



Communication, Engagement and Cooperation Department

Stakeholder Engagement

7th Meeting of the EFSA Stakeholder Bureau

Virtual Meeting, 15 September 2020

Introduction

The Stakeholder Bureau is one of the two permanent mechanisms under the Stakeholder Engagement Approach (SEA) with a role to advise EFSA on civil society concerns regarding food safety, health, the environment, risk communication and other issues in the EFSA's remit. The task of the Bureau is also to contribute to the general understanding of EFSA's scientific risk assessment process among stakeholders, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of its outcome. In addition, the Bureau helps shaping the agenda of the Stakeholder Forum, the annual gathering of all registered stakeholder organizations.

The seventh meeting of the Bureau took place on 15 September 2020 as a virtual meeting and was chaired by Bernhard Url, the Executive Director of EFSA, who welcomed the participants and presented the outline of the meeting. The meeting was an opportunity to get an update on the progress with EFSA's Strategy 2027 and to inform about the progress with the implementation of the Transparency Regulation. The Bureau members were also updated on the blueprint for the evolution of the stakeholder engagement, as well as on the upcoming communication and engagement activities, the progress with the reputation barometer and Ask EFSA service.

The seventh Bureau meeting was the first one in the new term of office of the Bureau members after the elections to renew the composition of the Bureau which took place in spring 2020. One new member of the Bureau, Ms Floriana Cimmarusti (SAFE Food Advocacy), is a newly appointed Bureau member representing the Consumer category, while all other Bureau members - representing NGOs, farmers, business and food industry, distributors, practitioners and the academia - have been reappointed. The Chair congratulated all Bureau members with their appointment.

The Chair updated the Bureau members about the impact of the COVID-19 on EFSA's operations and its productivity, and consequently the execution of its workplan. Teleworking remains the primary working regime for EFSA Staff. EFSA plans to continue with on-line meetings with external participants until the end of 2020.

The Chair welcomed the representatives of the European Commission, DG SANTE, who attended the Bureau meeting in the capacity of observers, and in particular Alexandra Nikolakopoulou, the new Head of Unit D1. Ms Nikolakopoulou briefly introduced the main scope of the D1 Unit focusing on the food sustainability, transparency, stakeholder engagement and interaction with EFSA. Unit D1 is responsible for developing and coordinating the Farm to fork strategy as part of the Green Deal initiative. Moreover, the Unit is responsible for the management and co-ordination of relations between the European Commission and EFSA.

Bernard Url provided a brief update on the progress with the implementation of the Transparency Regulation, stressing that EFSA and the European Commission continue to work hard on implementing the changes that the Transparency Regulation will introduce to the EU food safety system; he expressed confidence that the deadline set for March 2021 will be met. An important element of this process is to keep stakeholders updated on the implementation. In line with this goal, stakeholders have been regularly updated

on the progress with the implementation of the Transparency Regulation through dedicated engagement channels, the Sounding Board and Technical group meetings, as well as through the DG SANTE Advisory Group Working Group covering all four pillars of the Transparency Regulation.

The Bureau members were welcomed by Raymond O'Rourke, Acting Chair of the Management Board, who updated the Bureau members on the framing of the Strategy 2027, the implementation of the Transparency Regulation, and on the need for evolution of the stakeholder engagement. Raymond O'Rourke emphasised that EFSA and the Management Board continue to work on the Strategy definition process focusing on the assessment of how the changing European context will impact EFSA's 2027 Strategy.

EFSA will perform a Changing Context Analysis that would inform discussions around EFSA's possible contribution to the European Green Deal and other policy documents. The Management Board plans to review the draft 2027 Strategy, integrating the Changing Context Analysis at its March 2021 meeting, with a view of possible adoption of the 2027 Strategy in June 2021. All the outstanding steps in the strategy definition process, like the public consultation, will be conducted as soon as a new version will be available. Therefore, the Management Board decided to extend the current EFSA strategy 2020 timeline to 2021.

