

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE AND ADVISORY FORUM UNIT

Parma, 30 October 2008  
EFSA/AF/M/2008/184/PUB/FIN

**Minutes**

**TWENTY EIGHT MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM  
PARIS (FRANCE), 18-19 SEPTEMBER 2008**

**MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY FORUM**

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

|                |                                 |                |                            |
|----------------|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Austria        | <i>Roland Grossgut</i>          | Latvia         | <i>Gatis Ozoliņš</i>       |
| Belgium        | <i>Charles Crémer</i>           | Lithuania      | <i>Petras Mačiulskis</i>   |
| Bulgaria       | <i>Stefka Petrova</i>           | Luxembourg     | <i>Felix Wildschutz</i>    |
| Cyprus         | <i>Stella Canna-Michaelidou</i> | Malta          | <i>Ingrid Borg</i>         |
| Czech Republic | <i>Miroslav Elčner</i>          | Netherlands    | <i>Evert Schouten</i>      |
| Denmark        | <i>Henrik C. Wegener</i>        | Portugal       | <i>Manuel Barreto Dias</i> |
| Estonia        | <i>Hendrik Kuusk</i>            | Romania        | <i>Liviu Rusu</i>          |
| Finland        | <i>Kirsti Savela</i>            | Slovakia       | <i>Zuzana Bírošová</i>     |
| France         | <i>Valérie Baduel</i>           | Slovenia       | <i>Ada Hočevar Grom</i>    |
| Germany        | <i>Andreas Hensel</i>           | Spain          | <i>Jesús Campos</i>        |
| Hungary        | <i>Maria Szeitzné Szabó</i>     | Sweden         | <i>Leif Busk</i>           |
| Ireland        | <i>Raymond Ellard</i>           | United Kingdom | <i>Judith Hilton</i>       |
| Italy          | <i>Agostino Macrì</i>           |                |                            |

## Observers and Invitees of the Executive Director

|             |                          |  |                                   |
|-------------|--------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Norway      | <i>Kirstin Færden</i>    | European Commission<br>(DG Health and Consumers) | <i>Jeannie Vergnettes</i>         |
| Switzerland | <i>Michael Beer</i>      | European Commission<br>(DG Research)             | <i>Valérie Rolland</i>            |
| Croatia     | <i>Zorica Jurković</i>   | European Commission<br>(DG Research)             | <i>Danièle Tissot<br/>Boireau</i> |
| FYROM       | <i>Dusica Saveska</i>    | SAFEFOODERA                                      | <i>Alisdair<br/>Wotherspoon</i>   |
| Turkey      | <i>Muzaffer Nurseren</i> |  |                                   |

## Staff of the European Food Safety Authority

|                              |                                 |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Bernhard Berger</i>       | <i>Djien Liem</i>               |
| <i>Gian Luca Bonduri</i>     | <i>Christine Majewski</i>       |
| <i>Hubert Deluyker</i>       | <i>Elena Marani</i>             |
| <i>Muriel Dunier-Thomann</i> | <i>Alexandrine Maviel-Sonet</i> |
| <i>Christine Fuell</i>       | <i>Jeffrey Moon</i>             |
| <i>Anne-Laure Gassin</i>     | <i>Torben Nilsson</i>           |
| <i>Georgi Grigorov</i>       | <i>Carola Sondermann</i>        |
| <i>Juliane Kleiner</i>       | <i>Karen Talbot</i>             |

### 1 WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE MEETING

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle, Executive Director of EFSA, opened the meeting and passed the floor to Pascale Briand, General Director of the French Food Safety Agency, who welcomed the participants and emphasised the important role of EFSA and the need for cooperation with the national agencies. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle then welcomed the AF alternate of the Czech Republic and the AF observer from Turkey attending an AF meeting for the first time, as well as the representative from Lithuania replacing the AF member at this meeting. Finally, she mentioned that apologies were received from Greece and Poland.

### 2 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The agenda was adopted without changes. France, Cyprus, Finland, the Netherlands, and Germany raised additional issues for agenda item 9.2.

