rapid, reliable, objective and comprehensible information in the fields within its mission (Article 23).
- The Authority shall communicate on its own initiative in the fields within its mission without prejudice to the Commission’s competence to communicate its risk management decisions (Article 40).
- The Authority shall act in close collaboration with the Commission and the Member States to promote the necessary coherence in the risk communication process (Article 40).
- At the request of the Commission, the Authority shall provide assistance concerning communication on nutritional issues within the framework of the Community health programme (Article 22)

III. EFSA RISK COMMUNICATIONS: MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

7. The overall purpose of EFSA Risk communications is to provide appropriate, consistent, accurate and timely communications on food and feed safety issues, to all interested parties and stakeholders and to the public at large, based on the Authority’s risk assessments and scientific expertise.

8. A critical success factor in achieving this goal lies in EFSA’s ability to establish itself as an authoritative and trusted voice with regards to food safety concerns.

9. By providing risk managers with independent scientific assessments of the highest quality and disseminating such advice through effective risk communications in collaboration with the European Commission and authorities in Member States, EFSA strives to build public confidence in the risk assessment process.

10. More specifically, EFSA’s objectives in the area of risk communications are as follows:

- Establish the Authority as an expert and trusted source of information on food and feed safety issues (within its risk assessment mandate).

⁴ http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/wpr/1999/com1999_0719en01.pdf

⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32002R0178:EN:HTML>

- Promote the Authority's reputation as an organisation dedicated to scientific excellence, independence, openness and transparency.
- Ensure that messages are relevant, understandable and address food safety concerns.
- Enhance the coherence of information on food safety matters across the Community.

IV. EFSA RISK COMMUNICATIONS: OVERALL STRATEGY

****Understand consumer and public perception of food, risk and risks associated with the food chain***

11. Many factors influence consumer attitudes to food and food safety, public perception of risk, reactions to potential risk and willingness to accept scientific uncertainty surrounding risk. The development of effective risk communications messages therefore requires an in-depth knowledge of target audiences including: their level of awareness and understanding of food safety issues; their attitudes to food in general and food safety in particular; the possible impact of communications on behaviour; and the appropriate channels for effective dissemination of messages

****Bridge the gap between science and the consumer***

12. In order to be effective, risk communications must explain and contextualize risk. In developing public communications, EFSA seeks to translate scientific evidence into clear, accessible and meaningful messages, addressing the needs of key audiences. In addition to explaining risk assessment findings, risk communications must also, where required, provide clear advice to the recipients as to whether individual action is required and set out clearly any action steps recommended for governments and/or industry. This requires close collaboration between risk assessors and risk managers, taking into account their respective roles.

****Harness support of key actors in order to reach consumers with pertinent and effective messages***

13. EFSA seeks to involve national food safety authorities in Member States and stakeholders both in the development and dissemination of its scientific advice in order to ensure that messages are culturally sensitive and address appropriately public concerns. EFSA liaises closely with national food safety authorities through its Advisory Forum and Advisory Forum Communications Working Group (which brings together all of the Heads of Communications from national food safety authorities) so as to facilitate timely and consistent dissemination of risk communications messages across the Community. The European Commission is also associated throughout this process. EFSA also seeks to involve stakeholders from consumer associations and other NGOs as well as industry in the development and dissemination of risk communications messages.

****Promote coherent risk communications across the Risk Assessment/Risk Management interface***

14. Risk communications is a joint accountability of risk assessors and risk managers. EFSA's own role in risk communications is to inform risk managers, national authorities, stakeholders and the public at large about food and feed safety issues and

to provide scientific advice in an open and transparent manner. For EFSA, co-ordination with risk managers (in particular the European Commission and national food safety authorities in Member States), whilst maintaining the Authority's independence, is critical to ensure coherence of public communications.

