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COMMUNICATION ENGAGEMENT & COOPERATION DEPARTMENT

Review of EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Approach 2016–2019

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1. Background

Close cooperation with stakeholders is an essential element of EFSA's work. As outlined in its Strategy 2020¹, one of EFSA's strategic objectives is to prioritise public and stakeholder engagement in the process of scientific assessment. Therefore, EFSA's mission is carried out in cooperation with stakeholders to promote coherent advice and increase trust in the EU food safety system.

Stakeholders have contributed significantly to EFSA's activities since its creation in 2002. Until 2016, EFSA carried out its engagement with stakeholders primarily through its Stakeholder Consultative Platform. Stakeholder expectations and EFSA's needs evolved over time and to ensure fitness-for-purpose EFSA carried out a review of the Stakeholder Consultative Platform in 2015, after 10 years of operation, under the supervision of EFSA's Management Board and in consultation with stakeholders.

A new Stakeholder Engagement Approach (SEA) was endorsed by the EFSA Management Board in June 2016, and is designed to give representatives of consumer associations, food industry and businesses, farmer organisations, NGOs, distributors, practitioners and academia the opportunity to engage with EFSA and to provide input at different stages of the risk assessment and risk communication processes. Through stakeholder engagement EFSA aims at improving understanding of EFSA's scientific decision-making processes, improving the quality of EFSA's scientific outputs, and strengthening the trustworthiness of the processes.

As defined by the Decision of the Management Board on the Criteria for Establishing a List of Stakeholders and the Establishment of the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau², EFSA recognises seven categories of stakeholders. To become registered as an EFSA stakeholder an organisation needs to fulfil several criteria. Registered stakeholders can interact with EFSA through a mix of permanent and ad hoc engagement tools depending on their interest and expertise.

In 2017, EFSA carried out an interim evaluation of the SEA focusing on the activities and results of a pilot phase (June 2016-November 2017). The interim review resulted in an adjustment to the approach, e.g. allowing election of alternate members of the Bureau. In compliance with Article 9 of the above-mentioned Decision of EFSA's Management Board, a review of the effectiveness of EFSA's stakeholder engagement and related activities must be carried out within three years of adoption of the SEA.

This report on the SEA review will inform EFSA's Management Board on the effectiveness of the principles and measures implemented under SEA and may support decision-making on how the SEA is currently implemented and on possible improvements in the future. The review and input from the Management Board will also contribute to discussions on the EFSA Strategy 2027.

¹ EFSA Strategy 2020 Trusted science for safe food – [link](#)

² Decision of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority on the Criteria for Establishing a List of Stakeholders and the Establishment of the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau – [link](#)

2. Executive Summary and Key Recommendations

2.1 The Scope of the review

The review will inform the Management Board on the effectiveness of the principles and measures established under the SEA for the three-year period since its establishment (2016-2019). It focusses on the registration process for stakeholders, the categorisation of stakeholders, the existing engagement mechanisms, and the extent to which EFSA adhered to the principles of openness and balanced representation in implementing the SEA with special attention to possible improvements for the future.

The review is based on input received from three main sources: 1) assessment by an external evaluator; 2) outcomes of discussions at the Stakeholder Forum meeting in October 2019; and 3) reporting by EFSA staff who coordinated and/or took part in engagement activities.

2.2 Key Findings

The review of the SEA indicates that the approach is meeting the key objectives established by the Management Board to enable a wider range of stakeholder organisations to: 1) be informed about EFSA's work, and 2) to provide input at different stages of the risk assessment and communication processes. Regarding stakeholder categorisation most stakeholders agree that the stakeholder groups are well defined, cover all the relevant stakeholders and that stakeholders are allocated to the appropriate categories.

A balanced representation of views is achieved by allowing the representatives of all seven categories to take part in a mix of permanent and targeted engagement opportunities where different stakeholder categories have equal opportunity to present their views and contribute to EFSA's work.

According to the results of the review, permanent engagement tools are fit-for-purpose and allow stakeholders to provide strategic input on EFSA's work.

Targeted models such as info sessions and workshops add value to EFSA's work at an early stage of the risk assessment process and provide information to the stakeholder community on activities planned by EFSA. The discussion groups are recognised as an efficient model that allows EFSA to consider different perspectives and technical expertise from all the stakeholder categories.

The Communicators lab was recognised as a useful tool to elicit stakeholder input on EFSA's new communication formats. The main obstacles for some stakeholders who did not participate in selected engagement mechanisms were a lack of resources or a lack of relevance of the specific topics.

Stakeholders provided positive feedback on the quality of information and the transparency of the established procedures. EFSA regularly publishes reports, lists of participants and agendas of meetings on its website. Stakeholders would however appreciate more information on how their input is taken into consideration and how it impacts EFSA's work.

2.3. Key Recommendations

The following recommendations are for presentation to EFSA's Management Board in December 2019.

Continue to implement the Stakeholder Engagement Approach (SEA) with several operational modifications

EFSA should continue with the roll-out of the SEA as it has proven to be fit-for-purpose and consider several practical modifications to further improve the stakeholder engagement processes.

Adopt more topic-based engagement

In addition to events targeting a specific stakeholder category (e.g. NGOs, Industry), EFSA should further explore possibilities to organise events on topics of interest to a wider audience across different categories of registered stakeholders.

Establish a feedback loop and provide more information on the impact of stakeholders' input

EFSA should look at additional ways to provide stakeholders with more information about the impact of their input to EFSA's work. Possible solutions may include an increased use of online tools, including interactive webcasts, to ensure more information on specific follow-up actions.

Produce an engagement catalogue

EFSA should produce a catalogue of available engagement opportunities to provide more clarity and visibility on the existing engagement mechanisms and to increase stakeholder interaction from early in the risk assessment process.

Explore the feasibility of additional engagement mechanisms

EFSA should explore the feasibility of new engagement tools at different stages of the risk assessment process to ensure an appropriate level of transparency and openness while maintaining EFSA's independence. Additional on-line interactive engagement methods such as webinars and tele-conferences should be tested to facilitate remote participation and cost efficiency.

Involve stakeholders in the selection of topics for the Communicator Lab

EFSA has been asked to allow stakeholders to provide input on the selection of topics to test within the Communicator Lab engagement tool.

3. The scope of the SEA review

3.1 Objectives

The objectives of the review were to critically evaluate the implementation of the SEA and formulate recommendations on its main features including the registration process, the categorisation of stakeholders, and the functioning of the permanent and targeted engagement mechanisms and the transparency and information provided.

After a pilot phase from June 2016 to November 2017, EFSA carried out an interim evaluation of the new engagement approach³. This evaluation concluded that SEA was delivering on its objectives to provide stakeholders with a better understanding of the Authority's scientific decision-making processes and to improve the quality of its scientific outputs. The purpose of the ongoing review was to look at whether this holds true for the entire three-year period since the SEA started, with an emphasis on potential improvements for the future.

3.2 Methodology

The review report was compiled on the basis of information gathered through:

- **Assessment of the SEA by an external evaluator**

An external provider was commissioned to carry out an evaluation of the SEA based on a review of key documentation on different mechanisms provided by EFSA and an online stakeholder survey. In addition, the contractor benchmarked stakeholder engagement approaches implemented by other regulatory agencies in the EU and beyond with an aim to gain insights on how to better interact with stakeholders from different stakeholder models globally.

- **Reporting by EFSA staff who took part in stakeholder activities**

The implementation of SEA is the responsibility of EFSA's Engagement and Cooperation Unit (ENCO). Throughout the implementation, many other EFSA units took part in the implementation of different engagement models, depending on the topic. To gather input on possible improvements to existing engagement models, a series of internal interviews were carried out with EFSA Staff from different units and departments.

- **2019 Stakeholder Forum**

The main focus of the third edition of the Stakeholder Forum which took place in Parma, 17-18 October 2019 was to review and co-design with stakeholders future engagement mechanisms and to gather their input to inform the ongoing SEA review. The members of the Stakeholder Bureau had a prominent role in developing the agenda and in facilitating discussions during world café sessions on topics such as the framing of questions, digital solutions for engagement, risk communication, crowdsourcing, and how to ensure concrete follow-up and feedback on the input provided by stakeholders.

³ [Stakeholder Engagement Approach; Interim evaluation report - Pilot phase June 2016 – November 2017](#)

4. Key Findings of the Review of the SEA in 2016-2019

4.1 Results of the external review

Following a procurement procedure in May 2019, Ipsos was commissioned to undertake a review of EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Approach. There follows an outline of the key findings of the review including the results of a stakeholder survey. The full report is available as Annex 5.1.

Registration process and categorisation of stakeholders

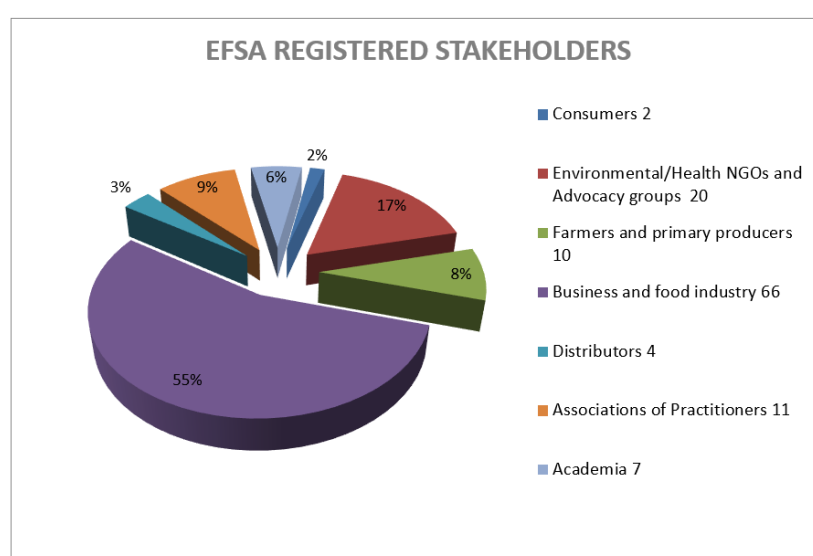
The June 2016 Decision of the EFSA Management Board provided criteria for the establishment of a list of registered stakeholders. As of November 2019, the list of registered stakeholders included a total of 120 organisations⁴. The registration process remains open with a quarterly assessment window of new applications.

Concerning the registration process and the categorisation of stakeholder organisations, general feedback received by the stakeholders was positive. Stakeholders agreed that the registration process is intuitive and that the eligibility criteria are clearly defined and felt that the outcome of the registration process was communicated in a timely and appropriate manner. A majority of stakeholders agreed that the stakeholder groups were well defined, covered all relevant stakeholders and that stakeholders were usually allocated to the appropriate categories. Four in ten respondents (41%) agreed that some groups of stakeholders were not sufficiently represented. Over-representation was seen as a smaller, although not insignificant, issue.

Some respondents noted that due to the diversity of interests within a category, Stakeholder Bureau members may face difficulties in representing the view of all organisations in the category. EFSA could help Bureau Members in facilitating the collection of views from associations across the category they represent.

In addition, a balanced representation of views is achieved by enabling stakeholders to take part in a mix of permanent and targeted engagement mechanisms where different stakeholder categories have equal opportunity to contribute. Finally, the transparency of engagement is ensured by publishing reports, lists of participants and agendas of meetings on EFSA's website.

Table 2. Overview of registered stakeholders by category, Nov 2019



⁴ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/engage/stakeholders>

Permanent mechanisms for engagement

Stakeholder Forum

The Stakeholder Forum, which takes place on an annual basis, gives all registered stakeholders the opportunity to provide strategic input to EFSA regarding its work plan and priorities, the development of horizontal policies and processes, and on how the various engagement platforms function.

The themes and topics of each Forum meeting were determined by the input of registered stakeholders and by the priority areas identified by EFSA in its Strategy 2020.

Since starting the SEA implementation, EFSA has hosted three meetings of the Stakeholder Forum. The Forum allowed exchanges of views and the collection of stakeholder input on EFSA's multi-annual planning cycle and mid-term review of its 2020 strategy. In addition, EFSA gathered ideas on the post-2020 Strategy, building upon the outcomes of the EFSA scientific conference 2018. EFSA gathered valuable input on transparency and openness, the future of data, regulatory science and innovation, and on the impact of risk communication. Based on input received during previous editions, EFSA revised the set-up of the third Forum to make discussions more interactive, allow input from stakeholder testimonials, enabling participants to take part in discussions on different topics based on their interest and providing an onboarding session for newcomers.

The Stakeholder Forum was considered a fit-for-purpose mechanism by 82% of stakeholders who responded to the survey. Reports of the meetings including agendas, list of participants and presentations can be found [here](#) on EFSA's website.

Stakeholder Bureau

The Stakeholder Bureau acts as EFSA's high-level advisory group on stakeholder engagement and provides input to EFSA about civil society's concerns and helps shape the agenda of the Stakeholder Forum. In addition, the Bureau provides input on how to ensure a balanced representation of views and interests of all the registered stakeholders. The Bureau is regularly updated on EFSA's ongoing work and can exchange views and provide input on different topics such as implementation of the Transparency Regulation⁵, developing the next EFSA Strategy, and be updated on ongoing communication and engagement activities.

The review found that respondents were positive about the frequency of Bureau meetings (twice per year), the opportunities for registered stakeholders to contribute to Bureau meetings, the nomination process of Stakeholder Bureau members, and the interaction between Bureau members and registered stakeholders. Some stakeholders expressed concerns about the format of the Stakeholder Bureau in relation to possible under-representation of certain categories (the large size of the industry category and diverse interests).

Since starting the implementation of the SEA five Stakeholder Bureau meetings have taken place. Reports of the meetings including agendas, list of participants and presentations can be found [here](#) on EFSA's website.

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2019/1381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the Transparency and Sustainability of the EU Risk Assessment in the Food Chain

Targeted engagement mechanisms

In addition to the permanent engagement mechanisms, the SEA includes targeted engagement mechanisms that allow stakeholders to interact with EFSA on specific topics and on specific interests of the stakeholder category they belong to. This includes discussion groups, workshops, roundtables, info sessions, scientific colloquia and the Communicators Lab.

The targeted mechanisms in general terms were assessed as fit for purpose. Roundtables, scientific colloquia, info sessions and discussion groups are recognised as efficient engagement models that provide good opportunities for interaction and exchange of information between stakeholders and EFSA. Regarding the Communicators Lab, 44% of the stakeholders who responded were not adequately informed about its operations. Possible improvements that were flagged include doing more to signpost when and why EFSA seeks input from stakeholders.

Discussion Groups

Setting up a new discussion group follows an established procedure that specifies the rationale for the group, the selection of stakeholder representatives, terms of reference and reporting requirements. Since the SEA began *ad hoc* discussion groups were set up to support EFSA's work on: endocrine disruptors, feed additives and allergenicity in regulated products.

The following discussion groups were operational when this report was drafted:

1. Food Chemical Occurrence Data Discussion Group
2. Discussion Group on Emerging Risks
3. Bee Partnership - Discussion Group on harmonised data collection
4. Bee Guidance Discussion Group

Discussion Groups are appreciated by the stakeholders as flexible formats for engagement that act as "learning systems" to allow EFSA to capitalise on stakeholders' specialist knowledge in specific areas and provide stakeholders with information about different aspects of the Authority's work.

Roundtables

The purpose of this engagement tool is to provide specific stakeholder groups with an opportunity to engage with EFSA. Two Roundtable initiatives active under the SEA take place annually: one for NGOs and advocacy groups and one for business and food industry groups.

The **Roundtable with NGOs** presents an opportunity to gather stakeholder input on topics such as GMOs, endocrine disruptors, feed additives, data transparency, assessment methodologies, bee health, environment risk assessment, alternatives to animal testing and risk communication.

The **Industry roundtable** meeting allows exchange of views on topics such as a pilot activity for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the administrative check of draft dossiers, public access to data submitted during the risk assessment process, dialogue with applicants before and during risk assessment and on communication of EFSA's scientific opinions.

Info sessions, technical meetings, scientific colloquia and workshops

These engagement tools provide opportunities to increase knowledge of EFSA's work among different groups of stakeholders. Typically, they are organised on specific scientific topics, where EFSA presents progress on the work it is carrying out or to discuss the

results of a public consultation. Recent examples include an info session on the hazard assessment protocol for bisphenol A⁶, a technical meeting on a draft protocol for the assessment of free sugars from all dietary sources⁷, and a workshop on the problem formulation for the environmental risk assessment of gene drive modified insects⁸.

The workshop with representatives of the Academia stakeholder category was the first event under the Stakeholder Engagement Approach specifically targeting science and technology communities, including scientific societies, and research associations. The initial idea for the topic of this workshop was provided by a stakeholder organisation. This event presented a starting point to facilitate discussion and explore common topics of interest to shape future collaboration⁹.

Communicators Lab

The Communicators Lab ("Comms lab") is an initiative designed to elicit stakeholder feedback on the usability of specific communication products that EFSA develops. In practical terms, this means that EFSA may consult stakeholders on, for example, the format or template for a new multimedia product to check its relevance and accessibility as a communication tool. The Comms Lab does not serve as a platform by which EFSA discusses or engages with stakeholders on the content of its communications, which remains the sole responsibility of EFSA.

