

Report of activities of EFSA Networks for the year 2023

Abstract

This document contains a short description of the activities of European Networks of scientific organisations operating in the fields within the Authority's mission during the year 2023. It includes information on main deliverables, outcomes of each Network and the relevant budget.



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INTRODUCTION

According to its founding regulation (Regulation (EC) No 178/2002), EFSA shall establish a system of Networks of organisations operating in the fields within EFSA's mission, the objective being to facilitate a scientific cooperation framework by the coordination of activities, the exchange of information, the development and implementation of joint projects, the exchange of expertise and best practices. The European Network meetings are meeting organised by EFSA scientific units with Member State representatives, nominated by their country, in compliance with the [MB Decision concerning the establishment and operation of European Networks of scientific organisations operating in the fields within the Authority's mission](#).

Since June 2022, the coordination and organisation of meetings of the Networks have been assigned to [RAL Unit](#). RAL is working closely with the Engagement & External Relations Unit, in charge to collect nomination and monitor Terms of References, and with the scientific units in charge of the networks. In 2023, EFSA coordinated 15 Networks including 7 subgroups, created 2 new network subgroups, and organised 32 meetings with a total of 1654 attendees¹.

This report of activities of EFSA Networks for the year 2023 is the third edition ([Report of activities of EFSA Networks for the year 2022](#))² and contains for each European Network, the main deliverables, main outcomes and the respective budget.

¹ The figure includes all the experts attending the network meeting, excluding the EFSA staff.

² Report of activities of EFSA Network for the year 2021 is available at <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/event/mb20220629/C17.%20Report%20on%20Networks%20activity%20-%2011.%20mb220629-i5.pdf>



ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE (AHAW) NETWORK

1. Main purpose and objectives of the Network as described in the ToR³:

The overall objectives of the EFSA Scientific Network for Risk Assessment (RA) in Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW) are to install and enhance cooperation between Member States (MS) and EFSA, and to build a mutual understanding of RA principles of animal health and welfare in a transparent way. The network is expected to promote the harmonisation of risk assessment practices and methodologies, including harmonisation of the data collections, as well as reducing duplication of activities by identifying and sharing current priorities.

The specific objectives of the network are:

- to facilitate harmonisation of AHAW assessment practices and methodologies by:
 - sharing best practices for animal health and welfare assessment between EFSA and MS;
 - discussing new scientific developments for animal health and welfare RA and their implications on RA practices;
 - discussing ongoing issues of animal health and welfare assessment such as new guidance documents developed or new opinions adopted;
 - focusing attention on, and the streamlining of common research and data needs that support progress in AHAW RA.
- to enhance the exchange of information and data on AHAW areas between EFSA and MS by:
 - discussing issues on quality of data required for AHAW RA purposes (standards for biological agents and animal population data collections);
 - promoting harmonised data submission to EFSA by discussing issues related to the availability of the data;
 - sharing information, data and experience in data collection and surveillance;
 - identifying and mapping expertise in specific areas and issues.
- to achieve synergies in AHAW RA activities by:
 - identifying common themes and areas for mutual collaboration between EFSA and MS, and between MS at national and EU level in relation to RA;
 - sharing and discussing on-going animal health and animal welfare risk assessment activities to avoid duplication;
 - sharing and discussing priorities for AHAW RA at national and EU level;

³ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/assets/ahawnetwork.pdf>



- sharing of information related to AHAW RA at national and EU level and AHAW Network through a common digital exchange platform (e.g., Teams and/or SharePoint);
 - identifying emerging risks when addressing current issues in animal health.
- to improve the collaboration between animal health and public health on nonfoodborne zoonotic and potential zoonotic issues by:
 - identifying common themes and areas for mutual collaboration on non-foodborne zoonotic and potential zoonotic issues between animal and public health;
 - sharing and discussing on-going non-foodborne zoonotic and potential zoonotic issues between animal and public health networks of EFSA and ECDC;
 - sharing and discussing priorities for joint risk assessments of non-foodborne zoonotic and potential zoonotic issues at national and EU level;
 - sharing of information and data on non-foodborne zoonotic and potential zoonotic issues between animal and public health through a common digital exchange platform (SharePoint); EFSA may entrust to the network certain tasks, in particular preparatory work for scientific opinions, scientific and technical assistance, and the collection of data.
- The AHAW Network has two groups divided by areas of competence:
 - Animal Health (AH)
 - Animal Welfare (AW)

In addition, the AHAW Network includes four other subgroups, three related to AH, and one to AW:

- Subgroup on One Health surveillance (AH) (EFSA mandate M-2022-00084)
- Subgroup on *Echinococcus multilocularis* surveillance (AH) (Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2018/772)
- Subgroup on Animal health data reporting on diseases for which EFSA holds a recurrent mandate (AH): Avian influenza (mandate number M-2017-0221) and African swine fever (mandate number M-2022-00109)
- Subgroup of the National Contact Points (NCPs) for scientific support on the protection of animals at the time of killing (AW); the specific objectives of this subgroup are listed in Art 20 of Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009.

The main purpose being, respectively:

- Subgroup on One Health surveillance: supports the MSs holding direct grants for activity CP-g-22-04.019 under the EU4Health Program 2022 under EFSA's OH mandate M-2022-00084. It brings together the relevant MS authorities responsible for public health, animal health and environmental health. The subgroup facilitates the collaboration between MSs, EFSA and ECDC by providing guidance to designing, establishing and regularly revising



the coordinated One Health surveillance system for emerging and re-emerging non-foodborne zoonotic and potential zoonotic issues in animals and the environment. Information generated by this surveillance will provide for early detection of threats to public health and will be jointly assessed by all involved parties. The objectives of the subgroup are fully aligned with the fourth term of reference of the AHAW network;

- Subgroup on *Echinococcus multilocularis* surveillance : discussion on the outcomes of the EFSA assessment on the surveillance activities to demonstrate freedom from the parasite; discussion on scientific advances to improve the performance of the surveillance activities;
- Subgroup on Animal health data reporting on diseases for which EFSA holds a recurrent mandate (AH): Avian influenza (mandate number M-2017-0221) and African swine fever (mandate number M-2022-00109).

2. Work programme for year 2023

The main activities planned for the Animal Health and Welfare network and its subgroups for 2023 were:

1. annual meetings of the following groups and subgroups: AH topics, AW topics, AW subgroup of scientific NCPs, AH subgroup on *E. multilocularis* surveillance, AH subgroup on One Health surveillance;
2. adaptation of the ToRs (July 2023) and creation of two new subgroups on Animal health data reporting on diseases for which EFSA holds a recurrent mandate: Avian influenza and African swine fever;
3. continuous sharing and exchange of information;
4. production of preparatory work for new welfare mandates (i.e. on welfare of beef cattle and turkeys on farm) by the AHAW Network (AW topic) and the NCPs subgroup, respectively.

The main activities planned for the *E. multilocularis* network subgroup for 2023 was the annual meeting for the discussion on the outcomes of the assessment on the surveillance activities to demonstrate freedom from *E. multilocularis* in the relevant countries; endorsement of the scientific report; discussion on scientific advances to improve the performance of the surveillance activities.

The main activities of the One Health surveillance subgroup for 2023 were to agree options for sustainable surveillance strategies for the priority pathogens that were identified by the subgroup in 2022 and to establish the collaboration between MSs, EFSA and ECDC for the coordinated surveillance system under the One Health approach for cross-border pathogens that threaten the Union that will be implemented during the years 2024-2026.



3. Meetings

During 2023, the following meetings took place:

2 AHAW network meetings.

- 21st meeting of the Scientific Network on Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare (including a joint session with the subgroup of scientific NCPs established under Art 20 Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009), 30 May (joint session) and 31 May (AM) 2023, hybrid plenary meeting.

Topics of the meeting: i) presentation of the recent EFSA Scientific Opinions (SOs) in the context of the Farm-to-Fork strategy and of the new AW mandates, ii) exchange of information on AW topics proposed by Network members, and iii) Exercise on the "Assessment of ABMs at slaughterhouses to monitor the on-farm welfare of beef cattle" in preparation for the relevant mandate.

- 22nd meeting of the Scientific Network on Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare, 21-22 September 2023, hybrid plenary meeting.

Topics of the meeting: (i) avian influenza: overview of the disease situation in Europe and individual countries, highly pathogenic avian influenza in mammals (farmed for animals and wildlife), biosecurity uptake in poultry establishments, EFSA's Bird Flu Radar and upcoming call on active surveillance in wild birds, vaccination of poultry; (ii) aquaculture: infectious haematopoietic necrosis virus, EFSA mandates on listing and categorisation and assessment of reservoir and vector species; (iii) One Health collaboration opportunities; (iv) burning topics: epizootic haemorrhagic disease, sheep and goat pox, anthelmintic resistance; (v) African swine fever: overview of the disease situation in Europe and individual countries, use of fences in the management of wild boar populations; (vi) EFSA data collections and work in the area of wildlife.

Number of attendees: 92

1 *E. multilocularis* subgroup meeting.

- 13th meeting of the *Echinococcus multilocularis* subgroup network, 05 July 2023, online subgroup meeting.

Topic/content of meeting: discussion on the outcomes of the assessment of the surveillance activities to demonstrate freedom from the parasite in the concerned countries; Next steps for the improvement of the performance of the surveillance activities.

Number of attendees: 7

1 National Contact Points established under Art 20 Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009 subgroup meeting.



- 8th meeting of the scientific NCPs (including a joint session with Scientific Network on Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare (AW subgroup)), 30 May (joint session) and 31 May (PM) 2023, hybrid subgroup meeting.

Topic/content of the meeting: i) presentation of the recent EFSA scientific outputs in the context of the Farm-to-Fork strategy and of the new AW mandates, ii) exchange of information on AW topics proposed by Network members, and iii) Exercise on the “Assessment of ABMs at slaughterhouses to monitor the on-farm welfare of turkeys” in preparation for the relevant mandate.

Number of attendees: 29

2 One Health surveillance subgroup meetings.

- 2nd meeting of the One Health subgroup of the Scientific Network for Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare, 16-17 January 2023, online meeting.

Topic/content of the meeting: the subgroup members discussed and agreed the options for sustainable surveillance strategies for the priority pathogens that were identified by the subgroup in 2022.

- 3rd meeting of the One Health subgroup of the Scientific Network for Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare, 7 and 14 November 2023, online meeting.

Topic/content of the meeting: the subgroup members presented their plans for the coordinated surveillance system under the One Health approach for cross-border pathogens that threaten the Union that will be implemented during the years 2024-2026. EFSA explained the reporting and visualisation tools that will be developed, and EFSA and ECDC gave an outlook on how the data generated by the surveillance activities can be used for risk assessment purposes.

Number of attendees: 147

4. Deliverables and Outcomes:

During 2023 the main deliverables and outputs of the Animal Health and Welfare network and its subgroups were:

1. AH topics:

- [Annual report of the Scientific Network on Animal Health 2023](#)

2. AW topics:

- [Annual report of the EFSA Networks on Animal Welfare 2023](#)
- AHAW Network (AW group): [Technical report on The use of animal-based measures at slaughter for assessing the welfare of beef cattle on farm: EFSA AHAW Network exercise](#)
- Scientific NCPs subgroup established under Art 20 of Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009: Technical report on [The use of animal-based measures at slaughter](#)



for assessing the welfare of turkeys on farm: EFSA scientific NCPs Network exercise

3. One Health surveillance subgroup: Coordinated surveillance system under the One Health approach for cross-border pathogens that threaten the Union – options for sustainable surveillance strategies for priority pathogens
4. *E. multilocularis* subgroup: Annual assessment of Echinococcus multilocularis surveillance reports submitted in 2023 in the context of commission delegated regulation (EU) 2018/772

5. Budget⁴

1. Initial budget for 2023 for the AHAW network meetings including joint session with the scientific NCPs under Art 20 Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009 subgroup: 23,650€
Total cost of activities: 15,317€
2. Initial budget for 2023 for the *E. multilocularis* subgroup meeting: 150€
Total cost of activities: 150€
3. Initial budget for 2023 for the meeting of the subgroup scientific NCPs established under Art 20 Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009: 8,016€
Total cost of activities: 7,544€
4. Initial budget for 2023 for the One Health subgroup meetings: 13,840€
Total cost of activities: 8,760€

6. Overall Assessment

The objectives set in the ToRs were met in 2023, with particular emphasis on creating two new subgroups on Animal health data reporting on diseases for which EFSA holds a recurrent mandate: Avian influenza and African swine fever. Apart from this, the network contributed to EFSA's risk assessment activities in terms of providing additional information on disease outbreaks in individual countries (e.g., highly pathogenic avian influenza in mammals) and challenges in prevention and control (e.g., network members completed a survey on the use of fences for the control of wild boar populations). Network activities in 2023 also allowed for the establishment of important research collaborations among network members and between network members and EFSA. Through the network EFSA was able to localise relevant expertise in Member States and IPA countries to address its mandates on specific topics such as aquaculture.

In relation to the AW topics, the participants of both the AHAW Network (AW group) and the subgroup of the scientific NCPs confirmed that the format of the Network meetings worked out

⁴ The cost of activities for the Integrated Data Unit subgroups Antimicrobial resistance (AMR), Foodborne outbreaks (FBO) and Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) are covered by the Biological Hazards and Animal Health and Welfare Unit meeting budget.



very well. It consisted in a joint session where the recently adopted EFSA's Scientific Outputs were presented as well as the ongoing activities in the field of AW carried out by EFSA. It was followed by a session dedicated to sharing and exchange of information among MS representatives and EFSA. It was also appreciated and successful to have a separate Day 2 of network meeting to focus on the exercises organized to gather practical experience from MS representatives on the use of ABMs at slaughter to assess on-farm welfare of beef cattle and turkeys. Network members provided relevant information and data that will feed the discussions of the EFSA's working group experts when approaching the specific ToRs of the new EC mandates.

