

Legal and Policy Affairs Unit

REPORT

Pre-Accession Seminar on the EFSA Advisory Forum and Management Board

24-25 April 2008, Izmir, Turkey

Objective of the seminar

The topic of the second seminar within the Pre-Accession Programme 2008 for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Croatia was the EFSA Advisory Forum and Management Board and it took place in Izmir, Turkey on 24-25 April.

Within the seminar the role of the Management Board in evolving of EFSA's strategy and future direction as well as assuring EFSA's independence from the political process was presented. The Advisory Forum is the main formal interface between EFSA and the national authorities in the Member States and therefore this programme gave special consideration to the role of Member States in the Advisory Forum and the work of the AF working groups as well as information on the scientific networks and ongoing projects. The Candidate Countries presented their food safety systems and shared their views on importance of cooperation with EFSA and the Member States.

Audience

The number of participants from the two Candidate Countries was 36 (26 experts from Turkey and 10 experts from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). Different authorities were represented in the seminar as follows:

From Turkey:

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs - General Directorate of Protection and Control; Department of Animal Movement and Quarantine, Department of Food and Feed Registration Services, Department of Food Control Services, Department of Public Health Services, Department of Aquaculture Services, Department of Animal Movement and Quarantine Services, Department of Drug and Equipment Services, Department of Plant Protection Services, General Directorate of Agricultural Research; Ankara Provincial Control Lab., Central Institute of Food Control and Research – Bursa, Institute of Agricultural Research – Kahramanmaraş, Institute of Research on Olive of Bornova, Ministry of Health - Refik Saydam Hygiene Center, TÜBİTAK Marmara Research Center - Food Institute, EGE UNIVERSITY Department of Food Engineering.

From the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia:

Ministry of Health - Food Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Water Economy - Veterinary Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy - Phytosanitary Directorate, Institute for Public Health Protection - Kumanovo, Institute for Public Health Protection - Skopje.

Interpretation

A simultaneous Interpretation (to/from English, Turkish and Macedonian) was provided.

General considerations

The seminar started with a welcome speech by *Nurseren Budak*, Department of Food and Feed Registration Service, Head of the Food Codex Department in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Republic of Turkey. In the continuation of the programme representatives from competent authorities from Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were welcomed by *Bart Sangster*, Vice-Chair of the EFSA's Management Board who at the same time chaired the meeting. The chair gave an introduction to EFSA and presented the role of the Management Board in evolving of EFSA's strategy and future direction as well as assuring EFSA's independence from the political process.

The programme continued with the presentation on EFSA Advisory Forum purpose, role and composition by *Gian Luca Bonduri*, Senior Assistant to the EFSA Advisory Forum. The participants could hear more about the Advisory Forum as the main formal interface between EFSA and the national bodies and about possibilities of participation of representatives from Candidate Countries in Advisory Forum meetings within the EFSA Pre-Accession Programme as observers.

As this programme gave special consideration to the role of Member States in the Advisory Forum the next speaker was *Leif Busk*, Chief Scientist in the Swedish National Food Administration and a Member of the EFSA's Advisory Forum who presented the Swedish view on the work of the Advisory Forum. The speaker presented Member States' expectation on EFSA and importance of EFSA's support especially to small countries in areas of high national interest. The cooperation between EFSA and the Member States will be further improved by establishment of national Focal Points. In his concluding remarks he pointed out that EFSA, as a producer of high quality assessments vital for Food Safety work in Europe, meets the expectations of the Member States.

Within the programme of this seminar the ongoing scientific projects coordinated by the Advisory Forum was explained. *Gian Luca Bonduri* presented the Advisory Forum ESCO WG - fostering harmonised risk assessment approaches in Member States. The speaker presented the latest developments in setting up of a database of scientific experts in Europe, work of Working Group on Emerging Risks, Safety of Assessment of Botanical Preparations used as Food Supplements and the European Network of Food Consumption Database Managers.

The next speaker, *Leif Busk* presented the cooperation between EFSA and the Member States with an example of the Advisory Forum Steering Group on Scientific Cooperation and a project on analysis of risk and benefits of fortification of food with Folic Acid.

The presentation of Folic Acid Project as an example of the cooperation coordinated by EFSA Advisory Forum was appreciated a lot by representatives from the two Candidate Countries who took the opportunity to ask questions and discuss with the speakers.

The second day of the seminar started with a presentation of the work and importance of the EFSA AF Working Groups. The Head of EFSA IT Unit, *Thierry Beniflah* presented the role and work of the AF Working Group on IT. The speaker presented several projects this Unit has been participating in by supporting the work of AF, Communication WG, Focal Points, Scientific Expert Database and Article 36 of the Founding Regulation. The IT Unit is at the same time underlying technology for implementing of the Strategy on Cooperation and exchange of scientific data. During the exchange of information session which followed after the presentation possibility of financing of IT equipment in Candidate Countries competent institutions by the Pre-Accession Programme was discussed.

In order to make this seminar a two way communication and information exchange the representatives from the Candidate Countries competent authorities presented the structure and institutional cooperation within their national food safety systems. They also shared their views on cooperation with the EU Member States and EFSA. Deputy Director of the Croatian Food Agency, *Andrea Gross-Bošković* presented the food safety system in Croatia and the work of the Croatian Food Agency. She gave her views on the cooperation with EFSA, the Member States and the Candidate Countries and presented ongoing projects Croatian Food Agency is participating in at the EU level.

The work of the Advisory Forum Working group on Communication was presented by *Karen Talbot*, Communications Advisor in the EFSA's Communications Directorate Executive Office. She stressed the importance of cooperation with the Candidate countries and participation of representatives from those countries in the work of this AF WG.

Macedonian viewpoint of the importance of the cooperation and networking with the EU Member States was presented by *prof. Stanislava Lazarevska*, Director of the Food Directorate, Ministry of Health, EFSA's Pre-Accession Programme National Coordinator. Among the activities the Food Directorate is involved in the Director stressed the harmonisation of national legislation with the Acquis Communautaire, implementation of food contaminants monitoring programmes and development of the RASFF system. Prof. Lazarevska explained that risk assessment and risk communication in Macedonia are in a stage of development and within this programme they expect substantial support from EFSA in this sense.

Food safety system in Turkey and the views on importance of the cooperation and networking with the EU Member States was presented by *prof. Nevzat Artik* Deputy Director of the Directorate General of Protection and Control, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the Republic of Turkey. He presented the food safety legislative framework, the structure and institutional cooperation and participation of competent authorities from Turkey in international projects.

Conclusions:

The seminar ended with the Conclusions and Discussion session where *prof. Bart Sangster* made an overview of the two days meeting and shared his views on importance of the cooperation between EFSA, Member States and the Pre-Accession Countries. This seminar gave opportunity both for representatives from Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on one side and EFSA and Member States on the other to exchange information and experiences in order to support the development of food safety systems in the beneficiary countries and to prepare their institutions for active participation in EFSA after the accession.