MINUTES OF THE 1st MEETING OF EXPERT GROUP FOR CHEMICAL OCCURRENCE DATA

Meeting date:	**19 June 2008**
Venue:	**Parma**
Meeting Room:	**MTG DUSD 00/003**
Time:	**9h00-17h00**

Participants:

Emmanuelle Moons (Belgium)	Julijonas Petraitis (Lithuania)
Tery Vrabcheva (Bulgaria)	Anders Møller (Denmark)
Jiri Ruprich (Czech Republic)	Thomas Wenzl (EC)
Fanny Heraud (France)	Lila Vodeb (Macedonia pre-accession country)
Matthias Frost (Germany)	Darja Sokolic Mihalak (Croatia pre-accession
Mária Túri Szerletics (Hungary)	country)
Christina Tlustos (Ireland)	Stefan Fabiansson (EFSA)
Marie-Louise Wiborg (Norway)	Francesco Vernazza (EFSA)
Maria Antónia Calhau (Portugal)	Pietro Ferrari (EFSA)
Erika Dobrikova (Slovakia)	Davide Arcella (EFSA)
Victoria Marcos Suárez (Spain)	Stefano Cappè (EFSA)
Jacob Van Klaveren (The Netherlands)	Mari Eskola (EFSA)
Madalina Georgescu (Romania)	Chiara Bianchi (EFSA)
Anja Hallikainen (Finland)	Hubert Deluyker (EFSA)
Urška Blaznik (Slovenia)	
Elżbieta Brulińska-Ostrowska (Poland)	

Apologies:

Kakouri Eleni Ioannou (Cyprus)
Büchert Arne (Denmark)
Stacchini Paolo (Italy)
Astor Elsa (Sweden)
Spindura Jillian (UK)
Dace Santare (Latvia)

Agenda:

1. Welcome and apologies for absence
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Presentation of participants
4. Purpose of the Expert Group
5. Presentation of Member States organisations and activities
6. Presentation of new IT tool for DOIs
7. Food description and classification
8. Data structure
9. On-going data collection activities
10. Future activities

Minutes:

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The chairman welcomed the members of the Expert Group.

2. Purpose of network and adoption of the agenda

The chairman pointed out that as part of the EFSA Scientific Cooperation (ESCO) activities a need was identified for the creation of a chemical occurrence network of experts between EFSA and the national authorities. The objectives of the Expert Group include the sharing of scientific information and provision of scientific advice as key priorities. The final output of the Expert Group will be a report to the EFSA Executive Director.

The Agenda for the 1st meeting of the Expert Group was adopted.

3. Introduction of participants

Each participant briefly introduced themselves.

4. Purpose of the Expert Group

The chairman emphasized that according to EC Regulation 178/2002 EFSA shall search for, collect, collate, analyse and summarise relevant scientific data in close collaboration with Member States (MS). The activities of the Data Collection and Exposure Unit (DATEX) include all aspects of data collection from farm to fork, and from harmful to beneficial dietary constituents, except pesticides and microorganisms covered by other units.

The structure of EFSA was described. Many activities in the DATEX Unit are done in collaboration with EFSA Panels. The DATEX Unit receives information through cooperation with MS.

The European Commission, or one of the MS, addresses a request to one of the EFSA Panels (80% of requests involving DATEX go through the CONTAM Panel). The Panel asks DATEX to open a call for data to MS. Some requests come directly to DATEX. Since the information will be used for data analyses to perform exposure assessment, and ultimately to produce an opinion, individual data are necessary. Sometimes data have already been submitted to the Commission but in aggregated form. This is not sufficient for the needs of DATEX and although a call seems repetitive it is necessary.

DATEX main objective is to coordinate and facilitate data collections for the occurrence of contaminants or nutrients in food, beverages and feed and associated consumption data for the same categories.
The Terms of Reference established by the EFSA Advisory Forum request that the Expert Group review the priorities for the collection of occurrence data specified in the Commission Regulation 1881/2006. A crucial aspect will be the identification of a common food classification system to harmonise data coming from different European countries with different languages.

The Expert Group will look at ways of facilitating data submissions. Excel files are probably the easiest way to send data but involves a lot of manual handling. As an alternative, the XML format is an option. Important details of any data collection are the quality of input, representativeness of data, analytical sensitivity, and survey methodology used. For data exchange it is important to define system compatibility, repository functionality, automated validation, standardised coding system, data submission format, and future access rights.

5. Presentation of Member State organisation and activities

Participants in turn presented their institutions and the activities of each represented country. Copies of PowerPoint presentations have been circulated separately.

The Head of Scientific Cooperation and Assistance (SCA), Hubert Deluyker, presented the structure and activities of the Directorate to which the DATEX Unit belongs. He also pointed to the fundamental importance for participants to complete the EFSA declaration of interest (DOI). It was stated that interest is part of participants' expertise. Potential conflict of interest can arise and will be identified on a *case-by-case* basis to ensure impartiality of activities.

6. Presentation of new IT tool for DOIs and Expert Database

Ernesto Guisado (IT project manager) provided an in-depth description of the annual declaration of interest. Experts are given a username and password to give access to the DOI page. He also presented the Expert Database. The same entry details can be used to access the Expert Database.

7. Food description and classification

Francesco Vernazza emphasized the importance of establishing an EFSA classification system. Matthias Frost presented the two systems currently used in Germany. Efforts are made to create a unique compatible system in the near future. A facet system is being developed.

The chairman stated that EFSA management is pushing to create an EFSA system that can be universally applied, and announced that a working group will be created with representatives from all relevant sectors.

The Expert Group for Chemical Occurrence Data supported the development of a European food description system. In particular:

- the need for a 'new fashion' classification system was acknowledged, that could possibly be very flexible and open. The GS1 standard system used by industry was mentioned, more information is needed and possible collaboration could be organised.

- an interest was expressed in a system with multiple levels with respect to the details. The system should be compatible with the data collected within dietary surveys and easily usable in laboratories of analysis. Food fortification should be taken into account.

- some participants found it to be very useful to have a unique identifier for foods but others expressed concerns about it.

- hope was expressed that a new classification system could integrate information on food and recipes (e.g. aggregate items). The EPIC-soft system could indeed be very useful in this direction. Sharing this view it was nevertheless pointed out that in some classification systems food grouping was a huge problem.

- Finally the need for a simple codification system was highlighted since a complicated system will increase the amount of resources needed to analyse food and feed.

8. Data structure

Stefano Cappé and Chiara Bianchi (Infrastructure, EFSA) presented and described a coherent framework for data structure and storage

Matthias Frost expressed interest in this project and proposed to liaise with current similar activities initiated in Germany.

9. On-going data collection activities

Davide Arcella presented an exhaustive list of activities on occurrence data currently ongoing in the DATEX Unit. Pietro Ferrari illustrated some statistical considerations in relation to dietary exposure assessment of chemical compounds.

10. Future activities
The chairman gave a quick overview of future topics to be covered by the Expert Group.