

92nd MEETING OF THE EFSA ADVISORY FORUM



22 May 2024: 9:00-17:30

23 May 2024: 9:00-12:30

MINUTES

Location: Parma, Italy / Web-conference

Members	Attendance	
	In person	Online
Austria (AT)	Klemens Fuchs	
Belgium (BE)		Axel Mauroy
Bulgaria (BG)		Donka Popova
Croatia (HR)	Apologies	
Cyprus (CY)	Rebecca Kokkinofta	
Czech Republic (CZ)	Jitka Gotzova	
Denmark (DK)	Dorte Lau Baggesen	
Estonia (EE)	Mari Reinik	
Finland (FI)	Apologies	
France (FR)		Matthieu Schuler
France (FR)		Salma Elreedy
Germany (DE)		Andreas Hensel
Greece (EL)	Apologies	
Hungary (HU)	Ákos Bernard Józwiak	
Iceland (IS)	Apologies	
Ireland (IE)	Wayne Anderson	
Italy (IT)	Alessandra Perrella	
Latvia (LV)		Vadims Bartkevics
Lithuania (LT)		Jurgita Bakaseniene
Luxembourg (LU)	Caroline Merten	
Malta (MT)		Mark Cassar
Netherlands (NL)	Dick Sijm	
Norway (NO)	Harald Gjein	
Norway (NO)		Danika Grahek-Ogden
Poland (PL)	Jacek Postupolski	
Portugal (PT)	Filipa De Vasconcelos	
Portugal (PT)		Luis Lourenço
Romania (RO)		Monica Mariana Neagu
Slovak Republic (SK)		Katarina Fašiangová
Slovenia (SI)	Urška Blaznik	
Spain (ES)	Icía Fierros	
Sweden (SE)	Helena Brunnkvist	



Observers	Attendance	
	In person	Online
Albania (AL)	Amarilda Keli	
Bosnia and Herzegovina (BA)	Dzemil Hajric	
Kosovo (XK)* ¹	Apologies	
Montenegro (ME)		Mirjana Lekic
Republic of North Macedonia (MK)		Jasmin Hadji Vasilev
Serbia (SR)		Tamara Boskovic
Switzerland (CH)		Katharina Stärk
Türkiye (TR)	Dilber Ersin	
European Commission DG SANTE - E.3 (Observer)		Anastasia Alvizou
European Commission DG SANTE - E.3 (Observer)		Athanasios Raikos
EFSA Representatives		
Bernhard Url (Chair)	Georges Kass (speaker)	
Barbara Gallani (Co-Chair)	Agnès Rortais (Speaker)	
Nick Kriz (Co-Chair)	Frank Verdonk (Speaker)	
Guilhem de Seze (Co-Chair)	Francesca Baldinelli (Speaker)	
Carlos Das Neves (Co-Chair)	Beatriz Guerra (Speaker)	
Victoria Villamar (HoU ENREL)	Lina Mur (Speaker)	
Fabrizio Abbinante (HoU iDATA)	Cinzia Percivaldi (Speaker)	
James Ramsay (HoU COM)	Virginia Spurio Salvi (CORSER)	
Sérgio Potier Rodeia (Team Leader, Community Management)	Federica Amiconi (Advisory Forum Secretariat)	
Maria Azevedo Mendes (Advisory Forum Secretariat)	Andrea Laroni (Advisory Forum Secretariat)	
External participants		
Juana Bustos (Centro Nacional de Alimentación-Spain)	Aivars Bērziņš (Chair of EFSA Management Board)	
Anneluise Mader (BfR)	Simon Noa (BeeLife)	

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence



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Item 1: Opening and welcome address

EFSA's ED Bernhard Url opened the 92nd Meeting of the Advisory Forum (AF) as the Chair of the session by welcoming the members of the AF in Parma. The meeting included participants from 32 countries and the European Commission (EC). Prof. Aivars Bērziņš, Chair of the EFSA Management Board joined as well physically the meeting.