Raymond O'Rourke informed participants that the Management Board is closely following the Transparency Regulation implementation process and acknowledged EFSA's commitment to actively engage with stakeholders to keep them informed and enable them to comply with the new provisions.

The Management Board is also closely following the progress with the General Communication Plan on Risk Communication. The Plan is intended to enhance the coordination and consistency of risk communication on food safety and will strengthen the communication between EFSA, EU Member States, the EU institutions and stakeholders.

Stakeholder engagement, the way forward

Goran Kumric, Engagement & External Relations Officer, Engagement and Cooperation Unit, EFSA, presented the blueprint for an updated stakeholder engagement process reflecting on the learnings from the past and stakeholder recommendations collected since the adoption of the Stakeholder engagement approach in 2016. The Bureau members were informed on the updated engagement process and the next steps - Digital event series on the evolution of engagement framework.

The first event that will take place on 6 October 2020 will serve to set the scene, report back on how EFSA has taken onboard the recommendations gathered at the Forum 2019, and introduce the series of thematic events focusing on specific aspects of the evolved engagement framework EFSA is designing. The three thematic workshops that will follow will focus on single aspects of the three engagement streams of the evolved framework (preparedness, Stakeholder dialogue, quality of science) and gather stakeholder input to fine-tune them as appropriate. The last event of the series will be followed by a final survey

to seek feedback from those who took part in the events and collect insights that will inform the recommendations on the way forward. These recommendations which will be discussed at the Stakeholder Bureau Meeting of September 2021 and at the Annual Forum 2021, which will be considered as the concluding appointment of these series accompanying the update of EFSA's stakeholder engagement process.

Bureau members positively reacted to the proposal. Maud Perrudin (Business and Food Industry) expressed the need for more clarity on the objective of different engagement models and to integrate learnings from the past along the process of developing new models. It is important to communicate clearly on what is in it for stakeholders and why should they attend an event. Jose Julio Ortega (Academia) reacted positively to the proposal and offered academia's support and insights on virtual meetings.

Els Bedert (Distributors) stressed that the feedback loop is of outmost importance to support transparency of the process and gain consumer trust in science and trust in food systems. Els Bedert said that digitalisation helps networking, but at the same time presents a challenge in managing personal agendas risking overload. Gulden Pekcan (Practitioners) shared her impressions that the new approach with increased digitalisation may ignite the engagement among the Practitioner category. All have agreed that the length of virtual meeting matters, and it should be kept short and concise.

Bernhard Url invited the Bureau members to help EFSA in framing the new model and to participate in events as moderators. In addition, Bureau members would have a role as a consultative body in summing-up and making the most out of the input collected from stakeholders.

The Chair emphasised that EFSA wants to create the right processes and tools to engage more effectively with its interested parties in order to improve the quality of its scientific outputs by ensuring access to the right data and expertise, but also to increase trust in the risk assessment process.

EFSA is exploring new engagement methodologies to ensure more openness, transparency and participative engagement with stakeholders as foreseen in the Transparency Regulation and indicated by stakeholders during the last Stakeholder Forum. The Bureau members agreed that, to allow stakeholders to better plan their engagement and increase participation at EFSA events, a long-term calendar of upcoming activities should be shared with the Bureau.

Upcoming engagement and communication activities

Domagoj Vrbos, Team Leader Strategic Communications, Communications Unit, presented the latest EFSA's communication activities related to EFSA's scientific work, what comes next as regards stakeholder engagement and an update on the Reputation Barometer.

Latest communication activities covered the African Swine Fever (ASF) campaign, Glycoalkaloids in potatoes, review of evidence on bee mortality rates, and updated timeline for mandate on dietary sugars. In addition, a list of stakeholder events since the last

Bureau meeting was presented, together with an overview of upcoming engagement activities presented until the end of the year.

In 2017, EFSA launched its first Reputation Barometer - a tool designed to better understand the expectations and perceptions of those with whom EFSA interacts on a regular basis. The study provided important insights into the approach EFSA takes to work with institutional partners and stakeholders and how to improve it. The 2020 reputation barometer study consists of a stakeholder and partner survey combined with dedicated interviews with peer organisations. EFSA is analysing the data coming from the survey and will share the report with stakeholders and publish it by the end of the year.