So far, EFSA has tested several products such as the topic web page on bee health, the data visualisation on antimicrobial resistance, the plain language summary concept and an interactive tool – the dietary reference values finder. Improvements to the proposed formats were made thanks to stakeholder input.

Transparency and information provided

Stakeholders provided very positive feedback on the quality of information and the transparency of the established procedures. More than eight out of ten respondents (84%) agreed that EFSA provides enough information about the agenda, topics and participants of engagement activities. Three quarters (75%) of respondents agreed that EFSA provides enough information about the dates of activities for stakeholders. Finally, stakeholders perceived the overall quality of the information on EFSA's website, including the reports and materials presented during the events, positively. Nonetheless, there remains room for improvement. Notably, most surveyed stakeholders agreed that EFSA should provide more information on the impact of their input.

Key findings

- the registration process is effective, and the benefits of registering are clearly communicated,
- the categories are well defined and stakeholder organisations are allocated to an appropriate stakeholder category,
- the application of the principles of equal opportunity and balanced representation is positively perceived,
- the main reason for stakeholders not participating in certain mechanism was lack of resources and relevance of the topic,
- in general, more information is needed on how stakeholder input is taken into consideration and how it impacts EFSA's work.

⁶ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/170914>

⁷ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/180213>

⁸ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/190515>

⁹ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/190314-0>

4.2 EFSA staff experience and lessons learnt

To gather input on staff perception of the SEA operations and suggestions for possible improvements of existing engagement models, several internal interviews were carried out. These involved personnel from units that manage the daily operations of engagement models and who took part in different activities since the SEA started. In total 10 interviews were carried out.

Overall implementation of the SEA

The overall impression is that the engagement activities implemented under the SEA have significantly contributed to the improvement of engagement with different stakeholders during the last three years. Based on the input collected through the interviews it was suggested that EFSA should further enhance engagement with the Academia stakeholders, to broaden perspectives and technical knowledge available under the existing Academia category. The representatives of newly registered stakeholder organisations would benefit from dedicated events or training to enable information exchanges and increase awareness of EFSA's work and existing engagement models.

Operational aspect of engagement

The input from EFSA staff stresses the importance of the timely sharing of information on EFSA's work and the upcoming engagement activities since it enables the stakeholder community to better plan their engagement and contribution. EFSA staff who took part in the interview recognised the benefits of stakeholder input, in particular, on technical knowledge and data related to emerging risks and innovations in food processing.

Based on the input provided by staff EFSA may wish to further invest in developing digital interaction models that would foster stakeholder participation and make engagement more cost effective. Possible solutions for remote engagement with a larger audience could be to apply tele-conference and webinar-type meetings.

Key findings

- further enhance engagement with Academia stakeholders,
- it is important to provide timely information on upcoming engagement activities to enable stakeholders to better plan their engagement and input,
- provide onboarding sessions for newly registered stakeholders,
- invest in digital interaction models to make engagement more cost effective.

4.3 Outcome of the Stakeholder Forum 2019

The objective of the Forum was to increase awareness of the SEA's principles and implementing mechanisms, foster the balanced involvement of stakeholders and to gather concrete proposals to (re)shape EFSA's stakeholder engagement mechanisms.

From the results of the satisfaction survey, participants appreciated the format of the 2019 Forum meeting which included an onboarding session for newly registered stakeholders, plenary sessions with a key note speech on trust in science and on why engagement matters, as well as world café conversations that provided an opportunity for a balanced input. Each discussion was facilitated by a stakeholder representative acting as table host and supported by a co-host from EFSA acting as rapporteur. The Stakeholder Bureau was involved in the design of the programme.

The closing panel discussion took stock of the outcomes of the world café conversations, acknowledged divergencies, discussed and prioritised next steps and agreed how to move forward with the input gathered from the workshop.

A strong majority of participants felt the contribution they provided during the Forum will inform EFSA's future directions on stakeholder engagement and that they expect to be kept informed on the progress made with their input.

The input provided by the Forum will feed into the elaboration of EFSA's Strategy 2027 and provides food for thought on how to proceed with stakeholder engagement. The full Report of the Stakeholder Forum 2019 is available [here](#).

Key findings

- in addition to existing events targeting specific stakeholder categories, EFSA should organise events on overarching topics relevant for registered stakeholders from different categories,
- new engagement models should be explored at different stages along the risk assessment process to ensure an appropriate level of transparency and engagement,
- the importance of clear objectives when asking stakeholders for input; ensure a balanced representation of views and demonstrate concrete examples of how the stakeholder feedback is used,
- explore ways to allow stakeholders to give input on future EFSA "self-task" mandates,
- stakeholders should have a role in the selection of topics to be tested under the Communicators lab,
- EFSA's website should provide information in a more structured way, to make it accessible to both professional and non-professional users.

5. Annexes

5.1 Report on external review of SEA

5.2 Next steps

	Activity	Time
1.	Roll-out of SEA through the implementation of existing permanent and targeted mechanisms Implement recommendations endorsed by the Management Board	Q1- Q4 2020
2.	Implementation of the Transparency Regulation <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Stakeholder Sounding Board- Technical Discussion Groups	Q1- Q4 2020
3.	Large Scale Engagement	Q1- Q4 2020

16 July 2019

Review of EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Approach

Final report

Ipsos

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Executive summary

Ipsos was commissioned by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in May 2019 to undertake a **review of EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Approach (SEA)**. This review builds on an interim evaluation by EFSA covering the 2016-2017 pilot period of the SEA, and has as purpose to inform EFSA on the effectiveness of the principles and measures under the SEA for the 3-year period (2016-2019) since its establishment. The **focus** of this evaluation is on the registration process of stakeholders, the engagement mechanisms, and the extent to which EFSA adhered to the principles of openness and balanced representation in implementing the SEA, with special attention to possible improvements for the future.

Methodology

The review encompassed **three main research methods**: (1) a review of key documentation made available by EFSA, (2) an online survey targeting EFSA's registered stakeholders, and (3) a review of stakeholder engagement approaches used by other agencies ('review of alternative practices'), aimed at identifying good stakeholder engagement practices that might be replicable to help improve the SEA.

The **online survey**, fielded between 13 June and 3 July by means of EUSurvey, was completed by in total 38 registered stakeholders. This included respondents from all seven stakeholder categories defined by the SEA. Best represented was the business and food industry group with 15 respondents, followed by the academia and environmental / health NGOs and advocacy groups (accounting for 6 and 5 respondents, respectively). The **review of alternative practices** encompassed five organisations selected in close cooperation with EFSA, based on the availability of relevant information on these organisations, as well as these organisations' remit / type of work and size. The following five organisations were selected: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat (UNFCCC), U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO).

Main findings

This section summarises the main findings of the review and is structured around the clusters of EFSA's engagement model that are the key subject of this review, namely: the categorisation of stakeholders; stakeholder registration; the permanent and targeted engagement mechanisms; and the transparency / information provided, in addition to stakeholders' overall opinions on the SEA.

Stakeholders' overall opinions on the SEA – About three quarters (74%) of the stakeholders surveyed for this study rated EFSA's stakeholder engagement and its mechanisms with a 4 or a 5 out of 5. Most of the remaining respondents (21%) answered with a '3'. The average score was a 3.8 out of 5, compared to a comparable score of 3.5 out of 5 in the interim evaluation of the SEA (it is important to add, however, that the question was rephrased slightly for better clarity).

Categorisations of stakeholders – Registered stakeholder of EFSA are assigned to one of seven stakeholder categories under the SEA¹. As of December 2018, out of 117 registered stakeholders, 66 (56%) were in the business and food industry group and 18 (15%) in the NGOs and advocacy group. The number of registered stakeholders representing the other stakeholder groups ranged from 2 to 11. The stakeholders surveyed for this study were quite positive about the seven

¹ These categories are: Consumers, environmental/health NGOs and advocacy groups, farmers and primary producers, business and food industry, distributors and HORECA (food service industry preparing and serving food and beverages), practitioners' associations, and Academia.

stakeholder categories applied in the SEA. The application of the principles of equal opportunity and balanced representation in the SEA was rated slightly higher by respondents compared to 2017 (3.6 out of 5, versus 3.3 out of 5 in 2017). Majorities (57%-61%) agreed or strongly agreed that the stakeholder groups are well defined, cover all relevant stakeholders and that stakeholders are usually allocated to the appropriate groups. On the other hand, the surveyed stakeholders were not fully persuaded concerning the representation of stakeholders in the SEA. Four in ten respondents (41%) agreed or strongly agreed that some groups of stakeholders are *not sufficiently* represented and about a third (32%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that some groups of stakeholders are overrepresented. A similar proportion (32%) agreed or strongly agreed that some groups of stakeholders have *undue* influence, whereas roughly a quarter of respondents (24%) agreed or strongly agreed that some groups of stakeholders have *excessive* influence.

When asked for ideas to improve EFSA's categorisation of stakeholders, numerous respondents mentioned that the food industry and business stakeholder group is too large and diverse, encompassing firms with very disparate activities and sizes. Several respondents pointed to the different relationship with EFSA of regulated versus non-regulated food industry and business stakeholders and noted that this hampers the representation of the food industry and business group in the Stakeholder Bureau. This is in line with similar findings in the interim evaluation of the SEA.

Key findings review of alternative practices

- *None of the five organisations applies substantially more, or more specific, stakeholder categories than EFSA.*
- *Representativeness of stakeholder groups is not an issue that is unique to EFSA: UNFCCC's stakeholders have called for better differentiating the rules for engagement with stakeholders by type of actor and area of interest.*
- *When it comes to improving the representativeness of the existing stakeholder groups, the UNEP Major Group Facilitating Committee (MGFC) might serve as inspiration.*

Stakeholder registration – Since the establishment of the SEA in 2016, EFSA works with a list of registered stakeholders, updated on a quarterly basis. The number of registered stakeholders has increased from about 70 at the end of 2016 to 117 as of December 2018, and has remained relatively stable since 2017. Stakeholders register by means of an online registration form, in which they need to indicate among others their preferred stakeholder category.

The stakeholders surveyed for this review were positive about the registration process. Close to nine in ten respondents (86%) rated the ease of use / intuitiveness of the registration process for stakeholders on EFSA's website, with a 5 or a 4 out of 5 – the average score was 3.9 out of 5. Nearly all respondents (95%) strongly agreed or agreed that they could indicate their specific needs, interests and expertise. Stakeholders also generally felt that the eligibility criteria were clearly defined, that it was clear why they needed to provide certain information, and that the outcome of the registration process was communicated in a timely and appropriate manner (89%-92% agreed or strongly agreed). A similar proportion of respondents (88%) agreed or strongly agreed that it was easy to select the right stakeholder category – this in contrast to the 2017 interim evaluation, in which stakeholder reported this as a problem. Slightly fewer respondents (82%) strongly agreed or agreed that the benefits of registering for stakeholders were clearly communicated.

Stakeholders had limited suggestions for improvements to the registration process for stakeholders on EFSA's website. The only suggestion that was made more than once was that additional information could be provided about the timing and progress of the registration process (two respondents noted this).

Key findings review of alternative practices

- Even though opportunities for improvements are limited, some alternative practices are worth highlighting, in particular regarding the information provided on the registration process and the benefits of registering.
- UNFCCC, EUIPO and UNEP provide extensive guidance on the registration process, see for example UNFCCC's Online Admission System and EUIPO's "Fast Track" patent application tool.
- UNEP maintains an easily searchable online stakeholder list.

Permanent and targeted engagement mechanisms – The SEA encompasses two *permanent* engagement mechanisms: The Stakeholder Forum and the Stakeholder Bureau. The former (the Forum) meets on an annual basis and provides registered stakeholders with a platform to provide feedback on strategic planning, horizontal processes, and the engagement platforms. The second Stakeholder Forum was held in Brussels on November 2018 and was attended by slightly over 60 registered stakeholders. The Stakeholder Bureau, chaired by EFSA's Executive Director, is made up of seven members representing the seven different stakeholder categories. It acts as EFSA's high-level advisory group on stakeholder engagement and provides input to EFSA with regards to civil society's concerns on health, environment, food production and other issues in the Authority's remit, and helps shape the agenda of the Stakeholder Forum. Stakeholder Bureau meetings take place every six months in Brussels.

Previous feedback on the Stakeholder Forum and the Stakeholder Bureau was generally positive. In a satisfaction survey of the second Stakeholder Forum, 25 of the 27 respondents (93%) indicated that they found the overall programme of the event excellent or very good. The interim evaluation of the SEA similarly concluded that there was overall satisfaction with the organisation of the first Bureau meeting. Points for improvements that were mentioned with regard to the Stakeholder Forum related to the desire to attend with more than one representative, as well as to get more information / material in advance of the meetings, more information about how the recommendations from the last Forum were addressed, and more time for discussions in plenary and break-out sessions. Regarding the Stakeholder Bureau, the interim evaluation recommended to provide participants with a (digital) information pack about EFSA's work.

In addition to the permanent engagement mechanisms, the SEA encompasses *targeted* engagement mechanisms that allow stakeholders to interact with EFSA on specific topics. This includes discussion groups, public consultations, stakeholder meetings (workshops, roundtables, info sessions), and the Communicators Lab. In the interim evaluation of the SEA, stakeholders generally commented positively on the targeted engagement mechanisms. Points for improvement that were flagged were that more could be done to signpost when and why EFSA seeks input from stakeholder and the resources required for participation. The purpose of the Communicators Lab was not fully understood by all stakeholders. The interim evaluation of the SEA recommended inter alia to continue investing in communicating to / gather feedback from stakeholders about the engagement opportunities.

In the stakeholder survey for the current study, respondents generally were positive about the Stakeholder Bureau as well. This applied for example to the location of Bureau meetings (held in Brussels) and the information provided by Bureau members to registered stakeholders (rated 4.3 and 4.0 out of 5, respectively). Respondents were also positive about the frequency of Bureau meetings (twice per year), the opportunities for registered stakeholders to contribute to Bureau meetings, the nomination process of Stakeholder Bureau members, the information provided about Bureau meetings to

registered stakeholders and the interaction between Bureau members and registered stakeholders (all were rated between 3.7 and 3.8 out of 5). The surveyed stakeholders were least positive about the Bureau's format (rated 3.5 out of 5).

Stakeholders' self-declared participation in the last two years (2017-2019) in the SEA stakeholder engagement mechanisms varied substantially. Close to nine in ten respondents (86%) indicated to have participated at least once in the Stakeholder Forum. Two thirds of respondents (67%) indicated to have participated at least once in the roundtables. Participation in the other engagement mechanisms was lower. Notably, half (50%) of respondents noted they had never participated in the Mandate working groups or Communicators labs.

The most common reason mentioned for not participating in engagement mechanisms was a lack of resources – close to six in ten (59%) of respondents specified this as reason for never or only once participating. Half of the respondents (47%) mentioned a lack of relevance of the topics discussed as an important reason for not participating, whilst about a fifth of respondents (22%) noted that they were not aware about the applicable mechanism(s).

There is a clear link between participation in the engagement mechanisms, and the perceived usefulness of, and awareness about, these mechanisms. Eight out ten respondents (82%) strongly agreed or agreed that the Stakeholder Forum is fit for purpose. Slightly fewer respondents (77%) strongly agreed or agreed that the roundtables are fit for purpose. On the other hand, just about a third of respondents (31%) believed that the Communicators labs is fit for purpose, whilst most others (44%) said that they were not aware about this engagement mechanism.

When asked what would increase their participation in the stakeholder engagement mechanisms, most respondents (55%) mentioned engagement mechanisms that are better tailored to their organisation's interests. Substantial proportions of respondents (42%-45%) also specified that 'more information / guidance about the aim of activities / mechanisms', 'more information about how and when to participate in activities / mechanisms', and 'more information about how stakeholder input is used by EFSA' would make them participate more often in the SEA.

Key findings review of alternative practices

- *The reviewed organisations recognise the importance of tailored engagement.*
- *Some of the organisations mention the need for direct contact with specific stakeholders, see for instance FDA's online "external stakeholder meeting request" system.*
- *Several of the reviewed organisations employ online platforms or webinars to increase engagement. Good example are the UNFCCC 'Adaptation Knowledge Portal' and the FDA's 'Guidance Webinar series'*
- *Several organisations recognise the importance of funding to stimulate stakeholder participation.*

Transparency / information provided – Openness and transparency are key principles of the SEA and EFSA as a whole; as is reflected among others in the 'Frameworks for interaction' of the Stakeholder Forum, Stakeholder Bureau and the various targeted engagement mechanisms. In the interim evaluation of the SEA, the feedback on the transparency of the SEA was generally positive, especially concerning the amount of information made available on EFSA's website. Points for improvement that were mentioned included the accessibility of information on the website (we understand that since important changes have made to the website), as well as the clarity and availability of information about the aim of the engagement mechanisms.