15. Such an approach is particularly important where a risk in the food chain has been identified and confirmed and an increase in public awareness is required. In such instances, EFSA's role is to provide scientific information about risks associated with the food chain including, where desirable or needed, advice to allow consumers to make their own informed choices about the foods they select. By providing the general public with objective, reliable and easily understandable information on the results of its work, EFSA is fulfilling its mission to restore consumer confidence, as laid down in its Founding Regulation. In doing so, EFSA works closely with both the European Commission and Member States in order to provide appropriate public advice whilst ensuring that such advice is complementary to, and consistent with, any risk management measures communicated by these institutions.

V. KEY TARGET AUDIENCES

16. Given the different levels of consumer awareness, interest in and attitudes towards communications on food, food safety, nutrition and health, it is neither possible nor desirable for EFSA to seek to address the resulting diverse and multiple information needs of consumers in Member States through a single and unique message disseminated across Europe. When crafting effective communications, one size does not fit all.

Who does EFSA communicate to?



17. EFSA's communications strategy therefore focuses on "influencing the influencers," and on providing those organisations who engage regularly in consumer communications at national level as well as stakeholder and other groups in direct contact with consumers, with the information they require and with messages which can be further adapted and tailored to meet specific audience needs. Media are an important conduit and channel for reaching these groups as well as a broader audience with more targeted messages.

18. The primary targets or recipients of EFSA's scientific advice are in fact those who commission work from the Authority and/or have a particular involvement or interest in food and feed safety issues. These include: the European institutions who can task the Authority to carry out scientific work (ie the European Commission, European Parliament and Member States); national food safety authorities; stakeholders with a specific interest in the food chain (including industry, consumer organisations, environmental and other NGOs); stakeholders from the scientific and academic communities; and other audiences with a particular interest in food and food safety issues (eg health professional groups).

19. All of the opinions of EFSA's Scientific Panels and EFSA's own advice are ultimately available to the public at large, notably through their publication on the Authority's website. Whilst EFSA's scientific advice is technical in nature and cannot cater to all the information needs of the public at large, it must nevertheless be understandable to non-scientists and within a broader public audience be meaningful and relevant to those with an interest in EFSA's work and notably to an informed layperson.

VI. COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

20. How does EFSA communicate its scientific advice?

Communications and outreach strategies cover a broad spectrum including: timely provision of scientific findings through publication on the EFSA web site; targeted mailings to specific audiences; media relations; organisation of colloquia, workshops and/or conferences to exchange points of view and debate findings; and depending on the nature of the risk assessment and where warranted, a more proactive dissemination of findings through press releases and/or media briefings.

The sections hereunder outline the major components and tools of EFSA's communications action plan including:

- understanding public perception of risk
- development of EFSA public announcements
- media relations
- web
- publications
- collaboration with national food safety authorities.

VI.1 UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF RISK

Consumer perception research

21. In 2005, EFSA initiated research to investigate the views of consumers on risks associated with the food chain. EFSA and the Health and Consumer Protection Directorate General (DG SANCO), commissioned a Eurobarometer on risk perception, carried out in 25 Member States in the autumn of 2005. Findings from this research provide invaluable input to both organisations regarding consumer attitudes to risk, perceptions and concerns regarding food safety as well as the role of public authorities in addressing concerns and ensuring the safety of the food chain. This research also provides valuable insights to national food safety authorities in addition to that carried out at national level. It is intended that this survey provide a benchmark and be

repeated in future in order to evaluate trends in public perception over time and to help monitor the effectiveness of public policies and programmes.

22. In addition to this quantitative research, EFSA proposes in future to carry out qualitative research on certain themes, for instance in the context of a new, emerging risk. Focus group research could be utilised to test consumers' understanding and the impact of communications messages on target audiences, taking into account the special needs of vulnerable groups.