The One Health surveillance subgroup has achieved its objectives for 2023. Using the outputs created by EFSA in collaboration with ECDC and subgroup members, 23 countries were successful in applying for direct grants for activity CP-g-22-04.019 of the EU4Health Program 2022. The attendance of the 3rd meeting of the subgroup by all countries with several representatives resulted in a good collaborative spirit among the subgroup members and understanding of the next steps under the mandate, which paved the way for a successful implementation of the surveillance activities in the coming three years.

7. Supporting document(s)

[Agenda of the 21st meeting of the Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare network](#)

[Minutes of the 21st meeting of the Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare network](#)

Technical report on [The use of animal-based measures at slaughter for assessing the welfare of beef cattle on farm: EFSA AHAW Network exercise](#)

[Agenda of the 22nd meeting of the Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare network](#)

[Minutes of the 22nd meeting of the Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare network](#)

[Annual report of the Scientific Network on Animal Health 2023](#)

[Agenda of the 13th meeting of the *Echinococcus multilocularis* subgroup network](#)

[Minutes of the 13th meeting of the *Echinococcus multilocularis* subgroup network](#)

[Agenda of the 8th National Contact Points established under Art 20 Council Regulation \(EC\) 1099/2009 subgroup network](#)

[Minutes of the 8th National Contact Points established under Art 20 Council Regulation \(EC\) 1099/2009 subgroup network](#)

Technical report on [The use of animal-based measures at slaughter for assessing the welfare of turkeys on farm: EFSA scientific NCPs Network exercise](#)

[Annual report of the EFSA Networks on Animal Welfare 2023](#)

[Agenda of the 2nd meeting of the One Health subgroup network](#)

[Minutes of the 2nd meeting of the One Health subgroup network](#)

[Agenda of the 3rd meeting of the One Health subgroup network](#)

[Minutes of the 3rd meeting of the One Health subgroup network](#)



MICROBIOLOGICAL RISK ASSESSMENT NETWORK

1. Main purpose and objectives of the Network as described in the ToR⁵:

The Scientific Network on Microbiological Risk Assessment (MRA Network) strengthens the scientific cooperation in the remit of microbiological risk assessments. It aims at anticipating and reducing the duplication of activities and hence avoiding divergence of opinions. The Network is a privileged and confidential environment to share data and methodologies facilitating harmonisation of assessment practices and to assist in anticipating emerging risks in the EU.

The main overall goals of the MRA Network are:

- to improve dialogue and exchange of information among participants;
- to build mutual understanding of risk assessment principles;
- to enhance knowledge on and confidence in the scientific assessments carried out in the EU;
- to provide increased transparency in the current process among Member States and EFSA;
- to raise the harmonisation level of the risk assessments developed in the EU.

The specific objectives of the MRA Network are:

- identifying common themes and areas for mutual collaboration;
- identifying and avoiding duplication of efforts;
- identifying experts in specific areas and on special issues;
- sharing of data availability and quality;
- strengthening cooperation amongst risk assessors and managers;
- exchanging information between EFSA, the EU Member States and other stakeholders;
- strengthening communication and collaboration between EFSA and the EU Member States and among risk assessors, risk managers and stakeholders; including national AF and FP members;
- focusing attention on and streamlining of common research needs;
- identifying potential emerging risks when addressing current issues.

2. Work programme for year 2023

The main activities planned for the Microbiological Risk Assessment network for 2023 were:

1. annual meeting 2023 held on 4-5th October;
2. continuous sharing and exchange of information and best practices.

3. Meetings

⁵ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/assets/biohazmranetworktor.pdf>



During 2023 the following meeting took place:

- 23rd meeting of the EFSA Network on Microbiological Risk Assessment, 04-05 October 2023, hybrid plenary meeting.

Topic/content of meeting: Anses Opinion on the pathogenicity of STEC, microbial risks due to power failure, rapid risk assessment on heating of eggs, how to handle raw milk coming from dairy farms with botulism, *Echinococcus spp.* eggs on berries harvest in the Netherlands, *Salmonella enterica* in the European pork production chain, identification of infection sources and transmission routes of *Campylobacter spp.*, risk profile of *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods, growth of persistent and sporadic isolates of *L. monocytogenes*, potential risks associated with plant-based dairy and meat substitutes, ECDC-EFSA Rapid Outbreak assessments, EFSA Focal Point Framework 2023-2027, refrigerated storage of eggs, Pathogenic *Enterobacteriaceae* in cakes using MALDI-TOF, pericarditis in broilers at post-mortem inspection, update on *Taenia solium* outbreak and update on recent and ongoing EFSA BIOHAZ activities.

Number of attendees: 41

4. Deliverables and Outcomes:

During 2023 the main deliverables and outputs of the Microbiological Risk Assessment network were:

1. completion and publication of the Annual report of the MRA Network, reporting on the various activities at Member States level;
2. presentation of three Rapid Outbreak Assessments published in 2023: outbreak of *Salmonella* Seftenberg ST14 infections linked to tomatoes, an outbreak of *Salmonella* Virchow ST16 infections linked to chicken meat, and an outbreak of *Salmonella* Mbandaka ST413 infections linked to chicken meat;
3. presentation on the Focal Point (FP) network framework 2023-2027 that envisages a new approach in EFSA cooperation with FP and MS, in which MS can propose activities.

5. Budget

1. Initial budget for 2023: 7,500€
2. Total cost of activities: 7,070€

6. Overall Assessment

The objectives set in the ToR were met in 2023. The Scientific Network on Microbiological Risk Assessment (MRA Network) had its first meeting in 2007. Currently, 25 European Union Member States and two observer countries (Switzerland and Norway) are participating in the MRA Network. The 23rd meeting was held on 4-5 October 2023 as a hybrid-meeting in Parma and online. A wide range of activities related to microbial risk assessment were presented



including pathogenicity of STEC, risks due to power failure, heating and refrigerated storage of eggs, milk from dairy farms with botulism, *Echinococcus* eggs on berries, *Salmonella* in the pork chain, *Campylobacter* transmission routes, *Listeria monocytogenes* growth and presence in ready-to-eat foods, pathogenic *Enterobacteriaceae* in cakes, pericarditis in broilers at post-mortem and update on *Taenia solium* outbreak. Activities of the EFSA BIOHAZ Panel and the BIOHAW Unit were presented. The next MRA network meeting is anticipated for autumn 2024. The network members suggested to have an additional web-meeting in spring 2024.

7. Supporting document(s)

[Agenda of the 23rd meeting of the Microbiological Risk Assessment network](#)

[Minutes of the 23rd meeting of the Microbiological Risk Assessment network](#)

[Annual report of the Scientific Network on Microbiological Risk Assessment 2023](#)



BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHIES AND OTHER TRANSMISSIBLE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHIES (BSE-TSE) NETWORK

1. Main purpose and objectives of the Network as described in the ToR⁶:

The main overall goals of the BSE-TSE scientific network are:

- to improve dialogue and exchange of information among participants;
- to build mutual understanding of risk assessment principles;
- to enhance knowledge on and confidence in the scientific assessments carried out in the EU;
- to provide increased transparency in the current process among Member States and EFSA;
- to raise the harmonisation level of the risk assessments developed in the EU.

The specific objectives of the BSE-TSE scientific network are:

- identifying common themes and areas for mutual collaboration;
- identifying and avoiding duplication of efforts;
- identification of experts in specific areas and on special issues;
- sharing of data availability and quality;
- strengthening cooperation amongst risk assessors and risk managers;
- exchanging information between EFSA, Member States and other stakeholders;
- strengthening communication and collaboration between EFSA and the EU Member States and
 - among risk assessors; risk managers and stakeholders; including national AF and FP members;
 - focusing attention on and streamlining of common research needs;
 - identifying potential emerging risks when addressing current issues.

2. Work programme for year 2023

The main activities planned for the BSE/TSE network for 2023 were:

1. 18th Annual meeting

3. Meetings

During 2023 the following meeting took place:

- 18th meeting of the BSE-TSE network, 11 October 2023, online plenary meeting.

⁶ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/assets/biohazbsenetworktor.pdf>



The main topics of the agenda are: Animal and public health risks of relaxing the feed ban (The Netherlands), 2022 EFSA TSE EU summary report: provisional results, TSE EURL: update activities, EFSA: update TSE activities, WOA: update TSE activities, EC: update TSE activities Q&A session and Round-the-table discussion on the topics discussed in the meeting and country updates.

Number of attendees: 46

4. Deliverables and Outcomes:

During 2023 the main deliverables and outputs of the BSE/TSE network were:

1. Annual Report of the Scientific Network on BSE/TSE 2023
2. Minutes of the Scientific Network on BSE/TSE 2023

5. Budget

1. Initial budget for 2023: 15,000€
2. Total cost of activities: 0€

6. Overall Assessment

The objectives set in the ToR were met in 2023. The main activity, the annual meeting, contributed to improve the dialogue and exchange of information among participants, and between EFSA, Member States and other stakeholders. It also contributed to the strengthening of communication and collaboration between EFSA and the EU Member States.

7. Supporting document(s)

[Agenda of the 18th meeting of the BSE-TSE network](#)

[Minutes of the 18th meeting of the BSE-TSE network](#)



COMMUNICATIONS EXPERTS NETWORK

1. Main purpose and objectives of the Network as described in the ToR⁷:

Risk communications is identified as one of the mandates in EFSA's founding regulations and includes acting in close collaboration with the Member States (MS) to promote coherence in the risk communication process as well as ensuring appropriate cooperation regarding public information campaigns. Co-operation in risk communications between EFSA and the Member States is the focus for the Communications Expert Network (CEN), which is closely aligned with the Advisory Forum (AF) to support its strategic priorities and with the Transparency Regulation Objectives:

- Objective 1 – Seamless coordinated communication in the EU.
 - Strategic alignment with the heads of national competent authorities on issues relating to EU food safety.
 - Improved coordination, preparedness and consistency in communications between EFSA and Member States on all areas within EFSA's remit, in particular, in case of diverging views, food outbreaks, and emerging risks.
- Objective 2 - Shared Best Practice.
 - To share best practices and guidelines in communications harnessing collective expertise and promoting harmonised ways of working.
- Objective 3 - Skills and knowledge developed across Member States to facilitate and optimise Targeted Risk Communication.
 - Acquired of knowledge and shared experiences in communications and risk communications to understand better the risk perceptions of target audience.
 - Developed methods to meet their information needs through targeted communication methodologies and tools.

2. Work programme for year 2023

The main activities planned for the Communications Experts network for 2023 were:

1. **Coherence in risk communication** – Optimising coordination, preparedness and consistency in communications between EFSA and Member States on all areas within EFSA's remit, namely:
 - communication materials on relevant scientific outputs by EFSA were shared with CEN members ahead of publication to allow time for Member States (MS) to prepare their own activities to ensure that messages to audiences are aligned and consistent.

⁷ https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/cen/cen_tor.pdf



For particularly complex issues or where there is high public concern, such as bisphenol A, nitrosamines, and glyphosate, these efforts were further supported through pre-publication teleconferences with the CEN;

2. Pan-EU campaigns on food safety & plant health – the CEN played an essential role in the development and delivery of the third year of communication campaigns.
 - #EUChooseSafeFood to raise awareness about the science behind food safety and to foster greater confidence among citizens in the food choices they make. 17 Member States participated.
 - #PlantHealth4Life - 12 countries participated - 10 Member States and 2 pre-accession (IPA) countries – in the campaign that ran from July to September 2023. It focused on importance of keeping plants healthy protects by respecting EU rules about bringing plants into the region. Tactics centred on traditional media and social media posts – paid and organic - across main platforms (Instagram, LinkedIn and X (Twitter)), complemented by activity from social media influencers in participating Member States. 'Out of Home' advertising (posting materials as billboards in public spaces) was also used.
3. **Developing best practice** - Coordinated communication - a half-day workshop in May between EFSA and MS networks - the Focal Points (FP) and Communication Expert Network (CEN) - further explored the potential to improve coordinated communication of risks in the food chain in Europe. Through a series of plenary and breakout session, around 75 MS members discussed key issues, shared thoughts on best practice and made recommendations to execute activities to develop key building blocks for a coordinated communication framework in the EU. To facilitate this, EFSA and Member States launched five projects:
 - CEN and FP best practice joint working;
 - definition of EU Coordinated Framework;
 - Member State Communication Coordinator pilot programme;
 - Pilot programme for Member States to develop jointly two communication products:
 - Pesticide infographic (4 x Member States);
 - Contaminants infographic (3 x Member States).
 - International Risk Communication Liaison Group – several CEN members are active participants in this international network coordinated by EFSA and participated in the twice-yearly meetings to bring their perspective and expertise to the group.
4. **Skills and knowledge optimised**
 - Social research: distribution of social research on citizen concerns on key food safety topics (bisphenol A, Eurobarometer and avian influenza).



- Sharing best practice and knowledge: co-creation of Crisis Communication Guidelines.

3. Meetings

During 2023 the following 2 meetings took place:

- 13th meeting of the Communications Experts network, 23-24 May 2023, hybrid plenary meeting.

A one-day hybrid meeting held in EFSA and online that covered the following:

Standing items – update of relevant Advisory Forum and Focal Point discussions; progress update on the CEN work plan, EFSA communication activities over the next six months; and analysis of media relations activities; an update on EFSA work in the field of social science - progress on extending the Eurobarometer to IPA pre-accession) countries; flash polls on consumer awareness and attitudes to bisphenol A & plant health; a planned campaign to increase citizen understanding of the difference between the concepts of 'hazard' versus 'risk'. Key Country Issues- where Member States highlighted major communication initiative undertaken – including a practical demonstration of music as a tool for risk communication; Campaigns – update on two pan-EU campaigns by EFSA and MS (#EUChooseSafeFood and #PlantHealth4Life) and a regional campaign to raise awareness on African Swine Fever (#StopASF).

- 14th meeting of the Communications Experts network, 24-25 October 2023, online plenary meeting.

Ad hoc items: an update on activities to facilitate coordinated communication between EFSA and Member States which includes a joint MS/ EFSA project to create a joint website to communicate to citizens on food safety, best practice in digital accessibility for websites and crisis communications.