Item 2: Adoption of agenda and AF Thematic Fair

The plenary adopted the agenda of the meeting, as proposed. The Chair informed the plenary that the [minutes](#) of the 91st Advisory Forum Meeting had been published on the 26th of April. Before giving the floor to Aivars Bērziņš, Bernhard Url informed the plenary that AF members are invited to attend the AF Thematic Fair that will take place as of the lunch break till the coffee break alongside the day. The fair aimed to enhance networking while giving visibility and providing relevant information on topics considered of interest both to EFSA and MS. AF members had the opportunity to visit a number of thematic stands and further explore ideas for cooperation and partnership. The thematic stations were about partnership, scientific outsourcing and collaboration, Focal-Points tailor-made activities, capacity-building, novel foods, plant health and the DiCo2 Project, a new digital platform to share RA plans and support partnership-building.

Item 3: Update from the Management Board

The Chair gave the floor to Prof. **Aivars Bērziņš** (Chair of Management Board) who congratulated Bernhard Url for his appointment as EFSA's acting Executive-Director as of 1 June 2024, following the MB's decision in February 2024 not to proceed with the nomination of a candidate, which resulted in the MB request to the European Commission to relaunch the EFSA Executive Director recruitment procedure. The second point mentioned was about the review of EFSA's independence policy and the outcome of the external evaluation carried out in Autumn 2023. The evaluation report highlighted that EFSA has a robust system in place that ensures a satisfactory level of independence and prevention of conflicts of interests. The report includes 21 recommendations suggesting improvements in the areas such as communication, balance between ex-ante and ex-post checks, enhanced use of IT tools, consistent application of independence requirements, etc. The report is available online on EFSA's website. Regarding the next steps, Prof. Bērziņš informed that on 30 May the subgroup is expected to endorse the draft of the revised EFSA independence policy, which will be presented for possible adoption by the MB on 20 June 2024. On partnership with the MSs for risk assessment, Prof. Bērziņš shared information on the reflections that are being carried out by the MB and highlighted the factors enabling partnership. France commented on an important achievement finalised by the MB: the recent renewal of the EFSA Scientific Committee and Scientific Panels. On partnerships with MSs for risk assessment, France also inquired about the idea of "partnerships hubs / expertise centres" and whether this approach may be explored by EFSA. Germany inquired about a possible joint MB-AF meeting in the future. Finally, on the external evaluation's recommendation concerning improvement in the area of communication, Barbara Gallani informed that the Communication Unit will ensure that an information pack is prepared explaining the differences with the previous policy, but also that EFSA really counts on the role that MB, AF and FP Members have to play not just in the dissemination of the new policy, but really in its explanation at national level.

Item 4: Update on the Advisory Group on Data

The Chair gave the floor to **Akos Jozwiak** (AF Member from Hungary) to provide an update on the recent topics discussed at the last meeting of the Advisory Group on Data (AGoD), starting from the development by EFSA of an internal AI hub for communication, the drafting of a document on AI in collaboration with the EC and the launch of the GPT@JRC, a platform developed by the Joint Research Center (JRC) to allow the EC and its Agencies to access a safe GPT version for AI savvy users. He informed then about EFSA's Data and Evidence Programme encouraging the MS to join this activity to help EFSA in building these different tools, applications, procedures



envisaged by the programme. The second project presented at the AGoD meeting is called “Rebuild project” which is EFSA’s strategic response to the evolving requirements in data collection and management which aims to enhance capabilities to re-engineer data collection and analysis at EFSA. MS’s support to the activity is very welcomed in the context of the Focal-Point tailor-made activities. The third project mentioned was the EFSA Data Outreach project aimed at improving data discovery, access, interoperability, re-use and data literacy. An objective of the project is as well the development of specific pipelines for EU common data platform for chemicals. Akos Jozwiak then provided an overview of the progress of the FP TM activities and on AGoD recommendations. He reminded that a new AGoD mandate has started, implying a review of the multi-annual roadmap for which a workshop was organized in Parma to discuss the restructuring of the subgroups, the ownership and the priority actions. The plenary was informed as well about the launch of the AGoD webpage as part of EFSA’s website. On the way forward, the plenary was informed that AGoD will provide advice for the newly submitted FP TM activities in the area of data already as of this June/July and finalize the roadmap and the subgroup resetting. Finally, the multi-annual plan will be finalized by Q3 while in October a Data Conference on “Data readiness for AI” is planned to take place back-to-back with a Data Collection Networks’ meeting.