In the survey for the current study, respondents were also positive about the openness and transparency of the SEA. More than eight out of ten respondents (84%) agreed or strongly agreed that EFSA provides sufficient information about the agenda, topics and / or participants of activities. Three quarters (75%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that EFSA provides enough information about the dates of activities for stakeholders. Around two thirds of respondents (65%-68%) agreed or strongly agreed that EFSA provides sufficient information on updates of the lists of registered stakeholders and the purpose of targeted engagement with specific sub-groups of stakeholders. Respondents rated EFSA's Stakeholder Team with a 4.1 out of 5 (the same score as for in the interim evaluation of the SEA). Nonetheless, there remains room for improvement. Notably, only about a third of the surveyed stakeholder (32%) agreed or strongly agreed that EFSA provides sufficient information the impact of stakeholder input. And whilst the quality of information provided on the website and during events was rated highly (3.8 and 3.9 out of 5, respectively), the timeliness of information provision was rated somewhat lower (3.5 out of 5).

Key findings review of alternative practices

- FSANZ and UNEP have systems / processes in place to ensure openness about the impact of stakeholder input.
- Several organisations make use of online platforms, webcasting and social media, to allow stakeholders direct access to information. See UNFCCC's 'Adaptation Knowledge Portal' and EUIPO's 'Transparency Portal'.
- Several of the reviewed organisations highlight their increased activity on social media

Conclusions

Overall the evidence shows that the SEA is delivering on its aims and objectives. The surveyed stakeholders rated the SEA and its mechanisms with a 3.8 out of 5, an improvement over the 3.5 out of 5 in the interim evaluation. The surveyed stakeholders were mostly positive about the SEA's permanent and targeted engagement mechanisms, although this varied depending on the mechanism. Whereas the Stakeholder Forum, roundtables and scientific colloquia were rated highly, stakeholders were less positive about the Mandate working groups and Communication labs. The latter appears related to lower awareness and participation, as mentioned also by stakeholders themselves. Other important reasons of stakeholders for not participating in engagement mechanisms were a lack of resources and a lack of relevance of the topics covered in the mechanisms. Hence, it is no surprise to see that most stakeholders noted that they would be more likely to participate if the engagement mechanisms were more tailored to their organisation's needs, and if more information were provided about the mechanisms' aims / purpose and functioning. The registration process appears not to prevent participation – feedback was very positive, although some stakeholders would like to see more guidance.

Regarding the Stakeholder Bureau, whilst the surveyed stakeholders were positive about the elements relating to its functioning (such the information provided by the Bureau to registered stakeholders), opinions were more mixed concerning the format / composition of the Bureau. This may relate to concerns about the representativeness of stakeholder groups. Although the stakeholder categorisation itself was perceived positively, concerns were raised regarding the under- and overrepresentation of stakeholder groups in the SEA, and about some groups exercising undue or excessive influence. The evidence from both the interim evaluation and the current review suggests that a reason for this may be the large size and heterogeneity of the food industry and business stakeholder group. Several stakeholders mentioned that differences in this group – notably regarding stakeholders' relationship with EFSA – are not sufficiently taken into account and that it is difficult for this group to speak with one voice.

Stakeholder feedback on the openness and transparency of the SEA was generally positive, especially regarding the provision of information about activities (including agendas, topics and dates), as well as regarding the reports and

materials presented during events and the quality of information provided on the EFSA website. The accessibility of information on the website was rated highly as well, which suggests that the improvements to the website made since the interim evaluation were fruitful. Nonetheless, potential areas for improvement can be identified. Concerns were raised regarding the timeliness of information provision. Moreover, a substantial number of stakeholders related their lack of participation in the stakeholder engagement mechanisms to a lack of information on these mechanisms. Significant is that only about a third of respondents felt that EFSA provides sufficient information on the impact of stakeholder input. The last point may be particularly important as it ties in to the earlier mentioned concerns about the representation of stakeholders in the SEA.

Recommendations

The recommendations build on the conclusions resulting from this review, including the review of alternative practices, and are listed in order of priority based on our assessment of which are most important.

Recommendation 1 – Look at ways to improve stakeholder representation / categorisation

To address stakeholders' concerns relating to stakeholder representation, it could be beneficial to look at ways to increase the representativeness of the food industry and business stakeholder group. A suggestion could be to allocate two seats to the food industry and business stakeholder group in the Stakeholder Bureau. We would *not* suggest to try to address stakeholders' concerns relating to stakeholder representation by drastically changing the stakeholder categorisation or substantially increasing the number of stakeholder categories.

Recommendation 2 – More / better use of interactive stakeholder engagement platforms

Bearing in mind that stakeholders mentioned that better tailored engagement would make them participate more, and considering stakeholders' concerns relating to the timeliness of information provided and the costs for participation, we would recommend further exploring the opportunities for online, innovative and interactive engagement methods. An interesting example of such a system is the UNFCCC 'Adaptation Knowledge Portal', or the system put in place by the FDA to address ad hoc requests from specific stakeholders. We also suggest looking for additional ways of entering into direct contact with stakeholders, for example via webinars and / or the expanded use of social media.

Recommendation 3 – Further enhance information on impact stakeholder input

To address stakeholders' concerns regarding the transparency about the impact of stakeholder input, EFSA could look at additional ways to communicate how stakeholders' input is used, possibly via the EFSA website, in publications and / or by other means. An increased usage of web portals and platform, including interactive webcasts, could also allow EFSA to provide stakeholders with more information about the impact of their input (see recommendation 2).

Recommendation 4 – Additional guidance on stakeholder registration

Notwithstanding positive opinions on stakeholder registration, we suggest to continue looking at ways to further improve the registration process, as there appear to be relatively easy to realise ways to do so. An option could be to provide more guidance materials, as is done in some other organisations. This could include step-by-step guidance on the steps to take (for example in relation to the selection of the preferred stakeholder category), concise information about the benefits for registered stakeholders, and/or an interactive list of existing stakeholders (as opposed to the current .pdf list).

1 Introduction

This deliverable is the final report for the review the Stakeholder Engagement Approach (SEA) of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). This review was commissioned to Ipsos in May 2019 under FWC 17-3030 and carried out between May and July 2019. The report is structured as follows:

- Section 1 introduces the purpose of the assignment, provides a description of the activities within the scope of the review, presents the methodology used, and describes the limitations and challenges encountered.
- Section 2 summarises the key findings of the review, structured around the clusters of EFSA's engagement model that are the key subject of this review, namely: the categorisation of stakeholders (2.1); stakeholder registration (2.2); the permanent and targeted engagement mechanisms (2.3); and the transparency / information provided (2.4), in addition to a section on stakeholders' overall opinions on the SEA (2.5).
- Section 3 presents the conclusions of the review, as well as the key recommendations that in the opinion of the Ipsos team would help EFSA further improve the SEA.
- Finally, the annexes include the stakeholder survey questionnaire and an overview of the documents reviewed for this study.

1.1 About the assignment

EFSA made the request for services for the current study in the context of the mandatory requirement by EFSA's Management Board decision (Article 9) to review the effectiveness of the Authority's stakeholder approach within three years from the adoption of the SEA in June 2016². The implementation of the SEA followed a review of EFSA's stakeholder engagement activities and aims to provide stakeholders with an improved understanding of the Authority's scientific decision-making processes and at better tailoring EFSA's scientific outputs to stakeholders' needs. The SEA provides a wide range of stakeholders³ the opportunity to engage with EFSA and to provide input at different stages of the risk assessment and risk communications process.

After a pilot phase (June 2016-November 2017), EFSA executed an interim evaluation of the SEA⁴. This evaluation – on which the current review builds – focussed on the registration of stakeholders, the engagement mechanisms, and the extent to which EFSA adhered to the principles of openness and balanced representation in implementing the SEA. The interim evaluation concluded that SEA was delivering on its aims and objectives. The purpose of the current review is to look at whether this holds true for the entire 3-year period since the establishment of the SEA, focussing on the December 2017-June 2019 period, deriving lessons learned and with an emphasis on potential improvements for the future.

² EFSA, 'EFSA Stakeholder Engagement Approach' (2016). Available at: http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EFSA%20Stakeholder%20engagement%20approach_FINAL.pdf

³ Seven major stakeholder groups are distinguished: representatives of consumer associations, food industry and business, farmer organisations, environmental NGOs, distributors, practitioners and academia.

⁴ EFSA, 'Stakeholder Engagement Approach Interim evaluation report. Pilot phase June 2016- November 2017'. Available at: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/mb180321/mb180321-i5.pdf>

1.2 Methodology

The methodology used for this review involved three main tasks: (1) a review of key documentation, (2) an online stakeholder survey, and (3) a review of stakeholder engagement approaches used by other agencies.

The review of key documentation encompassed the documentation / information listed in the Tender Specification, as well as other documentation / information that EFSA made available for the review team after the signature of the contract (see Annex 2 for the full overview of the documentation / information reviewed). The latter included the questionnaire and results of the stakeholder survey for the interim evaluation of the SEA, as well as the reports of the 2019 NGOs Roundtable and Academia Workshop.

The online survey of registered stakeholders was implemented by means of the EUSurvey tool. Ipsos designed the questionnaire for the stakeholder survey (see Annex 1), taking into consideration EFSA's feedback. The distribution of the survey to the registered stakeholders and promoting participation was the responsibility of EFSA. Between 13 June and 3 July 2019, 38 registered stakeholders completed the survey. This included respondents from all categories of stakeholders: consumers (2), farmers and primary producers (4), business and food industry (15), environmental / health NGOs and advocacy groups (5), associations of practitioners (4), distributors and HORECA (2), and academia (6). Of the 38 respondents, eight indicated to be members of the EFSA Stakeholder Bureau. The great majority (73%) of respondents specified to participate several times a year, but less often than once a month, in EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Activities⁵. Most respondents became a registered stakeholder of EFSA in 2016 (55%) or 2017 (26%)⁶.

The review of stakeholder engagement approaches used by other agencies (point three above), referred to in the remainder of this report as the 'review of alternative practices', involved a review of publicly available documents and aimed to identify good stakeholder engagement practices that might be replicable to help improve the SEA. Particular attention was paid to identifying possible best practices that relate to EFSA's engagement model (see above), but the Ipsos team also looked for broader insights that can contribute to improving the SEA more generally. In collaboration with EFSA, five organisations were selected for the review of alternative practices, taking into account the availability of relevant information on these organisations, as well as these organisations' remit / type of work and size⁷. The following five organisations were selected: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat (UNFCCC), U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO).

1.3 Challenges and limitations

This assignment has been subject to some challenges and limitations, which are summarised below:

- Due to the overall short time frame of the study, and in line with the Tender Specifications, the review of alternative practices consisted of a quick review of *publicly available* information only.

⁵ The remainder was split in two: 14% of respondents indicated to participate once a month or more often in EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Activities; 14% indicated to participated once a year or less often.

⁶ Another 4 respondents (11%) registered in 2018, 2 respondents (5%) registered in 2019, and 1 respondent did not indicate when his/her organisation registered.

⁷ Sister EU agencies of EFSA were not considered for selection due to EFSA existing close cooperation with these agencies.

- The response rate to the survey was good (38 out of approximately 120 registered stakeholders⁸). Nonetheless, the relatively small overall number of respondents limited the possibilities for stakeholder group-level analysis.

2 Main findings

2.1 Categorisation of stakeholders

In this section, we will look at the categorisation of stakeholders by EFSA. Key research questions addressed are whether the definitions applied to the seven stakeholder categories are clear, whether there are possible improvements to be made to the categorisation of stakeholders, and to which extent the principles of equal opportunity and balanced representation among stakeholders are applied within the SEA.

2.1.1 Findings

Organisations that meet the criteria to become a registered stakeholder of EFSA (see section 2.2) are assigned to one of seven stakeholder categories under the SEA⁹. As of December 2018, out of 117 registered stakeholders, 66 (56%) were in the business and food industry group. With 18 registered stakeholders, NGOs and advocacy groups were also represented well. The same applied to practitioners' associations, which accounted for 11 registered stakeholders. The number of registered stakeholders representing the other stakeholder groups ranged from 2 to 9¹⁰.

The 2017 interim evaluation report of the SEA raised some concerns relating to the categorisation of stakeholders, which was considered by some to be too rigid, and not always reflecting the structure and interests of stakeholders. A particular concern that was raised by stakeholders at the time was that the business and food industry group was too large and diverse, making it difficult to ensure representativeness and to engage its members¹¹. Based on these findings, the interim evaluation recommended to appoint one primary representative and one alternate representative to act on behalf of each stakeholder group, to ease organisation and engagement of stakeholders, in particular in the larger groups – we understand that EFSA has recently implemented this recommendation¹². The stakeholder categories themselves were left unchanged since 2016 until today, as was recommended by the interim evaluation. The latter evaluation did, however, recommend to pay particular attention during the application stage to how stakeholders are assigned to categories.

Results stakeholder survey

On average the respondents to the survey rated the application of the principles of equal opportunity and balanced representation in the SEA with a 3.6 out of 5, in which 5 is exceptional. This constitutes an improvement compared to the

⁸ 117 registered stakeholders as of December 2018. See: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/stakeholders-registered-list.pdf>

⁹ These categories are: Consumers, environmental/health NGOs and advocacy groups, farmers and primary producers, business and food industry, distributors and HORECA (food service industry preparing and serving food and beverages), practitioners' associations, and Academia.

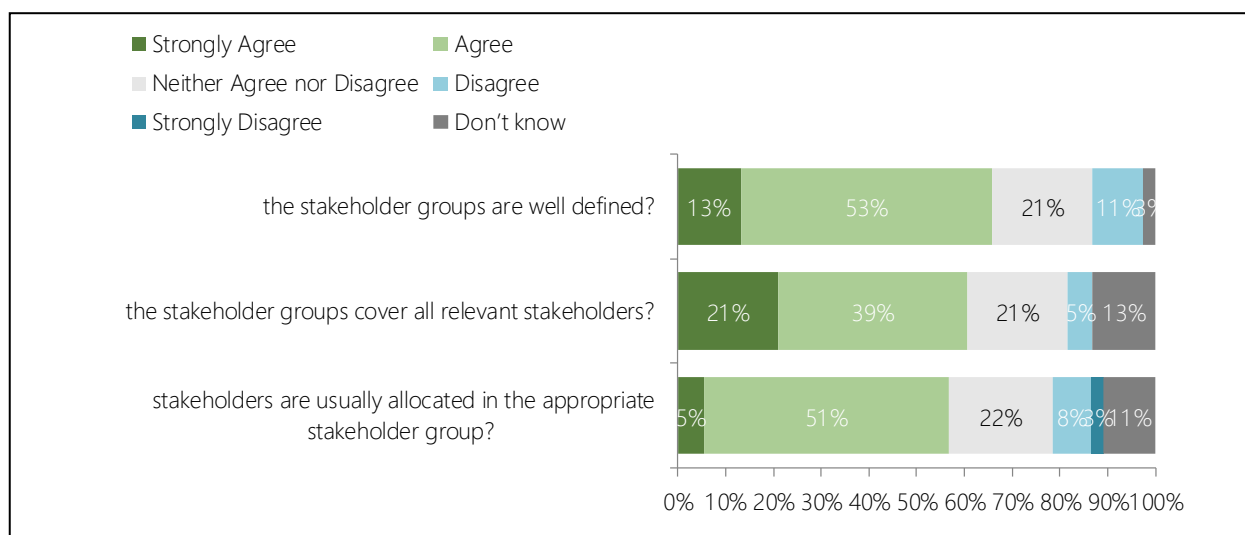
¹⁰ EFSA, 'List of Registered Stakeholders' (07 December 2018). Available at: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/stakeholders-registered-list.pdf>

¹¹ EFSA, Stakeholder Engagement Approach Interim evaluation report (2017).

¹² A call for nominations of stakeholder representatives as alternate members of the Bureau was planned at the end of 2018. See <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/20181026-report.pdf>

interim evaluation of the SEA, in which respondents rated the extent to which the principles of equal opportunity and balanced representation among stakeholders had been applied with a 3.3 out of 5¹³. When asked about the seven stakeholder categories applied by EFSA, two thirds (66%) of stakeholders surveyed for the current study agreed or strongly agreed that the stakeholder groups are well defined, whilst most others (21%) neither agreed nor disagreed (see figure below). Slightly smaller proportions (57%-61%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that stakeholder groups cover all relevant stakeholders and / or that stakeholder are usually allocated in the appropriate stakeholder group.

Figure 2.1: Opinion on stakeholder categories



Q2.1. When thinking about the seven stakeholder categories applied by EFSA, do you agree or disagree that...

