Minutes

ADVISORY FORUM WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS

UPPSALA, SWEDEN
9TH JULY 2009

MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY FORUM WORKING GROUP ON COMMUNICATIONS:

Chair: GASSIN Anne-Laure, Communications Director

Austria	**PUBLIG Elisabeth**
Czech Republic	**BALGA Josef**
Estonia	**PRIISALU Piret**
Finland	**LAESLEHTO Marja**
Germany	**BÖL Gaby-Fleur**
Hungary	**CSEH Júlia**
Ireland	**CONWAY Edel**
Poland	**WISNIEWSKA Iwona**
Portugal	**SEABRA Maria João**
Slovak Republic	**THEISZOVÁ Marica**
Slovenia	**KALOPER Urska**
Spain	**GARCIA GÓMEZ Juan Julián**
Sweden	**CORP Eva**
Sweden	**GUSTAFSSON Karin**
The Netherlands	**MEIJER Jan**
United Kingdom	**COLLIS Terrence**

Observers:

Croatia	**ILEŠ Davor**
European Commission	**MORETTI Barbara**
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	**JONOVSKA Katerina**

European Food Safety Authority Staff:

ADAMOVA Monika	**GAMMING Yenny**
AVANZINI Francesca	**NILSSON Torben**
BONDURI Gianluca	**TALBOT Karen**
CUTTING Andrew	

Apologies:

Belgium	**CASSART Pierre**
Bulgaria	**PCHELINSKA Mariela**
Cyprus	**PARTASSIDES Dora**
Denmark	**KORNHOLT Heidi**
France	**LEYDET Valérie**
Greece	**TSIGARIDA Eirini**
Italy	**TARANTO Mirella**
Lithuania	**KUNICKIS Saulius**
Luxembourg	**HAU Patrick**
Norway	**SOLEM Knut Albert**
Romania	**MONEA Alina-Ioana**
Turkey	**AYDIN Gokalp**

1. Welcome by Anne-Laure Gassin, Director of Communications at EFSA and Inger Andersson, Director-General of the Swedish National Food Administration, followed by Presentation on the work of SNFA by Inger Andersson

1.1 Anne-Laure Gassin opened the meeting by thanking the Swedish National Food Administration (NFA) for hosting the event and gave the floor to Inger Andersson, Director-General of the Administration. After welcoming the participants, she presented the work of the NFA and updated the group on the upcoming activities of the Swedish Presidency. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked the Director-General.

2. Adoption of the agenda (Doc AF Comm WG 09.07.09 – 1)

2.1. Anne-Laure Gassin welcomed all participants, in particular new members, and informed the group of apologies received.

2.2. She thanked the members who had already filled in their Declarations of Interests and reminded the remaining few that they should complete the electronic form at their earliest convenience.

2.3. As no additional items were indicated by the members, the agenda was adopted as proposed.

3. Minutes of the meeting 07 05 2009 and matters arising

(Doc AF Comm WG 09.07.09 – 2)

3.1. Anne-Laure Gassin asked the members to provide their comments on the minutes of the last meeting by Friday, 10 July and informed them that the approved minutes will be published on the Extranet and the EFSA website on Monday, 13 July.

3.2. She outlined the matters arising from the meeting in Rome that would be discussed with the group during the day. Then she presented to the members a proposal to change the timing of future AFCWG meetings to two half days (afternoon and a morning session). She explained that it was due to many members needing to leave the meeting earlier in order to catch their flights. Members had no objections and it has been agreed that EFSA will send out a note confirming the dates and times of the upcoming meetings, including those in 2010. The new arrangement will apply for the next meeting in Prague in October.

4. Update on progress at EFSA and communication activities

4.1. Anne-Laure Gassin highlighted some EFSA scientific activities carried out since the last meeting, including an update on main communication activities. She mentioned the different media materials published and activity undertaken. In addition, she reported on the coverage gathered and the key topics covered by the European media.

4.2. Then she updated the group on EFSA's cooperation with stakeholders, highlighting the NDA technical meeting on health claims with applicants and the EFSA Stakeholders Platform meeting focused on EFSA's approach to public consultation. She also reported on EFSA cooperation with MS and other EU Agencies, including the joint events organised with the AGES (Austria) and EFET (Greece),.