Fabrizio Abbinante (Head of IDATA unit) complemented the presentation by saying that all those projects aim to modernize the full data management at EFSA from data ingestion to data visualization, and this is done not only for humans, but also for machines, because the future will be about making data ready for AI. Thanks to the FP TM activities this job is carried out by defining clear rules and mechanism by which EFSA and MS can co-develop solutions together in a secure environment. Netherlands stressed the importance that as many MS as possible get onboard in this project and the importance to clearly stress that MS make available capacities to join these projects. Portugal supported the participation in these consortia, stressing the positive side of getting good results with a limited financial effort, and encouraging especially small countries to join these projects as a new paradigm of working at the convergence of natural and IT science. The Netherlands invited the chair of the Management Board to address the issue of data as a need-to-have at the level of the Management Board.

Item 5: Focal Point Operational Framework 2023-2027

5.1. Focal Point tailor-made activities: state of play

The Chair gave the floor to **Barbara Gallani** (ENGAGE Head of Department) who provided an overview of the recently submitted tailor-made activities. Overall, 17 TM proposals were submitted by 23 countries, 11 new proposals and 6 follow-up activities. It was mentioned that considering an available budget of 4 million for 2025 and with an overall value of the proposals received worth of 8 million, not all proposals will manage to receive funding. Akos Jozwiak presented the second part of the presentation focused on the revised simplified AF criteria for the assessment process of TM activities; the role of the AF Trio and of AGOD, that will be the responsible consultation body for the data-related proposals. MSs recommended that alignment with Presidency’s priorities is not given undue prominence in the Trio’s considerations. EFSA’s preliminary assessment results will be shared with the AF Trio. The Trio will meet in June and July. By the end of September both FP and AF Members will receive feedback about the results of the overall assessment. At the end of the presentation Luxembourg inquired about the possibility to outsource an activity to the organization of neighboring country in the framework of the TM activities. France raised the issue of sub-contracting by the FP to other Article 36 organisations (when the FP institution does not have in its remit all the required competencies for carrying out the TMA): when it comes to responsibility, the FP can ensure that deliverables are submitted on time by the sub-contracting organisation but the FP cannot be held liable and responsible for the quality of the deliverables. This issue needs to be reflected upon.

5.2. Focal Points’ recent engagements: main takeaways

Sérgio Potier Rodeia (Community Management Team Leader in the ENREL Unit) debriefed the plenary on the recent engagement activities taking place on 24-25 April at EFSA’s HQ in Parma: the Joint FP-CEN (Communication Expert Network) Workshop on Coordinated Communication, the



54th FP Network meeting and the EFSA and FP Networking Fair. The joint workshop was attended also by MS Communication Coordinators (MSCC) and it aimed to support building coordinated communication process in MS by analyzing target audiences, reflecting on dissemination optimization and learning how to build national networks. The main highlights discussed at the 54th FP Meeting included the impact of FP activities on EFSA strategic objectives, the results from principal activities' implementation, a debrief of the tailor-made activity on NAMs implemented by Norway and information on the crisis preparedness workshop. On the EFSA and FP networking fair, Sergio stressed how this new format of bringing together MS representatives and EFSA scientific and engagement officers has proved to be very successful. As also demonstrated by the satisfaction survey, the event collected 95% overall satisfaction and the added value of repeating similar type of events in the future was highlighted.

Item 6: Partnerships

6.1. Partnership call for the assessment of Novel Food applications

Carlos Das Neves, Chair of the first part of the Partnership bloc gave the floor to **Georges Kass**, (Novel Foods Safety Team Leader in the NIF unit) to introduce the elements of the EFSA's forthcoming call on the assessment of novel food applications. EFSA considers novel food any type of food that was not consumed before 15 May 1997. This group includes many types of substances, ranging from new molecular structures to food consisting of, isolated from or produced from plants, animals or algae to engineered nanomaterials. The presentation stressed that since 2018 a huge increase in the number of novel food dossiers coming to EFSA occurred, mainly because of the change of the legislation requiring EFSA to handle the risk assessment of these dossiers; in the past this was done at the MS level. With the launch of the call for the assessment of novel food application that will happen in mid-June, EFSA is looking at partnering with MS and getting together MS organizations to benefit from their expertise and capacity to work on these dossiers. The project will run over a period of 4 years and its envelope is worth €3.5 Million. Finally, an invitation to attend the stand on novel foods was addressed to all MS to get to know more about this partnership during the AF Thematic Fair.