%; All respondents who answered question item (n=37-38)

Source: Online survey

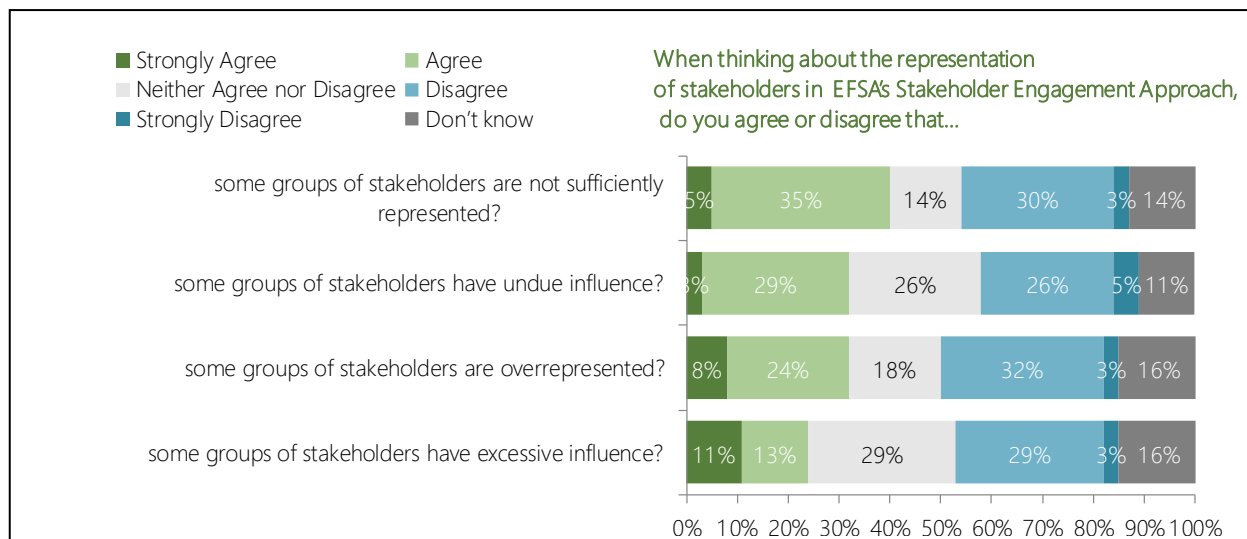
The surveyed stakeholders were asked if they knew of concrete ways to improve EFSA's categorisation of stakeholders. The qualitative feedback from the survey on this question aligned to a large extent with the findings from the interim evaluation of the SEA (see above). Numerous respondents mentioned that the food industry and business stakeholder group (accounting for more than half of all registered stakeholders) is too large and heterogenous, encompassing firms with widely disparate activities and sizes. Several respondents pointed to the different relationship with EFSA of regulated versus non-regulated food industry and business stakeholders (regulated stakeholders being directly affected by EFSA work, as opposed to non-regulated stakeholders). These factors reportedly hamper the representation of the food industry and business group in the Stakeholder Bureau, in which all stakeholder groups are represented by one representative (even though a system with alternates is now in place, see above).

In view of the feedback mentioned above, it comes as no surprise that a sizable proportion of respondents to the stakeholder survey thought that stakeholder representation could be improved. More specifically, four in ten respondents (41%) agreed or strongly agreed that some groups of stakeholders are *not sufficiently* represented, a further 14% did not agree nor disagree (see figure below). Overrepresentation was seen as a smaller, although not insignificant, issue. About a third (32%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that some groups of stakeholders are overrepresented, whilst an additional one fifth (18%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Does the representation of stakeholders in the SEA lead to some groups of stakeholders exercising disproportionate or unwarranted influence? In the view of a non-negligible number of surveyed stakeholders this is the case. Around a third (32%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that some groups

¹³ See question 4 of the survey for the interim evaluation of the SEA: "How would you rate the extent to which the principles of equal opportunity and balanced representation among stakeholders have been applied during the pilot phase"

of stakeholders have *undue* influence, whereas roughly a quarter of respondents (24%) agreed or strongly agreed that some groups of stakeholders have *excessive* influence.

Figure 2.2: Representation of stakeholders



Q2.4. When thinking about the representation of stakeholders in EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Approach, do you agree or disagree that...
%; All respondents who answered question item (n=37-38)

Source: Online survey

2.1.2 Alternative practices

How do the five reviewed organisations categorise their stakeholders? This of course depends to a large degree on the type of stakeholders catered to, which varies depending on the organisation. Hence the lessons that can be learned from specific stakeholder categorisations is limited. Moreover, a perfect categorisation may not exist, as there is always a trade-off to be made between granularity / representativeness on the one hand, and practicality on the other hand. In this respect, it should be noted that none of the organisations applies substantially more, or more specific, stakeholder categories than EFSA does. The FDA, like EFSA, categorises industry stakeholder in a single group (called "trade associations"), without further subdivisions. FSANZ makes a distinction between industry and industry associations, but this appears not relevant for EFSA, which does not have specific firms as registered stakeholders.

Nonetheless, the review of alternative practices delivered some relevant findings relating to the issues identified by the stakeholders surveyed for this study. The fact that stakeholder categorisation and the representativeness of stakeholder groups is not an issue that is unique to EFSA can be observed in a report by Parties and non-Party (to the Treaty) stakeholders of the UNFCCC, which summarises proposals made to further enhance the effective engagement of stakeholders¹⁴. This report highlights the risk caused by conflicts of interest if stakeholders are not clearly distinguished based on their interest and obligations. As a solution, UNFCCC's stakeholders have called for better differentiating the rules for engagement with non-Party stakeholders by type of actor and area of interest. When it comes to improving the representativeness of the existing stakeholder groups, the UNEP Major Group Facilitating Committee (MGFC) might serve as inspiration. This is a self-organised group composed of two representatives for each key stakeholder group (Major

¹⁴ Gregory Measer, 'Beyond the Last Mile: Monitoring and Assessing Medical Countermeasure Use in Response to Public Health Emergencies', US Food & Drug Administration (26 April 2017). Available at: <https://www.fda.gov/media/105356/download>

Group), providing guidance and support on logistics and helping to identify and involve stakeholders in areas / regions where they are underrepresented¹⁵.

2.2 Stakeholder registration

This section focusses on the stakeholder registration process. Key research questions addressed are whether the registration process is considered effective and intuitive by stakeholders, and if there are additional ways of promoting and encouraging relevant stakeholders to register.

2.2.1 Findings

The Decision of the Management Board of 30 June 2016 led to the establishment of a list of registered stakeholders. The registration process aims to ensure that the stakeholders EFSA engages with constitute a relevant reference group and that each stakeholder's interest in EFSA's work is made known prior to engagement. Organisations interested in becoming registered stakeholders must submit an application to EFSA outlining how they meet a set of five eligibility criteria¹⁶. The application is submitted using an online form, in which applicants need to inter alia specify their preferred stakeholder category¹⁷. EFSA assesses applications based on the eligibility criteria and in accordance with the procedure defined in an internal Working Instruction on Stakeholder Registration. EFSA's regulations stipulate that the Authority shall notify stakeholders of the outcome of the application process within three months upon receipt by EFSA and that each assessment must be documented in an Assessment Report, which is shared with the applicable stakeholder. Since its inception in September 2016, EFSA updates the list on a quarterly basis¹⁸. The number of registered stakeholders has increased from about 70 at the end of 2016 to 118 as of December 2018, and has remained relatively stable since 2017¹⁹.

Results stakeholder survey

The stakeholder survey suggests that stakeholders generally have a positive opinion on the stakeholder registration process. When asked to rate from 5 (exceptional) to 1 (unsatisfactory) the ease of use / intuitiveness of the registration process for stakeholders on EFSA's website, close to nine in ten (86%) of respondents answered with a 5 or a 4, and not a single respondent rated the process as less than 3 (the average score was 3.9 out of 5).

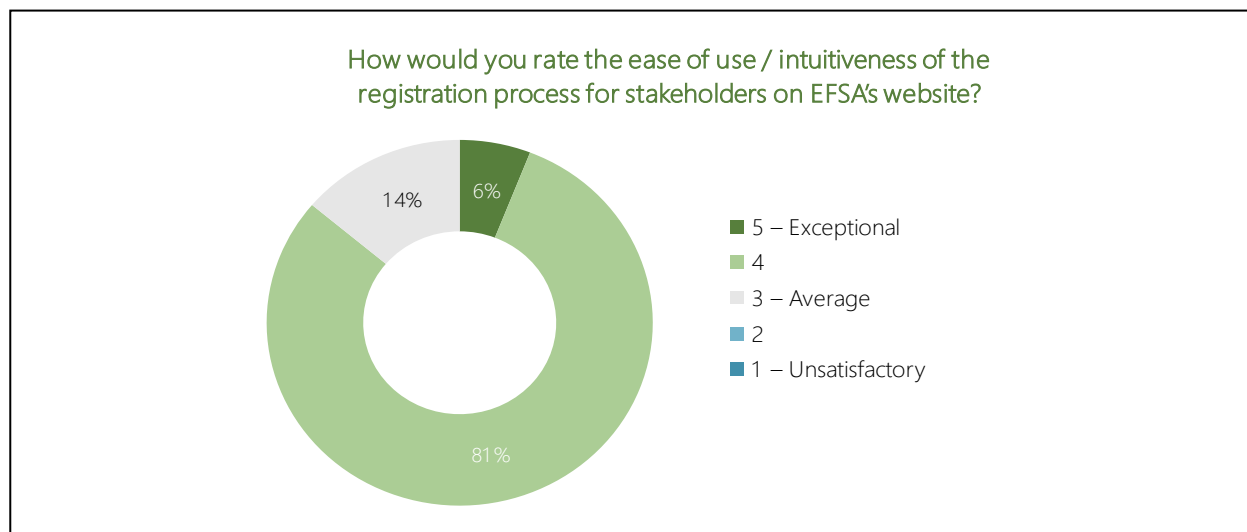
¹⁵ UN Environment Programme, 'Handbook for Stakeholder Engagement', (2018). Available at: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26862/HANDBOOK%20FOR%20STAKEHOLDER%20ENGAGEMENT.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

¹⁶ The eligibility criteria are: a) "The organisation is legally established in the EU /EEA and has activities at an EU level; b) The organisation has a legitimate interest in EFSA's work or in the food and feed sector; c) The organisation is representative in the field of its competence; d) the organisation is non-profit making and does not exclusively represent individual companies; and e) The organisation is registered in the EU Transparency Register". See: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Document18992.pdf>

¹⁷ See EFSA stakeholder registration form. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/Stakeholder_Registration21_09_2016

¹⁸ At the time of writing, the most recent version available online is from December 2018.

¹⁹ As of December 2017, counted 107 registered stakeholders. See the Interim evaluation of the SEA.

Figure 2.1: Opinions on registration process of stakeholders

Q3.1. How would you rate the ease of use / intuitiveness of the registration process for stakeholders on EFSA's website?

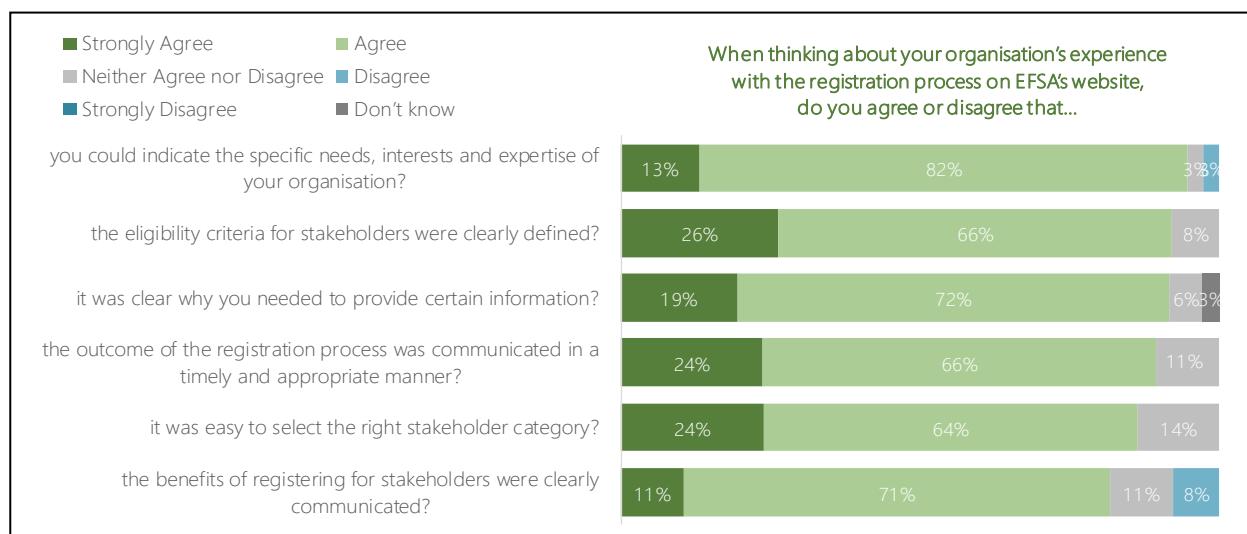
Please answer using the scale in which 5 is "exceptional" and 1 is "unsatisfactory".

%; All respondents who answered question (n=36)

Source: Online survey

When asked about their experiences with specific elements of the registration process, stakeholders' opinions were positive as well. Nearly all respondents (95%) strongly agreed or agreed that they could indicate the specific needs, interests and expertise of their organisation in the registration process for stakeholders on EFSA's website. More than nine out of ten (92%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the eligibility criteria for stakeholders were clearly defined and that it was clear why they needed to provide certain information. Similar proportions (88%-89%) strongly agreed or agreed that the outcome of the registration process was communicated in a timely and appropriate manner, and / or that it was easy to select the right stakeholder category (in contrast to the 2017 interim evaluation, in which stakeholder reported as a problem with the registration process that it was hard to select the appropriate stakeholder category to join)²⁰. Slightly fewer respondents (82%) strongly agreed or agreed that the benefits of registering for stakeholders were clearly communicated.

²⁰ EFSA, Stakeholder Engagement Approach Interim evaluation report (2017).

Figure 2.2: Experience with the registration process for stakeholders

Q3.2. When thinking about your organisation's experience with the registration process for stakeholders on EFSA's website, do you agree or disagree that...

%; All respondents who answered question item (n=36-38)

Source: Online survey

Considering these positive opinions, it is no surprise to see that stakeholders had limited suggestions for improvements to the registration process for stakeholders on EFSA's website. It is worth mentioning, however, that two stakeholders felt that more information could be provided about the timing and progress of the registration process, for example by means of a message confirming the reception of the submission for registration and through regular updates on the progress of the application process.

2.2.2 Alternative practices

Not all five reviewed organisations work with an official registration of stakeholders (FSANS does not, EUIPO only for stakeholders who want to apply for a patent), but those organisations that do usually employ an online registration form more or less comparable to the one used by EFSA. If we also take into account that EFSA's registered stakeholders are generally pleased with the online stakeholder registration in its current form (see above), the learning opportunities for EFSA seem limited in this regard. Nonetheless some alternative practices are worth highlighting, in particular regarding the information provided on the registration process itself and on the benefits of registering.

UNFCCC, EUIPO and UNEP provide extensive guidance on the registration process and the steps to follow. Whilst it would make no sense for EFSA to replicate the information provided for these more complex registration systems, they do provide some inspiration. Stakeholders that register on UNFCCC's Online Admission System (OAS)²¹, for example, are provided with a detailed registration manual, describing the steps to take as well as the nomination process²². In the case of EUIPO, step-by-step guidance is provided on the "Fast Track" patent application process, including by means of a video and examples of trademarks and designs²³. In addition, EUIPO provides a check list of key information to include for the

²¹ See UNFCCC Online Registration System: <https://onlinereg.unfccc.int/>

²² UNFCCC, 'UNFCCC Online Registration System Admitted Observer Organizations (IGOs & NGOs) User Manual', (June 2019). Available at: https://onlinereg.unfccc.int/public/UNFCCC_ORIS_User_Manual-Observer_Organisations.pdf

²³ See EUIPO 'FastTrack' online application portal. Available at: <https://euipo.europa.eu/ohimportal/en/web/guest/apply-now>

trade mark application²⁴. UNEP also provides documentation about the accreditation process and modalities, the duration of the process, and the benefits for organisations to obtain the observer status.²⁵ UNEP's list of accredited stakeholders²⁶, which is easily searchable and shows the stakeholder groups stakeholders are in, could also be an easy to replicate improvement over the .pdf registered stakeholder list used by EFSA.

2.3 Permanent and targeted engagement mechanisms

In this section, we look at whether the permanent and targeted engagement mechanisms established under the SEA are effective and fit for purpose. To do so we consider stakeholders' opinions on the format and effectiveness of the Stakeholder Bureau and Stakeholder Forum, as well as the targeted engagement mechanisms. Special attention is paid to the reasons behind stakeholder (non-) participation.

2.3.1 Findings

Permanent engagement mechanisms

The SEA established two *permanent* engagement mechanisms: The Stakeholder Forum and the Stakeholder Bureau. The former provides registered stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback / recommendations on strategic planning, horizontal processes, and the various engagement platforms. The themes and topics for each **Stakeholder Forum** are decided by EFSA based on the proposals from the registered stakeholders and by the priority areas identified in EFSA's Strategy 2020. The Stakeholder Forum meets on an annual basis and is chaired by EFSA's Executive Director. EFSA hosted the first meeting of the Stakeholder Forum on 30 and 31 May 2017 in Parma, which was attended by 52 registered stakeholders²⁷. The second meeting of EFSA's Stakeholder Forum was held in Brussels on 20 November 2018 and was attended by slightly over 60 registered stakeholders²⁸.