The Cypriot AF member, Stella Canna-Michaelidou, declared an interest in relation with agenda item 11.2 regarding the PPR Guidance Document, since she

is also a member of EFSA's PPR Panel. It was not considered as being a conflict of interests, since she does not act as rapporteur.

### **3 MATTERS ARISING SINCE THE 27<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM**

#### **3.1 Management Board meeting in Ljubljana on 25 June 2008**

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle updated the AF on the Management Board (MB) meeting in Ljubljana on 25 June 2008 and thanked Slovenia for the good cooperation during their EU presidency. The MB meeting in Ljubljana was the last meeting for four of the MB members, including the Chair Patrick Wall. Four new members have been appointed and two members were reappointed. The MB will constitute itself with new Chair and Vice-Chairs at its next meeting in Paris on 2 October 2008. In Ljubljana, the MB discussed ways to ensure the scientific quality of EFSA's work. The MB also endorsed technical updates of the list of article 36 institutions from Denmark, Finland, Germany, and Hungary. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle reminded the Member States that a general update of the list of article 36 institutions is ongoing and that nominations should be submitted through their Permanent Representations.

#### **3.2 Scientific Committee meeting in Parma on 15-16 July 2008**

Torben Nilsson informed the AF about the key issues of the Scientific Committee (SC) meeting in Parma on 15-16 July 2008. The SC had adopted its animal cloning opinion. It also agreed on the mandate of a new working group, chaired by Sue Barlow, which will consider a possible broader application of Threshold of Toxicological Concern (TTC). The SC had also discussed the strategy for increasing awareness of EFSA's scientific work and recognition of the experts' work, EFSA's Management Plan for 2009, the draft nanotechnology opinion, and the work of EFSA's Panels and the working groups under the SC.

Norway drew the attention to their TTC opinion from 2006. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle thanked Norway and said that the SC is aware of the opinion.

#### **3.3 AFCWG meeting in Berlin on 19 June 2008**

Anne-Laure Gassin briefed the AF on the outcomes of the AFCWG meeting in Berlin on 19 June 2008. The AFCWG had discussed EFSA's communication activities, the contribution of national focal points, GMOs, an Austrian case study on antibiotic residues on plants, and cooperation in communications.

#### **4.4 AFITWG meeting in Prague on 24 June 2008**

Torben Nilsson briefed the AF on the outcomes of the AFITWG meeting in Prague on 24 June 2008. A task force under the AFITWG is presently revising the AFITWG terms of reference to reflect the future needs, since most of the initiatives of the present terms of reference have been completed or are well

advanced already. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle informed that the revised AFITWG terms of reference would be submitted to the AF for adoption at its meeting in November 2008.

### **Other matters arising since the 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Advisory Forum**

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle mentioned that the discussions with the European Commissioner for Health, Androulla Vassiliou, during her visit to EFSA on 17-18 July 2008 had been very constructive and fruitful.

## **4 EFSA'S STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2009-2013 AND PRIORITIES FOR EFSA'S MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR 2009**

Firstly, Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle thanked for the comments received already from some AF members on EFSA's strategic plan for 2009-2013 and priorities for EFSA's management plan for 2009. She recalled that the deadline for further written comments is the end of October 2008. She then presented EFSA's strategic plan for 2009-2013 that will form the basis for EFSA's annual work programmes, including the consultation process and EFSA's key challenges and strategic objectives. She assured the AF members that EFSA will continue to strengthen the cooperation and invited comments, particularly on the challenges and strategic objectives.

France suggested that strengthening the cooperation with national institutions should be a strategic objective of EFSA and that the cooperation should be institutional, *i.e.* not only through the involvement of individual experts, in order to take advantage of the national institutions' competencies. France also said that harmonisation and relations with third countries are important issues. Austria emphasised that the cooperation with Member State experts is very important. Sweden welcomed the strategic plan and found that the strategies and goals were good. However, nutrition should be given more emphasis and consideration should be given to the charging of fees, though this should not lead to financial cuts. Also, the level of self-tasking should be increased. Cyprus expressed appreciation of the strategic plan and recommended that EFSA should promote a common framework to harmonise data collection, including a focus on age specific data. Cyprus further recommended that EFSA should develop mechanisms for supporting Member States during food safety crises at national level. The Netherlands expressed strong support to the strategic plan and said that increased cooperation with national authorities could be a way to face the workload, although the budgetary implications also at national level should be considered. The Netherlands found a holistic approach interesting, but unclear how it would relate with the distinction between risk assessment and risk management. Finally, the Netherlands said that the issue of travelling to Parma needs to be addressed. Germany emphasised that scientific quality needs to be in the forefront and found that some aspects of EFSA's cooperation with the Member States could be better: The Member States do not have so much