Matthew Ramon, Team Leader External Engagement, in the Engagement and Cooperation Unit presented the Ask EFSA service and outlined the key findings coming from the interactions with the general public. EFSA is committed to transparency and openness and welcomes feedback and questions on its activities from any party interested in its work. Ask EFSA is a customer-oriented service providing individual responses to queries received through a webform available on EFSA's website.

Ask EFSA receives more than 700 queries per year from all over the world, related to either corporate or scientific aspects of its work. Most requests arrive from the EU – notably Italy, Germany and Spain, while main customers outside the EU arrive from the UK, the USA and Switzerland.

The main areas of requests are related to corporate issues (e.g. requests to visit EFSA, recruitment, EFSA's events), while scientific topics cover nutrition (novel food and health claims), food ingredients (additives, food supplements, sugars and flavourings), and pesticides (glyphosate). In 2020, Ask EFSA registered a rise of queries related to biological hazards for what concerns possible contamination of food with COVID-19. EFSA will continue to improve its interactions with citizens and keep on addressing citizens' concerns. These interactions with citizens help EFSA to better understand customer's demands, expectations, and perceptions of EFSA and its science in general.

Points raised by Stakeholders

Bruno Menne (Farmers and primary producers) said that Copa-Cogeca finds it important to have an independent risk assessment and appreciates EFSA's work in that regard. EFSA risk assessments lead to risk management measures having direct consequences on the ground. Therefore, COPA COGECA believes that it would be important to have in mind the possible management measures when doing the risk assessment otherwise it might provide decision-makers with an incomplete picture.

Jose Julio Ortega (Academia) wanted to know more about the development with the Science Studies and Project Identification and Development Office (SPIDO) project. Marta Hugas, the EFSA's Chief Scientist provided an update on the progress stressing the upcoming consultation with stakeholders and international partners on the theme papers. Floriana Cimmarusti (Consumers) wanted to know more about EFSA's ongoing work on the TiO₂ and how EFSA intends to communicate and engage about it.

Els Bedert (Distributors) asked if any extension of existing EFSA core task under the existing legislative framework are foreseen. The European Commission noted that discussions are ongoing but there are no decisions on this matter at the moment. Bernhard Url noted that EFSA has capacity to respond to possible new tasks related to nutrition and food sustainability.

Bruno Menne (Farmers and primary producers) expressed concerns about the process of establishing a stakeholder discussion group (e.g. Stakeholder Consultative Group on Allergenicity of GM plants) asking that sufficient time should be allocated to allow stakeholders to respond to a call for stakeholder nominations and to identify appropriate expertise within their organisations. It is important to provide stakeholders enough time to prepare nominations but, at the same time to strike a balance and not to impede the risk assessment process.

General remarks and next steps

Bernhard Url emphasised that EFSA will continue to exchange information with the Stakeholder Bureau members. EFSA is looking forward to an active participation and interaction over the coming months, particularly in view of the implementation of Transparency Regulation, framing of the Strategy 2027 and the upcoming stakeholder events.

The Chair thanked the Bureau members and all the participants for the constructive discussions and valuable input and announced that the next Bureau meeting will take place in March 2021 (indicative date 16 March, to be confirmed).

