

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORATE

PROGRESS REPORT

December 2007 – January 2008

Highlights

SCIENCE

RISK ASSESSMENT

1. AFC

The AFC Panel held its 26th plenary meeting in Parma on 27-29 November. A significant number of draft opinions have been presented to the Panel and some have been deferred to the January 2008 meeting because of lack of time. In the food additives area, the opinion on beeswax (E 901) as a glazing agent and as carrier for flavours was adopted. In the field of nutrient sources, the opinion on calcium citrate malate was adopted at the meeting and another opinion on mixed tocopherols as sources for vitamin E will, after it was thoroughly discussed, be sent out to the members for possible adoption by written procedure. In the field of flavourings, one Flavouring group opinion and four opinions on revised Flavouring Groups, as well as a group of substances evaluated by JEFCA and considered by the AFC Panel, FGE 79, were adopted at the meeting. The Panel also discussed a draft opinion on a long list of alpha, beta unsaturated carbonyls with a structural alert for genotoxic activity. The possibility of applying (quantitative) structure activity relationship ((Q)SAR) in the evaluation was thoroughly discussed, but a final conclusion was not reached so final adoption was deferred to a later meeting. In the field of food contact materials, a 17th list comprising nine substances was approved. Draft guidelines on submission of a dossier for the evaluation of a process to produce safe recycled plastic materials and articles for food contact uses, is published on EFSA's website for public consultation.

2. AHAW

The AHAW Panel held two plenary meetings during this period (5-7 December and 30-31 January). In December, 5 scientific opinions were adopted: on "Pig welfare - tail biting", "Zoonosis", "Animal Welfare aspects of the killing and skinning of seals" and two opinions were also adopted on "Aquatic animal diseases" - molluscs and crustacea. In January's plenary, two opinions were discussed for possible adoption "Tuberculosis testing in deer" and "Welfare of salmon". The deadline for the opinion on "Tuberculosis testing in deer" has been postponed to the end of February because the Commission asked the Panel to add the sanitary requirements for trade between non-free herds/countries.

Two new mandates were received from the Commission during December's plenary – one on "Bluetongue" and another on "Classic Swine fever".

In relation to the mandate on "Welfare of dairy cows", the WG held a meeting with experts from Member States under the umbrella of the Advisory Forum in December 4, with the participation of more than 25 experts. All

relevant scientific information provided by the Member States experts will be evaluated and considered for the scientific opinion.

The proposals received upon the launch of the two calls under Article 36 related to animal welfare and to animal diseases, were evaluated and signed by two consortia in December 2007.

Representatives of the AHAW Unit gave presentations on the activities of the Panel at the following events:

- Medreonet First Annual Meeting, 12-14 Dec 2007, Palma de Mallorca
- International Conference on Bluetongue, 16 January
- Workshop on the animal welfare aspects of seals hunting", 14 January, Brussels
- Meeting of the European Forum of Animal Welfare Councils (EUROFAWC), 15-16 January, Prague

AHAW scientific staff attended the SCoFCAH WG meeting on 9-10 January and 29 January on ADNS and BTNET; the EUFMD meeting on containment standards for FMD laboratories, Brussels, 21-22 Jan 2008; and the OIE *ad hoc* Group on the List of Aquatic Animal Disease - Mollusc Team, Paris, 23-25 Jan 2008.

### 3. BIOHAZ

The following opinions were adopted at the BIOHAZ Plenary meeting of 5-6 December:

- TSE risk assessment of the use of bovine blood in feeds for fish, in consideration of a report produced by the European Animal Protein Association
- Monitoring and identification of human enteropathogenic *Yersinia* spp, to give advice and recommend the monitoring methods for *Yersinia* spp. in animal populations and foodstuffs that are most optimal from the public health point of view. ECDC was involved on the public health aspects.
- *Listeria monocytogenes* risk related to ready-to-eat foods and scientific advice on different levels of *L. monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods and the related risk for human illness. The opinion presents the science-based elements to the Commission with a view on the establishment of *L. monocytogenes* criteria in the Codex Committee of Food Hygiene.
- Review of the Community Summary Report on Trends and Sources of Zoonoses, Zoonotic Agents and Antimicrobial Resistance in the European Union in 2005. Conclusions on the situation in the EU were made, and the main risk factors and public health priorities were identified, with suggestions for improvements in monitoring and reporting, recommendations to further protect public and/or animal health in the EU. The opinion was jointly adopted by both BIOHAZ and AHAW Panels in collaboration with ECDC.
- The food safety implications of different housing and husbandry systems for pigs. This opinion was a contribution to the risk assessments on pig welfare adopted by the AHAW Panel (fattening pigs, breeding pigs (sows/boars) and tail biting).

It is anticipated that the BIOHAZ Panel will adopt the following opinions at its next Plenary meeting (23-24 January):

- Foodborne antimicrobial resistance as a biological hazard
- Biological Safety of a Process for the Hydrolysis on-Farm of Dead Pigs
- Biological safety of a Process for the Hydrolysis on-Farm of Dead Rabbits
- Source attributions for *Salmonella* in meat and meat preparations

After the request from the EC, the BIOHAZ Panel is expected to issue a document on the interpretation and clarification of the conclusions of its Opinion of 8 March 2007 on certain aspects related to the risk of Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) in ovine and caprine animals (EFSA-Q-2007-039).

