



# Minutes

## 77<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE EFSA ADVISORY FORUM

### Meeting details

Date: 28-29 October 2020

Venue: Virtual meeting, Teams

Meeting hours: 9:30 – 13:00 (28.10.2020)

9:30 – 13:00 (29.10.2020)

Members	
Austria (AT)	Klemens Fuchs
Belgium (BE)	Benoit Horion Xavier Van Huffel
Bulgaria (BG)	Illian Kostov
Croatia (HR)	Darja Sokolić
Cyprus (CY)	Stelios Yiannopoulos Charitini Frenaritou
Czech Republic (CZ)	Petr Benes
Denmark (DK)	Christine Nellemann
Estonia (EE)	Piret Priisalu
Finland (FI)	Pia Mäkelä
France (FR)	Moez Sanaa Salma Elreedy
Germany (DE)	Andreas Hensel Nicole Gollnick (2 <sup>nd</sup> day only)
Greece (EL)	Stavros Zannopoulos
Hungary (HU)	Ákos Bernard Józwiak
Ireland (IE)	Pamela Byrne
Italy (IT)	Pier Davide Lecchini Alessandra Perrella
Latvia (LV)	Vadims Bartkevičs
Malta (MT)	Ingrid Busuttil
Netherlands (NL)	Antoon Opperhuizen
Norway (NO)	Cecilie Rolstad Denby Danica Grahek-Ogden
Portugal (PT)	Pedro Portugal Gaspar Filipa Melo de Vasconcelos
Poland (PL)	Jacek Postupolski
Romania (RO)	Simona Rădulescu
Slovenia (SI)	Urška Blaznik
Slovak Republic (SK)	Marica Kuzmiak Theiszova Katarina Kromerova
Spain (ES)	Ana Canals Caballero
Sweden (SE)	Per Bergman



Observers & External Participants	
Albania (AL)	Pamela Radovani
Bosnia and Herzegovina (BA)	Dzemil Hajric
Iceland (IS)	Hrönn Ólína Jörundsdóttir
Kosovo <sup>1</sup> (XK)	Naser Krasniqi
Montenegro (ME)	Vesna Dakovic
Republic of North Macedonia (MK)	Zoran Atanasov
Serbia (RS)	Tamara Bošković
Switzerland (CH)	Vincent Dudler
Turkey (TR)	Serap Hanci
European Commission (EC)	Anastasia Alvizou Alexandra Nikolakopoulou Rada Chehlarova

EFSA Participants	
Bernhard Url (Chair)	Gorgias Garofalakis
Juliane Kleiner	Eileen O'Dea
Guilhem de Seze	Yann Devos
Barbara Gallani	Bernard Bottex
Claudia Heppner	Arthur Healy
Marta Hugas	Angelo Maggiore
Mary Gilsean	Aleksandra Lewandowska
Dirk Detken	Sérgio Potier Rodeia (Advisory Forum Secretariat)
Claudia Roncancio-Pena	Doina Tiganu (Advisory Forum Secretariat)
Domagoj Vrbos	Cristina Alonso Andicoberry (Advisory Forum Secretariat)
Barbara Ghizzoni	Clementina Piani (Advisory Forum Secretariat)
Cinzia Percivaldi	Angéline Camus (Advisory Forum Secretariat)

Apologies	
Lithuania (LT)	Snieguole Sceponaviciene
Luxembourg (LU)	Marc Fischer

## 1. Opening of the meeting & adoption of agenda

Bernhard Url, Chair of the meeting, welcomed participants to the 77<sup>th</sup> Advisory Forum (AF) virtual meeting. The Chair welcomed:

- **Mrs. Alexandra Nikolakopoulou** - new Head of Unit in DG-SANTE D1;
- **Mrs. Hrönn Ólína Jörundsdóttir** - Director General, Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority;
- **Mr. Naser Krasniqi** - new AF Observer and National Coordinator for Kosovo.