Expert Advisory Group on Risk Communications

23. EFSA established in 2005 an expert Advisory Group on Risk Communications (AGRC), reporting to the Executive Director⁶. Members of this group have a wide range of expertise in risk communications (eg sociology, anthropology, consumer science, psychology...) and reflect Europe's wide cultural diversity. The AGRC provides advice to the Executive Director on risk communications issues and practices, thereby assisting EFSA in the implementation of its mission with respect to risk communications. It is expected that this group will provide EFSA in 2006 with an annual review on key themes addressed by the Authority (and other risk assessment bodies) based on the analysis of resulting media coverage. Topics will include such themes as: the safety and nutritional contribution of fish; GMOs; BSE risk in goats etc... The outputs will be shared and reviewed with members of the Advisory Forum Working Group on Communications in order to garner learning and establish lessons learned in an ongoing effort to develop and promote best practices on risk communications within the Community.

VI.2 EFSA PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

24. In determining its communication strategy with regards to its scientific opinions and advice, EFSA takes into account considerations such as:

- the significance of the risk assessment results (eg routine vs new findings);
- the nature of the risk (eg emerging, possible, identified and confirmed);
- the potential public health impact;
- public perception and anticipated reactions;
- the legislative and market contexts, as appropriate.

25. EFSA tailors its communications approach to provide the appropriate level and depth of information whilst respecting its overall mandate of openness and transparency. EFSA has established an internal Science Communications Committee (involving the Executive Director, Director of Science, Director of Communications and Press Office staff and the Director of International and Institutional Relations) in order to review the Authority's work programme, at minimum on a quarterly basis, and define a forward planning calendar with respect to communications requirements related to upcoming scientific issues, opinions and/or events. In addition to publication of opinions on the Authority's website, the Committee reviews and determines which opinions should be supported by more proactive communications including: news alerts, press statements, press releases, press briefings and/or inclusion in the Authority's bimonthly newsletter, EFSAnews, or other publications.

⁶ http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/about_efsa/communicating_risk/adv_group_risk_comm.html

26. All the opinions adopted by EFSA's Scientific Committee and Panels are published on the Authority's website. A summary outlining key findings is published along with the opinion and made available in the languages of the website. Whilst the Opinions are drafted in English, the recognised language of the international scientific community, summaries are provided also in French, German and Italian in order to facilitate their understanding and uptake, notably by the media. All third parties with a specific interest in EFSA's work can subscribe to the EFSA Highlights mailing in order to receive, by email, notification of new additions to the EFSA website, and notably to be alerted of the publication of scientific opinions.

27. Explanatory Notes: In order to address the information requirements of the non-technical reader, EFSA's Scientific Committee agreed in October 2005 that EFSA would provide, where useful and in addition to the technical summary included in EFSA's Scientific Opinions, an additional explanatory note. Piloted in October 2005, EFSA will further develop this approach, notably in the context of the redesign of its website.

28. Press statements or press releases are drafted for scientific opinions considered to be more "sensitive" and/or of broader public interest. Whilst both press statements and press releases are published on the EFSA website, press releases are in addition actively distributed to media. Considerations taken into account in determining whether press statements and/or press releases will be prepared include: the novelty of the scientific findings or risk assessment; the level of stakeholder and/or public interest; the presentation of a possible controversial point of view; legislative deadlines; and possible risk management implications ensuing from the scientific advice.

28.1 EFSA public announcements related to scientific opinions have concerned themes such as: semicarbazide and baby food; GMO risk assessments; contaminants in fish (methylmercury; safety of wild and farmed fish); labelling of allergenic foods; health effects of trans fatty acids; animal health and welfare (transport, stunning, laboratory animals); BSE (BSE risk in UK, GBR assessments, Specified Risk Materials, BSE in goats..); microbiological risks in infant formula; avian influenza, aspartame ...

28.2 EFSA also issues press releases on corporate announcements and activities. In 2005, EFSA published 46 press releases and statements, 30 of which were science-related. Over 18% of the opinions adopted by EFSA's panels were supported by media relations activities.