The BIOHAZ Panel has established 2 WGs for new mandates:

- Assessment of the possible effect of the four decontaminant substances on the emergence of antimicrobial resistance. The BIOHAZ Panel will address the food safety aspects and SCENIHR (EC-DG SANCO non-food committee) will address the environmental impact.
- Scientific advice on the paper "Consumption of beef tongue and sweetbread: risk for public health?" in particular on the conclusions and recommendations in respect to the harvesting of bovine tongues at the level of the slaughterhouse.

#### 4. CONTAM

In the period 23 November to 23 January, the CONTAM Panel met once in plenary (26-28 November) and adopted six opinions:

- Marine biotoxins in shellfish: Okadaic acid and analogues
- Glucosinolates as undesirable substance in animal feed
- Cross-contamination of non-target feedingstuffs by salinomycin authorised for use as a feed additive;
- Cross-contamination of non-target feedingstuffs by monensin authorised for use as a feed additive.
- Cross-contamination of non-target feedingstuffs by semduramicin authorised for use as a feed additive.
- Cross-contamination of non-target feedingstuffs by maduramicin authorised for use as a feed additive.

The opinion on okadaic acid is the first in a series of opinions on marine biotoxins in shellfish. The opinion on glucosinolates is the third opinion in the series of opinions on natural plant products and the last four are number 3 to 6 in the series of opinions on coccidiostats dealing with cross-contamination of feed to non-target animal species.

Seven WG meetings were held in the WGs on polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), heavy metals, perfluorooctanesulfonates (PFOS), cross-contamination of coccidiostats, natural plant products in feed and heavy metals in feed.

#### 5. FEEDAP

During the period December 2007-January 2008, the FEEDAP Panel held 9 working group and 1 plenary meeting during which 1 draft opinion was discussed, 1 draft opinion was proposed for written adoption in January and 1 opinion was adopted.

The FEEDAP Scientific Secretariat was invited to participate in a WG of the Standing Committee on Animal Nutrition of the European Commission to further discuss and vote on the draft 'Commission Regulation on detailed rules for the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1831/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the preparation and the presentation of applications and the assessment and the authorisation of feed additives'. The new guidelines were adopted by the SCFCAH (Standing Committee on Food Chain and Animal Health) by qualified majority.

The FEEDAP Unit organised a meeting with FEFANA and the European Commission to review the comments received from FEFANA during the public consultation launched at the end of 2007 on a guidance for the assessment of compatibility of zootechnical microbial additives with antimicrobial substances. This was also the opportunity to further address the establishment of a detailed priority calendar for the re-evaluation of existing feed additives in accordance with Article 10 of Regulation (EC) No 1831/2003 and to prepare the development and implementation of new guidance documents to applicants.

In 2007, in order to improve cooperation with external users, EFSA launched the development of a new communication platform which the FEEDAP Unit has started to use successfully. In this context, and following a meeting with the Member States and the development of new procedures to ensure protection of confidential data, closer collaboration with the Member States has been triggered.

#### 6. GMO

In the period December to January, the GMO Panel had one plenary meeting, in Parma on 18-19 December. At this meeting, the GMO Panel adopted a proposal for a mandate for a new self tasking activity to develop approaches and guidance for assessing the impacts of GM plants on non-target organisms/arthropods in environmental risk assessments. In addition, the Panel discussed with representatives of DG SANCO the implementation of Action 3 of the EC GMO action plan, for which the EFSA Guidance document will be used as a basis and will be further updated, taking into account the outcomes of its various self-tasks. This update will also take into account the feedback received from the Member States at the special Advisory Forum meeting on GMOs.

Four WG meetings were held on the molecular characterization, food/feed safety, and environmental risk assessment of applications for placing GMOs on the market within the framework of Regulation (EC) 1829/2003. One WG meeting discussed the risk assessment of applications submitted under Regulations (EC) 1829/2003 and (EC) 1831/2003 for co-opinion by the FEEDAP and the GMO Panels (feed additives and biomass for feed purposes).

Within the framework of Article 36 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002, two calls for tenders were launched in July 2007 for specific collecting and reviewing tasks of relevant scientific data on genetically modified organisms, and in particular on the potential effects that herbicide tolerant crops might have on non-target organisms as well as on genetically modified plants and microorganisms expressing CRY proteins. By the closing date two applicants had submitted an application for each of the calls. The applications were scrutinized by the EFSA Evaluation Committee which concluded that none of the applications was suitable in the light of the criteria stipulated in the call for proposals and guide for applicants. The applicants were notified in writing in December 2007.

On 13 December 2007 the GMO unit organized a workshop with applicants under Regulation (EC) 1829/2003 with representatives of seven companies and Europabio. The objective of the meeting was to discuss: i) past experience; ii) proposal for further improvement; iii) procedure; vi) feedback from applicants. Several proposals were discussed to streamline the procedures for GMO applications and enhance the quality and/or presentation of GMO applications. Following the workshop, bilateral meetings with each applicant were organized to discuss experience on individual applications.