During the discussion, Ireland inquired whether it may represent a conflict of interest if risk managers from the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) sitting in the Commission's working group are allowed to join this partnership call. Czech Republic asked if applicants would be able to access this type of information. It was clarified that the call was open only for Art.36 organisations that, in case of joining the consortia, will not have the possibility to work as consultants for applicants, because of confidentiality requirements. Germany inquired about the ownership and confidentiality of the data. The European Commission clarified that the specific Art.36 organization joining the consortia will have access to the confidential data, but not automatically all Art.36 organisations.

Action 1: MS to disseminate the call at the national level and consider forming or joining a consortium to provide the expertise needed for the assessment of applications received.

6.2. The EU Pollinator Hub: a platform for sharing data on bee/pollinator health in EU.

The Chair gave the floor to **Agnès Rortais** (Ecotoxicology Scientific Officer in the PLANTS unit) who presented the EU Pollinator Hub, a platform designed for sharing data on bee and pollinator's health in Europe. Due to the large scales of bees and insect pollinators losses globally caused by multiple factors such as land management, land cover configuration, invasive alien species, pesticides use, and climate change, in 2017 the European Parliament (EP) asked EFSA to organize a conference to discuss how to strengthen harmonised and standardised data-collection and data-sharing on bee health in Europe. Based on the discussions of the conference, it was recommended to establish a Bee partnership in the EU. Following a public procurement and thanks to the EC funding provided back in 2019, the design of the platform was awarded to the BeeLife Brussels-based non-governmental organisation. They provided a well-designed and user-friendly platform offering data curation, peer review services, harmonized protocols for monitoring bee health, and insect pollinator populations at both local and national levels that can bring awareness,



understanding on pollinator data trends, and mitigation options in Europe. The platform is fed with data from the agrochemical and honey packaging industry, national EU scientific authorities, academia and practitioners, but also, farmers, veterinarians and beekeepers who have been extremely active by trying to connect the platform with smart devices. Given the need to find a solution for the long-term sustainability of the platform, the presentation concluded with a plea to MS to advocate for the importance of this platform at national level with Ministries and competent authorities having a remit on bee health. The AF Member from Austria, Netherlands, Slovenia, and Sweden were contacted beforehand to inquire about a potential support from these countries in this regard.

Sweden informed that the Swedish Chemical Agency is currently working with similar projects where their data could well fit into this platform. Austria as well mentioned that bee health falls under the remit of AGES, thus there is full support for the project's continuation. France mentioned that it was not clear whether the EU Reference laboratory for Bee Health and the National Reference Laboratories are expected to disseminate information about this platform in their countries. France also commented that when there is an open platform, a balance has to be found between how strict the platform is on the data quality versus how "open" it is in catching data. The Netherlands suggested that it would be useful to have further information on the relationship between the bees, the populations and its environmental landscape. Finally, Agnès Rortais informed the plenary that the current EFSA's funding will be sustained until October 2024 and MS are invited to make suggestions to ensure the sustainability of this platform beyond this date.

Action 2: MS to inquire about institutions potentially interested in supporting and providing long-term sustainability to the EU's pollinator Hub.

Item 7: Engaging in Risk Assessment

7.1 Report on EFSA mission to the USA

Guilhem De Sèze (ASSESS Head of Department) took over the chairing and started the afternoon session with a debrief on key highlights on EFSA's Mission to the USA taking place in April 2024. The mission included visits to key US institutions such as the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the US Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the EU Delegation to the US. The mission was organised upon the invitation by the European Commission and the FDA. The last time that an EFSA delegation visited the US was in 2019 as part of a broader mission which also included Canada. Alongside the visit to the USDA's Chief Scientist Office, key topics of common priority such as One Health approach, Nutrition and healthy diets, social science and governance were discussed. It was agreed to strengthen cooperation on scientific foresight, identifying common research gaps and to hold a yearly meeting among the Chief Scientist's Offices. During the visit to USDA's Animal and Plant health inspection service (APHIS) similar issues arose when it comes to data collection and wildlife surveillance in terms of animal welfare. The discussion showed synergies also on how to bring a quantitative aspect into the animal welfare risk assessment. Guilhem stressed that from EFSA's side there was a particular interest in the recent Horse Protection Act because EFSA has just received from the EC a mandate to look at the welfare of horses and related species. In terms of plant health, an interesting aspect was to know about what the US is doing on interception data, which are data coming from border control as a signal for pests that are developing outside of the border but could potentially spread within the borders. When it comes to the discussion with FDA, questions such as allergens in novel food, ultra processed food, nanomaterials and methodology, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and New Approach Methods (NAMs) were discussed. It was agreed to collaborate on new Biotechnology techniques, to continue Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) discussions on outbreaks from outside the EU/USA and to hold a common workshop on microbiome at the end of 2024. As regards EPA, the discussion turned around PFAS, Environmental Risk Assessment, NAMs and alternatives to pesticides. It was interesting to understand US work on new biobased pesticides for which a dedicated unit has been created within EPA in order to study this type of active substances. Finally, the mission wrapped-up at the EU Delegation to the U.S which was an opportunity to meet also the Agricultural Attaché from the German Embassy to the U.S and to exchange with colleagues from the BfR that explained