29. Press briefings are organised to present opinions for which there is a high level of stakeholder and public interest and/or for which there may be more immediate risk management implications. In these instances, a more complete and direct briefing of media will help ensure common understanding and consistency of messages, particularly if the communications includes advice to consumers. Close co-ordination with risk managers is required in such instances.

29.1 EFSA has held relatively few press briefings to date. These have addressed topics such as: semicarbazide and baby food; GMO risk assessments; trans fatty acids; aspartame and BSE risk in goats in addition to corporate events and announcements.

VI.3 MEDIA RELATIONS

30. Media constitute an important and trusted source of information for consumers in Europe regarding food and food safety issues. Since its establishment, EFSA has strived to develop and implement appropriate tools, processes and systems to better serve the media and optimise communications efforts.

31. In addition to the drafting of press releases and statements, EFSA makes available additional background information and Q&As to further explain complex concepts and more technical scientific opinions to the media. Fact sheets outlining EFSA's organisation and work are developed on an ongoing basis to meet growing information requirements. EFSA will pursue this work in future in order to better tailor information delivery to the needs of media target audiences.

32. The EFSA press office is composed of a team of multi-lingual communications professionals able to manage media relations in 6 of the EU's official languages (Dutch, French, English, German, Italian and Spanish). In the context of future recruitment, EFSA's Communications department will seek to continue to expand its language proficiency skills to address those of the new Member States. The inclusion of trained scientists in the team facilitates understanding of scientific concepts required for drafting and communications of risk assessment methodology and findings.

33. In addition to the preparation of press materials and the organisation of press briefings, the EFSA press office handles media queries from general and specialised press on a daily basis and organises media briefings and interviews to convey EFSA positions on a wide range of corporate and scientific issues. EFSA's press office has established a comprehensive database of over 1000 national, European and international media contacts with an interest in EFSA's activities and actively sends out its press releases and other information (eg. new alerts, tailored announcements by topic and/or country, etc...) to these journalists on a regular basis.

34. EFSA has established and agreed guiding principles between the Authority and the Scientific Committee and Panels and their working groups with respect to handling media relations related to the communication of EFSA's scientific advice⁷. These reflect EFSA's general commitment to openness, to the clear communications of scientific findings and to providing a proper level of support to the independent members of the Scientific Committee and Panels.

35. These guidelines stipulate that the EFSA Communications department will provide the main point of contact between EFSA, the Scientific Committee and Panels and the media. EFSA undertakes to consult the Chairperson or if not available a Vice-Chair before making any substantive new media comment on the work of the Scientific Committee and Panels. Similarly, EFSA keeps the Chairperson informed of relevant developing media interests or stories related to the work of the Panels.

36. Whilst the responsibility for the public presentation of Opinions rests with EFSA, the Authority will only undertake this in close consultation with the Chairperson of the Scientific Committee or relevant Panel, as indicated above. (*The process for the development of public announcements is outlined in Annex 1*).

⁷ http://www.efsa.europa.eu/etc/medialib/efsa/mboard/mb_meetings/95.Par.0007.File.dat/mboard_meeting_012_doc7_en1.pdf

Media Training

37. EFSA has organised training programmes in order to support and strengthen the effectiveness of EFSA spokespeople in relaying key messages to the media and to the public at large. Such sessions have included relevant staff from EFSA Science and Communications departments as well as the Chairs of the EFSA Scientific Committee and Panels. EFSA will pursue these training programmes taking into account changes in staff and panel membership as appropriate.

Media Monitoring and Evaluation

38. Since the establishment of its press office, EFSA has carried out in-house media monitoring based on a limited number of search parameters in order to assess and improve the impact of its press activities. These media monitoring results are shared regularly with EFSA's Management Team, scientific and other staff members. EFSA has recently acquired access to professional media monitoring services and is currently working with the supplier in establishing the database and tools which will be utilised to monitor media across the 25 Member States and beyond on issues relevant to the Authority's work. Such services will provide the Authority with a more complete overview of the media environment as well as more immediate, structured and comprehensive view of media results achieved, including both quantitative and qualitative analysis of coverage.