Since December 2007, the GMO unit has implemented a new system to manage the timelines for the submission of additional information from applicants in a more precise and predictable way in order to further optimize the work planning of the GMO Panel.

## 7. NDA

### Nutrition & Health Claims

#### *Health claims applications (5 months legal deadline)*

In relation to Article 14 of Regulation 1924/2006, two additional applications relating to child development and health and 2 additional application relating to the reduction of disease risk were received from Member States in the Reporting Period (Dec 07 – Jan 08) and are now under validation procedure. A working group meeting is scheduled for 15-16 January 08.

#### *“Children Claim”*

On December 12, the European Parliament voted on the transition period for claims related to children's health and development. Children claims which have not been evaluated and authorized in a Member State (= the majority of children claims) can continue to be used provided an application for authorisation is made before 19 January 2008. Furthermore, the Commission announced that the assessment and the authorisation of claims relating to children's health and development will be given priority and that the evaluation can begin immediately, as from 19 January 2008. Based on this and the very recent change of the EC's interpretation of “children claims” in December 2007, IDACE (Association of the Food Industries for Particular Nutritional Uses of the European Union) communicated to EFSA that 100 applications for health claims for children's development and health (as Article 14 claims) will be submitted for evaluation by EFSA (5 months legal deadline) by 19 January 2008.

#### *Nutrient Profiles*

The working group meeting scheduled on 15-16 January 08 will also be finalising the drafting of the Opinion on "the setting of nutrient profiles for foods bearing nutrition and health claims pursuant to article 4 of Regulation 1924/2006". The adoption of the Opinion by the Panel is targeted by 30-31 January, to be in accordance with the required timeframe set by the EC.

#### Population Reference Intake

A working group meeting to proceed with the PRI on macronutrients is scheduled for 17/18 January 08.

#### Novel Foods

An opinion on the safety of All-blackia seed oil as a novel food ingredient was published before Christmas.

#### Infant formulae

A working group meeting was held in Vienna on Dec 3, on the safety and suitability of Lutein.

#### NDA Plenary meeting

An Opinion on Nutrient Profiles is scheduled for adoption at the NDA 19<sup>th</sup> Plenary meeting on 30-31 January 08.

### 8. PLH

One plenary meeting was held on 26-27 November. The Panel continued working in working groups focusing on preparation of the draft opinions requested by the Commission for scientific advice on 30 pest risk assessments (PRAs) on pests considered harmful for the four French Overseas Departments (FOD: Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique and Reunion) in the context of Directive 2000/29/EC. Nine new draft opinions have been prepared for discussion at the upcoming plenary meeting on 16-17 January. Issues requiring further harmonisation along the permanent working groups will be tackled by a joint Working Group on FOD PRAs to meet on 15 January.

The Art 36. call for proposals on an "Inventory of data sources for phytosanitary pest risk assessment in the European Community" has been closed. The only applicant was found eligible and capable of carrying out the required project. The grant offer is currently under relevant procedure.

The 10<sup>th</sup> EFSA Scientific Colloquium "Pest risk assessment - science in support of phytosanitary decision making in the European Community" held on 6-7 December 2007 (Parma, Italy) attracted more than 80 experts in phytosanitary risk assessment. The debate embraced the different scientific approaches to pest risk assessment, the availability of data, the assessment of the potential impact of new plant pests following their introduction to the EU and possible joint efforts with EU Member States, third countries and international organisations to further develop harmonised approaches. Scientists and risk managers from 22 EU Member States, Canada, Croatia, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey and the USA, also discussed the influence of climate change and global trade on the potential for entry, establishment and spread in the EU. The outputs including recommendations will be soon published in a report.

Opinions on invasive alien plants (*Hydrocotyle*, *Lysichiton* and *Ambrosia* spp.) delivered earlier in 2007 were discussed in the Standing Committee on Plant Health on 25<sup>th</sup> November. Representation of EFSA also attended the meeting of the EU Chief Officers of Plant Health Services held under the Portuguese presidency on 3<sup>rd</sup> December.

### 9. PPR

The PPR Panel held one plenary meeting on 11-12th December, and three opinions were adopted, two in the area of toxicology on the clastogenic properties and classification and labelling of TBSA, a metabolite of tritosulfuron (EFSA-Q-2007-128), requested by the European Commission, and on the genotoxic and carcinogenic potential of buprofezin in the context of the human risk assessment (EFSA-Q-2007-130), requested by EFSA's PRAPeR unit.

Another opinion on the default Q10 value used to describe the effect of temperature on transformation rates of pesticides in soil (EFSA-Q-2007-048, self-task) was also adopted.

The WGs on Toxicology and Residues discussed the draft opinion on cumulative risk assessment in human health (EFSA-Q-2006-160) scheduled for adoption in spring 2008.

A 6-month procurement contract was signed at the end of December to outsource the preliminary work on the exposure component in the frame of the self-tasked question on the risk assessment for cumulative exposure of triazoles pesticides.

Another 9-month contract was signed at end of December (call under Article 36) to outsource the preparatory work for the development of a new Guidance Document on exposure of operators, workers, bystanders, and residents to pesticides. The Steering Committee held a first teleconference on 8th January with the contractors.