Apologies were noted from Lithuania and Luxembourg.

<sup>1</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.



Under AOB, three additional items were raised: by The Netherlands, on the role of EFSA in health claims of botanicals, and on contamination of sesame seeds by ethylene oxide; and by Iceland, on an incident concerning SARS-CoV-2 in food.

The Agenda was adopted. The Chair noted that the minutes from the 76<sup>th</sup> Advisory Forum have been published on the EFSA's website end of August. The Chair informed that the meeting will be recorded for minute-taking purposes. No objection to the recording of the meeting was raised.

## **2. Welcome by the President of the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment**

The Chair gave the floor to Andreas Hensel, President of the German Federal Institute for Risk Assessment to welcome the plenary on the occasion of the German Presidency of the Council.

Andreas Hensel noted that current COVID-19 circumstances did not allow for an AF physical meeting in Germany (under the current Presidency of the Council) and highlighted that the invitation for Germany to host a future AF meeting remains. Andreas further mentioned the need to be better prepared to future challenges and, at the same time, noted that digitalisation needs to be turned into opportunities. Reference was made to the state-of-play of the relationship between the EU and the UK and to the need for a new cooperation approach to be found, as the current timeline only allows the UK to remain a partner until end of 2020 e.g. in the context of Horizon 2020. Finally, he emphasised the importance of the work of AF Discussion Group on Capacity Building and that he's looking forward to the upcoming report on its activities as per connections to finding innovative ways of identifying pools of expertise and building new partnerships.

## **3. Update on the Farm to Fork Strategy**

The Chair welcomed Alexandra Nikolakopoulou, new Head of the D1 Unit responsible for the Farm to Fork Strategy (DG-SANTE). Alexandra Nikolakopoulou reminded the plenary about the holistic approach of the Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy and provided an update on the most relevant implementation actions (e.g. Sustainable Food Systems framework, contingency plan, etc). In this context, collaboration between EFSA and AF members is crucial to achieve a successful transition to sustainable food systems. The flagship action of the F2F Strategy is the adoption of a new legislative framework for sustainable food systems, a basis to ensure policy coherence at EU and national level. Additional support actions cover current mandates of EFSA (e.g. animal welfare, front-of-pack labelling and nutrient profiles, date marking), contingency plan on food supply and availability, future legislative revisions, monitoring and EU research cooperation to address sustainability aspects. Regarding this last point, Alexandra Nikolakopoulou presented a proposal concerning the establishment of a High-Level Expert Group. Its objective is to advise the EC, in close collaboration with the UN Food Systems Scientific Advisory Committee, on the needs, potential feasibility, options and approach for the potential establishment of an International Platform for Food System Science (IPFSS). Reference also to the presentation of F2F governance and the importance of cross-sectorial approach.

MSs (notably BE, FR, ES, IE, IT) acknowledged the importance of an integrated approach to fulfil the F2F Strategy, combined with consistent working methods at national level and without losing focus on food safety. An integrated, data driven, human centred approach is crucial to this end. The NL, DK and IE expressed interest in joining the High-Level Expert Group abovementioned.



The Chair reminded how fundamental it is to find a common definition to sustainability. He concluded mentioning the work done by the AF Task Force on Data Collection and Data Modelling aimed at creating a data sharing ecosystem in support of a sustainable food safety risk assessment framework.

**Action Point 1:** AF members to express interest in participating in a High-Level Expert Group to assess the needs, potential feasibility and approach for an International Platform for Food Systems Science (IPFSS) by 20.11.2020 COB.

Note: as DG-SANTE will need to put forward a limited number of potential names to DG-RTD for further consideration, there are no guarantees that volunteers will be selected for the Expert Group.