The second meeting of EFSA's Stakeholder Forum held in November 2018 was used an opportunity to reflect on how EFSA responded to the recommendations made at the previous meeting, as well as the recommendations stemming from the external evaluation of EFSA carried out in 2018.²⁹ A satisfaction survey was commissioned after the second Stakeholder Forum meeting in which 25 of the 27 respondents (93%) indicated that they found the overall programme of the event excellent or very good. Respondents in particular appreciated the opportunities to talk with EFSA and its management, to network with peers, and to learn about EFSA latest work and future priorities. As points for improvement of the Stakeholder Forum, respondents to the satisfaction survey specified that they would like to have more than one representative of their association attending, more information / material in advance of the meetings, more information

²⁴ EUIPO online application checklist. Available at: <https://euipo.europa.eu/ohimportal/en/checklist>

²⁵ UN Environment Programme, 'Handbook for Stakeholder Engagement', (2018). Available at: <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26862/HANDBOOK%20FOR%20STAKEHOLDER%20ENGAGEMENT.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

²⁶ UN Environment List of accredited organisations December 2018). Available at: <https://www.unenvironment.org/civil-society-engagement/accreditation/list-accredited-organizations>

²⁷ EFSA, 'Feedback and Follow-up from the Stakeholder Forum', (September 2017). Available at: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/170919-3-p05.pdf>

²⁸ EFSA, 'Second Meeting of EFSA's Stakeholder Forum', (November 2018). Available at: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/REPORT%20SECOND%20MEETING%20OF%20EFSA%20STAKEHOLDER%20FORUM%202019.pdf>

²⁹ Vanessa Ludden et al., 'The 3rd Independent External Evaluation of EFSA 2011-2016 Final Report', (June 2018).

about how the recommendations from the last Stakeholder Forum were addressed, more time for discussions in plenary and break-out sessions (some preferred to return to a two-day events, as was the case for the previous Forum meeting in Parma), and different timings (October instead of November).³⁰ Stakeholders attending the Forum for the first time noted that it would be beneficial to obtain more information on EFSA's way of working and its activities.³¹

The **Stakeholder Bureau** acts as EFSA's high-level advisory group on stakeholder engagement. It provides input to EFSA with regards to civil society's concerns on health, environment, food production and other issues in the Authority's remit, and helps shape the agenda of the Stakeholder Forum. The Stakeholder Bureau is chaired by EFSA's Executive Director and is made up of seven members representing the seven different stakeholder categories. The members of the Bureau were elected by the registered stakeholders from the seven groups prior to the first Bureau meeting and in principle remain in place for a period of at least three years, even though the first representative of the Business and Food Industry group resigned earlier³². During the first meeting of the Bureau, it was agreed that its meetings shall be organised on a six-monthly basis, in Brussels if possible (contrary to the yearly meetings foreseen initially). The first meeting of the Bureau meeting took place on 19 September 2017, the second meeting was held on 18 April 2018, and the third meeting of the Stakeholder Bureau took place on 17 October 2018^{33,34,35}. All three Bureau meeting were organised in Brussels³⁶.

The interim evaluation of the SEA concluded that there was overall satisfaction with the organisation of the (first) Bureau meeting³⁷. Positive aspects that were mentioned included the good communication between EFSA and stakeholders, the active involvement of EFSA's senior management, the supporting documents exchanged in advance of the meeting, and the opportunities to intervene and contribute to discussions. The logistical and administrative support provided by EFSA for the Bureau meeting (e.g. travel arrangements, reimbursements, etc.) was also appraised. The interim evaluation recommended to provide all participants with a (digital) information pack about EFSA's work in advance of future Forum meetings, including links to general resources about EFSA and information about the specific topics on the agenda.

Targeted engagement mechanisms

In addition to the permanent engagement mechanisms, the SEA encompasses several targeted engagement mechanisms that allow stakeholders to interact with EFSA on specific topics. This includes discussion groups, public consultations, stakeholder meetings (workshops, roundtables, info sessions), and the Communicators Lab³⁸. In the interim evaluation of the SEA, the surveyed stakeholders commented positively on the targeted engagement mechanisms³⁹. Especially the roundtables were mentioned as very interactive, although some stakeholders regretted the fact that this only existed for

³⁰ EFSA, 'Second Meeting of EFSA's Stakeholder Forum', (20 November 2018). Available at:

<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/REPORT%20SECOND%20MEETING%20OF%20EFSA%20STAKEHOLDER%20FORUM%202019.pdf>

³¹ Idem.

³² EFSA, '1st Meeting of the EFSA Stakeholder Bureau', (19 September 2017). Available at: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/170919-3-report.pdf>

³³ Idem.

³⁴ EFSA, '2nd Meeting of the EFSA Stakeholder Bureau', (18 April 2018). Available at: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/180418-report.pdf>

³⁵ EFSA, '3rd Meeting of the EFSA Stakeholder Bureau', (17 October 2018). Available at: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/20181026-report.pdf>

³⁶ A fourth Bureau meeting was planned for April 2019, but no information is available about this meeting at the time of writing.

³⁷ EFSA, Stakeholder Engagement Approach Interim evaluation report (2017).

³⁸ For an overview of the specific aims of each of the targeted engagement mechanisms: Goran Kumric, 'Implementation of SEA and progress with the Communicators Lab', EFSA (June 2018). Available at: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/180613-p06.pdf>

³⁹ EFSA, Stakeholder Engagement Approach Interim evaluation report (2017).

Industry and NGOs (this is to our knowledge still the case, although consumer organisations have been invited to the NGO roundtables)⁴⁰. The surveyed stakeholders also flagged some other points for improvement. For example, it was raised that more could be done to signpost when and why EFSA seeks input from stakeholder and the resources required from stakeholders to take part. The feedback on the Communicators Lab was positive, but its purpose was not fully understood by all stakeholders. More in general the stakeholders specified that they preferred face-to-face engagement rather than interaction through online platforms, except for Communicators Lab (a digital platform by which EFSA elicits feedback on and tests the usability and usefulness to stakeholders of specific communications products and tools). The interim evaluation of the SEA recommended to continue investing in communicating to stakeholders about the engagement opportunities, to explore ways to gather feedback from stakeholders for future targeted engagement mechanisms and topics of interest for stakeholder engagement opportunities, and to offer training and information to all stakeholders interested in better understanding EFSA's internal procedures with regard to risk assessment.

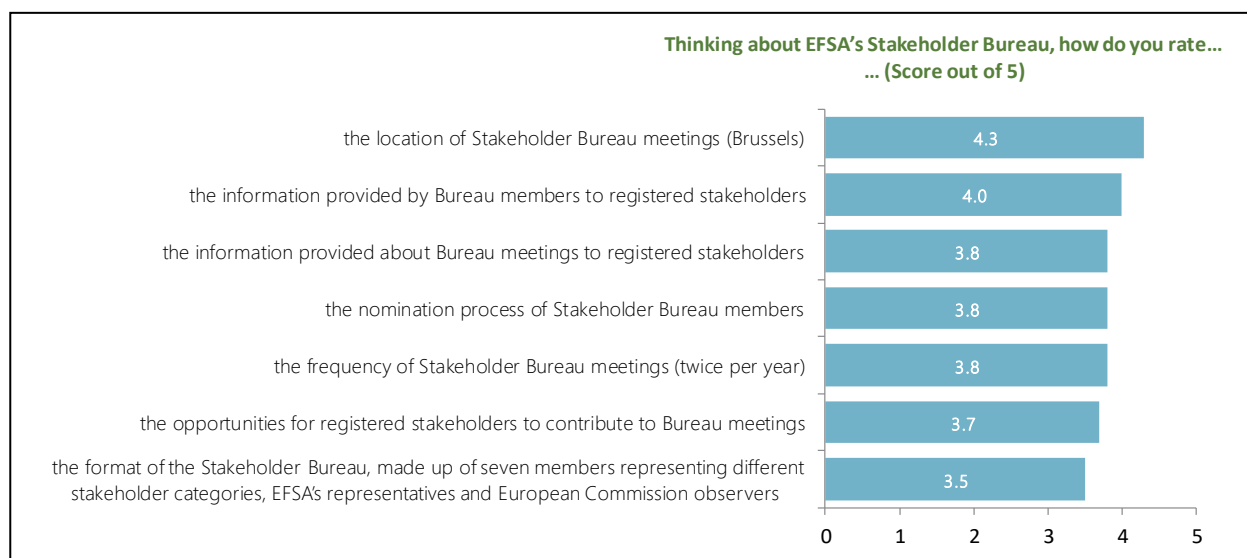
Since the interim evaluation, EFSA has tested different targeted models to interact with specific stakeholder groups, including consumers, farmers, distributors, practitioners and academia. Possible future engagement initiatives were for instance explored in the 2019 Workshop with Academia, enabling stakeholders from scientific and technological communities, including scientific societies, universities and research institutes associations, to engage with EFSA and exchange views on its ongoing work, especially with an eye on encouraging scientists to engage more actively via EFSA's existing channels.⁴¹

Results stakeholder survey

In the stakeholder survey for the current study, respondents generally were positive about the Stakeholder Bureau and its arrangements. As can be noted in the figure below, this applied for example to the location of Bureau meetings (held in Brussels) and the information provided by Bureau members to registered stakeholders (rated 4.3 and 4.0 out of 5, respectively). Other elements of the Bureau were rated less highly, but still positively. This included the frequency of Bureau meetings (twice per year), the opportunities for registered stakeholders to contribute to Bureau meetings, the nomination process of Stakeholder Bureau members, and the information provided about Bureau meetings to registered stakeholders; all were rated between 3.7 and 3.8 out of 5. It is noteworthy that the lowest score (3.5 out of 5) was for the format of the Stakeholder Bureau, made up of seven members representing different stakeholder categories, EFSA's representatives and European Commission observers. Moreover, this score was only 3.2 out of 5 when excluding respondents who are Bureau Members themselves. In a separate question (not included in the figure shown below), respondents rated the interaction between Bureau members and registered stakeholder with a 3.8 out 5 – this figure was not notably different when excluding Bureau members.

⁴⁰ EFSA, '2019 Roundtable with NGOs', (13 February 2019). Available at: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/190213-report.pdf>

⁴¹ EFSA, 'Workshop with Academia Stakeholders. Food Safety through Science – the Quality of risk assessment methodology', (14 March 2019). Available at: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/190314-re.pdf>

Figure 2.3: Opinions on EFSA's Stakeholder Bureau

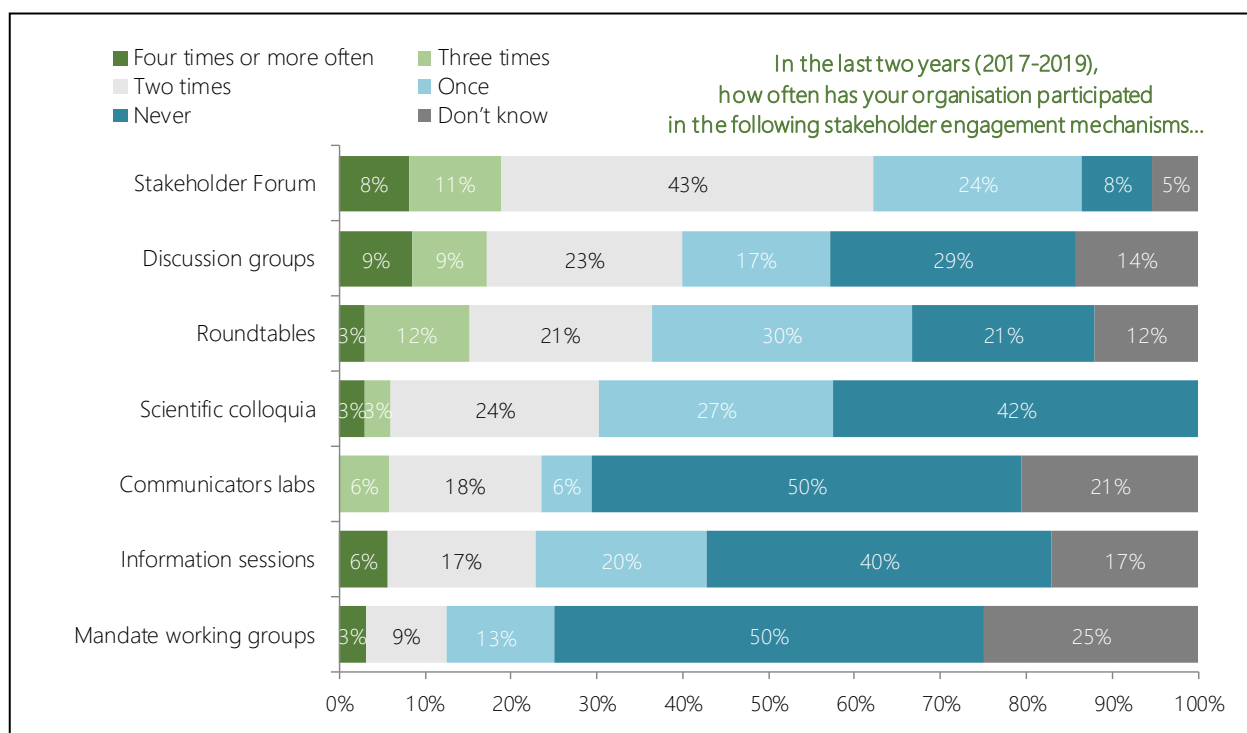
Q4.2. Thinking about EFSA's Stakeholder Bureau, how do you rate...

Please answer using the scale in which 5 is "exceptional" and 1 is "unsatisfactory".

Score out of 5; All respondents who are aware of the bureau, excluding "don't knows" (n=22-30)

Source: Online survey

Stakeholders' self-declared participation in the last two years (2017-2019) in the stakeholder engagement mechanisms part of the SEA varied substantially, depending on the mechanism. Close to nine in ten respondents (86%) specified to have participated at least once in the Stakeholder Forum. Respondents' participation in roundtables was also relatively high; roughly two thirds of respondents (67%) indicated to have participated at least once in this engagement mechanism. The participation in the other engagement mechanisms was lower. This applied notably to the Mandate working groups and Communicators labs; half (50%) of respondents said they had never participated in these two engagement mechanisms.

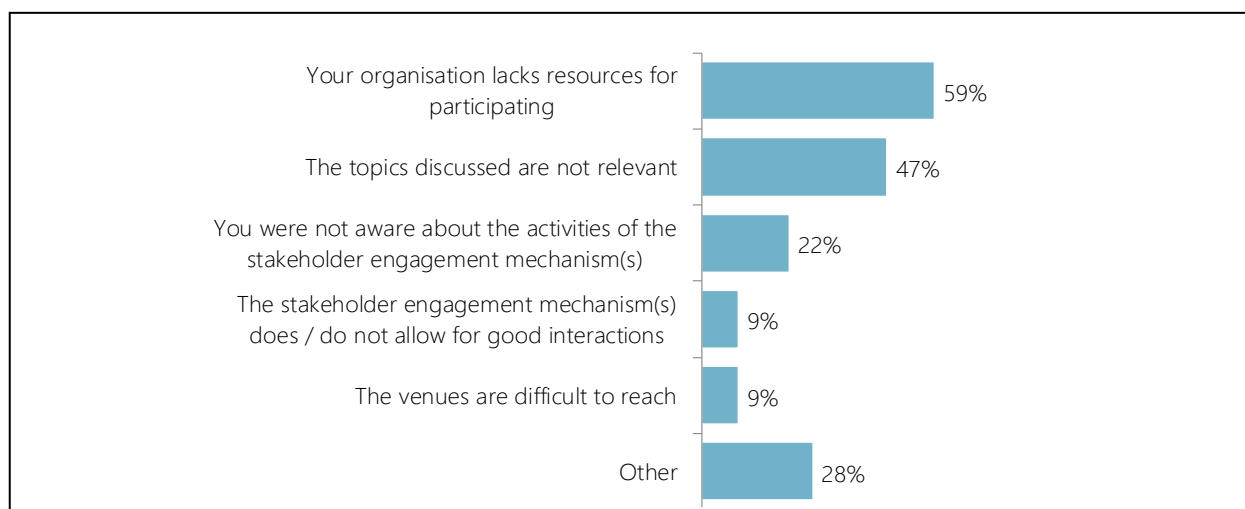
Figure 2.4: Participation in stakeholder engagement mechanisms

Q4.4. In the last two years (2017-2019), how often has your organisation participated in the following stakeholder engagement mechanisms that form part of EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Approach? Please provide your best estimation

%; All respondents who answered question item (n=32-37)

Source: Online survey

The figure below provides an overview of respondents' reasons for participating never or only once in the stakeholder engagement mechanisms listed above. The most prevalent reason specified was a lack of resources – roughly six in ten (59%) of respondents specified this as reason for never or only once participating. Almost half of the respondents (47%) mentioned a lack of relevance of the topics discussed as an important reason. About a fifth of respondents (22%) noted that they were not aware about the applicable mechanism(s). Several of the about a quarter of respondents (28%) who answered "Other", pointed to a lack of time as a key reason for never or only once participating.