5. Key points arising from the Advisory Forum (AF) meeting in Prague, 24-25 June 2009, AF special meeting on animal health in Vilnius on 12 May and meeting of the Steering Group on Cooperation in Parma on 18 May

5.1. Gian Luca Bonduri summarised the outcome of the AF meeting held in Prague, the AF special meeting on animal health in Vilnius and the meeting of the Steering Group on Cooperation in Parma.

5.2. Among the key topics discussed in at the AF meting in Prague he mentioned EFSA's proposal for a creation of a "network between Member State GMO risk assessors and the EFSA GMO panel" and further work on harmonisation of Risk Assessment. In addition, an update was provided on the current status of development of the Information Exchange Platform.

5.3. Further strengthening of the scientific cooperation between EFSA and the MSs was also among the topics discussed, namely the suggestion for the elaboration of a multi-annual cooperation approach, and possible involvement of EFSA's Scientific Committee in the discussion between EFSA and the MSs. To this end, AF decided to establish a specific working group to start drafting initial concrete proposals for future cooperation. Then Gian Luca Bonduri pointed out that EFSA's Emerging Risks Unit received the mandate to elaborate a system that would process and analyse the information available in the framework of the Rapid Alert System on Food and Feed (RASFF). IT tools were developed to extract descriptive statistics and reports from the RASFF notifications and to use this information for the elaboration of statistical trends.

5.4. Regarding the AF special meeting on animal health in Vilnius, Gian Luca Bonduri reported that EFSA's AHAW Unit presented the results of a survey that provides an overview of the organisations in MSs carrying out Animal Health and Welfare's Risk Assessment activities and describes the Risk Assessment approaches they applied. The results of this survey are included in a report that will soon be published online. Focus was put also on the further strengthening of scientific cooperation between EFSA and MSs, i.e. importance of coordination and cooperation in the area of data collection in order to avoid duplication of efforts and guarantee a rational use of resources. Cooperation activities in the framework of Art. 36 were also seen as important.

5.5. Gian Luca Bonduri then updated the group on the main outcomes of the Steering Group on Cooperation meeting held in Parma. ESCO WG on Botanicals presented two reports. Both contain recommendations for the possible revision of the *Guidance document on the safety assessment of botanicals and botanical preparations intended*

for use as ingredients in food supplements (draft published on EFSA's website in June 2008.

5.6. In addition, an overview of the progress of the ESCO Working Group on Isoflavones, was presented. A final report assessing and characterising the potential hazards and health benefits of isoflavone consumption is planned for November 2009. The Steering Group on Cooperation also discussed the proposal to create an ESCO WG on non-plastic food packaging materials and agreed that a background document needed to be prepared.

5.7. Torben Nilsson then concluded by providing a brief overview of different types of AF meetings and their scope, i.e. *Advisory Forum meetings*, *Special AF meetings* (established to create more interaction between EFSA and MSs and thus enable more direct interaction with Risk Managers in Risk Assessment area), *National experts meetings*, *ESCO Working Groups meetings*, e.g. on Folic Acid (these are not to be confused with the meetings of the WG of EFSA Panels) and lastly *Steering Group on Cooperation meetings* (this groups overviews the work of ESCO WG).

5.8. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked Gian Luca Bonduri and Torben Nilsson for their contribution and passed the floor to the Swedish colleagues.

6. Presentation of *Eco Smart Food Choice*

6.1. Åsa Brugård-Konde, nutritionist at the Swedish NFA presented to the members the Administration's Eco Smart Food Choices project which has been in progress for the past two years. The main objective was to demonstrate to consumers how we can make Eco Smart Food Choices and still follow the dietary guidelines. The project was carried out in cooperation with Swedish Environmental Protection Agency. They studied a number of food groups and their relative impact on the climate change. The aim was to identify relevant eco choices for each food group. For instance, they found out that meat and dairy generated the highest percentage of greenhouse emission and also that same food can have different impact (depending on how it grown, heated, treated with pesticides). They also analysed waste and concluded that a third of it is constituted by fruit and vegetables. The eco smart advises were discussed, prepared and tested by different scientific experts and NGOs in numerous workshops and consultation processes. The three major changes which are considered to make a difference to the environmental foot print include: do not buy more that you will eat, reduce meat consumption and eat local seasonal products. Lastly, Åsa Brugård-Konde touched upon challenges, one of them being how to inform consumers – how do they know if the fruit and vegetables were transported, what source of energy was sued in the green house, etc.