their international cooperation strategy and the process of reviewing their memorandum of understanding (MoU) with FDA.

During the discussion, France indicated that international cooperation (i.e., beyond Europe) is of importance to ANSES, for example on topics discussed with FDA such as NAMs (both as a national agency and as coordinator of PARC – *Partnership for the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals*) and pointed out that ANSES hosted a delegation from FDA at the beginning of May. France also pointed out a FDA scientist is member of the PARC International Board which is another element of common interest. It was also highlighted that in the future there could be a dedicated section of the AF meetings to exchange on international cooperation activities. France suggested that the EU Cross agency One Health taskforce's a Framework for action 2024-2026), published recently, could be presented in an upcoming AF meeting.

Action 4: EFSA to forecast a presentation on the One Health taskforce, and the joined framework for action recently launched, in one of the next AF meetings.

7.2. EFSA Networks 3-year evaluation report

The Chair passed the floor to **Nik Kriz** (ENABLE Head of Department) to provide an overview of the status of the evaluation of EFSA Networks. Based on the Management Board (MB) Decision, EFSA is required to evaluate the work of its networks (14 Networks and 8 sub-groups) at least every three years, beginning in 2021. The outcome of such evaluations should be reported to the AF and MB, the AF should provide their non-binding recommendation on either the continuation or discontinuation of each Network and sub-group and finally the MB shall decide. Nick Kriz informed the plenary that in order to carry out this task the evaluation was outsourced through a Framework Contract provided by the EC. The analysis focused on the criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, adequacy and impact, addressing 5 evaluation questions and applying 22 judgement criteria. The findings are based on an online survey, interviews with Network Coordinators, and desk research. The overall feedback found positive outcomes, and the unique opportunity to collaborate, share information, RA methodologies, and foster collaboration among EFSA and MSs. The evaluation provided also information on areas of improvement, namely on improving the criteria and the process for establishing network and subgroups, improving the process and criteria of experts' nomination, optimise the technological tools and the sharing of knowledge and best-practices. The next steps imply that AF Members will be requested to provide their non-binding recommendation by 15 July and EFSA will reflect of the improvements emerged from the analysis. The AF recommendation will be presented then at the October AF Meeting, including proposed improvements by EFSA. In December 2024, the MB will decide.

Action 3.a: AF Secretariat to share the 3-year evaluation report on 27 May

Action 3.b: MS to provide non-binding recommendation via written procedure by 15 July

7.3. Setup of a national scientific network for Food Contact Materials

The Co-Chair, Nik Kriz introduced the next topic and gave the floor to **Iciar Fierros-Sanchez** (Spanish AF Member) to present about the setup of a National Network on Food Contacts Material (FCM) as an example of good practice scientific information sharing that could be implemented in other Member States. She informed that the coordinators of the national network of FCM are the network participants of the EFSA FCM Network and the permanent members include AESAN and several Spanish universities. While the invited participants include industry and private associations, they may be invited on an ad-hoc basis to ensure that confidentiality and conflicts of interests are not breached. Iciar Fierros-Sanchez informed as well that the first FCM network meeting occurred on 24 March 2024, gathering 38 participants. New steps include the finalisation of the ToR, a MS Teams group finalization to promote the exchange of documents and interactions among the members, the update of the FCM projects list and sharing feedback in the EFSA FCM network. Germany suggested to include an invitation to experts on chemicals to avoid running into problems of One Substance One Assessment (1S1A). The comment was positively noted by the Spanish AF Member.