Table 1. Follow up actions

	Follow up action	When
1.	Share additional information on the ASK EFSA service; a high-level break-down of the requestors including which (sub)category they belong to.	Done
2.	Explore possibilities for exchange views with COPA-COGECA on their position related to EFSA's Risk Assessment.	Ongoing
3.	Explore best options to optimise the process of identifying expertise for EFSA stakeholder discussion groups, particularly taking in consideration appropriate timelines.	Ongoing
4.	Provide a clear timeline of upcoming engagement activities to allow stakeholders to prepare upfront and make sure members of their organisations can allocate resources for engagement.	Ongoing
5.	Provide additional info on the mandate on titanium dioxide (TiO ₂) including timelines for possible engagement with stakeholder along the process.	Ongoing

Annex 1. Agenda

Time	No.	Topic	Scope	Presenter
09.30-09.40	1	Welcome by the Chair of the Stakeholder Bureau and adoption of the Agenda	Welcoming the participants and presenting the outline of the 7th meeting of the Stakeholder Bureau. Brief update on the implementation of the Transparency Regulation.	Bernhard Url, Executive Director, EFSA
09.40-09.50	2	Welcome by the acting Chair of the Management Board	Welcome the Bureau and share the Management Board views on ongoing EFSA initiatives; shaping the EFSA Strategy 2021-2027, the implementation of the Transparency Regulation and evolving the stakeholder engagement.	Raymond O'Rourke Vice-Chair and acting Chair of EFSA's Management Board
09.50-10.45	3	Stakeholder engagement, the way forward	Exchange of views on the scope of the virtual stakeholder engagement events to reflect on recommendations raising from the Stakeholder Forum 2019 and the engagement approach review 2019	Goran Kumric, Engagement & External Relations Officer, Engagement and Cooperation Unit (ENCO)
10.45-11.00		<i>Coffee break</i>		
11.00-11.30	4	Upcoming engagement and communication activities	Presenting the upcoming communications related to scientific outputs; overview of upcoming engagement activities (events, public consultations, call for data), the Reputation Barometer and the Ask EFSA service.	Domagoj Vrbos, Team Leader Strategic Communications, Communications Unit Matthew Ramon, Team Leader External Engagement, ENCO, EFSA
11.30-11.50	5	Issues raised by the Stakeholder Bureau	Based on input collected before the meeting	Bureau Members
11.50-12.00	6	Closing remarks	Thanking the participants for the discussion and feedback and briefly outlining next steps	Bernhard Url, Executive Director, EFSA
12.00		<i>End of the meeting</i>		

Annex 2. Participants list

Stakeholder Representatives

	Stakeholder Category	Stakeholder Organisation	Name and Surname
1.	Consumers	SAFE Food Advocacy	Floriana Cimmarusti
2.	NGOs and Advocacy Groups	Federation of Veterinarians of Europe	Sean O'Laoide
3.	Farmers and Primary Producers	COPA-COGECA	Bruno Menne
4.	Business and Food Industry	Association of the European Self-Medication Industry (AESGP)	Maud Perrudin
5.	Distributors and HORECA	Euro Commerce	Els Bedert
6.	Practitioners	European Federation of Associations of Dietitians	Ayla Gulden Pekcan
7.	Academia	Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry Europe (SETAC)	Jose Julio Ortega

EFSA's Representatives

	Name and Surname	Function
1.	Raymond O'Rourke	Vice Chair and Acting Chair of the Management Board of EFSA
2.	Bernhard Url	EFSA's Executive Director
3.	Marta Hugas	EFSA's Chief Scientist
4.	Victoria Villamar	Head of Unit, Engagement and Cooperation, ENCO - apology
5.	Matthew Ramon	Team Leader, External Engagement, ENCO
6.	Domagoj Vrbos	Team Leader, Strategic Communications, COM
7.	Cinzia Percivaldi	Engagement & External Relations Officer, ENCO
8.	Goran Kumric	Engagement & External Relations Officer, ENCO
9.	Elena Marani	Institutional and Stakeholder Relations Assistant, ENCO

European Commission Representatives – Observers

	Name and Surname	Function
1.	Nathalie Chaze	Director, Food sustainability, international relations, DG SANTE, European Commission - apology
2.	Alexandra Nikolakopoulou	Head of Unit, Farm to fork strategy, DG SANTE, European Commission

3.	Anastasia Alvizou	Deputy Head of Unit, Farm to fork strategy, DG SANTE, European Commission
4.	Fatima Darago	Policy Assistant, Farm to fork strategy, DG SANTE, European Commission,