Figure 2.5: Reasons why never or only once participated in stakeholder engagement mechanism(s)

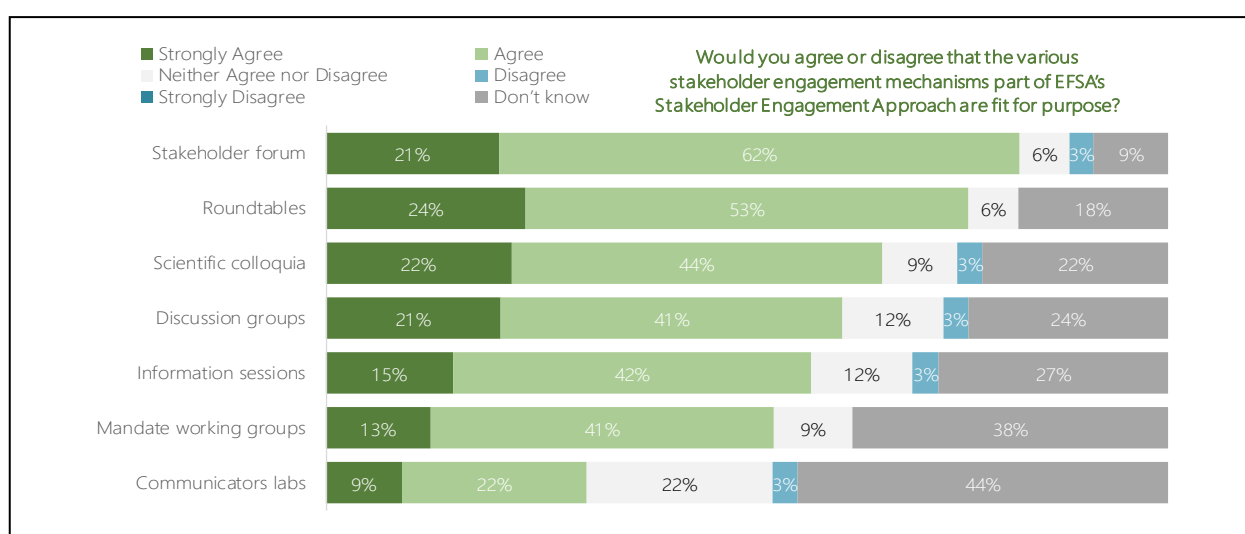
Q4.5a. Why did you never or only once participate in the applicable stakeholder engagement mechanism(s) mentioned above?

Please select all that apply.

% (multiple answer); Respondents who answered never or once to any of the items in Q4.4 (n=32)

Source: Online consultation

When asked if the stakeholder engagement mechanisms part of the SEA are fit for purpose, respondents were most positive about the Stakeholder Forum: eight out ten respondents (82%) strongly agreed or agreed that this engagement mechanism is fit for purpose. Only slightly fewer respondents (77%) strongly agreed or agreed that the roundtables are fit for purpose. The engagement mechanisms respondents participated less often in (see above) are judged less favourably, and are less well known. Between 53% and 66% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the mandate working groups, information sessions, discussion groups and scientific colloquia are fit for purpose. Respondents were least positive about the Communicators labs; about a third (31%) believed that the latter engagement mechanism is fit for purpose, whilst most others (44%) said that they did not know about the Communicators labs.

Figure 2.6: Fitness for purpose of various stakeholder engagement mechanisms

Q4.6. Would you agree or disagree that the various stakeholder engagement mechanisms part of EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Approach (see question above) are fit for purpose?

All respondents (n=32-34)

Source: Online consultation

With an eye on the future of the SEA, it is interesting to know what could increase stakeholders' participation in the stakeholder engagement mechanisms. The figure below shows that slightly more than half (55%) of respondents thought that engagement mechanisms that are better tailored to their organisation's interests would make them participate more. Slightly less than half (45%) of respondents specified that 'more information / guidance about the aim of activities / mechanisms' and 'more information about how and when to participate in activities / mechanisms' would make them participate more often in the SEA. 'More information about how stakeholder input is used by EFSA' was another element that was frequently mentioned by stakeholders as something that could increase their participation in EFSA's engagement mechanisms – four out of ten of respondents (42%) mentioned this.

Figure 2.7: What would increase participation in targeted engagement mechanisms



Q4.7a. Which of the below, if any, would make you participate more often in EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement mechanisms?

Please select maximum three answers

% (multiple answer); All respondents who answered question (n=33)

Source: Online survey

When asked whether EFSA reaches out sufficiently to 3rd party stakeholders, only about a quarter (24%) of surveyed stakeholders answered confirmatively (strongly agreed or agreed). A similar proportion of respondents (27%) neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, whilst almost half (46%) of stakeholders said they did not know whether 3rd party stakeholders were sufficiently engaged. When asked about concrete ways to better reach out to non-registered stakeholders, suggestions included providing more information about the benefits and requirements of registration and more international collaborations.

2.3.2 Alternative practices

The five reviewed organisations use a wide range of engagement mechanisms. This includes various types of events, meetings, etc. which are often broadly similar in format to those employed by EFSA. Nevertheless, some interesting alternative practices come to the fore, notably in the area of tailoring engagement mechanisms and engaging stakeholders in these mechanisms.

First of all, several of the reviewed organisations recognise the importance of tailored engagement. This comprises engaging with stakeholders on a case-by-case basis, to suit the project scope and the specific issues at play. In their stakeholder engagement strategy, FSANZ stresses for example the importance of appropriately designing stakeholder

engagement mechanism for each issue, taking into account practical realities⁴². To ensure this, FSANZ has developed an engagement framework that shows the different levels and types of stakeholder engagement processes that can be applied, depending on the engagement level⁴³. At each of the levels of engagement (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and initiate), the framework includes possible indicators of whether an engagement process is working well, and provides broad examples of a situation where the engagement may occur at each of the levels.

Some of the organisations specifically mention the need for direct contact with specific stakeholders, as a way to address stakeholder needs and improve engagement. FSANZ for example, has regular one-on-one interaction with all stakeholders through direct contact or contact through their website and social media, emails and phone calls⁴⁴. The FDA stresses the importance of building relationships with stakeholders and have both formal (including holding public meetings and soliciting public comment in response to draft guidances and regulations) and informal (include listening sessions with stakeholder groups on specific safety or nutrition issues) mechanisms in place to ensure this⁴⁵. In addition, since 2018 the FDA has an online "external stakeholder meeting request" system in place for stakeholders to request meetings with FDA staff, allowing to address ad hoc requests from specific (non-industry) stakeholders.⁴⁶

When it comes to providing information about stakeholder mechanisms and increasing engagement, it is interesting to note that several of the reviewed organisations employ online platforms to bring this about. A good example is the UNFCCC 'Adaptation Knowledge Portal' (AKP), part of the Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation to climate change (NWP)⁴⁷. The UNFCCC AKP aims at facilitating the sharing of good practices and lessons learned by offering an exchange platform to all adaptation practitioners and researchers, including partner organisations. The AKP provides access to a curated database of adaptation knowledge resources such as case studies, methods and tools, publications and technical documents, as well as other materials, and provides a platform to share the latest news and resources on adaptation under the UNFCCC process and from NWP partner organisations. Most of the portal's knowledge resources are shared directly by NWP partner organisations. Parties to the UNFCCC and non-NWP partner organisations can, however, also contribute to the AKP, including in response to UNFCCC's calls for submissions. Another organisation that makes extensive use of online tools to engage stakeholders is the FDA. An example is the FDA's 'Guidance Webinar series', which aims to foster collaboration and transparency in the development of guidance documents through direct outreach to affected stakeholders⁴⁸. These on-line sessions provide the opportunity to ask questions in real time. The presentations and accompanying slides are posted on the FDA website for future reference.

Since a lack of resources is the most important reason for EFSA's stakeholders to not participate in engagement mechanisms (see figure 2.4), we would like to point here also to the fact that several of the five organisations reviewed recognise the importance of funding to stimulate stakeholder participation⁴⁹. This applies notably to UNEP and the

⁴² See: FSANZ, 'Engaging in the Australian and New Zealand joint food regulation system', (July 2016). Available at: [https://foodregulation.gov.au/internet/fr/publishing.nsf/Content/4F8086690340389ECA257CEE000D1337/\\$File/Stakeholder%20Engagement%20Strategy_29%20July%202016.pdf](https://foodregulation.gov.au/internet/fr/publishing.nsf/Content/4F8086690340389ECA257CEE000D1337/$File/Stakeholder%20Engagement%20Strategy_29%20July%202016.pdf)

⁴³ Idem.

⁴⁴ See: <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/about/Pages/Stakeholder-engagement.aspx>

⁴⁵ FDA, 'FSMA Strategy for Engaging Stakeholders' (2018). Available at: <https://www.fda.gov/food/conversations-experts-food-topics/fsma-strategy-engaging-stakeholders>

⁴⁶ See FDA Meeting Request (version of September 2018): <https://www.fda.gov/about-fda/center-drug-evaluation-and-research/request-meeting-drugs>

⁴⁷ See UNFCCC Adaptation Knowledge Portal: <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NWPStaging/Pages/Home.aspx>

⁴⁸ See FDA Guidance Webinar Series (version of June 2017): <https://www.fda.gov/training-and-continuing-education/guidance-webinar-series>

⁴⁹ We noted that in the Frameworks for interaction between EFSA and the Stakeholder Forum/Stakeholder Bureau, under "working methodology", it is mentioned that funding decisions are assessed on a case-by-case basis.

UNFCCC, both of which fund for example travel for stakeholders with limited resources. UNEP mentions in its handbook for stakeholder engagement that they make it "... a priority to mobilize adequate funding, including through extra-budgetary resources, to support stakeholder participation, particularly stakeholders from developing countries"⁵⁰.

2.4 Transparency / information provided

This section focusses on stakeholders' opinions on the openness and transparency of the SEA, including the way information relevant to engagement activities is made available to public scrutiny, for example when it comes to the timely announcement of events, publication of agendas, lists of participants, outcomes of meetings with stakeholders, updates of the list of registered stakeholders etc. Attention is paid to stakeholders' feedback on the way input provided by registered stakeholders is documented in the reporting of EFSA's engagement mechanisms, the level of information provided to stakeholders that did not participate in meetings / mechanisms, and the service provided to registered stakeholders through the Stakeholder Secretariat.

2.4.1 Findings

Openness and transparency are part of the key principles of the SEA and EFSA as a whole⁵¹. This is reflected among others in the 'Frameworks for interaction' of the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau. According to the Framework for interaction between EFSA and the Stakeholder Forum, the transparency of the Forum's work is guaranteed through the timely announcement on EFSA's website of upcoming activities related to the Forum, as well as the publication of topics on the agenda, participants' list and the outcome of meetings.⁵² To ensure a balanced representation among the different stakeholder groups within the Forum's sessions, participants are asked to express their preference on workshops via a survey in advance of the event.⁵³ The framework for interaction between EFSA and the Stakeholder Bureau notes that the transparency of the work of the Stakeholder Bureau will be ensured through the timely announcement of EFSA's upcoming activities related to the Bureau, as well as by means of the publication of agendas, participant' lists and the outcomes of each Bureau meeting⁵⁴. Openness and transparency are also key aims of the targeted engagement mechanisms. For instance, the framework for interaction between EFSA and stakeholders' communication representatives aims to ensure transparency through the yearly reporting of the Communication's Lab's activities and by making all comments and feedback provided through the digital platform visible to all who are registered⁵⁵.

In the interim evaluation of the SEA, the feedback on the openness and transparency of the SEA was generally positive, especially regarding the amount of information made available on EFSA's website about the different engagement activities. Some stakeholders commented, however, that the information on the website was difficult to find (we understand that since then important changes have made to the website). In addition, the interim evaluation noted that stakeholders liked to see more clarity and information about the aim of the engagement mechanisms.

⁵⁰ UN Environment Programme, 'Handbook for Stakeholder Engagement', (2018).

⁵¹ EFSA, 'Transparency and Engagement in Risk Assessment (TERA) Project', (June 2018). Available at: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/mb180620/mb180620-i7-p.pdf>

⁵² EFSA, 'Framework for interaction between the European Food Safety Authority and the Stakeholder Forum'. Available at: https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/engage/stakeholders/Framework_Stakeholder_Forum.pdf

⁵³ EFSA, 'Second Meeting of EFSA's Stakeholder Forum', (20 November 2018). Available at: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/REPORT%20SECOND%20MEETING%20OF%20EFSA%20STAKEHOLDER%20FORUM%202019.pdf>.

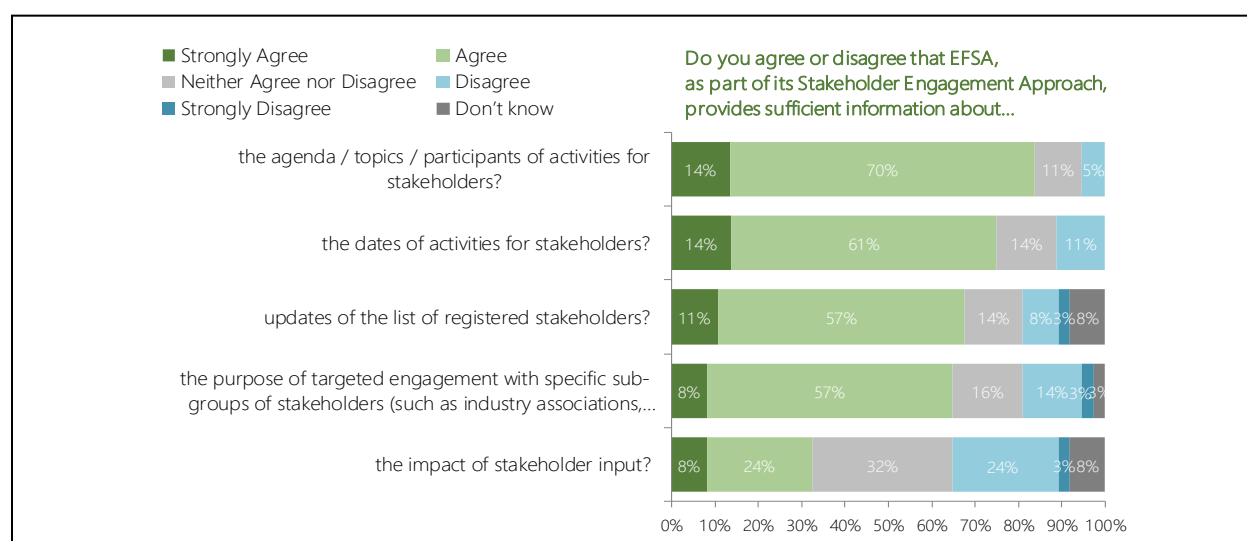
⁵⁴ EFSA, 'Framework for interaction between the European Food Safety Authority and the Stakeholder Bureau'. Available at: https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/engage/stakeholders/Framework_Stakeholder_Bureau.pdf

⁵⁵ EFSA, 'Framework for interaction between EFSA and the Communication representatives of EFSA Registered Stakeholders'. Available at: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EFSACommsLab-framework-for-interaction.pdf>

Results stakeholder survey

In the stakeholder survey for the current study, respondents were also positive about the openness and transparency of the SEA, although there remain some perceived areas for improvement. As shown by the figure below, more than eight out of ten respondents (84%) agreed or strongly agreed that EFSA provides sufficient information about the agenda, topics and / or participants of activities for stakeholders part of the SEA. Three quarters (75%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that EFSA provides enough information about the dates of activities for stakeholders. The surveyed stakeholders were somewhat less positive about the information provided by EFSA on updates of the lists of registered stakeholders, as well as about the purpose of targeted engagement with specific sub-groups of stakeholders such as industry associations, academia or NGOs – respectively 65% and 68% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that EFSA provides sufficient information about these two elements. Important is that only about a third of the surveyed stakeholders (32%) felt that in their view EFSA provides sufficient information on the impact of stakeholder input. The latter issue was also mentioned multiple times as an important area for improvement of the SEA as a whole (see section 2.5).