influence on EFSA's work due to the high level of requests from the European Commission. This may lead to overlaps and different risk assessment approaches between Member States and EFSA. Hence, there is a need for mechanisms to address divergence between Member State and EFSA opinions. Germany also suggested consulting the industry before finalising risk assessment opinions; because they know the production processes and can provide useful data. Hungary said that the document is good, but could emphasise more the importance of a healthy diet and lifestyle and microbiological concerns. Norway reinforced the importance of a healthy diet and suggested a greater emphasis on emerging risks associated with novel foods taken cumulatively. Italy suggested a need to enhance the cooperation between EFSA, the European Commission and the Member States on research. Bulgaria congratulated EFSA with its work and said that EFSA is a necessary institution for Europe. Bulgaria suggested using EFSA experts in training of younger professionals and also said that nutrition needs more attention. Belgium agreed on the need for a greater emphasis on nutrition, since nutrition is likely to be an area requiring more focus within the coming five years. Belgium further said that GMOs should be more explicitly mentioned and that a submission fee might reduce the large number of unsubstantiated health claims. Denmark said that efficient ways of communication with the Member States and third countries on emerging diseases should be developed. Sweden said that the independence of EFSA should be considered in relation with the question of inputs from national agencies.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle replied that EFSA will continue to strengthen its cooperation with Member States and that this will be reflected both in the strategic plan and in EFSA's annual work programmes that will also include more detailed activities. She fully agreed on the importance of nutrition and mentioned that the staffing of EFSA's NDA Unit has doubled during the last two years. The discussion on research was referred to agenda item 10. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle also thanked for the support to further self-tasking, saying that in the past almost 10 % of EFSA's work was self-tasking addressing, in particular, risk assessment methodologies. However, the ongoing work on applications takes a lot of resources, since EFSA aims at delivering on time and to be in conformity with the regulations. A fee may be useful. EFSA will also streamline its procedures to continue to address the increasing number of requests from the Member States. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle further explained that the consultative process is indeed important, but with two scientific outputs per day and tight deadlines, it would be difficult for EFSA to consult on all outputs. Nonetheless, EFSA always organises a public consultation on key documents. EFSA's guidelines on public consultation will be shared soon and EFSA will work with its stakeholder platform to define when there is a need for public consultation. Anne-Laure Gassin added that guidelines on risk communication can promote coherence and also referred the important role of the AFCWG. Hubert Deluyker mentioned that the Information Exchange Platform (IEP) is a tool to sharing national opinions and also mentioned the importance of taking full advantage of

the focal points. He mentioned that horizontal networks and a close cooperation with the European Commission are important in addressing emerging risks, including those deriving from illegal trade. He also highlighted the importance of the work of the ESCO on fostering harmonised risk assessment approaches in generating mutual acceptance of how to work. Finally, he mentioned that the suggested training could be considered as a cooperation project. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle concluded by mentioning that EFSA is working with the national Italian authorities on concrete action points to ensure that EFSA will remain attractive for staff and experts.

*Action 1: Member States to submit possible further comments on EFSA's strategic plan for 2009-2013 in writing before the end of October 2008.*

*Action 2: Member States to share national strategic plans and work programmes through the Information Exchange Platform.*

## **5 DIETARY REFERENCE VALUES – GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

Juliane Kleiner presented EFSA's draft opinion on general principles for establishing dietary reference values (DRV) (formerly population reference intakes) and informed that the draft opinions on micronutrients would follow in 2009. She mentioned that EFSA would coordinate with the related EURRECA research project to avoid duplication. A national expert meeting on DRV will be organised during the public consultation on the draft DRV opinions. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle said that it will be important to include data also from Bulgaria, Romania and non-EU neighbouring countries. She expressed disappointment that the EURRECA project had been started by the European Commission at the same time as they submitted a request with a similar mandate to EFSA.