The revised draft of the Guidance Document on risk assessment for birds and mammals is on the EFSA website for public consultation until 27<sup>th</sup> January 2008. A meeting with Member States was held in Brussels on 4-5 December to explain and discuss the draft GD, three members of the WG were present.

A Fate WG discussed the work-plan of the new self-tasked revision of the Guidance Document on persistence in soil and scheduled the first public consultation for second half of January 2008.

## SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE

### 1. Scientific Cooperation

Recruitment for the Scientific Cooperation Unit has further progressed (selections for an AD 5 and FG II positions have been finalised). The unit continued its work in facilitating cooperation between EFSA and Member States by:

(i) Development of a database of scientific experts: a first working group meeting took place in December with participation of 10 experts from MS and the EC (DG-RTD) and agreement on key issues leading to the start of the pilot phase of the project in January 2008.

(ii) Article 36 list: The updating of the Article 36 database has continued. A procedure to maintain the Article 36 list up to date has been discussed and agreed and a committee has been established to assist in this work.

(iii) The financial management of all Focal Points agreed/signed in 2007 and the first payments have been carried out.

(iv) The scientific coordination of a colloquium on Pest Risk Assessment in cooperation with the PLH unit was completed. The colloquium took place in Parma on 5/6 December 2007 and a short summary is available on EFSA's website.

(v) The scientific coordination of a meeting with Pre-Accession countries, which took place in Turkey and Croatia, has been carried out to take stock of the work and identify key learning for the next PHARE project phase.

(vi) The work on the scientific coordination of the Scientific Forum came to an end as the Forum took place in Brussels on 20/21 November 2008. A subsequent survey demonstrated a high degree of satisfaction with the programme and the outcome. An in-house evaluation was performed in collaboration with Communication.

(vii) A paper to raise awareness of EFSA's scientific work has been prepared in cooperation with the Communication Department setting out the way for the preparation of business plans for an EFSA Scientific Bulletin and a revised EFSA Journal. A project steering group is currently created and participation of interested Member States in the project is foreseen.

(viii) The arrangements for the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the ESCO Working Group on folic acid food fortification have been finalised. The meeting will take place in Parma on 30/31 January 2008.

### 2. Assessment Methodology

The Assessment Methodology Unit is part of the WG to evaluate the UK publication on the effects of certain food additives on child behavior. After an initial review of the Lancet paper and the Food Standards Agency report, the Assessment Methodology Unit proceeded with the re-analysis of the raw data and a first draft report has been provided to the WG on January 8. This report was discussed during the WG meeting on 11 January 2008.

The Assessment Methodology Unit managed the Q10 experimental dataset and repeated the statistical analysis underlying the Q10-FATE opinion which has been adopted by the PPR panel in December. The Assessment Methodology Unit took part in the related WG meetings and edited the draft opinion in all sections relevant to quantitative analysis and its interpretation, as well as the relevant appendices.

The Assessment Methodology Unit Multiple Framework Contract is now active and can be used for outsourcing statistical tasks. Technical support was provided to the Zoonoses unit for the first call under this Framework contract on baseline study analyses. The Assessment Methodology Unit is also actively involved in the analysis of these baseline study results.

The Assessment Methodology Unit has been asked to assist in the collection and analysis of progress indicators derived from the 2008 work plan for all units in the risk assessment and scientific cooperation and assistance directorate.

Finally, methodological and statistical support was provided in the form of short term consultations to many units, including the Zoonoses team (baselines studies, trend analysis), the PLH unit (planning of upcoming modelling activities) and the Risk Assessment department (contribution to the document on future animal health policy in EFSA).

### 3. Datex

The Datex Unit contributed to the final refinement of the OA group marine biotoxin opinion approved by the CONTAM Panel on 26-28 November, and begun drafting the exposure assessment for the following marine biotoxin group, the Azaspiracids (AZA group). Differences between shellfish species and seasonal variability have been investigated, as well as the influence of the sample preparation methodology.

Summary statistics from the EFSA Food Consumption Concise Database were calculated and provided to the National experts in order to allow them to perform a final check. These controls are preliminary to the publication of the data on the EFSA web site.

The DATEX unit was requested to provide technical and scientific support to collecting and analysing data on the occurrence of cadmium in food and beverages. An evaluation of existing information was performed and, in particular, data from the Commission Scientific Cooperation (SCOOP) program were organised in a database and made available for analysis. Preliminary results were presented to the CONTAM Working group on heavy metals in Rome on December 10-11.

Activities for two art.36 calls were registered in this period. The Grant Agreement for DATEX 02 call was signed in December. The DATEX 03 call met the deadline of December 10 and opening evaluation activities are ongoing.

### 4. Pesticide Risk Assessment Peer Review (PRAPeR)

The pesticide peer review process continued with the distribution of draft assessment reports for 5 new active substances and 3 existing active substances of the third stage to the respective applicant(s) and Member States. The public versions of the reports were produced and made available on the EFSA website, initiating a 40-day public consultation period. Several other substances are in the process of either having the public report finalised or are awaiting confirmation by the Commission of the preliminary prioritisation.