7.4 Mandates; RA plans; other updates



The Co-Chair, Nik Kriz gave the floor to **Guilhem De Sèze** to provide an update on the latest mandates received by the EC and on MS RA Plans that may be of interest to EFSA. Regarding the mandates, Guilhem mentioned: Carbapenemase-producers in food-producing animals, the welfare of horses, donkeys and their hybrids, a joint mandate to EFSA and ECDC on avian influenza (AI), dietary exposure, perchlorate in food, genotoxicity of beauvericin, health-based guidance value (HBGV) for delta-8-tetrahydrocannabinol, presence of plant lectins in food and the risk for animal and human health related to the presence of dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs in feed and food. As regards MS RA Plans of interest for EFSA, it was mentioned: the farmed fish species by Sweden, presence of nanoparticles in plant protection products and biocidal products by France, RA of Hesperidin in Food Supplements by Norway, transmission of multi-resistant bacteria to the consumer through food by Spain, RA of PFAS in food and drinking water by Austria, Cyclic oligomers in foods, starch-based biodegradable food packaging films, biomarkers development and quantitative DNA damage at molecular level, high pressure processing on pesticide and antibiotic residues by Greece. Finally, Guilhem informed that following EC's mandate to examine if and which of the co-formulants listed in the 2022 EFSA technical report fulfil any of the criteria listed in its annex (8/182), EFSA found out that 5/8 of these 182 co-formulants are already listed in the annex and the output will be published by mid-May 2024. Finally, he informed that EFSA has received recently a mandate from the European Parliament to look at the methodology to assess long term toxicity, including carcinogenicity of pesticide products. France provided context about the self-mandate ANSES started about the presence of nanoparticles in plant protection products and in biocidal products: France has, for more than 10 years a mandatory annual declaration on substances at nanoscale for industry who use, produce or sell products under nanoform. Given the declarations received in R-Nano, a study was launched by ANSES with LNE (in France) and the starting assessment will be based on the results of this study.

7.5 EFSA and Member States: joining forces on Engagement.

The Chair gave the floor to **Cinzia Percivaldi** (Engagement Officer in the ENREL unit) to provide an overview of the main ongoing and upcoming engagement activities at EFSA. She started with the main highlight about the upcoming workshop on the "Biomarkers of effect" happening on 24-25 June. She informed MS that EFSA is now finalizing a self-task mandate on the revision of the guidance document of margin of exposure, nanotechnology and selected default values and that an engagement plan will be shared in due course with MS. She highlighted then the sector-specific guidance on food additives, novel foods, mechanical PET recycling, tolerable upper intake and ecotoxicology. A mention to engagement activities regarding the ongoing EFSA mandates was made, highlighting the animal welfare technical meeting and call for evidence, a workshop on the emergency authorisation of plant pest products (PPP), a webinar and a public consultation on the protein safety assessment of GMOs, a webinar for applicants on the food enzyme intake model calculator tool, and a public consultation and a webinar on styrene. MS will be also informed in June about the engagement plan on the 9 CONTAM mandates for which a MS input to frame the call was sought beforehand. Finally, Cinzia stressed the ongoing public consultation on PPP active substances and new active substances, food enzymes and the call for data on exposure assessment of lycopene, food additive occurrence data in food and beverages intended for human consumption, and the collection of chemical contaminants occurrence data in food and feed. The presentation concluded with a plea to MS to actively work with EFSA in building synergies on engagement, while she provided a timeline to reconvene in the October's AF Meeting with the respective planned engagement activities for 2025.

During the discussion, France indicated that there are many topics on which to cooperate, and stressed the importance that the information on all these engagement activities is shared as early as possible with MS in order to allow a proper planning ahead of the contributions during the windows of the consultations, especially for an agency such as ANSES which works with Panels and Working Groups who may have limited or no meeting planned during the periods of the consultations. Cinzia reassured that, as per usual habit, the dissemination will be done timely to the Focal-points and the concerned distribution lists.

Action 4: AF members to take note of the upcoming engagement initiatives presented by the ENREL unit and seek more information on any activity of interest through the AF Secretariat. AF



members are also encouraged to signal any engagement plans for 2025 in the prospect of related discussions at the next AF meeting – by 15 September.