Standing items: update of relevant Advisory Forum discussions, importance of developing a communication approach for New Genomic Techniques and risk benefit communications to risk managers and the general public; update on the work plan, EFSA communication activities over the next six months, and analysis of media relations activities, an update on EFSA work in the field of social science, sharing social research on public attitudes and awareness to Avian influenza and fish consumption, Key Country Issue where Member States shared best practice on social media, translating risk perception into risk communication practice and lessons learned on communication challenges in Croatia during a recent outbreak of African Swine Fever.

Ad hoc issues: coordinated communication, next steps in building an EU framework for coordinated communication, Communication Lab (a deep dive discussion on avian influenza) and Artificial Intelligence (hearing expert Chris Reed introduced AI and



potential applications for communications as well as a guide on tips and tricks to use AI tools).

Number of attendees: 83

4. Deliverables and Outcomes:

During 2023 the main deliverables and outputs of the Communications Experts network were:

1. coordinated communication on 22 of EFSA's scientific outputs via prenotification of materials ahead of publication. This included three pre-publication teleconferences with the network and ongoing collaboration and communication through a shared working space with the CEN;
2. coordinated communication to support implementation of the Transparency Regulation.
An important progress was made in 2023 with CEN members contributing to proposals for the development of an EU framework for coordinated communication. Furthermore, the CEN has committed to participate in initiatives in 2023 to define them more clearly and begin implementation from 2024 onwards.
 - CEN and FP best practice joint working – consultation on draft report completed; finalisation of report on track for completion by 31/01/24 deadline.
 - Definition of EU Coordinated Framework - consultation on draft report completed; finalisation of report on track for completion by 31/01/24 deadline.
 - Member State Communication Coordinator pilot programme – pilot programme on track for completion by 31/01/24.
 - Pilot programme for Member States to develop jointly two communication products:
 - Pesticide infographic (4 x Member States)
 - Contaminants infographic (3 x Member States)

Both infographics completed by 31/12/23.

3. Campaign outcomes.
 - #EUChooseSafeFood 2023 campaign delivered against its objectives of raising awareness that science - delivered by EU and national bodies – underpins food safety in Europe, as well as triggering critical thinking and engagement among target audiences. Results included:
 - 52 media partnerships across 15 participating countries created; also 15 social media influencers; and 858 articles delivered through earned media;
 - stakeholder engagement - 112 stakeholders engaged in the campaign – with Italy and Greece the most successful (33 and 20 stakeholders respectively);
 - social media metrics show the campaign generally exceeded targets, achieving more than 130 million impressions (47% above the target; and more than 260K clicks, exceeding the target by 41%;
 - the total Reach of the campaign was 114 million against a target of 86M.



- #PlantHealth4Life – 359 media articles; social media – 61.7 impressions and 16.8 million people reached.
- Joint development of communication products and campaign – the delivery of infographics tailored to different national audiences jointly developed by EFSA and CEN members to illustrate the difference between the concepts of 'hazard versus risk'. A coordinated campaign via social media channels by EFSA and Member States was carried out in two waves to increase awareness.

5. Budget

1. Initial budget for 2023: EUR 35,000
2. Total cost of activities: EUR 11,294

6. Overall Assessment

The CEN again made an important contribution to upholding and strengthening the trust of citizens in the EU food safety system through:

- implementation of the core work of ensuring coherence, consistency and clarity in communication of risks in the food chain in 2023 through information sharing and cooperation on key risk assessments on 22 outputs;
- contributing to key activities to progress the definition of the EU framework for coordinated communication to meet the requirements and aspirations of the Transparency Regulation;
- campaigns – the CEN made an important contribution to raising awareness among about key fundamental issues about EU food safety and plant health.

7. Supporting document(s)

[Agenda of the 13th meeting of the Communications Experts network](#)

[Minutes of the 13th meeting of the Communications Experts network](#)

[Agenda of the 14th meeting of the Communications Experts network](#)

[Minutes of the 14th meeting of the Communications Experts network](#)



PLANT PEST SURVEILLANCE NETWORK

1. Main purpose and objectives of the Network as described in the ToR⁸:

The overall aim of the EFSA Scientific Network on plant pest surveillance is to establish and enhance cooperation between Member States (MS) and EFSA, to build a community of knowledge and expertise for preparing and designing statistically sound and risk-based surveys for quarantine pests in the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. The members of the Network will become the EFSA contact points and trainers in plant health surveys following the EFSA methodological framework in their respective MS. Establishing and supporting of the network was requested by the European Commission in mandate M-2022-00069: for providing scientific and technical assistance to the Member States and training activities on survey guidelines relevant for plant health for the EU territory, Iceland and Norway.

Specifically, the Network aims to:

- ensure the mutual understanding of statistically sound and risk-based surveys in plant health, sharing the developments of survey methodologies, keeping the participants abreast of the most recent and relevant progress in the field of pest monitoring and surveillance;
- build capacity on pest surveillance in the MSs by disseminating the knowledge, expertise and best practice of using the EFSA pest survey toolkit. In particular by training the key players in the MSs, that within the MS institutions are in charge of planning and executing surveys of quarantine pests, for initiating, preparing, designing, implementing and reporting of surveys of EU quarantine pests;
- act as a contact point between EFSA and the Member State authorities that are competent in the field of planning and execution of specific surveys for EU quarantine pests;
- share the MS experience in the implementation of pest surveys for improving the current practices;
- harmonise the Plant Health surveys performed across the MSs allowing for comparison of pest surveys in time and space.

2. Work programme for year 2023

The main activities planned for the Plant Pest Surveillance network for 2023 were:

1. to organise and hold two meetings of the Network;
2. to hold meetings in the form of workshops on statistically sound and risk-based plant pest surveillance;

⁸ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-01/terms-of-reference-network-plant-pest-surveillance-2022-2025.pdf>



3. to explore and discuss the variety of plant pest surveillance systems and methods in the EU;
4. to build EU capacity on plant pest surveillance by establishing the surveillance community.

3. Meetings

During 2023 the following **2** meetings took place:

- 1st Plant Pest Surveillance Network meeting, 10-11 May 2023, hybrid plenary meeting.
The meeting discussed the establishment of a network to improve the preparedness of European Union Member States (MSs) for pest outbreaks. Survey methodologies and strategies were shared among MS representatives, emphasizing the need for uniformity in surveillance activities.
The meeting was organised as a workshop where the methodological framework was presented, focusing on risk-based sampling and the statistics behind it. The EFSA Plant Pest Survey Toolkit was introduced as a tool to assist in the design and preparation of quarantine pest surveys.
The detection survey process was explained, including the preparation, design, and implementation stages. EFSA Pest Survey Cards and Story maps were presented as resources to guide MSs in gathering relevant information for survey preparation. Experiences with *Xylella fastidiosa* detection surveys were shared by France, Spain, and Italy, detailing their national surveillance systems and plans.
A practical session on survey design for *Xylella fastidiosa* was conducted, presenting different scenarios and working through them in group exercises using the RiPEST tool. The meeting concluded with a briefing on the International Standards (ISPMs) relevant to surveillance activities and the legal background regulating pest surveys.
- 2nd Plant Pest Surveillance Network meeting, 25-26 October 2023, onsite plenary meeting.
The meeting covered a wide range of topics related to surveillance in the food chain, including plant, animal, environmental, and human health. This included a discussion on the role of plant health in the context of climate change and the importance of ongoing surveillance projects.
As an example of successful implementation of survey framework animal health surveillance within the EFSA was discussed, with an outline of the requirements of the European Commission and European Member States. A surveillance project focused on *Echinococcus multilocularis* was presented as an example.
The meeting also provided an update on the surveillance of priority pests in line with EC regulations. This included an overview of the EUROPHYT platform for plant health surveys and key statistics from surveys conducted in 2022.



The French epidemiological plant health surveillance platform was introduced, focusing on the platform's multidisciplinary objectives, its operational framework, and collaboration with partners and working groups.

In the workshop part of the meeting, practical exercises were conducted on target population strategy, determining method and inspection units, and running the RiPEST tool. These exercises provided participants with hands-on experience in designing detection surveys for chosen EU priority pests.

Number of attendees: 79

4. Deliverables and Outcomes:

During 2023 the main deliverables and outputs of the Plant Pest Surveillance network were:

1. annual report of Surveillance Network 2023;
2. minutes of the 1st meeting of the Plant Pest Surveillance network;
3. minutes of the 2nd meeting of the Plant Pest Surveillance network;
4. training materials provided to the participants:
 - Presentations in the format of PDF documents
 - Scenarios for group activities
 - Reports of exercises

5. Budget

1. Initial budget for 2023: 38,648€
2. Total cost of activities: 33,875€

6. Overall Assessment

The objectives set in the Terms of Reference (ToR) were achieved in 2023, marking the inaugural operational year for the network. During this time, two workshops were conducted providing the first platform within the EU to gather topic experts and initiate the establishment of statistically robust and risk-based plant pest surveillance capacity across the EU. Both workshops served as training grounds for 78 Member State representatives and observers who were educated in the methodological framework and tools developed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). In the process of capacity-building, the variety of pest surveillance systems and approaches within the EU were examined, and the potential for standardisation was discussed. Observers from the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO), Switzerland, and the European Commission (EC) actively participated in these discussions and training sessions.

7. Supporting document(s)

[Agenda of the 1st meeting of the Plant Pest Surveillance network](#)

[Minutes of the 1st meeting of the Plant Pest Surveillance network](#)

[Agenda of the 2nd meeting of the Plant Pest Surveillance network](#)



[Minutes of the 2nd meeting of the Plant Pest Surveillance network](#)

[Annual report on the EFSA Plant Pest Surveillance Network 2023](#)



RISK ASSESSMENT IN PLANT HEALTH NETWORK

1. Main purpose and objectives of the Network as described in the ToR⁹:

The overall aim of the EFSA Scientific Network for Risk Assessment in Plant Health is to install and enhance cooperation between Member States (MS) and EFSA, to build a mutual understanding of RA principles in plant health in a transparent way. It is expected to promote the harmonisation of risk assessment practices and methodologies, including harmonisation of the data collection, and reduce the duplication of activities by identifying and sharing current priorities. This applies within the framework of the new EU plant health rules, adopted in October 2016 by the European Parliament and the Council¹⁰.

The Scientific Network for Risk Assessment in Plant Health aims to contribute to strengthening the scientific cooperation on plant health issues in the European Union. The network represents a privileged environment in which to share data and methodologies. It also enable the anticipation of emerging risks in the EU and the enhancement of the understanding of the current plant health risk assessment priorities that may need to be addressed through EFSA. This platform for cooperation in the field of plant health is based on a dynamic exchange of information among all participants.

The specific objectives of the scientific network for risk assessment in plant health are:

- To facilitate harmonisation of risk assessment practices and methodologies in plant health by:
 - sharing best practices between EFSA and the EU Member States;
 - discussing ongoing issues of plant health risk assessment such as new guidances developed or new opinions adopted;
 - discussing new scientific developments in plant health risk assessment and their implications on risk assessment practice;
 - focusing attention on and streamlining common research needs that support progress in plant health risk assessment;
 - analysing risk assessment needs and planning ahead to support the new EU Plant health law.
- To enhance exchange of information and data between EFSA and MS by:
 - discussing issues of availability and quality of data required for plant health risk assessment purposes;
 - enhancing cooperation in data collection and sharing for plant health risk assessment;
 - identifying and mapping expertise in specific areas and on specific issues.
- To achieve synergies in plant health risk assessment activities by:
 - identifying common themes and areas for mutual collaboration;
 - sharing and discussing on-going plant health risk assessment activities;
 - sharing and discussing priorities for plant health risk assessment at national and EU level;

⁹ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/assets/plhranetworktor.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016R2031>



identifying new and emerging risks for EU plant health.

2. Work programme for year 2023

The main activities planned for the Risk Assessment in Plant Health network for 2023 were:

- update and discussion on EFSA Plant Health Risk Assessment activities (completed, ongoing and planned work);
- Member States to present and discuss their matters of interest, to promote harmonisation and synergies in the assessment at national level and in ongoing and future projects;
- exchanges with International and EU Institutions/agencies to update on their activities of interest for the Network;
- organise network meetings.

3. Meetings

During 2023 the following **2** meetings took place:

- 19th meeting of the EFSA Scientific Network for Risk Assessment in Plant Health, 14-15 June 2023, hybrid plenary meeting.
Member States were presented with an update on the following EFSA plant health risk assessment activities: pest categorisation, quantitative pest risk assessment, climate suitability, commodity risk assessment for High-Risk Plants or for derogations to EU plant health law provisions. A database on non-EU Scolytinae (of coniferous and of broad-leaved trees), built by University of Padova (IT) to support the ongoing EFSA pest categorisation of this large insects groups, was presented to the Network. In the area of cooperation, MS were informed on: ongoing and new tasking grants and framework partnership agreement to support EFSA plant health risk assessment; ongoing and new art 36 grant calls on data collection and experimental data generation to reduce risk assessment uncertainties; ongoing art 36 grants and thematic grants on innovative methodologies and risk assessment priorities/strategy. In particular, updates were provided on the ongoing art 36 grant projects: global data collection on antibiotics use and resistance in plant pathogenic bacteria ["Plantibio" by UC Louvain (BE)]; research on climate suitability of Mediterranean citrus growing areas for citrus black spot [art 36 Grant by IVIA (ES), ANSES (FR) and NIB (SI)].
In communication, the Network was informed on the upcoming plant health awareness campaign PlantHealth4life and on the new way of communicating plant health to the broader public via the Xylella comic stripes. The Network was also presented the new EPPO platform for sharing plant health communication material¹¹.
The Network was also involved with the Parma local community by participation to the screening and public debate of the documentary movie on Xylella "The era of Giants" and by a technical visit to low input organic and IPM farms/experimental stations in Parma province.
- 20th meeting of the EFSA Scientific Network for Risk Assessment in Plant Health, 05-07 December 2023, hybrid plenary meeting.
In the areas of plant health risk assessment and data collections, MS were presented with an update on: pest categorisation, quantitative pest risk assessment, climate suitability,

¹¹ EPPO Platform on Communication Material
https://www.eppo.int/RESOURCES/eppo_databases/communication_platform



commodity risk assessment for High Risk Plants or derogations to EU plant health law provisions, *Xylella* host plants database, European *Xylella* conference, apple pests database.