#### 4. 4<sup>th</sup> EFSA Scientific Conference

The Chair gave the floor to Marta Hugas and Yann Devos who gave an update on the preparation of EFSA's 4<sup>th</sup> Scientific Conference, planned currently in the week of 20-25 June 2022 in Brussels. The event will address the changing context in which regulatory (food, feed and environmental safety) science acts, examine how risk assessments and communication, and engagement (in the remit of EFSA, as well as other relevant Agencies and MS) need to be advanced to remain fit for purpose, and reflect on future strategic goals and directions for regulatory/policy science.

Yann Devos presented the draft Conference Programme Outline. The desire to strengthen engagement with relevant EU Agencies (ECDC, ECHA, EEA and EMA), the JRC and MSs, enabling them to co-shape the scientific programme of the event, was pointed out as a key objective of the Scientific Conference. In this respect, Marta Hugas introduced the idea of setting up a Member State Advisory Board of EFSA's 4<sup>th</sup> Scientific Conference, which will be composed of 5 to 7 Advisory Forum members willing and interested to contribute to co-shape the event. Both the Member State Advisory Board and the External Advisory Board will act as advisory bodies providing input and guidance to the Scientific Programme Committee, which will develop the event structure, format and themes. The ToR were presented and endorsed in general by the plenary.

Ireland raised the idea of following an approach that will enable embedding a link between innovation and sustainability. Marta Hugas answered that it is being considered and will be further explored. During the meeting, DK, HU, IS, IE, DE, NL expressed interest to join the Member State Advisory Board. Additional expressions of interest were received from HR, SK and FR after the meeting. DG-SANTE further inquired whether a facilitating role is foreseen for DG-SANTE / EC in the organisation of the conference. The Chair replied that a certain role for political leadership could be foreseen as well and will be further explored. DG-SANTE finally underlined that the timing of the conference would be important as it could provide useful input for the development of the EU framework on sustainable food systems.

**Action point 2:** MSs to express their interest to join the Member State Advisory Board of EFSA's 4<sup>th</sup> Scientific Conference and comment the ToRs of the board, at latest by 16.11.2020.



## 5. Engagement and Communications Update

### ■ 5.1 - Recent communications, media highlights

Barbara Gallani provided an overview of communications and engagement activities from the last quarter of 2020, including the African Swine Fever (ASF) campaign results, stakeholder engagement activities and the latest Communication Experts Network (CEN) meeting.

### ■ 5.2 - EFSA Contribution to General Plan on Risk Communication

Barbara Gallani presented the ongoing work to inform the implementation of the Transparency Regulation regarding coordinated risk communication in the EU. In this context, AF support is ensured through input provided to the EFSA Steering Committee for Coordinated EU Risk Communication.

Barbara noted that EFSA is working to address the EC mandate for the provision of technical assistance in the field of risk communication in support of the EC's implementation of the General Plan for Risk Communication. The evidence being gathered to inform the General Plan can be clustered into four main topics: i) a Scientific Report on the Science of Risk Communication; ii) a Communication Product Catalogue; iii) dissemination Guidelines (best practice); and iv) Mapping Communication Capacities and Processes and linkages through *fora* and networks.

Regarding the latter point on Mapping Communication Capacities and Processes, during the month of November EFSA will run a survey through a consultancy contractor to map national and regional authorities' risk communication mechanisms on food and feed safety. The aim is to develop an information stream throughout the EU to ensure smoother and faster risk communication EU-wide as well as at national and regional level. A final report is expected in March 2021.

**Action Point 3:** EFSA to share the distribution list of the survey for mapping national and regional authorities' risk communication mechanisms on food and feed safety. Each country's AF members, in coordination with Focal Points, to deliver a single coordinated response to the survey by 25.11.2020.

### ■ 5.3 - EFSA Journal – proposal for consideration: opportunity to extend EFSA's publishing services to MSs

In the context of the Transparency Regulation, EFSA is identifying the "tools and channels" for an integrated risk communication network. Under this item, Arthur Healy and Barbara Ghizzoni presented a proposal to extend EFSA's publishing services (currently Wiley) to national agencies and other MS institutions. The aim is to improve the coordination of risk communication through an integrated approach, gathering all scientific assessments – at both EU and national levels – on one platform, i.e. a third channel on Wiley. This third channel would be shaped for national agencies assessments on Wiley Online Library and would be distinct from the EFSA Journal channel.