Consultation of Member State experts in the PRAPeR meetings continued in November with 5 meetings (physical/chemical properties and analytical methods; toxicology; residues; environmental fate and behaviour; and ecotoxicology)) to discuss issues related to 8 active substances. The outcome of the consultation and the summary of the risk assessment for these substances were finalized and distributed to the Member States.

For 2008 a new working programme was developed for the third and fourth stage of existing active substances on the basis of the Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1095/2007, which entered into force on 28 Sept. 2007. The report concerning the potential consumer health risks resulting from the use of certain active substances which were proposed to be exempted from the necessity of setting MRLs, was finalised. The European Commission requested a new risk assessment for 105 active substances in the framework of the first revision of temporary MRLs in Regulation (EC) 396/2005. The results of these assessments will be submitted in calendar week 3. In the

course of this exercise the database on toxicological reference values was updated with data provided by Member States.

## 5. Zoonoses

The joint EFSA-ECDC report on Trends and Sources of Zoonoses, Antimicrobial Resistance and Food-borne Outbreaks in EU in 2006 was published on the EFSA website on 19 December together with a press release. The press release focused on the decreasing trend in human *Salmonella* cases and increasing trend in listeriosis cases in the Community.

Three new Working Groups were set up under the Zoonoses Task Force with the mandate to develop the Community reporting system. One of the Working Groups will consider improved temporal and spatial trend analysis and develop future strategies for the application of quantitative epidemiological methods to trends in zoonotic agents in Europe. Another Working Group will deal with recommendations regarding animal and food categories where monitoring of the trends at the Community level would be useful. The Working Group on VTEC will prepare a proposal for a harmonised monitoring scheme for Verotoxigenic *E. coli* bacteria in animals and food in light of BIOHAZ panel's opinion. Together 4 Working Group meetings were organised during December and January.

A major data validation exercise was carried out during the months in collaboration with the Commission regarding the datasets from the EU-wide baseline surveys on *Salmonella* in turkeys and slaughter pigs and the Member States were contacted to check and complement their dataset.

A country visit was made to Belgium to enhance the reporting on zoonoses at the national level.

## SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

(a) At its last plenary meeting of 19 December 2007, the Scientific Committee endorsed a draft opinion on food safety, animal health and welfare and environmental impact of animals derived from cloning by somatic cell nucleus transfer and their offspring and products obtained from those animals. Subject to some amendments, as agreed at the Plenary meeting, the draft opinion was released for public consultation on 10 January 2008 and was accompanied by a press release and a frequently asked question document. Comments can be submitted until 25 February 2008. In addition, EFSA will also hold a dedicated stakeholder meeting on this subject in February 2008. Taking into account the comments received during the public consultation, it is planned that the Scientific Committee will be able to adopt a final opinion on animal cloning at its April Plenary meeting. Due to the data available, the draft opinion focused only on cattle and pigs and key conclusions of the draft opinion include; (i) although mortality and morbidity of clones are significantly higher than those observed in sexually-reproduced animals, healthy clones and their offspring indicate that cloning by SCNT can be successfully used; (ii) the health and welfare of a significant proportion of clones has been found to be adversely affected but the proportion of adversely affected clones could decrease as the technology improves and (iii) it is very unlikely that any difference exist in terms of food safety between food products from clones and their progeny compared with those derived from conventionally bred animals.

(b) Working group meetings were held in the area of transparency in risk assessment – scientific aspects, nanotechnology and human health risk-benefit assessment.

## ADVISORY FORUM

At the 24th AF plenary meeting in The Hague on 6-7 December 2007, the AF endorsed an updated decision on the operation of the AF and the new policy, format and guidelines for the Declaration of Interests were presented. Also, the implementation of the Strategy for Cooperation and Networking was discussed and numerous national focal point agreements were signed.



Table 1 Number of plenary and working group meetings, as well as the number of opinions, reports and statements adopted in the period December 2007 – January 2008

	Plenary Meetings	Working Group Meetings	Number of opinions / reports
AFC	1	6	17
AHAW	2	10	5
BIOHAZ	2	5	5 +4(January)
CONTAM	1	11	4
FEEDAP	1	9	1
GMO	1	5	0
NDA	0	1	0
PLH	1	9	0
PPR	1	6	3
SC	1	3	0
PRAPeR	0	5	1
TF Zoonoses	0	4	1
Total	11	74	37

## EXTERNAL RELATIONS

### 1. Cooperation with the European Institutions

#### European Parliament

At the level of the European Parliament, EFSA representatives participated in EP Committee meetings and followed Plenary sittings, notably a discussion on GMOs and the economic impact of the “zero-tolerance” scheme in the European Parliament’s Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) on 18<sup>th</sup> December and the adoption of the amendment on the Regulation on nutrition and health claims in first reading in the European Parliament’s Plenary. As regards the final adoption of the Budget for 2008, the European Parliament voted on the Draft Budget 2008 at its plenary sitting of 13 December 2007. As expected, it confirmed its initial position to restore the Commission’s proposal for a preliminary draft budget (PDB), aiming at increasing EFSA’s budgetary lines by 6.500.000€, for a total budget amounting to 63.406.000€.

A report on EFSA’s work in relation to nutrient profiles was sent to the European Parliament’s Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) for information.

