

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE AND ADVISORY FORUM UNIT

Parma, 04 January, 2010
EFSA/SGC/M/2009/296/RES/FIN

Minutes

**7TH MEETING OF THE STEERING GROUP ON COOPERATION
DUBLIN (IRELAND), 16 OCTOBER, 2009**

Chair: *Bernhard Berger*, Head of Scientific Cooperation Unit, European Food Safety Authority.

MEMBERS THE ADVISORY FORUM

Czech Republic	<i>Vaclav Stejskal</i>
Denmark	<i>Arne Büchert</i>
Malta	<i>Flavia Zammit</i>
Hungary	<i>Arpad Ambrus</i>
Ireland	<i>Alan Reilly</i>
Netherlands	<i>Evert Schouten</i>
Slovak Republic	<i>Zuzana Bírošová</i>
Sweden	<i>Leif Busk</i>
United Kingdom	<i>Alison Gleadle</i>
European Commission	<i>Jeannie Vergnettes</i>

MEMBERS OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

SC Vice-Chair	<i>Ada Knaap</i>
SC Vice-Chair	<i>David Lovell</i>

EFSA STAFF

<i>Stefano Cappé</i>
<i>Ermanno Cavalli</i>
<i>Miriam Jacobs</i>
<i>Elena Marani</i>
<i>Jeffrey Moon</i>
<i>Torben Nilsson</i>

1 WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE MEETING

Bernhard Berger opened the meeting by welcoming members and congratulated Alan Reilly on the 10 year anniversary of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland

Apologies were noted from Hubert Deluyker, Djien Liem and Vittorio Silano.

David Lovell, Vice Chair of the Scientific Committee was welcomed to his first meeting.

Bernhard Berger noted that the minutes of the last meeting were approved by written Procedure and circulated to members.

2 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Bernhard Berger proposed that Item 5 (Further Proposals on New Work) and Item 6 (Strengthening Cooperation: Medium Term Planning) be taken together.

This was agreed and the Agenda was adopted without further change.

3 ESCO WORKING GROUP UPDATE: ISOFLAVONES

Miriam Jacobs presented a comprehensive overview of the activities of the ESCO Working Group on Isoflavones, outlining some of the difficulties including the unexpected workload and problems identifying the appropriate expertise needed in order to complete the work.

Miriam Jacobs proposed to the group that the deadline for reporting be extended until September, 2010.

The Steering Group on Cooperation (SGC) welcomed the detail provided on the working of the group and the mechanisms involved and supported the continuation of work as planned.

Sweden noted that that the systematic approach being taken in the work was not the usual way for an ESCO working group and supported the proposed means of completing the work.

The Netherlands noted that the mandate underestimated the work involved and that additional expertise was needed and should be provided. The Netherlands also suggested that if interim deliverables could be delivered earlier, this would be welcome. Miriam Jacobs indicated that a database of isoflavones could possibly be an interim deliverable, but suggested that other aspects of the work would need to remain confidential until the completion of the work.

Denmark requested clarification on how the additional expertise was to be identified. Miriam Jacobs indicated that the current expertise was being sought from known experts, but that if it was not possible to identify the required expertise then a further request would be made to Member States (MS) through the Advisory Forum.

In response to questions from the group, Miriam Jacobs indicated that much of the work related to intake by infants from infant formulae and that it was not intended to undertake any data analysis or meta analysis, but rather rely on that which had already been completed. A full risk assessment was not being carried out, only a hazard assessment.

The progress on the work was welcomed and there was agreement by the SGC for an extension until September 2010 for the completion of the work while remaining within the terms of reference of the mandate. The SGC signalled support in identifying additional experts and agreed that first EFSA should try to recruit additional experts using the procedures in place at EFSA for this purpose, before sending a further request for assistance to the MS. The Chair also clarified that the report of the Working Group would form the basis for the Executive Director of EFSA to decide on any further work in this area.

4 HARMONISATION OF RA APPROACHES:

UPDATE ON DATA COLLECTION

Stefano Cappé presented an update on the food classification project, noting the various different and incompatible systems of food classifications for varied purposes and the past and current initiatives within the EU and internationally to try and provide a harmonised classification system.

The SGC agreed that the task was important, but understood the difficulties involved in trying to find a harmonised system, noting the purposes (such as zoonosis, pesticide residue and food consumption data) for which the various systems had been developed. The Group also noted that a range of other initiatives were also currently underway involving ESTAT and the WHO and it was important not to duplicate such other efforts and to coordinate activities wherever possible. Stefano Cappé reaffirmed that the work being undertaken was to conduct an analysis of the existing systems with a view to try and find a means of accessing the data from the systems for a variety of different uses.

It was noted by the group that until the Working Group had convened and commenced work, it was difficult to provide further details on the food classification system to be developed. The Group also noted that EFSA's Colloquium on food classification, planned for 2010 will provide additional support for the project.

The Group considered the proposed work was ambitious, but important to undertake and there was a need to coordinate with other similar initiatives such as those of ESTAT and WHO. Bernhard Berger also clarified that any significant changes to the mandate would require the agreement of the Scientific Committee and the Advisory Forum.

IT WORKING GROUP

Ermanno Cavalli presented a summary of the recent activities of the IT Working Group on the sharing of data, indicating the main aspect of MS being able to access data from EFSA electronically.

Ireland noted that the work paralleled what is being attempted at national level and recognised the difficulties with the task.

The SGC noted that the task of being able to 'report back' data to Member States was a welcome initiative despite the challenges presented and looked forward to further progress on the project.

5 FURTHER PROPOSALS FOR NEW WORK AND STRENGTHENING COOPERATION: MEDIUM TERM PLANNING

Bernhard Berger opened the discussion on Strengthening Cooperation by referring to the 'Moving Ahead' document which had been presented at the AF where it had been agreed the discussions would continue with the SGC and emphasised that the overall objective of the discussions was to identify ways of better sharing the workload with the given resources.

During the discussion it was evident that there were likely to be difficulties for many Member States to share information on resources and work plans. It was recognised that Member States have organised their risk assessment activities in different ways and that the varying organisational structures do not necessarily allow breaking down of information on risk assessment activities to the level requested. It was also noted that smaller MS relied more on a collaborative approach to maximise expertise and quality output, but were able to develop 'niche' areas of expertise.

The SGC noted that there were many examples where expertise was being pooled, most significantly by Member States providing support to the European risk assessment system by sending experts to the meetings at EFSA and the tools for assisting collaboration such as the Article 36 grants and procurements and the

IEP were being developed. The SGC wished to continue the discussion involving more MS, in particular the larger countries.

It was proposed that in discussing the way forward, it would be useful to consider the experience from those systems already in place in particular the evaluation report on Article 36 activities due at the end of 2009.

The Group also expressed the need to reflect on its own role in the mid term planning process at the next meeting.

Bernhard Berger concluded that the results of the discussions would be referred to the Advisory Forum and Scientific Committee for consideration and further guidance. The matter would then be discussed further at the next SGC meeting.

8 AOB

No other matters were raised.

9 CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

Bernhard Berger thanked participants for their attendance and closed the meeting.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the SGC will take place on 20 April, 2010 in Bratislava, Slovakia.