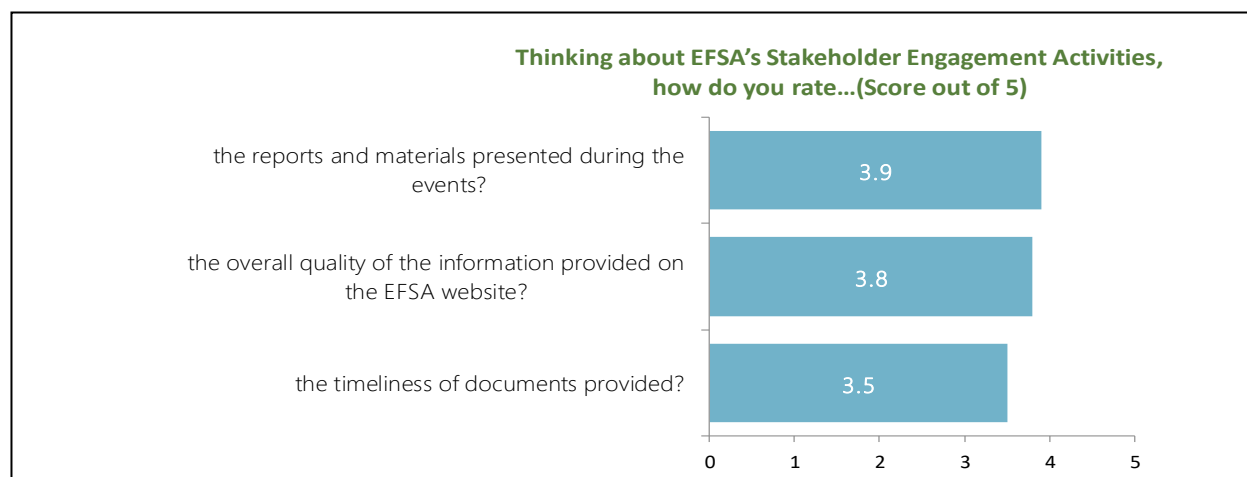
Figure 2.8: Opinions on transparency / level of information provided



Q5.1. Do you agree or disagree that EFSA, as part of its Stakeholder Engagement Approach, provides sufficient information about...
%; All respondents who answered question item (n=36-37)

Source: Online survey

Respondents were asked to rate the overall quality of the information provided on the EFSA website, the overall quality of the information provided on the EFSA website, the reports and materials presented during the events, and the timeliness of documents provided. As can be noted in the figure below, overall the opinions were positive. Nonetheless, the SEA scored somewhat less well in terms of the timeliness of documents provided, which was rated 3.5 out of 5.

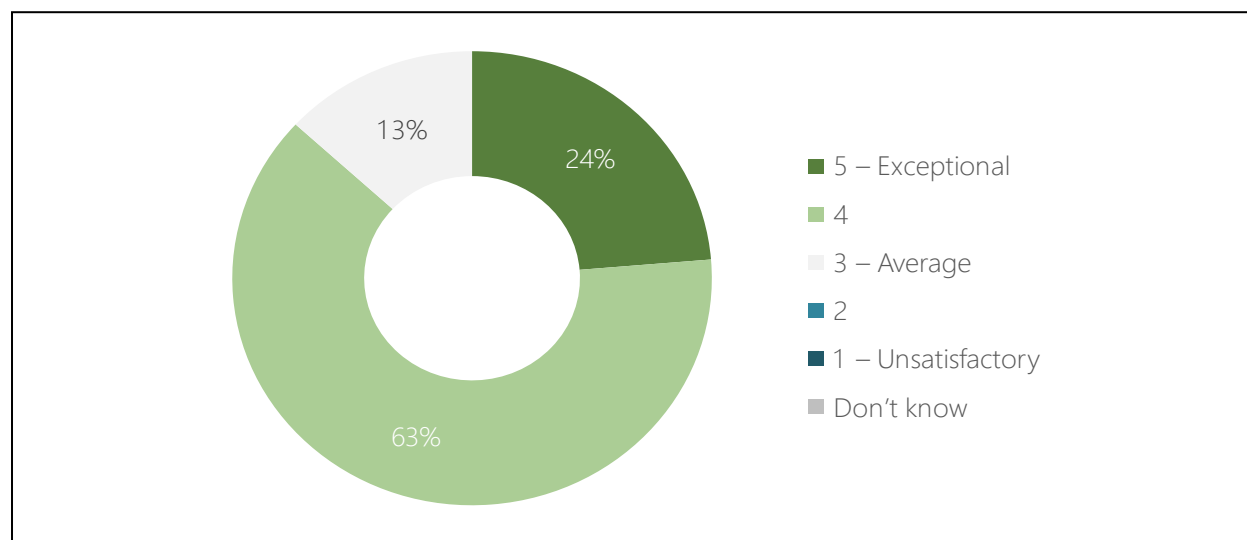
Figure 2.9: Opinions on quality and timeliness of information provided

Q5.2. Thinking about EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Activities, how would you rate... Please answer using the scale in which 5 is "exceptional" and 1 is "unsatisfactory".

Score out of 5; All respondents, excluding 'don't knows' (n=34-35)

Source: Online survey

Respondents rated EFSA's Stakeholder Team positively as well: close to nine in ten respondents (87%) answered with a 4 or a 5, with an average score of 4.1. This is the same score as for the similar question included in the stakeholder survey for the interim evaluation of the SEA⁵⁶.

Figure 2.10: Opinions on the overall quality of services offered by the EFSA Stakeholder Team

Q5.3. How would you rate the overall quality of services offered by the EFSA Stakeholder Team (correspondence, newsletter)? Please answer using the scale in which 5 is "exceptional" and 1 is "unsatisfactory".

All respondents (n=37)

Source: Online consultation

⁵⁶ In the interim evaluation of the SEA this question was phrased as follows: "13. How would you rate the overall quality of services offered by the Stakeholder office?"

2.4.2 Alternative practices

All five of the reviewed organisations recognise the importance of openness and transparency towards stakeholders. Even though this sometimes involves 'lofty statements' without much information on practical implications, there are interesting examples that show how the reviewed organisations go about ensuring transparency and openness, including in areas that are relevant for EFSA (considering the feedback from the surveyed stakeholders): transparency about the impact of stakeholder input and the purpose of engaging stakeholder, as well as the timeliness of information provision.

Concerning the openness about the impact of stakeholder input and reasons for engaging stakeholder, FSANZ notes in its stakeholder strategy the importance of communicating to stakeholders how contributions can affect an outcome. FSANZ outlines in its communication the reasons for engaging with stakeholders and the scope of the relevant project. A statement about the weight of evidence is provided both in website material and in publications. UNEP notes that stakeholder input is made available on the relevant web portals to which accredited stakeholders are granted access.

Limited information is available about how the five reviewed organisations aim to achieve timeliness of information provision. It is noteworthy, however, that many organisations note to make increase use of online platforms, webcasting and social media, to allow stakeholders direct access to information. This includes online portals, such as the UNFCCC's Adaptation Knowledge Portal mentioned in section 2.3.2. Another example is the EUIPO Transparency Portal⁵⁷. Launched in 2017, the Transparency Portal functions as a fully searchable online entry point for all documents contained within EUIPO's Register of Public Documents. Recently published documents are highlighted on the Transparency Portal. FSANZ has a 'current activities' page on the FSANZ website, with a clear overview of their priorities and way of working⁵⁸. The UNFCCC and UNEP webcast meetings, including plenary meetings, informal stocktaking plenary meetings, meetings of the high-level segment, press briefings and media training sessions. Several of the reviewed organisations highlight their increased activity on social media. The FDA has for instance developed a social media policy to ensure the Agency is appropriately represented in this space⁵⁹. Interesting is that this policy encourages FDA employees to use social media to share information that may benefit public health, as long if they stick to certain rules.

Effective information sharing might also require more sophisticated stakeholder engagement tools. EUIPO mention in their strategic plan that they are developing an online system tool for an integrated approach for stakeholder management, grouping information about stakeholder activities in a centralised manner to avoid duplication, along with simple guidance rules and procedures.⁶⁰

2.5 Stakeholders' overall opinions on the SEA

The stakeholders surveyed for this study rated EFSA's stakeholder engagement and its mechanisms with a 3.8 out of 5. This is a slight improvement over the score given by stakeholders in the survey for the interim evaluation of the SEA, in which EFSA's stakeholder engagement and its mechanisms were rated with a 3.5 out of 5 (it is important to add, however,

⁵⁷ EUIPO Transparency Portal. Available at: <https://euiipo.europa.eu/ohimportal/en/transparency-portal>

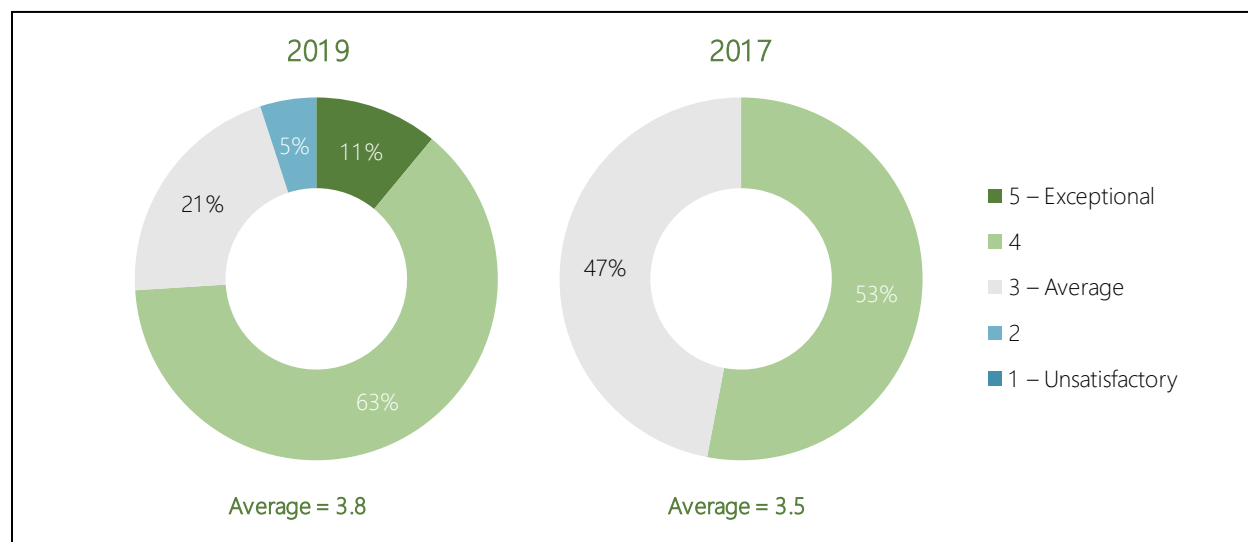
⁵⁸ FSANZ Current Activities (2019): <https://foodregulation.gov.au/internet/fr/publishing.nsf/Content/current-activities>

⁵⁹ FDA, 'U.S. Food and Drug Administration Social Media Policy', (November 2015). Available at: <https://www.fda.gov/media/94313/download>

⁶⁰ EUIPO, 'Strategic Plan 2020'. Available at: https://euiipo.europa.eu/tunnel-web/secure/webdav/guest/document_library/contentPdfs/about_euiipo/strategic_plan/strategic_plan_2020_en.pdf

that the question was rephrased slightly for better clarity⁶¹). As can be noted in the figure below, the difference in favour of the 2019 results would have been larger if it were not for two respondents who answered with a '2' in 2019.

Figure 2.11: Overall opinion on EFSA's stakeholder engagement and its mechanisms



Results for 2019: Q6.1. Overall, how would you rate EFSA's stakeholder engagement and its mechanisms? Please answer using the scale in which 5 is "exceptional" and 1 is "unsatisfactory". %; All respondents (n=38) (Online Consultation 2019)

Results for 2017: Q6. How would you rate the extent EFSA's stakeholder engagement and its mechanisms are fit-for-purpose? Does such stakeholder engagement meet your expectations? %; All respondents (n=15) (Online Consultations 2017)

Source: Online consultations (2017, 2019)

The surveyed stakeholders also themselves observed a positive evolution of the SEA. More than two thirds of respondents (71%) strongly agreed or agreed that the representation of stakeholders in the SEA has broadened since 2017. Most other respondents (18%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Respondents to the stakeholder survey were asked for qualitative feedback on the key aspect of the SEA that would need to be improved in the future. Two elements were mentioned multiple times. First of all, several respondents believed that the SEA should become more targeted to specific groups of stakeholders, for instance distinguishing better between regulated and non-regulated stakeholders (see also section 2.1). Secondly, several respondents felt that EFSA could provide more information about how it takes input by stakeholders into account for its work.

"More sector specific [engagement]"

"More targeted meetings"

"More targeted Discussion groups & Information sessions"

"It would be interesting to better understand how stakeholder feedback is received and used"

"...more information about how input by different stakeholders has been taken into account..."

"[Should] ... try to reach out to all categories of stakeholders on the outcomes achieved"

⁶¹ Question 6 in the survey for the interim evaluation for the SEA was phrased as follows: "How would you rate the extent EFSA's stakeholder engagement and its mechanisms are fit-for-purpose? Does such stakeholder engagement meet your expectations?"

3 Conclusions and recommendations

3.1 Conclusions

Overall, the feedback collected for this review through the online stakeholder survey, as well as evidence from existing sources including the interim evaluation of the SEA, confirms that EFSA is an organisation that takes its Stakeholder Engagement Approach seriously, and is delivering on its stated aims and objectives. Overall the surveyed stakeholders rated the SEA and its mechanisms with a 3.8 out of 5. The comparable score in the 2017 interim evaluation was 3.5 out of 5. More than two thirds of respondents (71%) believed that the representation of stakeholders in the SEA has broadened since 2017. These results suggest that the performance of the SEA has improved over the last two years⁶².

In line with this finding, the surveyed stakeholders were mostly positive about the engagement mechanisms part of the SEA. This applied to both the permanent and targeted engagement mechanisms, although opinions varied substantially depending on the specific mechanism. On the one hand, the Stakeholder Forum, roundtables and scientific colloquia were seen in a favourable light. On the other hand, the Mandate working groups and Communication labs were less often seen as fit for purpose. This divergence in opinions is related to awareness of and participation in engagement mechanisms – the Mandate working groups and Communication labs were least known and least participated in by the respondents to the survey. Stakeholders also mentioned themselves that a lack of awareness was an important reason for not participating. Other key reasons of stakeholders for not participating in engagement mechanisms were a lack of resources and a lack of relevance of the topics covered in the mechanisms.

Based on these findings, it is no surprise to see that, if asked what would increase their participation in the SEA, most stakeholders noted that they would be more likely to participate if the engagement mechanisms were more tailored to their organisation's needs, and if more information were provided about the mechanisms, both in terms of the aims of the mechanisms and about when and how to participate. The registration process appears not to be an impediment to participation – feedback on the registration process was overwhelmingly positive, although some surveyed stakeholders would like to see more guidance/documentation on the process.

Regarding the Stakeholder Bureau, it should be mentioned that although the survey respondents were positive about elements that relate to its functioning (such as the organisation of the meetings in Brussels and the information provided by the Bureau to registered stakeholders), the opinions were slightly more mixed concerning the format of the Stakeholder Bureau (which is composed of seven members representing different stakeholder categories, EFSA's representatives and European Commission observers). This may relate to concerns about the representativeness of certain stakeholder groups and their representatives. Concerns were raised regarding the under- and overrepresentation of certain groups in the SEA, and about some groups exercising undue or excessive influence. The evidence, both from the current review and the interim evaluation of the SEA, suggests that a reason for this may be the very large size of the food industry and business stakeholder group (covering over half of the total number of stakeholders) and the heterogeneity of

⁶² With the caveat that the question was rephrased slightly for clarity reasons.

stakeholders in this group, notably in terms of their relationship with EFSA. Several stakeholders mentioned that these differences are not sufficiently taken into account and that it is difficult for this group to speak with one voice.

The stakeholder categorisation itself, however, was perceived in a relatively positive way. The respondents to the survey rated the application of the principles of equal opportunity and balanced representation in the SEA fairly high (3.6 out of 5) and slightly better than in 2017. Stakeholders generally agreed with the seven stakeholder categories applied in the SEA, including the definition of stakeholder groups. A clear majority of respondents believed that the groups cover all relevant stakeholders and that stakeholders are usually allocated to the appropriate groups. The surveyed stakeholders also rated the application of the principles of equal opportunity and balanced representation in the SEA slightly higher than in 2017. The latter suggests that the issues with the rigidity of the system in place for the assignment of stakeholders to stakeholder groups, which was mentioned as a problem in the interim evaluation, have been addressed.

In line with the interim evaluation of the SEA, the feedback on the openness and transparency of the SEA was generally positive, especially regarding the provision of information about activities (including their agenda, topic and date). The feedback on the reports and materials presented during events and the overall quality of information provided on the EFSA website was also positive, although the timeliness of information was rated relatively less well. No negative comments were made concerning the availability of information on the website, which suggests that the improvements to the website, which we understand have been made since the interim evaluation, were fruitful. Nonetheless, some potential areas for improvement when it comes to openness and transparency can be observed. First of all, there is the fact that a substantial number of stakeholders related their lack of participation in the stakeholder engagement mechanisms to a lack of information on these mechanisms. An equally salient point is that only roughly a third of consulted stakeholders felt that EFSA provides sufficient information on the impact of stakeholder input. The latter might be particularly important as it ties in to the earlier mentioned concerns about representation of stakeholders in the SEA.

3.2 Recommendations

These recommendations build on the conclusions resulting from this review, including the review of alternative practices. Whilst recognising that, by and large, EFSA effectively engages stakeholders, there may be ways in which EFSA could further enhance the SEA. The recommendations are listed in order of priority based on our assessment of which are most important.