At the invitation of EFSA’s Executive Director in her capacity as Chair of the Advisory Forum, EFSA’s liaison MEP Mrs Kartika Liotard participated in the EFSA Advisory Forum meeting on 6 and 7 December 2007 in The Hague, Netherlands.

#### European Commission

On 5 December the Executive Director met with the Director General of DG SANCO for a bilateral meeting. Furthermore, EFSA participated in the meeting of the European Commission’s Advisory Group on the Food Chain, Animal Health and Plant Health on 30 November 2007.

#### Council of Ministers

A series of dossiers in connection with EFSA activities were on the table of EU Ministers of Agriculture for agreement at the Agriculture Council meeting 17-19 December 2007.

The Council reached political agreement on the following:

- the Food Improvement Agents Package (FIAP), which was closely followed by EFSA due to the impact it might have on EFSA's work;
- a draft Directive establishing a framework for Community action to achieve a sustainable use of pesticides, This Directive aims at promoting the rational and informed use of pesticides, including an increased recourse to non-chemical plant protection methods;
- a proposal for a Directive amending Council Directive 96/22/EC concerning the prohibition on the use in stockfarming of certain substances having a hormonal or thyreostatic action and of beta agonists. This agreement should constitute the basis for informal trilogue discussions with the European Parliament in view of a first reading agreement.

The Council also adopted:

- conclusions on the new Animal Health Strategy for the EU (2007-2013), notably encouraging a prevention policy while promoting vaccination when appropriate, making veterinary measures in line with OIE standards, and finally inviting the Commission to start working on an action plan on this matter to propose a legal framework for establishing general principles in the area of animal health;

Finally, on the Budget, further to the final vote in the Parliament (see above), the Council of the European Union also approved the adoption. This closed the budgetary procedure for the Budget 2008.

## 2. Relations with EU Presidencies

At the invitation of the Portuguese Presidency EFSA participated at the Council meeting of the Chief Plant Health Officers (CPHOs) on 3<sup>rd</sup> December in Brussels. EFSA was represented by the Director of Risk Assessment and the Head of Unit of Plant Health.

At the kind invitation of the Portuguese Presidency the last meeting in 2007 of EFSA's Management Board was held on 13<sup>th</sup> December in Lisbon. At that occasion, the Board was addressed by Portuguese Minister of Agriculture Jaime Silva.

Discussions were held with the 2008 EU Presidencies in the course of December, Slovenia and France. A visit of EFSA's Executive Director to Slovenia is being arranged and it will take place in February. At that occasion EFSA's Executive Director will meet Slovenian Ministers of Agriculture and Health. Arrangements are also on-going with regards to the meeting of the Management Board that at the kind invitation of the current Presidency will take place in Slovenia in June. Discussions are also on-going with the French authorities with regards to the upcoming Presidency of France in the second semester of 2008.

## 3. Relations with Stakeholders

EFSA's Executive Director addressed BEUC (the European Consumers' Organisations) at their General Assembly on 30<sup>th</sup> November in Brussels. It was an occasion to reiterate EFSA's commitment to close dialogue with consumer groups as consumer protection and public health are at heart of EFSA's activities. After the Executive Director's address, an exchange of views with consumer representatives took place and issues such as scientific cooperation, risk communication and consumer perception, GMOs, and new technologies were discussed.

In the context of EFSA's policy towards stakeholders, a dedicated meeting with EFSA's Stakeholder Consultative Platform on EFSA's Scientific Committee draft opinion on cloning is being organised for early February. The draft Opinion will be published on 11<sup>th</sup> January and an online public consultation will be launched at the same time for a duration of 6 weeks. Interested parties are invited to send their comments via EFSA's website by 25<sup>th</sup> February. Furthermore, a number of other online public consultations were launched in the course of December and early January. Those deal with the safety assessment of botanicals and botanical preparations, the risk assessment of birds and bird mammals and draft guidance on submission of a dossier for safety

evaluation by EFSA of a recycling process to produce recycled plastics intended to be used for manufacture of materials and articles in contact with food.

#### 4. International Relations

##### Pre-Accession Programme for Turkey and Croatia 2006/2007

In December 2007, the EFSA Pre-Accession Steering Committee had two separate meetings with the Turkish and Croatian authorities and stakeholders. The overall goal of those meetings were to evaluate the results and achievements of the activities implemented within the Pre-Accession Programme 2006/2007 and to discuss possible topics for the Pre-Accession Programme 2008 for Turkey, Croatia and Macedonia

General conclusions for the 2006/2007 Programme: The activities implemented within the 2006/2007 Programme (seminars, workshops, colloquia, conferences and Candidate Countries experts' participation in EFSA meetings as observers) were very well received by all the experts from the Candidate countries. The participants were enthusiastic about EFSA's activities and were keen to explore the opportunities to participate in EFSA's work. At all seminars, the participants were asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire to provide feedback to EFSA. This will enable EFSA to improve future events and increase the added value for the participants.

##### Pre-Accession Programme for Turkey, Croatia and Macedonia 2008

The contract with the European Commission for the 2008 Programme (500.000 Euro) was signed on Dec 14, 2007 and will run for one year. The Programme will be a continuation of the previous programme for Turkey and Croatia while for Macedonia it will be the start of cooperation with EFSA. The Programme will include seminars, workshops, study tours and participation in EFSA meetings by Candidate country experts following the pattern established in the PHARE programme for Romania and Bulgaria.