Positive feedback was received from several AF members, indicating interest in the initiative and supporting a feasibility study to assess all challenges ahead. Replying to comments raised in plenary, Barbara Gallani acknowledged the need for an in-depth feasibility study before a decision can be taken on whether such a publishing platform is realistic.



The Chair acknowledged the proposal as a valuable contribution to ensure the implementation of an ecosystem of collaboration leading to a closer European risk assessment community, with next steps to be followed up by EFSA.

#### ■ **5.4 - Social science at EFSA: update on the roadmap, results from recent studies and future plans**

Domagoj Vrbos provided an overview of EFSA's Social Science roadmap, its implementation, results from recent studies and the activities planned for 2021 in view of the start of EFSA Strategy 2027 in January 2022. He highlighted the input all these activities would have for the General Plan on Risk Communication. Domagoj Vrbos displayed also the first insights of the recent Reputation Barometer study, warmly thanking AF members for the high response rate. The overall results are positive and represent valuable feedback for the upcoming EFSA Strategy 2027.

The Chair thanked for the compliments made by MSs on EFSA's improvements and the need to better address responsiveness and timeliness in the EFSA Strategy 2027.

## **6. Risk Assessment**

#### ■ **6.1 - Update on crisis preparedness exercise held at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Focal Point meeting**

Bernard Bottex debriefed the plenary about the Crisis Preparedness Exercise organised on 22-23.09.2020 ahead of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Focal Point (FP) meeting. The exercise concluded a four-year crisis training strategy under the overall theme "connected capabilities". The objectives of the training were to explore the most appropriate ways to improve collaboration and exchange data / information between EFSA and FPs, in EU Member States and Pre-Accession Countries; to identify gaps in the current system and look for ways to improve them; and to share best practices and knowledge to improve ways of working for all.

The outcome of the discussion highlighted the importance of raising awareness among FPs on the urgent response procedure and on the possible role of the FP network and other communication channels, avoiding duplication of work and making best use of resources in crisis times.

The Chair highlighted that the outcome is not surprising since, in term of crisis, there are different and competing priorities along with risk assessment. More clarification is needed on the roles and expectations and, in this context, EFSA is committed to update its procedures and to provide regular training.

Some MSs expressed appreciation for the exercise but raised the issue that FPs are not involved in any of the legally established channels for contingency plans and that this is not part of their mandate. EFSA should consult with the EC to clarify what, if any, could be the role of FPs and CEN members in crisis urgent responses. France suggested to perhaps refocus the discussion on how EFSA and MSs could work together for producing risk assessment or scientific advice during crisis situations whereas Hungary indicated the need to re-think the roles of the various parties dealing with RA during crisis, which is very strongly linked to data interoperability, access and analysis.

The Chair concluded this item by acknowledging the need to improve the current crisis response mechanisms, including access to data for an optimal response at European level. This topic will be brought to the attention of the AF in future AF meeting.





## ■ 6.2 - EFSA mandates, MS risk assessment plans, upcoming public consultations (30 min.)

Juliane Kleiner illustrated the draft mandate for risk benefit assessment of consumption of fish in relation to the presence of dioxins and PCBs, as follow up of the November 2018 EFSA opinion on dioxins and consequent discussion with MSs and the EC. There are discussions ongoing with the EC regarding the methodology and with WHO concerning the update of the Toxic Equivalency Factor (TEF) for dioxins. On this last point, EFSA will launch a call for tender to update the toxicological database. Moreover, the guidance document on risk-benefit assessment will be updated to better address this mandate. Juliane Kleiner also mentioned the EC request for 5 mandates on welfare of calves, pigs, laying hens, broilers and animal transportation, all strategically linked to the F2F Strategy.