Bulgaria asked if specific DRVs would be set for children and suggested a closer cooperation with the WHO. France said that it is a very important work and suggested that EFSA should play a role in setting research priorities. The United Kingdom informed that a similar work is ongoing on carbohydrate intake in the United Kingdom and suggested working together to avoid duplication.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle agreed to work together to avoid duplication and develop synergies. She agreed on the comment on research priorities and referred to agenda item 10. Juliane Kleiner confirmed that EFSA is working in close collaboration with the WHO, confirmed that the DRVs would be age specific, said that the EURRECA project can do very important work in that field, and welcomed the possibility of cooperation with the United Kingdom on carbohydrate intake.

*Action 3: EFSA to organise a national expert meeting on dietary reference values during the public consultation on the draft opinions in 2009.*

**6.1 Review of the implementation of the strategy on cooperation and networking**

Hubert Deluyker presented the present status of the review of the implementation of the strategy on cooperation and networking and the timeline for its completion. Comments received from the Member States on the draft questionnaire had been taken in account and the AF adopted the questionnaire. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle said that the tight timeline is needed to complete the interim review by the end of this year in order to possibly adjust the way to work next year.

*Action 4: Member States to submit their replies to the questionnaire on the implementation of the strategy on cooperation and networking by 10 October 2008.*

**6.2 Focal point meeting in Parma on 9-10 September 2008**

Bernhard Berger updated the AF on the focal point meeting in Parma on 9-10 September 2008. The meeting focussed on the focal point reporting, workshops to foster the application of potential Panel members from new Member States, the status of the expert database activities, EFSA's grant and procurement programme for 2009, and the IEP. Anne-Laure Gassin mentioned that various promotional materials can be provided by EFSA to the Member States to encourage experts to become involved in the work of EFSA's Panels. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle said that an expert survey would be launched in October 2008.

Belgium asked who should enter information into the expert database. Germany asked about the quality assurance of the expert database and asked how to address the issue that most experts, being civil servants, would need permission to attend EFSA meetings. France noted that experts can register in the expert database without consent from their employer and regretted that the focal points had not received feedback on the expert registrations. France also regretted that the last focal point meeting had not allocated sufficient time to the discussion of issues raised by the focal points. Finally, France said that there is a need to avoid that focal points discuss issues that rightly belong in the AF.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle agreed on the latter two points and promised that sufficient time would be allocated for the discussions at the next focal point meeting. Bernhard Berger explained that the discussion of the focal point reporting had taken more time than anticipated. He said that EFSA is pre-filling the expert registration form for the experts who have already worked for EFSA. He further said that the expert database implementation is handled in accordance with the related Decision of the Executive Director, which was discussed and endorsed by the AF at its meeting in Rome on 10-11 April 2008.

*Action 5: EFSA to share the questionnaire for the expert survey with the AF for information.*

### **6.3 SAFEFOODERA**

Hubert Deluyker introduced the SAFEFOODERA presentation by mentioning that the AF at its last meeting in Oslo on 12-13 June 2008 had drawn the attention to a potential overlap between SAFEFOODERA and EFSA activities. Subsequently, Alisdair Wotherspoon (SAFEFOODERA) presented the objective and activities of SAFEFOODERA. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle thanked for the interesting presentation and suggested a similar presentation to the AF next year.

### **6.4 Grants and procurement – the EFSA programme for 2009**

Bernhard Berger presented EFSA's draft programme for grants and procurement in 2009. It was emphasised that support for risk assessment of applications, general risk assessment, data collection, and horizontal issues and scientific cooperation had been prioritised and that the programme would be submitted to the MB for adoption in December 2008.