6.2. The presentation triggered a discussion on issues such as the reaction and stance of industries, fair trade and ethical aspects, number of population reached, price of eco smart products, etc. Barbara Moretti from the European Commission informed the group that a Belgian town of Gent announced Thursday a no meat day since the beginning of 2009 and DG Agriculture is planning to introduce a label for food, e.g. label for organic farming, very much favoured by consumer groups.

7. Presentation of *The Keyhole* project

7.1. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked Åsa Brugård-Konde for her interesting presentation and passed the floor to Anita Laser Reuterswärd**,** from the Food Control Department at the Swedish NFA. She presented the Administration's Keyhole project which was set up 20 years ago to help consumers identify healthier options when buying food or eating out. She provided a short history of the project, explained why a keyhole symbol was selected (combined food circle and food pyramid), talked about the category system of 25 food groups and products that bear the symbol and mentioned also consumer understanding. Anita Laser Reuterswärd concluded by comparing the Keyhole with the Traffic light system and Guideline Daily Amounts (GDA). She pointed out that all these systems provide some benefits and also some drawbacks but what consumers need is a credible tool for making easy and quick choices when shopping. She also highlighted the importance of a constructive dialogue with industry and stated that the keyhole has been a tool for stimulating product development.

8. Communications: information exchange and forward planning

8.1. Andrew Cutting provided an overview of upcoming scientific issues for which future communications may be foreseen. These included: food colours and food supplements, additives, flavourings and enzymes, GMOs, pesticides, BSE- and TSE-related issues, zoonoses, nutrition and health claims and dietary reference values.

8.2. Terrence Collis from the UK pointed out that food supplements are big issue in the UK and receive lots of media attention. Anne-Laure Gassin reminded the group that EFSA was currently completing its first EU-wide assessment of vitamin and mineral sources used in food supplements currently sold in Europe.

8.3. Anne-Laure Gassin then informed the group that key country issues were received from Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia and Spain. Among others, Gaby-Fleur Böl from Germany and Elisabeth Publig highlighted a recent incident – traces of cocaine found in Red Bull Cola that received lots of media attention. Both agencies got involved in intensive media activities.

8.4. Marica Theiszovà from Slovakia informed the members that a second scientific congress on Zoonoses will take place in October in Bratislava. She encouraged the members to nominate experts from their countries to participate in the conference.

8.5. Juan Julián García Gómez from Spain reported on a Seminar on Media and Food Safety organised by the AESAN in June. Experts in food safety and specialised media participated in round table discussions on risk communication and the role of media. He also mentioned that the Agency was preparing a Summer Course in Food Safety and Nutrition in Madrid. Each day will be dedicated to a main topic in food safety, from the classic evaluation and management of food related risks, to the newest emerging risks from developing countries and risk communications. In addition one day will be dedicated to nutritionally oriented health promotion and education. Several participants from EFSA will take part in this meeting including the Executive Director.

8.6. Júlia Cseh from Hungary informed the group about a Stakeholder meeting on cereals and related foodstuffs contaminated with Fusarium organised by the HFSO in June. The meeting took place following a report published in Hungarian media about two children suffering from hormonal dysfunctions (the doctor assumed that the illness was caused by Fusarium toxins). The participants issued a joint press release highlighting that both a short- and long-term strategy should be developed to reduce deoxynivalenol contamination. Ongoing cooperation between Hungary, Slovakia and Austria, which is focused on the evaluation of mycotoxins, also covers the assessment of all information about the contamination levels of fusarium toxins in cereals found in these countries.

8.7. Barbara Moretti from the European Commission informed the members that DG SANCO was organising an international conference to mark the 30th anniversary of RASFF – Rapid alert system for food and feed. "Keeping an eye on your food", will look at the development of the system as well as future challenges.

8.8. Monika Adamova then provided an update on EFSA's recently published and upcoming publications. Among others, she mentioned: EFSA in Focus 4 (newsletters on Plants, Animals and Food), 2008 Zoonoses report (second part), EFSAnews 20, Moving Together 4, as well as 2008 Annual Report and its Summary and EFSA's Strategic Plan for 2009-2013 (last two available in all EU languages in autumn).

8.9. She also informed the group that the call for external scientific experts to review the quality of EFSA's scientific output was closed and EFSA received more than 160 applications. She thanked the members for helping to promote the call. She concluded

with an overview of past and upcoming corporate and scientific events and invited members to share ideas and provide suggestions for future joint events.