Guilhem de Seze highlighted the two main thematic areas of current work. Reference to a number of opinions<sup>2</sup> recently adopted and to an ongoing one in the field of GMO and new genomic techniques<sup>3</sup> was made. Guilhem noted as well an ongoing open consultation<sup>4</sup> on the draft scientific guidance for the preparation of applications on smoke flavouring primary products.

On MS risk assessment plans, Spain noted that it would be important that EFSA provides feedback to MSs on the use made of (additional) information shared upon EFSA's request in the frame of AF discussions. Juliane Kleiner acknowledged the observation and indicated that EFSA will explore ways of optimising the provision of such feedback back to MSs.

Denmark commented on their work on sustainable diets, including upcoming dietary guidelines and a sustainable diet risk assessment report. The EC expressed interest in receiving these assessments on sustainable diets from Denmark as well as the scientific opinion from Portugal on sustainable seafood.

The Chair concluded this agenda item with a reflection on how to best establish a community / platform approach for sharing and discussing more efficiently MS and EFSA scientific outputs, considering as well the current work on an European approach towards data-driven ecosystems inputs.

**Action Point 4:** Denmark and Portugal to share with EFSA, the EC and AF members the scientific assessments on sustainable diets mentioned during the AF meeting. In case of need, EFSA may support the respective sharing via the AF MS Teams channel.

## 7. Update on implementation of the new Transparency Regulation in the Food Chain

### ■ 7.1 - Introduction

The Chair introduced this agenda block as a standing item in the AF meeting, providing an overview of the main topics to be addressed.

<sup>2</sup> Scientific opinion on genetically modified organisms engineered with gene drives (gene drive modified organisms) and their implications for risk assessment methodologies; Scientific opinion on plants developed using type 1 and type 2 Site-Directed Nuclease and Oligonucleotide Directed Mutagenesis; Synthetic Biology developments in plants, environmental risk assessment aspects (ERA); Scientific opinion on the RA of plant developed through new genomic techniques, adopted in 139<sup>th</sup> Scientific Panel on Genetically Modified Organisms, 14-15 October 2020.

<sup>3</sup> In vitro random mutagenesis techniques, to be publish in September 2021. The topic is related to a recently published report by France on the same issue.

<sup>4</sup> Public consultation on the draft scientific guidance for the preparation of applications on smoke flavouring primary products, open until 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020.



## ■ 7.2 - An ecosystem vision for future partnerships

The Chair presented a long-term vision for a new partnership framework. He introduced the concepts of ecosystems – as blueprints for value creation through cooperation and competition of, possibly diverse, actors – and platforms – as systems with governance and collaboration rules that enable interaction among actors – which can support the vision for future partnerships. The Chair further noted that our food safety system needs to become more responsive and innovative; and that collaborations within ecosystems should be broadened and deepened. The Chair thanked the work of the AF Task Force on Data Collection and Data Modelling, which provided a vision to be entailed in the upcoming 2027 EFSA Strategy.

The Transparency Regulation provides the framework and resources to increase collaboration with MS under an ecosystem approach, with the aim to build a common EU culture for risk assessment. In this context, EFSA will focus on the creation and expansion of platforms to stimulate interactions among partners at ecosystem level, enabling partners to identify and share expertise, scientific evidence (data, algorithms), expert views, etc.

The Netherlands expressed the need for a trusted food safety system that better senses the environment, avoiding duplication of work and making best use of freed resources. The Netherlands suggested, in this context, that the vision stemming from the report of the Task Force on Data Collection and Data Modelling is translated into concrete actions. Hungary noted the challenges around the paradigm shift i.e. the resistance to move from a reactive onto a proactive system (based on sensing, shared data and methodologies), understanding the changes that need to be done at process level for the shift to occur, and the need for courage to overcome the barriers. France highlighted the importance of trust in a new food safety system; the need for a critical view on our ambition towards an ecosystem vision; and the need to frame collaboration as a path that goes beyond addressing policy needs onto setting a new risk assessment culture. Spain noted the need for moving from an EFSA centric vision into a model that brings added value also to MSs. Ireland noted the importance of resilience, enabling systems to quickly adapt and focus on how to best address existing barriers. Ireland suggested a possible AF statement which would push forward the shared ecosystem vision for partnerships presented by EFSA, strengthen commitment, provide hints for process changes, and cover staff development issues.