Germany said that there is a need for prior consultation with the Member States to consider national information and requested that this consultation would be official, *i.e.* not through the focal points. Germany also asked how to ensure the quality of the products. France found that the consultation should be through the AF. Italy asked how the synergy between EFSA's article 36 calls, national funding and DG Research framework programmes can be ensured to avoid duplication of efforts. Sweden congratulated EFSA on sharing its programme so early and asked if there would still be room for additional proposals. Bulgaria asked if the programme would include work on vitamins. Germany suggested that zoonoses should be a priority and that there is a need for research on risk perception. France asked how and when they could submit ideas and indicated that zoonoses, particularly blue tongue, would be a priority.

Hubert Deluyker explained that the focal points had been consulted on ideas and to avoid overlap, while he agreed that the AF is consulted on priorities. He also explained that the quality assurance takes place through compliance with the specifications and since the products serve as inputs or preparatory work, not as risk assessments as such. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle also agreed that the AF is consulted on the priorities and emphasised that the purpose of EFSA's grants and procurement is to prepare EFSA's work, not to fund research. She further said that zoonoses are a high priority, micronutrients are covered, and EFSA will add a risk perception project for 2009. The AF endorsed the proposed priorities.

*Action 6: Member States to submit possible further comments on priorities and proposals for EFSA's grants and procurement programme for 2009 to the Scientific Cooperation Unit by 10 October 2008.*



*Action 7: EFSA to present its activities on risk perception at the AF meeting in November 2008.*

## **7 THE INFORMATION EXCHANGE PLATFORM AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STRATEGY ON INCREASING EFSA'S SCIENTIFIC VISIBILITY**

Carola Sondermann presented the IEP and its contribution to the strategy on increasing EFSA's scientific visibility. She emphasised that the IEP should facilitate access to relevant scientific information available in the public domain, whereas no confidential papers should be shared through the IEP. She mentioned that the initial six months are intended as a pilot phase and that access to the IEP has been granted to the AF, the AFCWG, focal points and EFSA staff. She also presented the ongoing work on establishing an EFSA journal. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle added that recognition of the work of EFSA's experts is crucial.

Belgium agreed with the pilot phase approach, said that it would not be realistic for the AF member and focal point alone to feed the IEP due to their workload and suggested a broader access to the IEP. The United Kingdom mentioned that they have a similar platform on their webpage that would be cross-linked with the IEP. Austria agreed on broadening the access to the IEP and supported the idea of an EFSA journal and asked if it would involve an external review. Italy said that it is a challenge to get scientists and journalists to read the enormous amount of information provided. France agreed that there is a need to consider the workload of the focal points and emphasised that the purpose of the IEP should be the exchange of scientific information.

Hubert Deluyker said that a monthly IEP overview by sector would be provided for clarity. He also suggested broadening the access to the IEP only after the pilot phase. Carola Sondermann explained that due to the nature of EFSA's opinions; an external review would neither be feasible, nor needed, since the adoption process constitutes a peer review in itself.

## **8 LAUNCH OF THE REVISED EXTRANET**

Gian Luca Bonduri presented the new AF Extranet structure that had been developed in accordance with the proposal endorsed by the AF at its meeting in Rome on 10-11 April 2008. The new AF Extranet structure would be launched on 22 September 2008.

Belgium and France asked about the relation with the IEP. Gian Luca Bonduri said that the IEP would be accessible through a link from the AF Extranet.

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

### **9.1 Denmark: Outbreak of Salmonella U292**

Denmark updated the AF on an ongoing salmonella U292 outbreak in Denmark. Austria shared experiences from a salmonella U291 outbreak in Austria some years ago and suggested a possible cause. Also the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway shared ideas about possible causes. Germany suggested a collaborative study to find the typing of salmonella. Hubert Deluyker suggested collaboration with Community Reference Laboratories. Denmark said that there is a need for common typing of salmonella, since different systems are used in Europe today.

### **9.2 Other issues raised by the Member States**

France invited the AF members to attend a conference on veterinary medicinal products legislation, organised by the French Food Safety Agency on 30 September 2008 and a symposium on health risk assessment in the context of food, animal and plant imports in the EU, jointly organised with EFSA on 3 October 2008.

Cyprus briefed the AF on an incidence of contamination of drinking water by volatile organic compounds from plastic containers. Austria mentioned that plastic bottle caps had been identified as the source of contamination in a similar incidence in Austria.