Recommendation 1 – Look at ways to improve stakeholder representation / categorisation

As noted in the conclusions, stakeholders have some concerns about stakeholder representation. This relates to stakeholders feeling that some groups of stakeholders are not sufficiently or overrepresented, have undue influence or, to a lesser extent, exercise excessive influence. In line with the interim evaluation of the SEA, we would *not* suggest to try to address this by drastically changing the stakeholder categorisation or substantially increasing the number of stakeholder categories. Stakeholders were relatively positive about the categorisation. Moreover, the 'perfect' categorisation does not exist, and adding extra categories does not automatically lead to stakeholders feeling represented better, but could add to the burden for EFSA of coordinating the stakeholder groups.

Nonetheless, it could be beneficial for the SEA if EFSA looks at ways to increase the representativeness of the food industry and business stakeholder group. The latter group is very large compared to the other stakeholder groups and encompasses a very varied set of members, in terms of activities of the members, their size and especially their

relationship with EFSA (specifically with regard to regulated versus non-regulated members). This issue may have been partly addressed by appointing an alternate representative for each group in the Bureau, as we understand is currently being implemented by EFSA. A suggestion could be to go beyond this and allocate two seats to the food industry and business stakeholder group in the Stakeholder Bureau.

Recommendation 2 – More / better use of interactive stakeholder engagement platforms

The stakeholders surveyed for this review were mostly positive about the engagement mechanisms that form part of the SEA. They were least pleased, however, about the Communicators Lab. Nonetheless, we would recommend further exploring the opportunities for online, innovative and interactive engagement methods. Such methods allow to tailor information to certain stakeholder groups (bearing in mind that stakeholders mentioned that better tailored engagement would make them participate more) and may allow to address stakeholders' concerns relating to the timeliness of information provided and the costs for participation. An interesting example of such a system is the UNFCCC 'Adaptation Knowledge Portal', or the system put in place by the FDA, which allows to address ad hoc requests from specific stakeholders (see section 2.3.2). In addition, we suggest looking for additional ways of entering into direct contact with stakeholders, for example via interactive webinars and / or the expanded use of social media.

Recommendation 3 – Further enhance information on impact stakeholder input

As noted in the conclusions, the stakeholders surveyed were generally positive about the transparency and openness of the SEA. However, stakeholders did see room for improvement regarding EFSA's transparency about the impact of stakeholder input on its work. To address this concern, EFSA could look at additional ways to communicate how stakeholders' input is used, potentially via the EFSA website, in publications and / or by other means. An increased usage of web portals and platform, including for instance interactive webcasts, to engage stakeholders could also allow EFSA to provide stakeholders with more and more targeted information about the impact of their input (see recommendation 2).

Recommendation 4 – Additional guidance on stakeholder registration

Stakeholders are positive about the registration process in its current form. Hence additional efforts in this area should be weighed against the possibly limited impact on stakeholder satisfaction. Nonetheless we would suggest to continue looking at ways to further improve the process, as there appear to be relatively easy to realise ways to do so. An option could be to provide more guidance materials, as is done in some other organisations (see section 2.2.2). This could include step-by-step guidance on the steps to take (for example in relation to the selection of the preferred stakeholder category), concise information about the benefits for registered stakeholders, and / or an interactive list of existing stakeholders (as opposed to the current .pdf list).

Annex 1 Stakeholder survey questionnaire

Final, 12/06/2019

Introduction

At the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), we welcome your contribution to the review of our **Stakeholder Engagement Approach (SEA)** by means of this stakeholder survey.

In line with the first objective of the EFSA Strategy 2020, the overall purpose of the SEA is to provide stakeholders with a better understanding of EFSA's scientific decision-making processes and to improve the quality of EFSA's scientific outputs to better meet **stakeholders' needs**. The SEA is designed to give representatives of seven stakeholder categories the opportunity to engage with EFSA and to provide input to the risk assessment and risk communications process.

With the establishment of its new approach to stakeholders in 2016, EFSA has committed to evaluate the implementation of the SEA. A first internal evaluation on the pilot phase of the SEA was carried out in 2017. The current external **review**, performed by Ipsos Public Affairs as external provider and part of a comprehensive review of the SEA, covers the November 2017 - June 2019 period.

The current review focusses on the registration and categories of stakeholders, the engagement mechanisms, and the extent to which EFSA adheres to the principles of openness and balanced representation in implementing the SEA, with a strong emphasis on potential **improvements for the future**. The review and relating survey will serve as input to EFSA's Management Board.

We estimate that replying to the survey will take on average about **15-20 minutes**. Your response will remain **confidential**. You are not asked to provide personal details or details of your organisation. Please provide responses in English.

Profiling questions

[ASK ALL. REQUIRED]

Q1.1. In which country are you / your organisation (headquarters) based?

[SINGLE ANSWER]

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. Austria | 12. Greece | 23. Romania |
| 2. Belgium | 13. Hungary | 24. Slovak Republic |
| 3. Bulgaria | 14. Ireland | 25. Slovenia |
| 4. Croatia | 15. Italy | 26. Spain |
| 5. Cyprus | 16. Latvia | 27. Sweden |
| 6. Czechia | 17. Lithuania | 28. United Kingdom |
| 7. Denmark | 18. Luxembourg | |
| 8. Estonia | 19. Malta | 29. Iceland |
| 9. Finland | 20. Netherlands | 30. Norway |
| 10. France | 21. Poland | |

11. Germany

22. Portugal

[ASK ALL. REQUIRED]

Q1.2. Which category of stakeholders does your organisation belong to?

[SINGLE ANSWER]

1. Consumers
2. Environmental/Health NGOs and Advocacy groups
3. Farmers and primary producers
4. Business and Food industry
5. Distributors and HORECA (food service industry preparing and serving food and beverages)
6. Associations of Practitioners
7. Academia

Involvement

[ASK ALL]

Q1.3. Please indicate when your organisation became a registered stakeholder of EFSA

[SINGLE ANSWER]

1. 2016
2. 2017
3. 2018
4. 2019

[ASK ALL]

Q1.4. Could you briefly explain why you opted to become a registered stakeholder of EFSA?

[Open box]

[SHOW ALL]

In your responses to the following questions, please focus on your interactions with EFSA during the last two years (2017-2019).

[ASK ALL]

Q1.5. How often do you participate in EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Activities?

We refer to the Stakeholder Forum and the Stakeholder Bureau meetings, as well as the stakeholder activities organised based on stakeholders' area of interest and expertise. This includes mandate working groups, scientific colloquia, discussion groups, roundtables, the "Communicators labs", and information sessions (click [here](#) for more information).

[SINGLE ANSWER]

1. Once a month or more often
2. Several times a year, but less often than once a month
3. Once a year or less often

4. Never

Categories of stakeholders

[SHOW ALL]

As you might know, EFSA divides stakeholders into seven major stakeholder groups (please click [here](#) for a detailed description):

- Consumers
- Environmental/health NGOs and advocacy groups
- Farmers and primary producers
- Business and food industry
- Distributors and HORECA (food service industry preparing and serving food and beverages)
- Practitioners' associations
- Academia

[ASK ALL]

Q2.1. When thinking about the seven stakeholder categories applied by EFSA, do you agree or disagree that...

[GRID ACROSS. ONE ANSWER PER ITEM. RANDOMISE ITEMS]

1. the stakeholder groups are well defined?
2. the stakeholder groups cover all relevant stakeholders?
3. stakeholders are usually allocated in the appropriate stakeholder group?

[ANSWER ITEMS]

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree
9. Don't know

[ASK ALL]

Q2.2. If you can think of concrete ways of how EFSA's categorisation of stakeholders can be improved, please mention this below

[Open box]

[ASK ALL]

Q2.3. How would you rate the extent to which the principles of equal opportunity and balanced representation among stakeholders have been applied in the EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Approach's activities you took part in?

Please answer using the scale in which 5 is "exceptional" and 1 is "unsatisfactory".

[SINGLE ANSWER]

- 5 – Exceptional
- 4
- 3 – Average

2

1 – Unsatisfactory

[ASK ALL]

Q2.4. When thinking about the representation of stakeholders in EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Approach, do you agree or disagree that...

[GRID ACROSS. ONE ANSWER PER ITEM. RANDOMISE ITEMS]

1. some groups of stakeholders are *not* sufficiently represented?
2. some groups of stakeholders are *overrepresented*?
3. some groups of stakeholders have *excessive influence*?
4. some groups of stakeholders have *undue influence*?

[ANSWER ITEMS]

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree
9. Don't know

[ASK ALL]

Q2.5. When thinking about EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Approach, do you agree or disagree that the representation of stakeholders has broadened over the last two years? *We refer to the interests, perspectives and technical knowledge represented among EFSA stakeholders*

[SINGLE ANSWER]

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree
9. Don't know

The registration process

[ASK ALL]

Q3.1. How would you rate the ease of use / intuitiveness of the [registration process](#) for stakeholders on EFSA's website? *Please answer using the scale in which 5 is "exceptional" and 1 is "unsatisfactory".*

[SINGLE ANSWER]

- 5 – Exceptional
- 4
- 3 – Average
- 2

1 – Unsatisfactory

[ASK ALL]

Q3.2. When thinking about your organisation's experience with the registration process for stakeholders on EFSA's website, do you agree or disagree that...

[GRID ACROSS. ONE ANSWER PER ITEM. RANDOMISE ITEMS]

1. it was easy to select the right stakeholder category?
2. the eligibility criteria for stakeholders were clearly defined?
3. the outcome of the registration process was communicated in a timely and appropriate manner?
4. you could indicate the specific needs, interests and expertise of your organisation?
5. the benefits of registering for stakeholders were clearly communicated?
6. it was clear why you needed to provide certain information?

[ANSWER ITEMS]

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree
9. Don't know

[ASK ALL]

Q3.3. If you can think of concrete ways of how the registration process for stakeholders on EFSA's website can be improved, please mention this below

[Open box]

Permanent and targeted engagement mechanisms

[ASK ALL]

Q4.1. Are you aware of the [EFSA Stakeholder Bureau](#)? Please select what best applies to you / your organisation

[SINGLE ANSWER]

1. Yes, I am / my organisation is a member of the Bureau
2. Yes, my organisation voted for the nomination of the Bureau members
3. Yes, I am aware of the Bureau, but my organisation is not directly involved
4. No, I am not aware of the role of the Bureau, or only to a limited extent

[ASK ALL WHO ARE AWARE ABOUT THE BUREAU [Q4.1=1, 2 OR 3]]

Q4.2. Thinking about EFSA's Stakeholder Bureau, how do you rate...

Please answer using the scale in which 5 is "exceptional" and 1 is "unsatisfactory".

[GRID ACROSS. SINGLE ANSWER PER ITEM. RANDOMISE ITEMS]

1. the format of the Stakeholder Bureau, made up of seven members representing different stakeholder categories, EFSA's representatives and European Commission observers
2. the frequency of Stakeholder Bureau meetings (twice per year)
3. the location of Stakeholder Bureau meetings (Brussels)
4. the nomination process of Stakeholder Bureau members
5. the opportunities for registered stakeholders to contribute to Bureau meetings
6. the information provided about Bureau meetings to registered stakeholders
7. the information provided by Bureau members to registered stakeholders [ASK IF Q4.1=2 OR 3]

[ANSWER ITEMS]

- 5 – Exceptional
- 4
- 3 – Average
- 2
- 1 – Unsatisfactory
- 9. Don't know

[ASK ALL WHO ARE AWARE ABOUT THE BUREAU [Q4.1=1, 2 OR 3]]

Q4.3. How would you rate the interaction between Bureau members (plus alternate members) and registered stakeholders?

Please answer using the scale in which 5 is "exceptional" and 1 is "unsatisfactory".

[SINGLE ANSWER]

- 5 – Exceptional
- 4
- 3 – Average
- 2
- 1 – Unsatisfactory
- 9. Don't know

[ASK ALL]

Q4.4. In the last two years (2017-2019), how often has your organisation participated in the following stakeholder engagement mechanisms that form part of EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Approach? *Please provide your best estimation*

[GRID ACROSS. SINGLE ANSWER PER ITEM. RANDOMISE ITEMS]

1. Stakeholder Forum
2. Mandate working groups
3. Scientific colloquia
4. Discussion groups
5. Roundtables
6. Communicators labs
7. Information sessions

[ANSWER ITEMS]

- 1. Never
- 2. Once

3. Two times
4. Three times
5. Four times or more often
9. Don't know

[ASK THOSE WHO ANSWERED NEVER OR ONCE TO ANY OF THE ITEMS IN Q4.4 [Q4.4=1 OR 2]]

Q4.5a. Why did you never or only once participate in the applicable stakeholder engagement mechanism(s) mentioned above? *Please select all that apply.*

[MULTIPLE ANSWER]

1. The stakeholder engagement mechanism(s) does / do not allow for good interactions
2. Your organisation lacks resources for participating
3. The topics discussed are not relevant
4. The venues are difficult to reach
5. You were not aware about the activities of the stakeholder engagement mechanism(s)
6. Other

[ASK THOSE WHO ANSWERED "OTHER" IN Q4.5a [Q4.5a=6]]

Q4.5b. Please specify your reason for never or only once participating in the applicable stakeholder engagement mechanism(s) mentioned above.

[Open box]

[ASK ALL]

Q4.6. Would you agree or disagree that the various stakeholder engagement mechanisms part of EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Approach (see question above) are [fit for purpose](#)?

[GRID ACROSS. SINGLE ANSWER PER ITEM. RANDOMISE ITEMS]

1. Stakeholder Forum
2. Mandate working groups
3. Scientific colloquia
4. Discussion groups
5. Roundtables
6. Communicators labs
7. Information sessions

[ANSWER ITEM]

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree
9. Don't know

[ASK ALL]

Q4.7a. Which of the below, if any, would make you participate more often in EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement mechanisms? Please select maximum three answers

[MULTIPLE ANSWER. MAX. THREE ANSWERS]

1. More information / guidance about the aim of activities / mechanisms
2. More information about how and when to participate in activities / mechanisms
3. Engagement mechanisms that are better tailored to your organisation's interests
4. More use of innovative engagement platforms (video-conferencing, social-media etc.)
5. More support from the EFSA Stakeholder Team
6. More information about how stakeholder input is used by EFSA
7. Different or adapted engagement formats / mechanisms
8. Other

[ASK THOSE WHO ANSWERED "OTHER" IN Q4.7a]

Q4.7b. Please specify any other reasons that would make you participate more often in EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement mechanisms.

[Open box]

[ASK ALL]

Q4.8. If you can think of concrete ways of how the participation in EFSA Stakeholder Engagement mechanisms can be improved (for example by means of different or adapted engagement formats), please mention this below

[Open box]

[ASK ALL]

Q4.9. Do you agree or disagree that EFSA reaches out sufficiently to 3rd party (non-registered) stakeholders?

[SINGLE ANSWER]

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree
9. Don't know

[ASK THOSE WHO ANSWERED 3,4 OR 5 IN Q4.8]

Q4.10. If you can think of concrete ways of how EFSA can reach out better to 3rd party (non-registered) stakeholders, please mention this below

[Open box]

Transparency / information provided

[ASK ALL]

Q5.1. Do you agree or disagree that EFSA, as part of its Stakeholder Engagement Approach, provides sufficient information about...

[GRID ACROSS. SINGLE ANSWER PER ITEM. RANDOMISE ITEMS]

1. the dates of activities for stakeholders?
2. the agenda / topics / participants of activities for stakeholders?
3. updates of the list of registered stakeholders?
4. the impact of stakeholder input?
5. the purpose of targeted engagement with specific sub-groups of stakeholders (such as industry associations, academia or NGOs)?

[ANSWER ITEMS]

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neither Agree nor Disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree
9. Don't know

[ASK ALL]

Q5.2. Thinking about EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Activities, how would you rate...

Please answer using the scale in which 5 is "exceptional" and 1 is "unsatisfactory".

[GRID ACROSS. SINGLE ANSWER PER ITEM. RANDOMISE ITEMS]

1. the overall quality of the information provided on the EFSA website?
2. the reports and materials presented during the events?
3. the timeliness of documents provided?

[ANSWER ITEMS]

- 5 – Exceptional
- 4
- 3 – Average
- 2
- 1 – Unsatisfactory
9. Don't know

[ASK ALL]

Q5.3. How would you rate the overall quality of services offered by the EFSA Stakeholder Team (correspondence, newsletter)?

Please answer using the scale in which 5 is "exceptional" and 1 is "unsatisfactory".

[SINGLE ANSWER]

- 5 – Exceptional
- 4
- 3 – Average
- 2
- 1 – Unsatisfactory
- 9. Don't know

Overall opinion

[ASK ALL]

"Q6.1. Overall, how would you rate EFSA's stakeholder engagement and its mechanisms?"

Please answer using the scale in which 5 is "exceptional" and 1 is "unsatisfactory".

[SINGLE ANSWER]

- 5 – Exceptional
- 4
- 3 – Average
- 2
- 1 – Unsatisfactory

[ASK ALL]

Q6.2. Looking at the future, what would be the key aspect of the EFSA Stakeholder Engagement Approach that would need to be improved?

[Open box]

[END OF SURVEY]

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