

## Index

- 1 Background
- 2 What is meant by a conflict of interest
- 3 Basic principles of EFSA's approach to independence
- 4 Main features of EFSA's Independence Policy

## 1 Background

In June 2024, EFSA's Management Board approved a **new Independence Policy**, further strengthening the way in which the Authority manages the interests of its scientific experts and all professionals with whom it works.

The new Policy builds on EFSA's experience of managing interests over the last 20 years and is designed to strike the appropriate balance between **attracting the best experts** to work with EFSA while **protecting it against undue influence**.

## 2 What is meant by a conflict of interest

*"Any situation where a person has an interest that may compromise, or be reasonably perceived as compromising, his or her capacity to act independently and in the public interest in relation to the subject of the work performed at EFSA"*

## 3 Basic principles of EFSA's approach to independence

- Prior to working with EFSA, **all experts must submit Declarations of Interest (Dols)** that cover the previous five years.
- Experts must **update their Dols** at least once a year and every time a new interest emerges or a declared interest changes.
- EFSA screens Dols to identify potential conflicts of interest related to an expert's **professional activities and financial interests**.
- EFSA carries out **annual compliance and veracity checks** on a sample of experts' Dols.
- All Dols are **published on EFSA's website**.
- **External evaluations or audits** are carried out by the European Court of Auditors and the Internal Audit Service of the European Commission.

## 4 Main features of EFSA's Independence Policy

- Experts who are **employed by the food or feed industry or NGOs**, or with financial investments linked to businesses that are impacted by EFSA's outputs, are prevented from working with EFSA.
- Two-year **"cooling-off" periods** for a wide range of other professional interests if they overlap with the type of work the expert will carry out for EFSA.
- Requirements for experts to declare the **financial impact of their interests** on their annual earnings.
- **Research funding** from the private sector that benefits experts should not exceed 25% of their research budget if it relates to EFSA's activities.
- Requirements for individuals from **partner organisations designated by Member States** (Article 36 organisations\*) to be subject to the same transparency and independence requirements as members of EFSA's scientific Working Groups, when the activities are the same.
- EFSA's Executive Director reviews the **Dols of Management Board members** and can take preventive measures if needed.
- Measures for **breaches of the independence rules**, up to dismissal from EFSA scientific groups and a ban on working in the future with EFSA.
- Wide use of **IT tools** to facilitate the processing of Dols.

\* <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/partnersnetworks/scorg>