Finland informed the AF that noni juice was presently suspected to be behind two hepatotoxicity cases in Finland. In previous cases, EFSA's NDA Panel did not see evidence of a relationship between acute hepatitis and noni juice. However, Juliane Kleiner promised that the working group on novel foods under the NDA Panel would examine the two new cases. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle added that EFSA would keep the AF informed of the outcome.

The Netherlands mentioned that there is a renewed interest in bisphenol-A in the Netherlands and asked about the status of EFSA's ongoing activities. Hubert Deluyker said that the documentation on bisphenol-A would be reviewed further by the Panel the following week. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle added that EFSA's conclusions on bisphenol-A have been challenged. Denmark said that EFSA's opinion is eagerly awaited. Belgium requested a feedback from the Panel meeting before the finalisation of the minutes. Hubert Deluyker suggested that this could be an example to test the IEP.

Germany announced a conference on risk communication on 4-5 December 2008 and invited interested AF members to attend.

## **10 RESEARCH (SESSION WITH DG RESEARCH)**

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle welcomed Valérie Rolland and Danièle Tissot Boireau from DG Research and thanked for their willingness to present and discuss the work of DG Research in the AF. Djien Liem introduced by thanking DG Research for the good dialogue and cooperation with EFSA. DG Research thanked EFSA for the invitation and presented its working modalities and priorities within areas of relevance to EFSA. It was emphasised that the consultation with Member States on the research priorities takes place through DG Research's programme committee. It was also mentioned that technology platforms exist to align industry needs and that a new expert group on food and health is being established under DG Research. In reaction to the comments by Germany and France under agenda item 6.4 on the importance of zoonoses, it was highlighted that DG Research will increase the animal health calls to support the animal health strategy of the European Commission.

France thanked for a good presentation, agreed on the priorities and suggested establishing a platform for cooperation, involving also DG Health and Consumers in setting priorities. France also asked whether DG Research evaluates the impact of the research projects. Germany said that it is difficult to link European with national research, which may result in a lack of sustainability. Hence, national authorities should be consulted. Germany also suggested that EFSA together with DG Research should work for a standardisation of data collection at EU level. Italy pledged for a continuation of successful projects. Denmark requested a clarification of the relation with EFSA's article 36 projects and asked if Member States can contribute through the technology platforms. Denmark also suggested that the research on innovation in food production should be matched by research on the safety assessments needed as a basis for regulations on new technologies and to address consumer concerns. Cyprus agreed and suggested a main line on risk assessment methodologies addressing the innovations. Bulgaria asked if the research projects are open to non-EU countries.

DG Research replied that the national food safety authorities would have to channel their contributions through their Member State representatives in the DG Research's programme committee. DG Research has a close cooperation with DG Health and Consumers in setting research priorities and would also be open to consider suggestions from EFSA. There is no risk of duplication with article 36 projects, since DG Research is well informed about the article 36 calls. Furthermore, DG Research funds major research projects, which are also open to non-EU countries, while the article 36 projects are smaller and closely linked with EFSA's work. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle concluded that it is crucial that the AF and EFSA can contribute to consider research both on innovations and safety assessments and suggested further strengthening the cooperation between EFSA and DG Research through regular informal interactions and an annual exchange of views on concerns to address and research priorities within EFSA's remit.

**11.1 Health claims**

Juliane Kleiner presented the work of EFSA's NDA Panel related with health claims. Originally, it was expected that EFSA would have to address around 500 health claims. However, Member States submitted 44000 claims to the European Commission, and the consolidated list of article 13 health claims provided to EFSA by the European Commission comprises almost 3000 main entries and approximately 7000 similar health relationships. Furthermore, the final list was delayed, the quality of citations is often insufficient, and much supporting documentation is only available in the different Member State languages. In addition, more than 200 article 14 health claims were received. Hence, the amount of work to be accomplished by EFSA is higher than originally anticipated. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle said that there is a need for help from the authorities at national level before the NDA Panel can begin its work.