In cooperation, MS were informed on: tasking grants and framework partnership agreement to support EFSA plant health risk assessment; art 36 grants on data collection and experimental data generation to reduce risk assessment uncertainties; art 36 grants and thematic grants on innovative methodologies and risk assessment priorities/strategy. In particular, updates were provided on: global data collection on antibiotics use and resistance in plant pathogenic bacteria; global data collection to support the categorisation of non-EU Scolytinae of broadleaved trees; research on climate suitability of Mediterranean citrus growing areas for citrus black spot.

In communication, the Network was informed on the plant health awareness campaign PlantHealth4life and on the organisation and contribution by EFSA to international plant health events. In particular, about: EFSA's organisation in August 2023, in cooperation with EU research funded projects (BeXyl, ERC Multi X, Biovexo) and Euphresco Network, the 4th European conference on *Xylella fastidiosa* as satellite event of the International Congress of Plant Pathology ICPP2023 in Lyon (France)¹²; EFSA's contribution to the ICPP2023 via chairing and presenting at key-note plenary and concurrent sessions on food security, plant health (in cooperation with EPPO) and antimicrobial resistance in one health perspective; EFSA contribution to the European Entomology Conference (ECE 2023, Heraklion (EL), October 2023) via chairing and presenting in concurrent scientific session.

A discussion workshop with breakout sessions with MS was also organized in the second 2023 meeting, obtaining MS feedback and suggestions on: fitness for purpose of pest categorisation conclusions; integration of Artificial Intelligence in plant health risk assessment; integration of Citizen Science in plant health risk assessment (this latter topic was proposed following Sweden suggestion). About the "Integration of artificial intelligence and citizen science in plant health risk assessment", pros and cons emerged from the discussion with the MS and EFSA Staff. Overall EFSA received a positive feedback regarding both subjects, while the main concern was directed towards the need of testing, evaluating and measuring the quality of the results obtained through these approaches. Regarding the "Fitness for Purpose of Conclusions and Interaction with Member States in Plant Health Risk Assessment", feedback received focused on Pest categorisation. Regarding impact, it was suggested to provide more quantified/detailed description of the impact and its uncertainties, as well to include a weight of evidence approach. For pest occurrence, when a pest is already reported in some EU MS, it was suggested to contact Member States at beginning of a mandate, with an appropriate timeframe to gather more data from (national) scientists or regional authorities (which in some cases may even conduct limited surveys on particular pests). Concerning pest identity, consultation/collaboration with the EURLs on criteria for diagnostic methods and in difficult taxonomic cases was suggested. On climate suitability, the need for more detailed climate suitability in the categorisation process was expressed, as pest categorisation can result in quarantine status for new pests and support MS decision on whether a survey should be conducted in their territory. A two-step approach, i.e., an in-depth analysis of climate suitability once the quarantine status is decided, was also discussed. The possibility of consultation on draft opinions with Member States was discussed. It was

¹² <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/4th-european-conference-xylella-fastidiosa-researching-sustainable-solutions>



noted that this could require a longer timeline, hence it should be reserved for complex issues.

The Network confirmed the importance of face-to-face meetings for a better and more comprehensive interaction.

Number of attendees: 96

4. Deliverables and Outcomes:

During 2023 the main deliverables and outputs of the Risk Assessment in Plant Health network were:

1. update and discussion with MS on ongoing EFSA Plant health risk assessment and data collection activities;
2. update and discussion with MS on new and ongoing EFSA art. 36 cooperation projects with Member States [to support EFSA activities (Tasking Grants) and to reduce through research some methodological and biological knowledge gaps on quarantine, new and emerging plant pests and priorities];
3. update and discussion with MS on communication: the upcoming EU plant health awareness campaign conducted by EFSA with MS, following an EC SANTE mandate; the example of the Xylella comic for communication in plant health to a broader audience; EFSA active contribution to international scientific events in plant health;
4. in communication, to be noted also the involvement of the Network with the Parma local community by participation to the screening and public debate of the documentary movie on Xylella "The era of Giants" and by a technical visit to low input organic and IPM farms/experimental stations in Parma province;
5. provision of MS feedback and suggestions to EFSA, organised through a hybrid workshop with breakout sessions, on: fitness for purpose of pest categorisation conclusions and interaction with MS; integration of Artificial Intelligence in plant health risk assessment; integration of Citizen Science in plant health risk assessment.

5. Budget

1. Initial budget for 2023: 27,148€
2. Total cost of activities: 16,763€

6. Overall Assessment

During 2023 the main deliverables and outputs of the Risk Assessment in Plant Health network were:

1. update and discussion with MS on ongoing EFSA Plant health risk assessment and data collection activities;



2. update and discussion with MS on new and ongoing EFSA art. 36 cooperation projects with Member States [to support EFSA activities (Tasking Grants) and to reduce through research some methodological and biological knowledge gaps on quarantine, new and emerging plant pests and priorities];
3. update and discussion with MS on communication: the upcoming EU plant health awareness campaign conducted by EFSA with MS, following an EC SANTE mandate; the example of the Xylella comic for communication in plant health to a broader audience; EFSA active contribution to international scientific events in plant health;
4. in communication, to be noted also the involvement of the Network with the Parma local community by participation to the screening and public debate of the documentary movie on Xylella “The era of Giants” and by a technical visit to low input organic and IPM farms/experimental stations in Parma province;
5. provision of MS feedback and suggestions to EFSA, organised through a hybrid workshop with breakout sessions, on: fitness for purpose of pest categorisation conclusions and interaction with MS; integration of Artificial Intelligence in plant health risk assessment; integration of Citizen Science in plant health risk assessment.

7. Supporting document(s)

[Agenda of the 19th meeting of the Risk Assessment in Plant Health network](#)

[Minutes of the 19th meeting of the Risk Assessment in Plant Health network](#)

[Agenda of the 20th meeting of the Risk Assessment in Plant Health network](#)

[Minutes of the 20th meeting of the Risk Assessment in Plant Health network](#)



FOOD CONTACT MATERIAL NETWORK

1. Main purpose and objectives of the Network as described in the ToR¹³:

Taking into account art. 7.3 of the “Decision concerning the establishment and operation of European Networks of scientific organisations operating in the fields within the Authority’s mission”, the main objective of the Network on “Food Contact Materials” is to facilitate scientific cooperation on the risk assessment activities and approaches of mutual interest to the EU Member States, Norway and Iceland, Switzerland and EFSA.

Specifically, the Network on Food Contact Materials aims to:

- provide a platform for discussion, consultation and collaboration;
- enhance cooperation between scientists involved in risk assessment;
- promote exchange of information on activities and risk assessments;
- support and harmonise risk assessment;
- avoid duplication of work and possibly anticipate and prevent divergences.

Areas for cooperation are focused on:

- sharing and discussing on activities and projects related to the safety assessment of FCM;
- exchanging on challenges and experience in the assessment such as on non-intentionally added substances (NIAS);
- promote the exchange of information through a database/table on past, current and future projects related to safety assessment of (substances used to manufacture) FCMs;
- initiate, as far as needed, the setting of small group(s) of MSs with interest in a FCM type (e.g. coatings, paper and boards) to share expertise, build common projects, contribute to and harmonise safety assessment in a FCM type or of substances of interest;
- involve MSs in the preparation of the new EFSA Guidance to take on board their expertise;
- provide training on EFSA’s approaches e.g. advanced risk assessment.

2. Work programme for year 2023

The main activities planned for the Food Contact Material network for 2023 were:

1. EFSA to update on its activities, present and discuss its risk assessments, challenges and methodologies including promoting the awareness and application of EFSA Scientific Committee cross-cutting Guidance documents;
2. Member States to present and discuss their matters of interest, i.e. progress and challenges in the assessment of non-plastic FCMs and compliance testing of plastics, topic that is unavoidable (as representatives are often from national control laboratories) and

¹³ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/assets/fipnonplasticsnetworktor.pdf>



kept somehow under control as it is not in the remit of EFSA but of MSs and EC. It promoted harmonisation and synergies in the assessment of FCM groups regulated at national level and in ongoing and future projects;

3. exchange with International and EU Institutions/agencies to update on their activities of interest for the Network;
4. organize the annual network physical meeting.

3. Meetings

During 2023 the following **2** meetings took place:

- 9th meeting of the Food Contact Material network, 20 April 2023, online plenary meeting (<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/9th-meeting-fcm-network>).
2 scientific and/or technical items to share and discuss ongoing EFSA assessments: EC mandate on styrene, and use of substances from renewable biological origin to manufacture food contact materials.
- 10th meeting of the Food Contact Material network, 17-19 October 2023, hybrid plenary meeting (<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/10th-meeting-fcm-network>).
21 scientific and/or technical items: EC mandate on styrene; Chemical Strategy and Sustainability (CSS) and the One Substance One Assessment (1S1A); ECHA activities on the safety assessment of drinking water materials; IUCLID for the submission and assessment of applications; New guidelines for Network Participants; Spanish Research Agency about the Chemical safety of bio-based and/or biodegradable plastics for food contact; NVWA research project on biobased food contact materials; EFSA-Q-2023-00256: Safety assessment of substances from renewable biological origin to manufacture FCM (sharing and discussion on ongoing EFSA assessment); SILIFOOD project - risk assessment of non-evaluated substances migrating from food contact materials; Systematic evidence map on PET oligomers; Proposal for harmonisation of the safety assessment of rubbers; Shared EU databases of evaluated substances (IAS and NIAS); EC JRC activities and template on sharing data on migration; Compilation of Member States projects/research and Member States' oral feedback; European Commission SANTE activities including on the revision of the FCM framework legislation; Food Risk Assess Europe (FRAE); Council of Europe activities; Council of Europe activity on Enamels; Training: assessment of waxes, paraffinic, refined, derived from petroleum-based or synthetic hydrocarbon feedstock, low viscosity' for use in FCM (EFSA, 2022); Draft EFSA Guidance on PET recycling; Next FCM Network meeting: proposal for possible follow-up in terms of scientific cooperation and activities.

Number of attendees: 98

4. Deliverables and Outcomes:



During 2023 the main deliverables and outputs of the Food Contact Material network were:

1. extensive minutes of the annual meeting, published at the link provided in section 7;
2. presentations made at the two meetings, published at the links provided in section 7;
Two and twenty-four presentations were made respectively, and non-confidential ones published along with extensive minutes allowing a good sharing and 'external' visibility in the public domain including Industry;
3. cooperation was extended by sharing and discussing ongoing assessment of high and common interest (styrene and mixture of natural origin used to manufacture FCM); it included ECHA, EMA, and US FDA;
4. the annual physical plenary meeting was held for two days over three days with overall 47 participants other than EFSA. It gathered 27 participants (mostly MS representatives) and ca. 18 by teleconference. Online participation (hybrid) was allowed, facilitating more participation (like alternates) but limiting somehow the discussion with online participants. The meeting gathered 24 Member States, 1 representant from International Institution (Council of Europe), several representants from ECHA, several experts from the EFSA FCM WG and representants from EC JRC and EC DG SANTE; also the US FDA and EMA on spot. This provided an extensive 'internal' visibility and involvement allowing notably to share the same level of information and discussion at the same time amongst all participants. Twenty-four presentations were made and twenty were published along with extensive minutes allowing a good sharing and 'external' visibility in the public domain including Industry. The meeting allowed i) International and EU Institutions/agencies to update on their activities of interest for the Network, ii) EFSA to update on its activities, present and discuss its risk assessments, challenges and methodologies including promoting the awareness and application of EFSA Scientific Committee cross-cutting Guidance documents, iii) Member States to present and discuss their matters of interest, i.e. progress and challenges in the assessment of non-plastic FCMs and compliance testing of plastics, topic that is unavoidable (as representatives are often from national control laboratories) and kept somehow under control as it is not in the remit of EFSA but of MSs and EC. It promoted harmonisation and synergies in the assessment of FCM groups regulated at national level and in ongoing and future projects. On the latter, the practical usefulness of the EFSA "R4EU database on Member States risk assessment plans" appeared limited. It was again highlighted that this useful tool should be better supported by giving access to the Network representatives and improving communication between focal points and stakeholders including Network representatives.

5. Budget

1. Initial budget for 2023: 20,000€
2. Total cost of activities: 17,760€



6. Overall Assessment

The objectives set in the Terms of Reference are met (see above with respect to awareness, capacity building, harmonisation, etc.). A physical (hybrid) plenary meeting was held in October and an additional one earlier in April by teleconference. In both, there was a good participation (number of participants, representativity of MSs and other EU and international Institutions) and there were constructive discussions. MSs were happy with the meeting, in particular the duration, topics discussed and interactions. In addition, cooperation was extended by sharing and discussing ongoing assessment of high and common interest, therefore promoting early consultation (not replacing 'late' public consultation) of MSs, EU and USA sister Agencies.

7. Supporting document(s)

[Agenda of the 9th meeting of the Food Contact Material network](#)

[Minutes of the 9th meeting of the Food Contact Material network](#)

[Agenda of the 10th meeting of the Food Contact Material network](#)

[Minutes of the 10th meeting of the Food Contact Material network](#)



CHEMICAL MONITORING DATA COLLECTION NETWORK

1. Main purpose and objectives of the Network as described in the ToR¹⁴:

The purpose of the Scientific Network on Chemical Monitoring Data Collection is to provide advice and assistance to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in cooperation with the European Commission on all scientific and practical matters related to the collection, analysis and reporting of data on the results of chemical monitoring (i.e. pesticide residues, veterinary medicinal product residues, contaminants and food additives) in food and feed where EFSA compiles the data and assesses the results of monitoring programmes conducted by the Member States and other reporting countries. This network was created in March 2019.