VI.4 WEB

39. EFSA aims to establish itself as a European reference with respect to food and feed safety. This will be principally achieved through the availability of information and advice provided to the public on its website.

The EFSA website to date

40. On average, the EFSA website receives approximately **100 000** visits per month while over **12 200** subscribers are sent the EFSA Highlights email service, a thrice-weekly bulletin of latest news and related EFSA information. Thus for a large percentage of EFSA's dedicated audience - European Union institutions, consumer, industry and other key stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations and the general public – the principle experience of EFSA is not through EFSA conferences, meetings and other types of face-to-face contact with staff but through the Corporate website. For this reason it is critical that the user experience, both for specialist and non-specialist audiences, is credible, informative, timely and accessible.

Key goals

41. The EFSA website's principal goals are to:

- accurately reflect the mandate, work plan and decisions of the Authority
- promote the authority as a multilingual, data-driven reference point for food and feed safety issues in Europe
- demonstrate EFSA's commitment to transparency and freedom of information
- be accessible to both specialist and non-specialist audiences as well as those with physical limitations.

Future web developments

42. The EFSA web team aims to significantly improve the way in which information is delivered to its key audiences as well as the internal workflows and systems that support the online publishing process.

43. EFSA will continue to adapt and update its website in order to facilitate public access to its work and documents, meet information requirements and ensure a more user-friendly interface. A web survey was launched in January 2006 in order to better identify user needs and help guide future developments. Based on results from this survey as well as an internal review of current site performance, the information architecture of the site will be developed further and work will be carried out to improve the presentation and readability of content.

44. EFSA is currently implementing a new web content management system in order to provide EFSA with a more secure and efficient IT platform for the website; greatly ease and increase speed of publication; and allow the Authority to develop more precise analysis of internet traffic.

45. Improving the EFSA website search engine is high on the list of priorities as well as implementing an EFSA glossary and promoting the use of consistent keywords when tagging EFSA documents. This will facilitate both the effectiveness of the EFSA search engine and will also improve the capacity of external search engines to locate EFSA-related information on the World Wide Web.

VI.5 PUBLICATIONS

46. Publications play an important role in reinforcing EFSA's visibility and making the Authority's work known to key target audiences. EFSA publications fall into two categories: corporate and scientific.

EFSA's corporate publications include to date: the Annual Report and Summary; the bimonthly newsletter (EFSANews); a corporate brochure presenting the Authority, its remit, organisation and work; and fact sheets on key themes related to EFSA and its development. Current circulation of EFSA publications is approximately **13.100**, distributed primarily through the EFSA Highlights email service.

47. A growing number of ad hoc scientific publications are being developed in order to showcase the Authority's scientific work, facilitate its use by its customers and make this work known to a broader audience. In addition to Scientific Opinions, Statements and Conclusions, such publications include to date guidance documents on risk assessment and the publication series for EFSA Scientific Colloquia. EFSA has also recently published the Annual Community Zoonoses Report as well as a consolidation of all opinions on upper levels for vitamins and minerals adopted by EFSA's NDA Panel.

48. In collaboration with EFSA scientists, work will be undertaken in 2006 to develop appropriate tools for further dissemination of EFSA's scientific advice. EFSA will seek to publish in scientific journals selected opinions of the Scientific Committee and Panels, condensed and re-formatted to fit the format and lay-out of scientific papers. EFSA is also evaluating the opportunity of collaboration with an external editor in order to make the Authority's scientific work more widely known to the international scientific community.

49. EFSA will aim to identify new initiatives to better meet the needs of key audiences (for instance MEPs) and publish documents on selected themes, be they related to Science or to Corporate developments. EFSA will continue to build on its collaboration with the Office for Official Publication of the European Communities (OPOCE), the publishing house of the institutions and other bodies of the EU both with respect to the development and dissemination of documents.