The Chair thanked the plenary for the good feedback, highlighting that trust and courage come as a result of working together.

## ■ 7.3 - Reflections on current partnership framework

Following his intervention, the Chair gave the floor to Barbara Gallani and Guilhem De Seze to further elaborate on the current framework for partnerships as well as on the way forward towards achieving the vision presented. EFSA's partnership vision builds on current achievements but also highlights the need to boost risk assessment capacities and form collaborations that are sustainable and support a responsive, resilient and trusted risk assessment system.

Barbara highlighted the challenges ahead, mentioning ongoing initiatives to support the transition to new, more ambitious partnerships, including the entrusting of tasks of increasing span or complexity to MS partners. Among these initiatives, reference was made to the provision of training to Article 36 organisations and enhancing the support role of the Focal Point Network on partnerships. In this context, Guilhem highlighted that the existing Independent Scientific Advisers Scheme (ISA) – aimed at creating a pool of individual experts / junior scientists – needs to expand into new EFSA domains. On pilot projects, Guilhem noted the possibility to launch new ones in several domains of EFSA's work.





with the objective for them to advise on the best way forward, testing new approaches in establishing such partnerships in the future. Such pilots have the purpose of engineering new tools, platforms, services or drafting of scientific opinions, and have the key objective of delivering scientific advice and establish long-lasting partnerships. The pilot project on Food Enzyme Safety Assessment was presented as an example of this new type of partnerships. As a first step to its deployment, MSs were invited to express interest to participate in the development of new guidelines for enzymes assessment.

Overall, MSs expressed a positive reaction to the new initiatives presented by EFSA, including on staff exchanges and to support refining a concept note for an ecosystem partnership vision (NL, HU, FR, ES, PT expressed interest on the latter).

**Action Point 5:** AF members to express interest to the AF Secretariat in supporting EFSA in refining its thinking / vision on partnerships by 16.11.2020.

**Action Point 6:** AF members to express interest to the AF Secretariat on behalf of their MSs for participating in the new food enzyme guidance by Friday 20.11.2020.

**Action Point 7:** AF members to nominate to the AF Secretariat maximum two scientists per country for the new food enzyme guidance by 20.12.2020 (please provide name, surname and email address of the expert).

#### ■ 7.4 - Update on the Science Studies and Project Identification & Development Office (SPIDO)

The Chair gave the floor to Claudia Heppner, who presented the key comments provided by AF members to the first four draft scientific theme papers (multiple chemical risk assessment<sup>5</sup>, building a European Partnership for next generation, systems-based environmental risk assessment, artificial intelligence for evidence management in risk assessment, and new approach methodologies in risk assessment) during the second phase of consultation (July-September 2020) with AF members and the Scientific Committee, and how the feedback provided by AF members have been addressed by EFSA. In light of the comments received during the first and second phase of the consultation the theme papers have been revised. Claudia further clarified that the consultation with international partners and stakeholders (phase 3) is about to be initiated. An open call for tender for developing 3 roadmaps for action (multiple chemical risk assessment<sup>5</sup>, new approach methodologies in risk assessment, building a European Partnership for next generation, systems-based environmental risk assessment) will be launched in November, with support for dissemination being expected from AF members and Focal Points. An existing EFSA framework contract will be used to develop the roadmap for action on artificial intelligence for evidence management in risk assessment. AF members are also encouraged to support the envisioning of future scientific themes, as well as to provide suggestions on their potential involvement.

The Chair thanked Claudia Heppner for the update; and the EC for the support provided to SPIDO initiative. The EC indicated that they were very pleased with the work performed so far on SPIDO.