2. Work programme for year 2023

The main activities planned for the Chemical Monitoring Data Collection network for 2023 were:

1. advise and assist EFSA on issues and opportunities for standardised reporting of occurrence data on chemical contaminants, residues and other regulated substances in food and feed;
2. revise the data model, related catalogues and reporting specifications for Member States and other reporting countries;
3. defining the most optimal ways to analyse the data collected;
4. participate in the process of enhancing data quality on chemical substances in food and feed for the purpose of intake/exposure and compliance assessments;
5. exchange of information and analytical results from chemical monitoring between reporting countries and EFSA, and between the reporting countries;
6. assist in activities related to data access and publication;
7. act as the national reference point for the planning and organising of data collections for chemical substances in food and feed;
8. review EFSA outputs related to the network e.g. annual reports, scientific and/or technical reports, guidance documents, reporting manuals and online reports;
9. share experience in national sampling and/or control programme design, laboratory methods, compliance assessment and follow-up actions.

3. Meetings

During 2023 the following meeting took place:

- 6th meeting of the EFSA Scientific Network on Chemical Monitoring Data collection, 24-25 October 2023, hybrid plenary meeting.

Topic/content of meeting:

¹⁴ https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/science/Support/Data/Data_ToR_Chemical_Monitoring_Network.pdf



- monitoring data collected by EFSA on different chemicals (pesticide residues, veterinary medicinal product residues, contaminants and food additives) on the previous year (i.e. 2022). Food contact material data on plasticisers was also handled;
- survey on the data collection and round table on reporting countries feedback;
- agreement on rules, resources, tools, process and timelines of the next data collection (i.e. 2023);
- information exchange with SANTE presence of new data collection on impurities in food additives;
- round table between SANTE Units: E2, E4, F4, F6, G4 and G5 attendees, Network members and EFSA on import control reporting to EC vs EFSA;
- Annual Reporting on Official Controls: status of data sharing on chemical monitoring data collection with SANTE F6 colleagues;
- latest news on Advisory Group on Data (AGoData);
- latest advances on PRIMo 4 tool on pesticide.

Number of attendees: 144

4. Deliverables and Outcomes:

During 2023 the main deliverables and outputs of the Chemical Monitoring Data Collection network were:

1. agreement on EFSA procedures (timelines, business rules, paramCodes alignment among different domain) on the following year data collection in view of VMPPR and Contaminants new Regulations (Regulation (EU) No 2022/1646 and Regulation (EU) No 2022/932, respectively);
2. create awareness and clarify question on the new mandate on food additives and food flavouring data collection;
3. create awareness on the different control terminology used when reporting data to Commission through IMSOC than when is reported to EFSA;
4. agreement to keep working on possible data interoperability;
5. review of the network meeting minutes;
6. evaluation on satisfaction survey on data collection as well as the meeting.

5. Budget

1. Initial budget for 2023: 17,280€
2. Total cost of activities: 14,123€

6. Overall Assessment



All objectives were met. Due to the extended data domains to be covered, the main issues on the data model were discussed. Discussion on new business rules needed on the bases of recently adopted Regulation took place, reaching agreement in collaboration with SANTE counterparts on the impacted domains. Discussion on ways to improve data quality for better exposure assessments also took place. The need of making data interoperable among SANTE/EFSA was brought to the participant's awareness.

7. Supporting document(s)

[Agenda of the 6th meeting of the Chemical Monitoring Data Collection network](#)

[Minutes of the 6th meeting of the Chemical Monitoring Data Collection network](#)



FOOD CONSUMPTION DATA NETWORK

1. Main purpose and objectives of the Network as described in the ToR¹⁵:

The aim of the Network on food consumption data is to support EFSA in carrying out its mission in accordance with the established standards of scientific excellence, transparency and responsiveness foreseen in Regulation (EC) No 178/2002. In particular, the network shall facilitate EFSA in the collection of high quality, up-to-date and detailed national food consumption data, as well as the collation of this information into a pan-European food consumption database hosted by EFSA.

The main objectives of the FCD Network are to provide a forum for exchange of views between experts on methodologies for the collection and collation of food consumption and related data, in particular:

- to review methods and propose improvements on all issues related to food consumption data;
- to advise and reinforce the reporting and data submission formats proposed by EFSA for the collection of harmonised food consumption data to maintain their suitability for purpose;
- to advise on the integration and use of food composition data with dietary information for the assessment of nutrient intake;
- to act as a contact point between EFSA and the Member States to coordinate the collection of and accessibility to high quality, up-to-date and harmonised food consumption information.

2. Work programme for year 2023

The main activities planned for the Food Consumption Data network for 2023 were:

1. to update the network on the food consumption data collection activities performed by EFSA and MSs;
2. to present the suite of exposure tools available;
3. to update the network on the ERA EU Menu Project activities, preparing the ground for the future data collections (EU Menu 2);
4. to perform a survey on format and content of the network;
5. to perform a survey on the data collection infrastructure as part of the REBUILD project.

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https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/science/Support/Data/Data_TOR_FoodConsumption_2018.pdf



3. Meetings

During 2023 the following meeting took place:

- 15th meeting of the Network on Food Consumption Data, 24-25 April 2023, onsite plenary meeting.

Topic/content of meeting:

- EFSA updates on EU Menu;
- presentations by MS on the use of smartphone food record apps and online training tools in dietary surveys;
- preliminary results of the ERA EU Menu project: an assessment of EU Menu data;
- examples on how Food Consumption data are used in EFSA, i.e. 2 Exposure assessment case studies and the PRIMo Model;
- FAO presentation on the evaluation framework to assess the quality of food composition databases;
- Legal matters on data sharing and public access to food consumption data.

Number of attendees: 34

4. Deliverables and Outcomes:

During 2023 the main deliverables and outputs of the Food Consumption Data network were:

1. information sharing on food consumption and food composition data topics;
2. networking;
3. information sharing on the future EU Menu activities;
4. decision on ex-ante agreement for data sharing (even though retracted by Legal Unit).

5. Budget

1. Initial budget for 2023: 19,056€
2. Total cost of activities: 9,554€

6. Overall Assessment

The objectives set according to the ToR were met in 2023. The network meeting has proven to be useful for both EFSA and countries participating, characterized by a fruitful information exchange. The feedback survey had a score of 4.8 out of 5 points. Countries were happy with the topics discussed but underlined the limitations of an online meeting. A wish to have a physical meeting for year 2023 was expressed.

7. Supporting document(s)

[Agenda of the 15th meeting of the Food Consumption Data network](#)

[Minutes of the 15th meeting of the Food Consumption Data network](#)



ZOONOSES MONITORING DATA NETWORK

1. Main purpose and objectives of the Network as described in the ToR¹⁶:

The main objective of the Scientific Network for Zoonoses Monitoring Data is to advise and assist the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in cooperation with the European Commission on all scientific and practical matters related to the collection, reporting and analysis of data on monitoring of zoonoses, zoonotic agents, microbiological contaminants and antimicrobial resistance in food, feed and animals, on foodborne outbreaks as well as of data on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in bovine animals, small ruminants, cervids and other species in the European Union.

The network is composed by the main zoonoses network and four specific sub-groups:

1. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)
2. Foodborne outbreaks (FBO)
3. Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE)
4. Molecular typing, based on whole genome sequencing (WGS)

The Network is specifically asked to advise and assist EFSA on matters related to:

Data

- the identification of priorities for the harmonisation of fit-for-purpose monitoring approaches and for the collection of data on zoonoses, FBO, AMR and TSE of European and international significance covered by the main network and the four specific subgroups;
- the identification of issues and opportunities for harmonised monitoring and reporting for Member States and other reporting countries;
- updates of data models, related catalogues and reporting specifications for Member States and other reporting countries, in particular in the case of new data reporting requirements due to changes in the legislation;
- the participation in the process of enhancing data quality;
- the review of data collected and the participation in activities related to data access and publication;
- the nomination of the reporting officer (in the case of the main zoonoses network) and of the data providers (in the case of the TSE and WGS subgroups);
- the exchange of information and data between EFSA and Member States;

¹⁶

https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/science/Support/Data/Data_ToR_Zoonoses_Network.pdf



- the identification of issues and opportunities for development and use of electronic reporting, analysis and visualisation tools and databases for the data collection;
- acting as national reference points for planning and organising data collection activities and for ensuring the exchange of information at national level;
- coordinating at Member States level the call for data related to joint ECDC-EFSA assessments on foodborne events.

Science

- the collation, validation, analyses, and summary of relevant scientific data in its fields of competence;
- the review of EFSA outputs related to the Network e.g. annual scientific reports, scientific and technical reports, guidance documents, reporting manuals and online reports;
- the exchange of experiences in monitoring and/or surveillance programme design and in laboratory methods;
- the discussion of cross-cutting issues with other animal and public health networks of EFSA, EU Agencies (e.g. ECDC) and the relevant European Union Reference Laboratories (EURL) for this Network and its subgroups;
- the strengthening of international and inter-institutional collaboration and transdisciplinary knowledge transfer in the area of One Health Zoonoses data integration and interpretation.

2. Work programme for year 2023

The main activities planned for the Zoonoses Monitoring Data network for 2023 were:

1. review of the reporting guidance documents (zoonoses and foodborne outbreaks);
2. participation of countries (MSs/RCs) to training on data collection and data reporting;
3. data collection and data validation (zoonoses and foodborne outbreaks, AMR, TSE);
4. review of the annual One Health Zoonoses draft report, and the annual Summary Report on AMR in humans, food producing animals and food, as well as the TSE EU summary report, and of the communication tools (dashboards and story maps) of these three reports;
5. review of the Zoonoses National reports;
6. review of Rapid Outbreak Assessment draft reports;
7. review of the reporting catalogues (zoonoses and foodborne outbreaks, AMR, TSE);
8. participation in ad-hoc surveys (zoonoses and foodborne outbreaks, AMR, TSE), such as: "Survey on feedback from the 2022 data reporting";
9. continuous sharing and exchange of information via Microsoft Teams (zoonoses and foodborne outbreaks, AMR, TSE);

3. Meetings



During 2023, the following meetings took place:

1 Zoonoses Monitoring Data network meeting

- 41st meeting of the Scientific Network for Zoonoses Monitoring Data, 9-11 October 2023, hybrid plenary meeting, Maisons-Alfort, France.

Agenda points and presentations:

- IDATA colleagues: a) feedback received from the reporting countries in the feedback survey on 2022 data reporting, b) Improvements of 2023 data reporting, c) 2023 data reporting timelines, d) the zoonoses quality dashboards and e) EFSA's rebuild project – status update and survey results,
- BIOHAW colleagues: on a) key findings on zoonoses and foodborne outbreaks during 2022, b) 2023 data reporting: key data to provide, c) Update on Rapid Outbreak Assessments and related activities, d) Update on baseline surveys on antimicrobial resistance, e) Feedback on the 'Science meets policy' conference of 5-6 September 2023 and WGS subgroup of the Zoonoses network 20 September 2023, f) Feedback on the 4th Joint Meeting of the EFSA's Zoonoses Monitoring Data Network (FBO and WGS sub-groups) and the ECDC's Food- and Waterborne Diseases and Zoonoses Network on 19 September 2023, and g) EFSA Prioritisation of zoonotic diseases for coordinated surveillance systems under the One Health approach for cross-border pathogens that threaten the Union, and h) EFSA Call for tender 'Burden of zoonoses'
- EFSA chief scientist: 'EFSA One Health Road map'
- The ZOE consortium: a) a debrief of the collaboration during 2023, b) pilot communication tools (dashboards and story maps on Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (STEC), zoonotic tuberculosis and *Brucella*), and c) scientific feedback on the 2022 data validation
- EnvA, ZOE Consortium: 'Update on *Toxoplasma* data reporting'
- ISS, ZOE Consortium: 'Achievements of the Multi-centre study on *Echinococcus multilocularis* and *Echinococcus granulosus* s.l. in Europe (MEME) project'
- ANSES, ZOE Consortium: 'Update on *Toxoplasma* data reporting'
- ANSES, ZOE Consortium: 'Update on rabies data reporting in terrestrial animals'
- Statens Serum Institut: 'Outcomes of One Health EJP TOXOSOURCES'

Number of attendees: 88

2 Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) subgroup meeting

- 13th specific meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance data reporting, Scientific Network for Zoonoses Monitoring Data, 8-9 November 2023, hybrid subgroup meeting.

Agenda points and presentations - 1st day



- DG SANTE G5 presented an Update from the European Commission on the EU monitoring of MRSA in fattening pigs, that will start on January 2025 and will have the duration of one year. The purpose is to estimate the MRSA prevalence in the European population of fattening pigs.
- EURL - AR updated the participants on the several activities carried out at the EURL-AR providing scientific and technical assistance to NRLs, the European Commission and other organisations such as EFSA, ECDC.
- IDATA colleagues presented a) The feedback received from the reporting countries in the “feedback survey on 2022 data reporting”, b) The main remarks on the critical points related to the data validation exercise (both general and topic-specific remarks) to be considered, c) The 2023 data reporting: key data to provide, d) 2023 data reporting timelines.
- BIOHAW colleagues presented a) The preliminary key findings on AMR during 2022, and the status and next steps for the production of the 2022 EUSR on AMR.
- The AMR consortium presented: a) A brief introduction of the consortium, b) A live demo of the pilot communication tools: dashboards and story maps on occurrence of resistance in *Escherichia coli*, *Campylobacter jejuni* and *C. coli*, and MRSA.