A final report of the 2006/2007 Programme and comprehensive reports of the individual seminars, including the replies to the evaluation questionnaires, as well as the detailed list of activities planned for the Pre-Accession Programme 2008 will be ready shortly and will be published on EFSA's website.

## COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTORATE

### 1. Communications activities: on- and offline

Since the last MB meeting the Communications Directorate has carried out a number of on- and off line communications activities aimed at raising EFSA's visibility in Europe:

#### French media lunch with EFSA's Executive Director – Paris, 29 November:

On the occasion of the visit of EFSA's Executive Director to the French Food Safety Authority (AFSSA), the press office organised a *press lunch* with Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle and a selection of French journalists that report on food and feed safety related issues. The journalists from the following publications attended: *Le Figaro*, *La Tribune*, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, *Revue de l'industrie agroalimentaire*, and *International Herald Tribune*. The focus of the dialogue was on issues such as nutrition, pesticides, aspartame, cloning, nanotechnologies, food colours, climate change, and Bluetongue. But questions were also raised on EFSA's structure and the policy on Declarations of Interest. Feedback received from the journalists who attended was positive. Some of them requested further detailed information, which was later provided.

The general feeling from both sides was that the forum was an excellent way for EFSA to disseminate information. The relaxed setting was conducive to easy dialogue and we plan with the Executive Director to stage more of these over the coming months.

#### Symposium marking Dutch Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (VWA) 5 year anniversary - The Hague, 6 December:

EFSA's Executive Director Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle attended a symposium entitled *"Together taking care of trust"* organised by VWA to mark the VWA's 5 year anniversary. The symposium was opened by André van der Zande, Secretary General of the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, and included participants from a wide range of stakeholder organisations representing consumers, regulatory bodies, academia and industry. Also, Kartika Tamara Liotard, member of the European Parliament, attended the event. The symposium was concluded by the official signing of a Focal Point agreement committing EFSA and VWA to further enhanced mutual cooperation.

#### Signing of new Focal Point agreements with Member States - The Hague, 6 December:

To further reinforce EFSA's co-operation with Member States, Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle signed a further set of Focal Point agreements with several Member States that were attending the Advisory Forum meeting. These included: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain and were added to the agreements already signed with Romania, Bulgaria, France, and Italy. All signed agreements were posted on EFSA website together with a short introductory text and photos taken during the signature.

#### Management Board meeting - Lisbon, 13 December:

A press release entitled *EFSA's work plan for 2008 responds to EU food safety system needs* focusing on EFSA's Work Programme and Budget for 2008 which will steer next year's activities was distributed to journalists across Europe on the day of the meeting. The outcomes of the discussions including the presentations were posted on the website immediately after the meeting. Prior to the meeting, the Press Office arranged an interview with EFSA's Executive Director and the Portuguese daily *Público* which was published on 17 December and reported on the Management Board meeting, budget and work plan for 2008 as well as EFSA's future challenges, nutrition and microbiological risks.

## 2. Corporate / Science Press material: Press releases / Statements / News alerts / Web news stories:

### Press Releases / Statements:

- I. Five years on, EFSA looks to the future (22 November)
- II. EFSA adopts a scientific opinion on the animal welfare aspects of different methods of killing and skinning of seals (19 December)
- III. EFSA-ECDC annual report on animal infections transmissible to humans: Salmonella infections in humans in the EU down, Listeria infections up, Campylobacter still most frequently reported animal infection transmissible to humans (19 December)

The press release on EFSA's Scientific Forum and Summit organised in Brussels on 20-22 November as well as the individual sessions attended by European journalists generated some 48 articles (10 announcements were published by media from across the EU + pan-EU press prior to the event). The following 15 Member States (Denmark, the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Greece, Spain, Italy, Latvia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Estonia, France and Ireland) covered the event in their national media. The event was also well covered in pan-European media with 17 articles published in various specialised publications. Taking into account the print circulation of all publications which have covered the event, EFSA has reached an audience of nearly 3 million readers, not counting readership of on-line and audiovisual media that covered the event. The general tone of the coverage was positive, covering the majority of the Forum topics, in particular EFSA's role, nanotechnology, food colourings and additives and GMOs. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle was the most quoted EFSA spokesperson.

The publication of the press release on the EFSA opinion on the animal welfare aspects of different methods of killing and skinning of seals generated to date some 15 articles. EFSA findings were reported by several press agencies (*EFE*, *Agence Europe* and the *Canadian Press*), a couple of main general dailies (*Der Standard* and *Le Monde*) as well as regional, Pan- EU and specialised press. In addition to the coverage in Austria, Germany, Spain, France and Italy, the EFSA opinion was also covered in the main seal hunting countries Canada, Norway and Namibia. Most journalists highlighted EFSA's conclusion that some seals are being killed in an inhumane way.