50. More generally, EFSA will focus on developing greater and more effective integration between its on- and off-line communications and publication. The further development of EFSA's corporate identity and logo, with guidelines for their implementation across all on- and off-line publications will promote this integration.

VI.6 COLLABORATION WITH NATIONAL FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITIES

Advisory Forum Communications Working Group:

51. A key mechanism for enhancing collaboration in risk communications between EFSA and Member States is the Advisory Forum Communications Working Group. This forum provides opportunity for exchange of information and is a basis for co-ordination of communications activities between the national authorities and EFSA. The group also strives to develop best practices in risk communications and share learning from past experiences through the evaluation of communications initiatives and campaigns carried out by the Authority and/or national agencies. Risk communications training, initiated in 2005, will be pursued in 2006.

Timely and effective communications during emerging risks is another key priority. Building on work commenced in 2005, the group will further identify crisis communications requirements and define more effective strategies for collaboration in times of emerging communications issues and/or crises.

The group will also pursue its work in piloting the development of the Advisory Forum extranet and other communications tools, for instance use of video web conferencing.

VII. FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

52. Whilst EFSA's risk communications and plans address many of the points raised in the EFSA evaluation report, the Authority will strive to further enhance the impact and effectiveness of its communications. In doing so, EFSA will be guided by the conclusions and recommendations of the Management Board arising from the evaluation report. The Authority will pursue its communications activities with an aim to:

- Build visibility for EFSA's corporate mission and scientific expertise.
- Enhance the clarity and relevance of EFSA risk communications for key target audiences and the public at large, in collaboration with Member states.
- Promote coherence in risk communications on food and feed safety across the Community.

VIII. DESIRED OUTPUTS IN RISK COMMUNICATIONS

53. In conclusion, what is EFSA trying to achieve?

- To become a Europe-wide reference service on food and feed safety, largely through its website
- To provide timely and accurate public announcements on risk assessments and key EU-wide issues
- To disseminate accessible and relevant messages on food safety issues
- To achieve more consistent and culturally sensitive outputs through close co-ordination with Member States.



ANNEX : PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF EFSA PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

54. All materials destined for the media (press releases, statements, background documents, Question and Answer documents, fact sheets etc...) and/or other third parties are developed by the Communications department in close collaboration with EFSA's Scientific Staff and the Chairs of the Scientific Panels and their working groups, as appropriate. EFSA's International and Institutional Relations department also participates in review of press materials.

55. There are inevitably issues of balance (eg between technical accuracy and comprehensibility to the general reader) which will remain unresolved in discussions between colleagues within EFSA. In the event that agreement is not possible, resolution of issues will be put to top management, usually involving the Director of Science and the Director of Communications, with final arbitration by the Executive Director if a mutually agreed solution cannot be found.

56. Prior to publication, EFSA sends draft press releases under embargo to all members of the Advisory Forum including the European Commission and, where appropriate, to selected stakeholders concerned by a specific announcement. Through this process, EFSA seeks to gain input in advance of public announcements in order to: enable interested parties to prepare their own communications and hence foster a more consistent approach; identify possible areas of concern and amend drafts as and where appropriate.

57. With respect to stakeholders, EFSA liaises with both consumer and industry groups on the premise that: confidentiality is respected; the organisations concerned are supportive of EFSA's role in these areas; and that they can contribute to the development of public messages. In addition, EFSA advises key international organisations (eg WHO, FAO and national authorities outside Europe...) prior to dissemination of its public announcements.

58. This pre-notification process for EFSA public announcements has proven to be largely successful to date. Confidentiality has been respected and input from both Advisory Forum members and stakeholders have contributed to improving the quality of press materials whilst facilitating more consistent and timely communications throughout the Community.