Agenda points and presentations - 2nd day

- BIOHAW colleagues updated on the monitoring of AMR in imported meat from third countries and the upcoming baseline surveys on AMR and update on the on-going Scientific Opinions on AMR in EFSA.
- DK (DTU) gave a presentation on ‘Antimicrobial resistance monitoring in the Danish swine production by phenotypic methods and metagenomics from 1999 to 2018’.
- IT (Istituto zooprofilattico sperimentale del Lazio e della Toscana) gave ‘An update on carbapenemase resistance / OXA-48 from Italy’
- NL (Wageningen Bioveterinary Research) gave a presentation on the ‘Detection of *cfr* and *fexA* resistance genes in MRSA from humans and animals in the Netherlands, a result of a One Health surveillance’.
- FR (ANSES) presented a ‘Point for information: will *E. marmotae* impact the AMR monitoring in indicator *E. coli*?’.
- Hearing expert presented an ‘Update on CP-producers in companion animals in Europe’.
- EMA presented an ‘Update on the activities carried out by EMA and an overview on the ESVAC project of collecting, analysing and reporting sales data for veterinary antibiotics.’



- EFSA/ECDC/EMA (DE, BfR) presented an 'Update on the Scientific report on Antimicrobial consumption and resistance in bacteria from humans and animals - JIACRA IV report'.

Number of attendees: 57

3 TSE-BSE subgroup meeting

- 3rd Specific Meeting on Data Reporting on TSE-BSE, Scientific Network for Zoonoses Monitoring Data, 19 September 2023, online subgroup meeting.

Agenda points and presentations

- EFSA (BIOHAW) contractors briefly described the draft results of the European Union Summary Report (EUSR) on 2022 TSE surveillance data;
- EFSA (BIOHAW) contractors presented the TSE visualisation tools, including an online story map and MicroStrategy dashboards and the available links were shared with the participants and their feedback on the TSE visualisation tools was highly encouraged.
- BIOHAW colleagues presented EFSA opinions using Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and scrapie surveillance data in 2023. Using the TSE surveillance data in scientific outputs, other than the TSE EUSR, focusing on the recent mandates on the monitoring of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and the evaluation of the application of the negligible risk status of classical scrapie.
- EFSA contractors reported on the user feedback survey for the TSE 2022 data collection.
- CZ presented the TSE data flow - experiences from Czechia. The organizational structure of the veterinary administration in collaboration with the national laboratories in Czechia and the infrastructure used for the data preparation and transfer were presented and explained.
- DE presented the TSE data flow in Germany - the national dataflow used for the TSE surveillance data in Germany.
- EFSA contractors presented the enhancements of the TSE reporting tool.
- IDATA colleagues presented data reporting for the TSE data collection: key points of attention. The Network Members were informed on the timelines for the TSE 2023 data collection, along with the main sources for the data reporting instructions (i.e. the Guidance for reporting 2021 surveillance data on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSE) and the TSE reporting tool wiki homepage).
- EFSA contractors presented the Data Quality KPI dashboard, for the TSE 2022 data.



- IDATA colleagues presented the EFSA's Rebuild project, focused on the importance of Rebuild for the transition to a new data collection and analysis system in accordance with the EFSA Strategy 2027.

Number of attendees: 31

4 Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) subgroup meetings

- 1st specific meeting on WGS, Scientific Network for Zoonoses Monitoring Data, 27 February 2023, online subgroup meeting.

Agenda points and presentations

- BIOHAW colleagues presented the European monitoring system, assessment of foodborne outbreak and EFSA One Health Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) system as collaborative platform for data sharing at EU level; in addition, BIOHAW colleagues presented the procedure to share data to the EFSA One Health WGS system programmatically and the enhancement plan for the EFSA One Health WGS system.
- BIOHAW colleagues presented the procedure associated to the EFSA call for genomic data and use of genomic data in outbreak assessments.
- Several Member States presented briefly the approaches on sharing of genomic data through the EFSA One Health WGS system: strategies and difficulties.
- ENREL colleagues presented the new Focal Point Operational Framework 2023–2027, which was followed by a presentation from Denmark on a Danish proposal for improving WGS data sharing at national, EU and global level.
- BIOHAW colleagues presented the plan for the 'Science meets policy' conference and a joint meeting of ECDC and EFSA networks, and the opportunity linked to the ISA scheme.

Number of attendees: 119

- Joint Meeting of ECDC's FWD Network and EFSA's Zoonoses Network (WGS and FBO subgroups), 19 September 2023, Helsinki

Agenda points and presentations

- The first session focused on a foodborne event that occurred since 2019, specifically an international Salmonella outbreak linked to sesame-based products. The session gave the opportunity to present and discuss the contribution to the investigation from a national, European Union (EU) and global perspective; presentations were performed by colleagues from Public Health Agency of Sweden, Swedish Food Agency, ECDC and US-CDC.
- The second session focused on how to address prolonged listeriosis clusters linked to ready-to-eat (RTE) fish products at EU/EEA level; presentations were given by



colleagues from RKI and BVL (Germany), NVWA (The Netherlands), NVI (Norway) and ECDC.

- The third session focused on One Health whole genome sequencing set up and tools to address cross-border foodborne outbreaks in the EU/EEA; the main message of the discussion was the importance of data sharing from the countries, because ECDC and EFSA can take care of the technical aspects but the contribution from the countries is pivotal; presentations were given by BIOHAW colleagues, and colleagues from RIVM (The Netherlands), SSI (Denmark) and ECDC.
- The fourth session focused on discussing on how to improve cross-sectoral response to multi-country foodborne outbreaks; the objective of the session was to bring together national experts from both sectors and to stimulate a cross-sectoral discussion about the best approaches to produce and share data in support to the investigation of multi-country foodborne outbreaks and to define critical building blocks necessary to construct a cross-sectoral protocol for the swift and efficient response during multi-country foodborne outbreaks across Europe; the lead moderator (EFSA contractor) chaired the session and guided the experts through a series of questions (through Wooclap) over three key areas related to the stages of a multi-country foodborne outbreak (i.e. Whole genome sequencing and metadata sharing, Cluster detection, Outbreak assessment).

Number of attendees: 119

- 2nd specific meeting on WGS, Scientific Network for Zoonoses Monitoring Data, 20 September 2023, hybrid subgroup meeting, Helsinki

Agenda points and presentations

- BIOHAW colleagues presented the current status of the WGS data collection and lesson learnt from 2023 activities and the status of enhancement for the EFSA One Health WGS system.
- Feedback from Member States were showed from Portugal and Belgium.
- The network discussed on the inclusion of Campylobacter in the EFSA One Health WGS system and on an international cluster on ST 464 Campylobacter presented by EURL Campylobacter.
- Network discussed on planning for 2024 activities.

Number of attendees: 40

4. Deliverables and Outcomes:

During 2023 the main deliverables and outputs of the Zoonoses Monitoring Data network were:

1. Review of the reporting guidance documents (zoonoses and foodborne outbreaks):



- Manual for reporting on zoonoses and zoonotic agents, within the framework of Directive 2003/99/EC, and on some other pathogenic microbiological agents for information derived from the year 2022: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/supporting/pub/en-7825>
 - Manual for reporting 2022 antimicrobial resistance data within the framework of Directive 2003/99/EC and Decision 2020/1729/EU <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/supporting/pub/en-7826>
 - Zoonoses, foodborne outbreaks and antimicrobial resistance guidance for reporting 2022 data <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/supporting/pub/en-7827>
Guidelines for reporting data on zoonoses, antimicrobial resistance and food-borne were also updated on EFSA's webpage: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/resources/data-collection-zoonoses>
2. EFSA Knowledge Junction on Zenodo repositories:
- [Tables, figures, and country data complementing the European Union One Health Zoonoses 2022 Report](#)
 - Tables, figures and country data complementing the European Union Summary Report on Antimicrobial Resistance in Zoonotic and Indicator Bacteria from Humans, Animals and Food in 2021/2022 available in Zenodo: <https://zenodo.org/records/7544221>, <https://zenodo.org/records/7660134> and <https://zenodo.org/records/7636225>
 - Zenodo, on TSE (Zenodo repository cited by The European Union summary report on surveillance for the presence of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE) in 2022 - EFSA Journal - Wiley Online Library): <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7282822>; <https://10.5281/zenodo.7282881>
3. Review of the One Health Zoonoses draft report, and the draft EU Summary Report on AMR in humans, food-producing animals and food, the fourth joint inter-agency report on integrated analysis of consumption of antimicrobial agents and occurrence of antimicrobial resistance in bacteria from humans and food-producing animals in the EU/EEA (JIACRA IV), as well as the TSE EU summary report:
- EU One Health 2022 Zoonoses report: available at <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/8442>
 - The European Union Summary Report on Antimicrobial Resistance in zoonotic and indicator bacteria from humans, animals and food in 2021/2022: available at <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/7867>
 - The European Union summary report on surveillance for the presence of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE) in 2022: available at <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/efsajournal/pub/8384>
4. Review of the communication tools:
- Zoonoses dashboards:



- on Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* ([here](#)), zoonotic tuberculosis or tuberculosis due to *M. tuberculosis* complex ([here](#)) and on *Brucella* ([here](#)).
 - Zoonoses Story maps:
 - the EFSA story maps on Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* ([here](#)), *M. tuberculosis* complex, focussing on *M. bovis* and *M. caprae* ([here](#)) and on *Brucella* ([here](#)).
 - AMR dashboards:
 - Dashboard on complete susceptibility in indicator *E. coli* from animals and dashboard on the prevalence of ESBL and/or AmpC-producing *E. coli* from animals and meat thereof: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/microstrategy/dashboard-indicators-antimicrobial-resistance>
 - AMR Story maps:
 - Story map on antimicrobial resistance: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/a513eca219c14f6c800a0520e8f56a9b>
 - Story map on the monitoring of AMR in indicator commensal *E. coli*: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/da79ecb7b4304480aa3759fd490280f1>
5. Review of the Zoonoses National reports: available at [Biological monitoring | EFSA \(europa.eu\)](#)
6. Oversee WGS data collection for 4 Rapid Outbreak Assessment.

5. Budget¹⁷

1. Initial budget for 2023 for the Zoonoses Monitoring Data network meeting: 13,240€
Total cost of activities: 11,298€
2. Initial budget for 2023 for the Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) subgroup meeting: 7,990€
Total cost of activities: 8,756€
3. Initial budget for 2023 for the TSE-BSE subgroup meeting: 600€
Total cost of activities: 0€
4. Initial budget for 2023 for the Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) subgroup meetings including the Joint Meeting of ECDC's FWD Network and EFSA's Zoonoses Network (WGS and FBO subgroups): 15,000€
Total cost of activities: 9,527€

6. Overall Assessment

The objectives as reported in the Terms of Reference are met. The network meeting has proven to be extremely useful for both EFSA and countries participating. Many outcomes and

¹⁷ The cost of activities for the Integrated Data Unit subgroups Antimicrobial resistance (AMR), Foodborne outbreaks (FBO) and Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) are covered by the Biological Hazards and Animal Health and Welfare Unit meeting budget.



deliverables were obtained thanks to close collaboration and fruitful information and data exchange.

7. Supporting document(s)

[Agenda of the 41st meeting of the Zoonoses Monitoring Data network](#)

[Minutes of the 41st meeting of the Zoonoses Monitoring Data network](#)

[Agenda of the 13th specific meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance data reporting subgroup](#)

[Minutes of the 13th specific meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance data reporting subgroup](#)

[Agenda of the 3rd specific meeting on Data Reporting on TSE-BSE subgroup](#)

[Minutes of the 3rd specific meeting on Data Reporting on TSE-BSE subgroup](#)

[Agenda of the 1st specific meeting on WGS subgroup](#)

[Minutes of the 1st specific meeting on WGS subgroup](#)

[Agenda of the 2nd specific meeting on WGS subgroup](#)

[Minutes of the 2nd specific meeting on WGS subgroup](#)

[Agenda of the Joint Meeting of ECDC's FWD Network and EFSA's Zoonoses Network \(WGS and FBO subgroups\)](#)

[Minutes of the Joint Meeting of ECDC's FWD Network and EFSA's Zoonoses Network \(WGS and FBO subgroups\)](#)



EMERGING RISKS EXCHANGE NETWORK (EREN)

1. Main purpose and objectives of the Network as described in the ToR¹⁸:

The Emerging Risk Exchange Network (EREN) was established in 2010 facilitating the exchange of information, expertise and the coordination of activities among MSs and observers. Furthermore, it built support and commitment of MSs and observers to the emerging risks identification activities of EFSA and EREN members. EREN aims to provide a platform for the scientific cooperation between risk assessors of the EU Member States, EFSA, the European Commission, and observers from other interested parties, such as relevant EU-sister agencies, international authorities and organizations, and representatives from third countries with mutual understanding with EFSA to support emerging risk identification, to assess newly identified emerging issues/ risks and to enhance emerging risk identification methodologies.

2. Work programme for year 2023

The main activities planned for the Emerging Risks Exchange network for 2023 were:

1. Hold two meetings to discuss identification and characterisation of emerging issue signals, collating and organising topic information in relevant templates for briefing notes, publishing meeting minutes and preparing detailed secretariat notes on the discussions of the network in line with the objectives.
2. Contribute to the business analysis for the development of an EFSA Emerging Risks Analysis Platform (ERAP) centralising all EFSA activities for the analysis of emerging issues; participate in the testing of ERAP's prototype.
3. Providing expertise in specific areas for cooperation when needed and engaging with interested and relevant stakeholders.
4. Contribute to the creation of a newsletter, increasing the visibility of EFSA's activities on emerging risks.

3. Meetings

During 2023 the following **2** meetings took place:

- 29th Emerging Risks Exchange Network meeting 3-4 May 2023, took place in a hybrid plenary format (in-person in EFSA and online).

As reflected in the meeting minutes, the event included a core discussion and presentation on member states signals on possible emerging risks or updates following previous debates, including info about nanomaterials in waste water treatment, hazardous potential of B.cytotoxicus, microbial risk in plant-based products alternative to

¹⁸ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/assets/emrisknetworksen.pdf>



animal products, spread of a polyphagous pest fly, info-updates on EFSA and EREN activities and methodological aspects. Progress updates have offered insights on EFSA emerging risk workflow and development of Emerging Risk Analysis Platform, and on the EU funded FoodSafeR and Holifood projects, supporting emerging risk identification and collaboration. A thematic session on water scarcity motivated by recent FAO reports highlighted relevance to One Health and consideration of drivers for emerging risk. Members has supported and endorsed the idea for Newsletter on emerging risk updates.