**Action Point 8:** EFSA to share the revised SPIDO theme papers and framework document for information with the AF.

**Action Point 9:** AF members (and FPs) to support the dissemination of the open call for tender for the 3 roadmaps generation and encourage national organisations to submit an offer.

<sup>5</sup> The theme's name was revised to "Risk Assessment of Combined Exposure to Multiple Chemicals" to reflect the activities better.



## ■ 7.5 - Conclusions and next steps

The Chair thanked all participants for the fruitful discussions on all items and summarise the main conclusions and action items stemming from the plenary discussion.

## 8. Any Other Business

### ■ 8.1 – Management Board Decision on the operation of EFSA’s Scientific Networks

The Chair gave the floor to Dirk Detken who provided an overview of the changes introduced on the Decision of the Management Board (MB) on the operations of EFSA’s Scientific Networks, which will be presented to the MB in December 2020 for endorsement. The updated MB Decision will promote efficiency gains on the operations of EFSA’s scientific networks following an internal review carried out under the EFSA ART Programme, supporting the implementation of the provisions of the new Transparency Regulation. Dirk reminded that, despite the changes introduced, EFSA scientific networks are used in many different manners, therefore the scope of each network will need to be clearly laid down on the respective Terms of Reference, including measurable outcomes to facilitate the assessment of a network in the framework of its continuous review.

Networks not suitably enhancing the work of the EFSA should be discontinued. Responding to a comment from the Netherlands, EFSA confirmed that the modifications to be introduced are not intended to reduce the number of meetings of the existing networks.

### ■ 8.2 – Update on RARA21

The Chair gave the floor to Pamela Byrne (Ireland) to provide the plenary with an update on the ongoing preparatory work for RARA21. The event is due to take place in Portugal (Lisbon) on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021 (back-to-back with World Food Safety Day celebrations, as well as AF and FP meetings). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the RARA event was postponed from December 2020 to June 2021, with the intent of organising a physical meeting. However, the Programme Committee is closely monitoring the current situation and a final go / no-go decision and type of meeting (physical or virtual) will be taken in December 2020, or latest January 2021. The draft programme for the event is still under preparation, including three parallel sessions (based on current and future perspectives). RARA21 will remain a standing agenda item in AF meetings so MSs can closely follow its progress.

### ■ 8.3 – Update on the AF Discussion Group on Capacity Building

The Chair gave the floor to Ana Canals (Spain) to report on the activities of the AF Discussion Group on Capacity Building. The work currently under preparation – aimed at setting a vision for creating a harmonised European approach to risk assessment education – is considered of high importance for addressing the potential lack of risk assessment professionals in the future. Ana presented the conclusions and recommendations of the business case for an European Excellence Label and Master degree in food safety risk assessment, which include, on a first stage, (1) the outsourcing of a feasibility study for setting the excellence label, (2) the development of criteria for the award of the label, and (3) the formulation of its curriculum.

Germany, as leader of the AF Discussion Group, suggested the setting up of a Steering Committee composed by 2-3 MSs, EFSA and the EC, which will coordinate the 3 main tasks described above and report back to the AF. Overall, the plenary supported the proposed way forward. Portugal proposed that, when framing the work for setting up a master’s degree in food safety risk assessment, such



work includes a component as well on risk communication, idea supported by EFSA. The AF Discussion Group on Capacity Building agreed to bring this idea to future discussions.

**Action Point 10:** in collaboration with EFSA, AF Discussion Group on Capacity Building to establish a Steering Committee to prepare and implement a feasibility study for setting an excellence label in risk assessment.