9. Follow up of the debate on risk communication guidelines

9.1. Karen Talbot introduced the session on risk communication guidelines. She reiterated the objective of drafting the risk communications guidelines, highlighting that they should be tailored to specific circumstances, accessible and practical. The guidelines would help to build coherence in our risk communications across the EU and reinforce the key principles of communications and also build appreciation of the role and value of communications.

9.2. She informed the group that the draft project was presented to the EFSA's Advisory Group on Risk Communications (AGRC) who strongly supported the initiative. They advised to focus more on case studies and scenarios rather than principles and clearly identify the audiences in order to avoid any confusion.

9.3. Then Karen Talbot opened up a discussion focused on the most common scenarios and case studies. The members identified the following scenarios: high risk – high concern, high risk - low concern, low risk – high concern and low risk – low concern. She wrapped up the discussion by pointing out that this approach would be supported by simple case histories to illustrate scenarios/ways of working.

9.4. It has been agreed that Karen Talbot will send a write up of the discussion proposing a framework for scenarios. Members were asked to provide their feedback and propose case studies for different scenarios. The proposed framework and case studies will then be presented at the next AFCWG meeting in Prague.

10. Web monitoring and analysis

10.1. Yenny Gamming gave a presentation on how to use web metrics to better understand online audiences. She touched upon website visits and explained the visitor engagement index that demonstrates the intensity of returned visits (the higher the number the more loyal the visitor base). She also described how to make use and interpret the website's hits and page views as well as median visit duration and site bounce rate that illustrates the percentage of visitors that leave the site after viewing a single page.

10.2. Yenny Gamming also reported on the most popular tools and methods to monitor and evaluate the website – web metrics (statistics and analytics) being the most popular ones, followed by user comments, users surveys, usability testing and external evaluation/audits. She then presented the results of January 2009 EFSA website user

survey which revealed that the main audiences visiting EFSA website appear to be private consumers, industry representatives and scientists/researchers.

10.3. Anne-Laure Gassin thanked Yenny Gamming for her very interesting presentation and opened the floor for discussion. Eva Corp from Sweden informed the group that their office is carrying out media monitoring of blogs. She was asked to share with the group their findings and also the methodology used, staff involved, etc. Terrence Collis from the UK also pointed out that setting up a chief scientist blog on the FSA website brought many more new visitors.

10.4. It has been agreed that Yenny Gamming will prepare an online survey to create AFCWG web metrics benchmarks and to map AFCWG online communication activities. She will also share with the members the agenda of the upcoming WebManagersNetwork workshop, planned for November in Parma and to which the interested AFCWG members are also invited.

11. Focal points: Update on current activities and cooperation with AFCWG

11.1. Monika Adamova provided the members with feedback from the Focal Points meeting in Lisbon in May and progress on the Information Exchange Platform (IEP). She informed the group that EFSA's Scientific Cooperation Unit (SCO) was planning to develop an extranet platform for Article 36 organisations, including a database of the organisations that would contain contact information and competencies. Training on Article 36 will be offered to the FP at the next meeting in September to support their training initiatives of Article 36 organisations.

11.2. Among the topics discussed was also a project run by BfR – the establishment of "EU Food Safety Almanac", i.e. country profiles providing an overview of the public authorities and structures of food and feed safety in the EU ad its MSs. Gaby-Fleur Böl from BfR updated the group on the latest developments, described the procedures and indicative timelines.

11.3. Monika Adamova concluded with an update on Focal Points reporting, specifically the task 3 in the FP contract, i.e. "Networking and raising visibility of EFSA and its role in the EU food safety system". In this regard, the Communications department prepared a reporting template on target audience and networks created. However, the FPs commented that this reporting was difficult. It has been agreed that EFSA will revise and finalise the format of the template taking into consideration feedback from the FPs who are also members of the AFCWG or work closely with AFCWG.

11.4. Prior to the meeting, the members received a questionnaire on their cooperation with FPs. Monika Adamova reiterated the importance of AFCWG and Focal Points cooperation and reminded members to provide their feedback.

12. Any other business

12.1. Anne-Laure Gassin reminded the group that the next meeting will take place on 21-22 October in Prague and will be hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture - Food Safety Department.

12.2. Members were invited to propose topics for the upcoming meetings. The Chair thanked them for their presence together with EFSA staff and the interpreters and as no other points were raised, she closed the meeting at 15h15.