- 30th Emerging Risks Exchange Network meeting, 21-22 November 2023, took place in a hybrid plenary format (in-person in EFSA and online).

As reflected in the meeting minutes, the event included a core discussion and presentation on member states signals on possible emerging risks or updates following previous debates, including info about Epizootic Haemorrhagic Disease, Usutu viruses, Rare earth elements, plastics and microplastics, blue algae proliferation, info-updates on EFSA and EREN activities and methodological aspects. Progress updates have offered insights about finalisation of Influenza D report, Food Fraud, Ocean's project and status on suggested analyses on food supplements. The first issue of the emerging risk newsletter was presented and discussed too.

Number of attendees: 96

4. Deliverables and Outcomes:

During 2023 the main deliverables and outputs of the Emerging Risks Exchange network were:

1. briefing notes (BN) on emerging issues on discussed subjects and updates on previous BNs in DMS archives;
2. processing the identified 52 new emerging signals, and 29 from them were qualified of potential interest and followed up with EREN;
3. in preparation for EREN, two online surveys were conducted on suggested issues as potential emerging risks: 6th Survey
https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/29th_ERENsubmission and the results discussed at 29th EREN meeting and 7th Survey
<https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/30ERENmtg7survey> with results discussed at 30th EREN meeting; In addition an *ad hoc* survey was arranged to collect and assemble views on potential risks of the use or limitation of rodenticides;
4. feedback on functionalities of ERAP at info updates and during user acceptance testing of ERAP's prototype;
5. newsletter emerging risk updates – the first issue was prepared and circulated in November 2024, acclaiming positive feedback and support in the theme.

5. Budget



1. Initial budget for 2023: 15,510€
2. Total cost of activities: 13,538€

6. Overall Assessment

All objectives are met; members of the network were engaged in identifying and characterizing emerging risks, contributed to the development of ERAP and supported the creation of the first EFSA newsletter on emerging risks updates. The members showed also particular interest in future cooperation, opening the network to additional observers from third countries and international organisations. The awareness was raised on the wider aspects of the new EFSA process “8.1.Environment Scanning and Strategic Options Definition” and on the overarching drivers for emerging risk. Members also saw the promising perspectives of other relevant projects such as FoodSafeR to improve information sharing and connection and Holifood for the use of artificial intelligence methods in early risks detection. The network confirmed its willingness to participate in 2024 and 2025 in anticipatory activities for emerging risks identification related to the increased use of Ocean’s as source of food and feed and to create a community of knowledge on emerging risks related to botanicals food supplements.

7. Supporting document(s)

[Agenda of the 29th meeting of the Emerging Risks Exchange network](#)

[Minutes of the 29th meeting of the Emerging Risks Exchange network](#)

[Agenda of the 30th meeting of the Emerging Risks Exchange network](#)

[Minutes of the 30th meeting of the Emerging Risks Exchange network](#)



RISK ASSESSMENT OF NANOTECHNOLOGIES IN FOOD FEED NETWORK

1. Main purpose and objectives of the Network as described in the ToR¹⁹:

The main objectives of the Risk Assessment of Nanotechnologies in Food Feed Network (Nano Network) are to:

- facilitate harmonisation of methodologies by sharing:
 - best practices and guidance;
 - ongoing issues that could lead to duplication or divergent opinions between EU risk assessment bodies.
- exchange information and data between EFSA and MS by:
 - enhancing availability and quality of data;
 - sharing data collections and surveillances from national applications.
- providing expertise in specific areas;
- achieve synergies in activities by identifying:
 - priorities for the national and EU level;
 - new relevant scientific developments;
 - priority research needs, or gaps in expertise and analytical capacity;
 - areas for mutual cooperation.

EFSA may entrust certain tasks to the network, such as collection of data and identification of emerging risks, or some preparatory work for future guidance development.

The Terms of Reference of the Nano Network were recently approved by the EFSA Advisory Forum.

2. Work programme for year 2023

The main activities planned for the Nano Network for 2023 were:

1. organise an annual meeting 2023, and a joint session on Nanotechnologies in the context of the Global Summit on Regulatory Science 2023 (GSRS23)²⁰;
2. update the Network on the status of implementation of the EFSA Guidance on technical requirements for regulated food and feed product applications to establish the presence of small particles including nanoparticles (Guidance on Particle – Technical Requirements)²¹ and the EFSA Guidance on risk assessment of nanomaterials to be applied in the food and feed

¹⁹ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Nanonetwork.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/13th-global-summit-regulatory-science-gsrs23>

²¹ <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2021.6769>



chain: human and animal health (Guidance on Nano – Risk Assessment)²² and seek feedback from the Network on possible input received by stakeholders;

3. invite the Network to provide feedback on ongoing or planned activities in the field of Nanotechnology, new scientific developments, and emerging issues of concern to exchange information, facilitate harmonisation of methodologies, and identify areas for mutual cooperation;
4. invite the Network members to attend relevant trainings organised by EFSA or other institutions;
5. invite the Network to participate to a Survey organised to collect input on the lesson learnt from this first implementation phase of the EFSA Nano Guidances (2021), to reflect on possible actions to provide more detailed provisions to applicants and risk assessors.

3. Meetings

During 2023 the following meeting took place:

- 13th meeting of the EFSA Scientific Network for Risk Assessment of Nanotechnologies in Food and Feed (NanoNetwork), 26 September 2023, hybrid plenary meeting held as a joint meeting with the GSRS23²³.

A closed session of the annual NanoNetwork meeting was held in the morning of 26 September 2023²⁴. In the afternoon, a joint session with the GSRS23 was held²⁵.

Number of attendees: 40

4. Deliverables and Outcomes:

During 2023 the main deliverables and outputs of the Nano Network were:

1. the present annual report, which includes the work programme and resulting outcome and activities of the Nano Network for 2023;
2. exchange with the Network on the status of implementation of the EFSA Nano Guidances (the new Guidance on Particle – Technical Requirements²⁶ and the updated Guidance on Nano – Risk Assessment²⁷);
3. exchange with Network members on ongoing or planned activities in the field of Nanotechnology, new scientific developments, and emerging issues of concern to exchange

²² <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2021.6768>

²³ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/13th-global-summit-regulatory-science-gsrs23>

²⁴ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-09/agenda-13th-nano-networking-meeting.pdf>

²⁵ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-08/programme-at-a-glance-gsrs23.pdf>

²⁶ <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2021.6769>

²⁷ <https://doi.org/10.2903/j.efsa.2021.6768>



information, with the aim to facilitate harmonisation of methodologies and identify areas for mutual cooperation;

4. contribution from the Network in the production of a reporting template for the assessment of Electron Microscopy (EM) results, which is in preparation by the cross-cutting Working Group on Nanotechnologies²⁸;
5. contribution from the Network for the dissemination of an EFSA Call for Expressions of Interest for External Experts in the field of Nanotechnologies, with the aim to increase expertise on the topic in EFSA Panels' Working Groups²⁹;
6. provide trainings to interested Network members organised by EFSA or other institutions;
7. no criticisms were reported from Network members for 2023.

5. Budget

1. Initial budget for 2023: 14,778€
2. Total cost of activities: 12,397€

6. Overall Assessment

All objectives were met. Awareness was raised to the recently adopted Terms of References and expected deliverables.

7. Supporting document(s)

[Agenda of the 13th meeting of the Nanotechnologies in Food and Feed network](#)

[Minutes of the 13th meeting of the Nanotechnologies in Food and Feed network](#)

[Website GRS23, with the programme and documents of the Session on Nanotechnology](#)

²⁸ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/wgs/cross-cutting-science/wg-nanotechnologies.pdf>

²⁹ <https://careers.efsa.europa.eu/jobs/efsa-call-for-expressions-of-interest-for-external-experts-in-working-groups-nanotechnologies-371>



RISK ASSESSMENT OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS NETWORK

1. Main purpose and objectives of the Network as described in the ToR³⁰:

To enhance discussion and scientific exchange between EFSA, the GMO Panel, and Member State experts, EFSA established in 2010 the Scientific Network for Risk Assessment of GMOs (also known as “the GMO Network”). Since then, risk assessment principles and approaches, and several guidance documents were discussed at the network meetings, providing EFSA with valuable input and facilitating harmonization of risk assessment and exchange of knowledge.

On 24 June 2021, the Management Board of the Authority has adopted the “*Decision concerning the establishment and operation of European Networks of scientific organisations operating in the fields within the Authority’s mission*” to optimise the operational procedures of EFSA scientific networks in accordance with the remit and strategic objectives of the Authority and ensure a greater involvement of Member State expertise in support of EFSA's mission. The terms of reference of the Scientific Network for Risk Assessment of GMOs were revised in accordance with the Decision.

The main objective of the GMO network is to build mutual understanding of the principles underlying the risk assessment of GMOs between Member States and EFSA.

The specific objectives of the GMO Network are enhancing risk assessment practices and methodologies, and the exchange of information between EFSA and Member States by:

- sharing best practices in GMO/GM food & feed risk assessment expertise and experiences;
- discussing issues regarding GMO risk assessment such as EFSA guidance documents, adopted EFSA opinions and risk assessment of specific GMOs or GM food & feed;
- discussing new scientific developments in GMO risk assessment and discussing their implications on risk assessment practices, such as the development of GMOs with new genomic techniques;
- sharing information on the development of GMOs using transgenesis and other techniques, and the consequences regarding risk assessment;
- discussing issues of availability and quality of data required for GMO risk assessment;
- sharing regular information on forthcoming EFSA consultations and other scientific cooperation activities in the field of GMO risk assessment.

2. Work programme for year 2023

The main activities planned for the Risk Assessment of Genetically Modified Organisms network

³⁰ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/assets/gmonetworkstor.pdf>



for 2023 were:

1. hold two yearly meetings, preparing detailed minutes on the discussions of the network in line with the objectives;
2. annual reports for all networks jointly, including resulting activities as well as the examination of the criticalities found;
3. invitations to the network for participating in relevant surveys.

3. Meetings

During 2023 the following **2** meetings took place:

- 15th Meeting of the GMO network, hybrid plenary meeting, Prague (8-9 June 2023).
The meeting was hosted by the Crop Research Institute in Prague (Czech Republic). EFSA and the Member States discussed the best modalities to enhance partnership and collaboration within the boundaries set by the Transparency Regulation. EFSA together with Germany and the Netherlands presented and discussed the current and future challenges on the protein safety assessment in GMOs. EFSA in collaboration with Norway and Germany presented and discussed two running mandates on new genomic techniques (NGTs) related to new developments in biotechnology applied to microorganisms and animals. The meeting was also dedicated to the discussion on GMO applications' issues, on aspects related to the new genomic techniques, on the EFSA colloquium on cell-cultured derived food, and on RNAi.
- 16th Meeting of the GMO network, online plenary meeting (13 December 2023).
Part of the 16th GMO Network meeting was dedicated to the discussion on the EC proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on plants obtained by certain new genomic techniques. The meeting addressed the need for a better engagement and collaboration with Member States regarding the possible development of guidance or documents related to the enforcement of the new regulation on NGT plants; the participants agreed that a focus group could be established to address this need. The meeting also provided an update to the Member States on two running mandates on NGTs related to new developments in biotechnology applied to microorganisms and animals. The meeting also provided an update on the current and future challenges on the protein safety assessment and the Member States were informed about an online EFSA seminar and about the launch of a public survey on this topic. Finally, one of the Member States presented its activity on the monitoring and assessing the potential impact of the introduction of the invasive weed teosinte on Bt-maize cultivation in the EU.

Number of attendees: 100

4. Deliverables and Outcomes:



During 2023 the main deliverables and outputs of the Risk Assessment of Genetically Modified Organisms network were:

1. Minutes of the 15th GMO Network meeting
2. Minutes of the 16th GMO Network meeting

5. Budget

1. Initial budget for 2023: 10,470€
2. Total cost of activities: 8,118€

6. Overall Assessment

The 15th GMO Network meeting held in Prague (Czech Republic) was the first in-person meeting after the Covid period. As resulted from the feedback survey, the format of the meeting was very appreciated since it fostered enhance interaction among the participants. The joint presentations by EFSA and Member States on different topics were also well-received. A preparatory discussion on partnership possibilities was also tabled.

Following the publication of the EC proposal for a new regulatory framework for the risk assessment of plants obtained by NGTs (5 July 2023), the 16th GMO Network in December 2023 addressed the need identified at the Advisory Forum meeting (4-5 October 2023) for a closer collaboration between EFSA and Member States on future activities related to new genomic techniques. In the meeting, the Member States overall agreed on the EFSA proposal to launch a call for interest to establish a focus group composed by selected experts of EU competent authorities that would support the identification of critical aspects, possible solutions and consensus related to future EFSA activities/mandates on NGTs.

7. Supporting document(s)

[Agenda of the 15th meeting of the Genetically Modified Organisms network](#)

[Minutes of the 15th meeting of the Genetically Modified Organisms network](#)

[Agenda of the 16th meeting of the Genetically Modified Organisms network](#)

[Minutes of the 16th meeting of the Genetically Modified Organisms network](#)



PESTICIDE STEERING NETWORK

1. Main purpose and objectives of the Network as described in the ToR³¹:

The main goals of the Pesticide Steering Network (PSN) are:

- to improve dialogue among participants;
- to build mutual understanding of risk assessment principles;
- to enhance knowledge on and confidence in the scientific assessments carried out in the EU;
- to provide increased transparency in the current process among Member States and EFSA;
- to raise the harmonisation level of the risk assessments developed in the EU.

The main objectives of the PSN are:

- plan, monitor, develop and improve the risk assessment and peer review process;
- integrate the risk assessment and Maximum Residue Levels (MRL) setting processes for coordinating and achieving efficiency in the implementation of the provisions of both regulatory frameworks;
- coordinate with the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA);
- give advice on prioritisation and risk assessors needs in the development and the updating of risk assessment guidance documents;
- ensure the cooperation and governance for IUCLID for pesticides.