## ■ 8.4 – Other topics raised under AOB

### ■ 8.4.1 - The role of EFSA on Health Claims on Botanicals (NL)

The Netherlands noted the occurrence of issues concerning products on the consumer market, particularly botanicals, with health claims which still have not been evaluated by EFSA. DG-SANTE requested the floor clarifying that more than 500 health claims on botanicals have been rejected by EFSA because they should be assessed at the highest possible standards of protection. Following the 2015 REFIT exercise on the Health Claims Regulation, it has been highlighted that it could be appropriate to explore the notion of traditional use. However, it was emphasized that the role of EFSA is tight in this respect since decision is still pending at the EC level as well as at MS level in the context of the PAFF Committee. The Netherlands expressed its intention to bring the topic to the policy level again.

### ■ 8.4.2 - Sesame seed contaminated by ethylene oxide (NL)

The Netherlands informed of an ongoing cooperation between Belgium and the Netherlands to tackle an issue concerning sesame seeds contaminated by ethylene oxide. DG-SANTE reminded that ethylene oxide is not authorised in the EU and the established MRL needs to be respected. Therefore, affected products must be recalled from the market and this is an action for MS Competent Authorities to follow-up. DG-SANTE further clarified that a scientific opinion has not been requested so far from EFSA. The Netherlands subsequently observed that EFSA might have a role in the communication of the risk. DG-SANTE noted that communication on these issues relate to a risk management decision.

### ■ 8.4.3 - COVID-19 infection of an industrial fishing crew and potential contamination of fish (IS)

Hrönn Ólína Jörundsdóttir (IS) expressed concern about an incident of COVID-19 infection of an industrial fishing crew and potential contamination of fish, asking for advice regarding the possibility of fish being contaminated. BfR offered to share published scientific information on the risk of food being a source of the virus, and Spain highlighted that AESAN's Scientific Committee is now preparing an opinion on the matter. Following this discussion, several MSs suggested that EFSA could have a dedicated webpage with updated data on COVID-19 and food. The Chair informed to take note of this recommendation.

## Closure of meeting

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking AF representatives, Observers and the EC, as well as EFSA Colleagues for their input into discussions during the course of the meeting.



## LIST OF ACTION ITEMS

Reference	Who	What
Action 1	AF Members	to express interest in participating in a High-Level Expert Group to assess the needs, potential feasibility and approach for an International Platform for Food Systems Science (IPFSS) by 20.11.2020 COB. <i>Note: as DG-SANTE will need to put forward a limited number of potential names to DG-RTD for further consideration, there are no guarantees that volunteers will be selected for the Expert Group.</i>
Action 2	AF Members	to express interest to join the Member State Advisory Board of EFSA's 4 <sup>th</sup> Scientific Conference and comment the ToRs of the board, at the latest by 16.11.2020.
Action 3	EFSA & AF Members	EFSA to share the distribution list of the survey for mapping national and regional authorities' risk communication mechanisms on food and feed safety. AF members, in coordination with Focal Points, to deliver a single coordinated response to the survey by 25.11.2020.
Action 4	Denmark & Portugal	to share with EFSA, the EC and AF members the scientific assessments on sustainable diets mentioned during the AF meeting. In case of need, EFSA may support the respective sharing via the AF MS Teams channel.
Action 5	AF Members	to express interest to the AF Secretariat in supporting EFSA in refining its thinking / vision on partnerships by 16.11.2020.
Action 6	AF Members	to express interest to the AF Secretariat on behalf of their MSs for participating in the new food enzyme guidance by Friday 20.11.2020.
Action 7	AF Members	to nominate to the AF Secretariat maximum two scientists per country for the new food enzyme guidance by 20.12.2020 (please provide name, surname and email address of the expert).
Action 8	EFSA	to share the revised SPIDO theme papers and framework document with AF members for information by 30 <sup>th</sup> of November.
Action 9	AF Members	and FPs to support the dissemination of the open call for tender for the 3 roadmaps generation and encourage national organisations to submit an offer once open call is published around 30 <sup>th</sup> of November.
Action 10	AF DG Capacity Building	in collaboration with EFSA, to establish a Steering Committee to prepare and implement a feasibility study for setting an excellence label in risk assessment.