The press release on the publication of the joint EFSA/ECDC report of zoonotic diseases generated limited coverage across the EU with 14 articles gathered to date (principally due to timing issues, ie.pre-Christmas break). The story was reported by two press agencies (*DPA* and *Agence Europe*), several dailies, including *Die Presse* (AT) and *Die Welt* (DE) and several specialised publications (*Agrarisch Dagblad*, *Food Production Daily*). Most articles highlighted that Salmonella infections were declining in the EU but the number of cases of Listeriosis has increased, in line with press release messages.

#### News Alerts:

- I. Nutrient profiles: EFSA consults experts and assesses options (6 December).
- II. EFSA consults experts on the future of plant pest risk assessment (6 December)
- III. Live broadcast of EFSA's 33rd Management Board meeting (13 December)
- IV. EFSA launches public consultation on botanicals (17 December)

#### Web News Stories:

- I. EFSA advises on health risks of consuming reptile meat (21 November)
- II. EFSA signs new Focal Point agreements with Member States in the Hague (7 December)
- III. Update on EFSA's evaluation of a study on food colours and behaviour (12 December)
- IV. EFSA's work plan for 2008 responds to EU food safety system needs (13 December)
- V. EFSA publishes a BSE/TSE risk assessment of the use of bovine dried blood products as an ingredient for feeds destined for farmed fish (20 December)

Articles following news alerts and web news stories appeared mainly in specialised press throughout Europe, such as *Agra Alimentation*, *FoodNavigator.com*, *Nutrition Horizon*, *AP-Foodtechnology*, *Organic Life*, *Just Food.com*, *Food Production daily*, etc.

### 3. Web developments

Key ongoing projects include work to enhance the search functionality of the EFSA website. Once launched, users will have a powerful tool to help them find content that is most relevant to them.

In addition, a large amount of new information was published, including web stories on BSE/TSE risk assessment of the use of bovine dried blood products; comprehensive advice on pig welfare; update on EFSA's plans to evaluate a study on food colours and behaviour; and health risks of consuming reptile meat.

We also made new procedures, agreements, reports and announcements available to stakeholders and the public. These include procedures for handling Declarations of Interest; public consultation on botanicals; Work plan for 2008; announcement of open scientific debate on the process of assessing the risks posed by pests that harm plants and impact on biodiversity; report on the recent scientific colloquium on nutrient profiles; Joint EFSA/ECDC report on infectious diseases transmissible from animals to humans; and focal point agreements with Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain.

### 4. Publications

In addition to the EFSA News N. 16 in French, German and Italian, the following publications announced at the MB meeting in December have now been published:

- "Moving Together – News on European food safety co-operation": a newsletter promoting EFSA and the Advisory Forum's cooperation and networking strategy;
- CD-ROM compiling all EFSA scientific documents: for the administrations/institutions of contributing scientific experts;
- "The feed additives workspace in ScienceNet": support to the FEEDAP Panel for the production of user guides;

- "EU agencies: whatever you do, we work for you": 2007 edition of the EU Agencies' joint publication (contribution).

## ADMINISTRATION

### 1. Recruitment Status

*Number of recruitment procedures for Temporary Agents and officials (until 31<sup>st</sup> Dec. 2007)*

			RECRUITMENT (+)			END OF CONTRACT (-)			
	Staff foreseen 2007  (establishment plan)	Total TA & Officials  end Dec 06	Number of New Contracts	New comers	Change in contract, Cat. or Grade (*)	Departures (**)	Change in Cat. or Grade (***)	"Net" Result	Total TA & Officials  end Nov 07
AD	166	87	72	50	22	5	10	57	144
AST	134	86	70	28	42	6	21	43	129
Total	300	173	142	78	64	11	31	100	273

*Number of recruitment procedures for all staff (until 31<sup>st</sup> Dec. 2007)*

	RECRUITMENT (+)				END OF CONTRACT (-)				
	Total staff number  end Dec 06	Number of New Contracts	New comers	Change in contract, Cat. or Grade (*)	Departures (**)	Contract Expiry	Change in contract, Cat. or Grade (***)	"Net" Result	Total staff number  end Dec 07
AT+Off	173	142	78	64	11	0	31	100	273
AUX	24	0	0	0	0	4	16	-20	4
CA	24	21	21	0	0	2	19	0	24
END	7	5	5	0	0	3	0	2	9
Total	228	168	104	64	11	9	66	82	310

*Number of recruitment procedures for all staff (until 30<sup>th</sup> Jan.2008)*

	RECRUITMENT (+)				END OF CONTRACT (-)				
	Total staff number  end Dec 07	Number of New Contracts	New comers	Change in contract, Cat. or Grade (*)	Departures (**)	Contract Expiry	Change in contract, Cat. or Grade (***)	"Net" Result	Total staff number  end Jan 08
AT+Off	273	6	4	2	4	0	2	0	273
AUX	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	-4	0
CA	24	5	4	1	0	0	0	5	29

<b>END</b>	9	<b>0</b>	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>11</b>	8	3	6	4	0	<b>1</b>	<b>311</b>

(\*) = EFSA's staff recruited to TA posts (including AUX, CA, END) at EFSA.

(\*\*) = Resignations, termination of contract after probationary period.

(\*\*\*) = EFSA's staff leaving their TA post in order to be recruited to a new TA post at EFSA (AUX, CA, END not included)