2. Work programme for year 2023

The main activities planned for the Pesticide Steering Network for 2023 were:

1. hold one yearly meeting, preparing detailed minutes on the discussions of the network in line with the objectives and publish the minutes/presentations.

3. Meetings

During 2023 the following meeting took place:

- 31st meeting of the EFSA Pesticide Steering network, 24 October 2023, online plenary meeting open to external observers.

Topics discussed: Update on the activities related the assessment of PPPs/co-formulants, improvements in IUCLID (MO dossiers), improvement in peer review, identification of insufficient dossier quality and exchange on the experiences with MS, assessment of common GW-metabolites, harmonization of the EFSA peer review and the CLH procedure

³¹ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Terms-of-Reference-Pesticide-Steering-Network.pdf>



by ECHA, new way of handling targeted consultations, substance identity for chemical substance falling under the PPP Regulation-alignment with rules for identification and naming of substances under REACH and CLP, feedback from MSs survey on an Interactive Pesticide Residue Exchange Platform (IPREP), updates on guidance documents (guidance document on water treatment and on rotational crops).

Number of attendees: 87³²

4. Deliverables and Outcomes:

During 2023 the main deliverables and outputs of the Pesticide Steering network were:

1. confirm long-term actions in relation to the activities on the assessment of PPPs/co-formulants including a common database and an online platform to facilitate sharing, access and re-use of information on chemicals from different EU Agencies/institutions;
2. revising the working context on micro-organisms and, among other activities, refining the reports generated by the report generator, making them more fit-for-purpose so that can be used as a basis for the draft of DAR/RARs;
3. providing feedback to MSs from peer review and completeness check, and propose actions;
4. share with the MSs proposals for improvements in order to avoid inconclusive assessments in the peer review;
5. consolidate the requests sent to RMS with the outcome of the Completeness check;
6. identification of insufficient dossier quality and exchange on the experiences with MS;
7. sharing experiences and propose actions regarding the assessment of common metabolites;
8. reinforcing the coordination mechanism between EFSA and ECHA in case of parallel AR/CLH report submission;
9. organise online training for MSs representatives on the new way of handling targeted consultations;
10. agree on the proposal for alignment according to the ECHA SID Guidance;
11. present updates of guidance documents.

5. Budget

1. Initial budget for 2023: 0€
2. Total cost of activities: 0€

6. Overall Assessment

The objectives set in the ToR were met in 2023. The meeting made it possible to maintain and strengthen the exchange with the MSs on topics of common interest, development on risk

³² Including external observers invited to the open session of the network meeting



assessment methodology and to progress in their application. In addition, the meeting was organized with the participation of observers. 87 participants registered via the online registration form and were able to submit questions upon registration. Questions were discussed during the meeting, addressed individually as annex to the minute of each meeting. The observers participation pilot is providing helpful results regarding the interest aroused by the event.

7. Supporting document(s)

[Agenda of the 31st open meeting of the Pesticide Steering network](#)

[Minutes of the 31st open meeting of the Pesticide Steering network](#)



PESTICIDE STEERING NETWORK IUCLID SUBGROUP

1. Main purpose and objectives of the Network as described in the ToR³³:

The goal of the Pesticides Steering Network IUCLID sub-group is to ensure the cooperation and governance for IUCLID for pesticides.

The main objectives of the PSN IUCLID sub-group are:

- identify issues for IUCLID backlog or IUCLID project work;
- provide input to IUCLID for Pesticides configuration, filtering rules, validation rules and report templates (aligning where possible with Biocides and in future CLH), contributing to the further development of features and tools which could automate pesticide dossier processing;
- consider specific requirements for PPP dossiers;
- participate in testing IUCLID releases;
- channel all requests for changes coming from pesticides submissions to the OECD IUCLID User Group Expert Panel who is the body deciding on the IUCLID changes to be implemented;
- channel all requests for changes and proposal for improvements before the relevant yearly release of IUCLID;
- based on practical experiences using IUCLID, provide input to further refine the EFSA helpdesk support, IUCLID manual and training materials and IUCLID implementation;
- act as point of reference for all IUCLID related issues and proactively share the information within the organisations of their country or organisation;
- share experience on the "on the job practice" to contribute to the further development of common working procedures.

2. Work programme for year 2023

The main activities planned for the Pesticide Steering network IUCLID subgroup for 2023 were:

1. run working party for the optimisation of filtering rules;
2. establish and run working party for the optimisation of the update of the Microorganism working context;
3. improve Report generator functionality;
4. discuss use of Annotations in IUCLID;
5. support Member States with admissibility check;
6. improve IUCLID functionalities based on input from applicants/Member States;

³³ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-08/tems-of-reference-iuclid-psn-subgroup.pdf>



7. collect requests for format changes to IUCLID before the annual release.

3. Meetings

During 2023 the following 3 meetings took place:

- 6th meeting of the Pesticide Steering Network – IUCLID sub-group, 28 March 2023, online subgroup meeting.
Topics discussed: latest IUCLID release, latest updates on validation assistant and Report generator. Feedback from Industry representatives and Member States.
- 7th meeting of the Pesticide Steering Network – IUCLID sub-group, 19-20 June 2023, hybrid subgroup meeting.
Topics discussed: latest updates on validation assistant and filtering rules, follow up on format release. Feedback from Industry representatives and Member States.
- 8th meeting of the Pesticide Steering Network – IUCLID sub-group, 22 November 2023, online subgroup meeting.
Topics discussed: latest updates on confidentiality and report generator, latest updates on format harmonisation and re-use of data, update from the working party on micro-organisms. Feedback from Industry representatives and Member States.

Number of attendees: 140

4. Deliverables and Outcomes:

During 2023 the main deliverables and outputs of the Pesticide Steering network IUCLID subgroup were:

1. new IUCLID validation rules;
2. new filtering rules;
3. list of mandatory documents for the micro-organisms working context;
4. input on IUCLID 6.7 Microbial Active Substance Application MINI-MANUAL³⁴;
5. closed List on Confidentiality (to be used by all stakeholders in refining the confidentiality request process);
6. decision to reduce the number of fields in a IUCLID dossier which can be claimed confidential (thus enhancing transparency and reducing the assessment work);
7. development of a new ad-hoc filtering rule which will improve the way we manage and publish data from the analytical methods documents;
8. development of new IUCLID documents and revision of existing documents for both the active substance and the microorganisms IUCLID working context.

5. Budget

1. Initial budget for 2023: 7,784€

³⁴ [10.5281/zenodo.10118201](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10118201).



2. Total cost of activities: 2,776€

6. Overall Assessment

Planned activities were achieved thanks to a good overall collaboration between EFSA, ECHA and IUCLID sub-group participants. Positive feedback was received by Member States and Industry representatives during the meetings.

7. Supporting document(s)

[Agenda of the 6th meeting of the Pesticide Steering network – IUCLID sub-group](#)

[Minutes of the 6th meeting of the Pesticide Steering network – IUCLID sub-group](#)

[Agenda of the 7th meeting of the Pesticide Steering network – IUCLID sub-group](#)

[Minutes of the 7th meeting of the Pesticide Steering network – IUCLID sub-group](#)

[Agenda of the 8th meeting of the Pesticide Steering network – IUCLID sub-group](#)

[Minutes of the 8th meeting of the Pesticide Steering network – IUCLID sub-group](#)



ANNEXES

TABLE 1- BUDGET INFORMATION AND NUMBER OF MEETINGS IN 2023

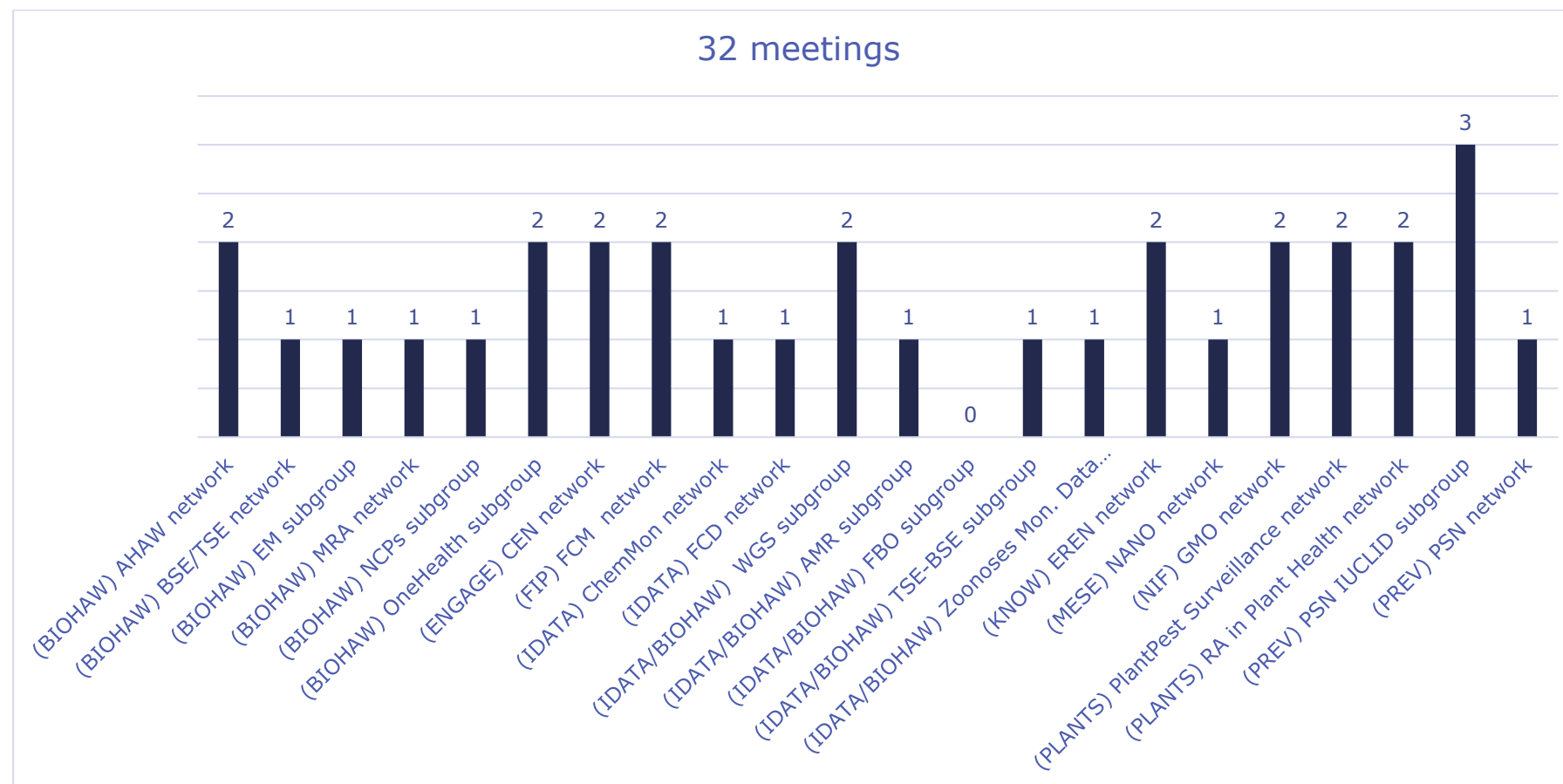
SMU	NETWORK name	2023 initial budget	2023 total cost of activities	2023 nr of meetings
BIOHAW	Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare (AHAW) network	€ 23,650	€ 15,317	2
BIOHAW	Echinococcus Multilocularis subgroup of the Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare network	€ 150	€ 150	1
BIOHAW	National Contact Points established under Art 20 Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009 subgroup of the Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare network	€ 8,016	€ 7,544	1
BIOHAW	One Health subgroup of the Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare network	€ 13,840	€ 8,760	2
BIOHAW	Microbiological Risk Assessment (MRA) network	€ 7,500	€ 7,070	1
BIOHAW	BSE/TSE network	€ 15,000	€ 0.00	1
ENGAGE (HoD Office)	Communications Expert Network (CEN)	€ 10,430	€ 7,196	2
PLANTS	Plant Pest surveillance network	€ 38,648	€ 33,875	2
PLANTS	Risk Assessment in Plant Health (PLH) network	€ 27,148	€ 16,763	2
FIP	Food Contact Material (FCM) network	€ 20,000	€ 17,760	2
IDATA	Chemical Monitoring Data Collection network	€ 17,280	€ 14,123	1
IDATA	Food Consumption Data (FCD) network	€ 19,056	€ 9,554	1
IDATA/BIOHAW	Zoonoses Monitoring Data network	€ 13,240	€ 11,298	1
IDATA/BIOHAW	Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) subgroup of the Zoonoses Monitoring Data network	€ 7,990	€ 8,756	1
IDATA/BIOHAW	Foodborne outbreaks (FBO) subgroup of the Zoonoses Monitoring Data network	€ 0	€ 0	0



IDATA/BIOHAW	TSE subgroup of the Zoonoses Monitoring Data network	€ 600	€ 0	1
IDATA/BIOHAW	Whole genome sequencing (WGS) subgroup of the Zoonoses Monitoring Data network (incl in WGS Joint metg with FBO)	€ 15,000	€ 9,527	2
KNOW	Emerging Risks Exchange (EREN) network	€ 15,510	€ 13,538	2
MESE	Risk Assessment of Nanotechnologies in Food Feed (NANO) network	€ 14,778	€ 12,397	1
NIF	Risk Assessment of GMOs (Environmental Risk Assessment + Food and Feed) network	€ 10,470	€ 8,118	2
PREV	Pesticide Steering Network (PSN)	€ 0	€ 0	1
PREV	Pesticide Steering Network – IUCLID subgroup	€ 7,784	€ 2,776	3
TOTALS		€ 286,090	€ 204,522	32



TABLE 2- NUMBER OF NETWORK MEETINGS IN 2023



One meeting of the Foodborne outbreaks (FBO) subgroup network was jointly organised with the Whole genome sequencing (WGS) subgroup network.



TABLE 3- NUMBER OF MEETING DAYS PER NETWORK IN 2023