France found that the situation is far from satisfactory and that there is a need to work with the Member States to avoid losing the work already done. France will share all relevant claims in French. Germany said that many claims that were rejected previously as plant additives are now been presented again and suggested that EFSA could reduce the workload by coordinating with EMEA. The European Commission said that they are grateful for the cooperation with EFSA. The task is going to be difficult and there is a need for cooperation between the European Commission, EFSA and the Member States. Bulgaria suggested that the Member States should submit the information in English as well as the original language, since EFSA would need years for assessing the health claims, if not provided with appropriate information in English. Sweden said that EFSA is not supposed to assess health problems related with botanicals.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle invited the Member States to share their screening work. Juliane Kleiner confirmed the need for a close collaboration, informed that EFSA is already in dialogue with EMEA, and explained that the health claims regulation does not foresee a safety assessment, but merely an assessment of the scientific substantiation.

**11.2 PPR guidance document**

Muriel Dunier-Thomann presented the work of the EFSA Panel on plant protection products and their residues (PPR) on guidance documents and Christine Fuell explained the process applied for the guidance document on risk assessment for birds and mammals. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle mentioned that this work was an example of EFSA self-tasking.

France found that the involvement of the Member States in the preparation of the guidance document had occurred too late in the process and said that France could not use the guidance document, since it does not take into account some

aspects of importance in France. France therefore suggested a closer cooperation with Member States from the beginning of the process in the future. The European Commission mentioned that research contributed to the development of the guidance document. Germany agreed with France. The United Kingdom said that they had been actively involved and welcomed EFSA's approach.

Muriel Dunier-Thomann said that EFSA had maximised its efforts to involve stakeholders including the Member States throughout the process. Christine Fuell added that the first public consultations took place in 2006 and that Member States were consulted at two occasions in 2007. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle concluded that there is a common objective to involve the Member States, that lots of efforts were made, and that EFSA will continue to improve the consultative process for future guidance documents, since the involvement of the Member States is crucial.

### **11.3 Aspartame**

Torben Nilsson informed the AF that the organising team on aspartame would finalise the screening of aspartame literature by the end of October 2008. A call for data would be launched in September 2008 to ensure the completeness of the information considered by the organising team. The report of the organising team would be ready by the end of the year, and a national expert meeting with aspartame experts nominated by the Member States would take place in January 2009. A few corrections were proposed to the background text of the mandate for the national expert meeting that was adopted by the AF.

Upon request from the United Kingdom, Torben Nilsson confirmed that the organising team is also considering consumer claims.

### **11.4 Pesticide peer review**

Hubert Deluyker presented the conclusions and recommendations of the working group that has reviewed the efficiency of the pesticide safety review process and invited the AF to endorse the establishment of a Pesticide Steering Committee (PSC) with Member State representatives to overview the process.

Cyprus supported the proposal. Austria also agreed, but said that there might be a conflict of interest between resource allocation and risk assessment. The Netherlands noted that it would become a very large committee and asked if the involvement of all Member States would be necessary.

Hubert Deluyker clarified that the PSC would not be involved in risk assessment work, since the risk assessment system is already in place, and said that all Member States would be needed to share the workload. The AF agreed on the establishment of the PSC.

*Action 8: Member States to nominate representatives for the Pesticide Steering Committee.*

#### **11.5 Other issues raised by EFSA**

No other issues were raised by EFSA.

### **12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Bernhard Berger informed the AF that EFSA would organise two scientific colloquia on nanotechnology and emerging risks, respectively, in 2009. He also reminded the AF that EFSA is organising a scientific colloquium on campylobacter in Rome on 4-5 December 2008. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle added that EFSA would also organise a scientific colloquium on genetically modified animals in 2009.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle informed the AF that EFSA will also organise an exchange between stakeholders and experts on GMOs.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle reminded the AF members that some still have to submit their annual declaration of interests electronically. Torben Nilsson offered that the AF secretariat is available to assist in case of any difficulties.

*Action 9: Member States to share possible ideas for scientific colloquia by 10 October 2008.*

### **13 CLOSURE OF THE MEETING**

Pascale Briand said that it had been a pleasure to host the AF meeting and reiterated the invitation for the joint event on 3 October 2008. The Chair thanked the French hosts and wished the French Food Safety Agency a happy tenth anniversary. She also thanked DG Research, the AF members and the interpreters before closing the meeting.