7.6 Intake assessment of 3-MCPD and mineral oil hydrocarbons in Estonia

The Chair gave the floor to **Mari Reinik** (AF Member from Estonia) who presented the preliminary results from a study on the intake on 3-MCPD and mineral oil hydrocarbons realized by the National Centre for Laboratory Research and Risk Assessment (LABRIS) upon a mandate from the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture. The objective of the study was to collect and to evaluate data on the concentrations of 3-MCPD, its esters and glycidyl esters (GE) and Mineral oil hydrocarbons (MOH) in food, especially in vegetable oils and fats, infant formula and ready-to eat food to evaluate the intake of these compounds by Estonian population. The analysis, carried out in 2023, considered 87 samples on 3-MCPD/GE and 111 samples of MOH, with 60% of them being Estonian products. Regarding the presence of 3-MCPD/GE, the results based on Estonian data showed high-concentration in olive pomace oil, mayonnaise and breakfast cereals. High concentration of GE, she informed that vegetable-based cubes were also found. Regarding the concentration of Mineral oil hydrocarbons (MOH), high values were found only in olive pomace oil and biscuits and crackers (EE data). The conclusions highlighted that higher intakes and lower MoEs were obtained compared to EFSA's assessments for 3-MCPD and GE MOSH and MOAH have slightly higher intakes and lower MoEs compared to EFSA's assessments. Nonetheless, some problems with data-gathering were highlighted as regards the small number of samples for some food groups that may significantly contribute to the intake (stock cubes), high and variable quantification limits, duplicate sample IDs in EFSA databases, consumption data partly outdated and of low quality, FoodEx2 classification (no official and complete public source and smart Coding App is not sensitive enough). She informed that scientific output will be published in June 2024. France inquired if the origin of those 3-MCPD in the in food was known. The answer provided informed that it was most likely an industrial contamination. The Netherlands offered to share some report on 3-MCPD and mineral oils. France shared information on a feasibility study of a restriction procedure in the framework of REACH, one of the findings is that the contribution from ink is probably not so high compared to that from other sources; among other arguments, it was concluded that the restriction is not deemed feasible.

7.7 Update on the Initiative Group on PFAS

For the last item of the day the Chair gave the floor to **Matthieu Schuler** (AF Member from France) who provided an oral update on the Initiative Group on PFAS. Set up in 2023 following the agreement reached at the 87th AF meeting (March 2023) the main objective of the Initiative Group on PFAS is to share and exchange information and build collaborative approaches in the field of the risk assessment of PFAS between Member States and EFSA. Recently, the Initiative had its second meeting of the Steering Board where information on the national situations was exchanged. Also, an MS Teams channel has been set up in order to exchange information and data. As the topic of PFAS is touching upon a broad scope, the Initiative Group will share information that can be assigned to the following eight categories: (1) toxicological and epidemiological data, (2) analytical performance, (3) research programmes, (4) safety reference values (including the question of grouping approach) and risk management values, (5) monitoring campaigns, (6) prioritisation and focusing methodologies, (7) mitigation of risk, risk reduction measures, and (8) information sharing, communication documents or processes. This taxonomy has been agreed to and implemented in the Teams Channel, all countries are invited to share information via this channel. Currently composed by the members from Germany, The Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Croatia and France, and EFSA, the Group intends to invite WHO experts as well . France also indicated that there is a reflection on how to evaluate the Initiative and its success, and the reflection about possibly drafting a short document on the guiding principles for the work on PFAS versus work that has previously been carried out on persistent chemicals such as dioxins.

EFSA also expanded on the recently organized Communication Lab on PFAS in the context of the Communication Experts Network (CEN) meeting that took place in April 2024. The session was led by Sweden and included group discussions on questions such as the media profile of the PFAS



issue in MSs as well as specific concerns and communication challenges. These insights have been gathered in a shared space on the CEN Portal in MS Teams and it was agreed to further this practice with the aim of creating a network's intelligence and message sharing repository. To conclude, EFSA suggested CEN to keep connected with the work of the Initiative Group on PFAS, adding that the CEN and the Communication coordinators can be a resource for coordinated communication.

Action 5: The Initiative Group on PFAS and CEN to continue seeking alignment in the area of coordinated communication on PFAS

Closing of the 1st Day



Day 2

Item 7: Engaging in Risk Assessment (cont.)

7.8. EFSA work on Avian Influenza (HPAI):

a. Introduction and state-of-play

The Chair gave the floor to **Frank Verdonck** (Head of Unit of BIOHAW), who began its presentation with a brief update on the HPAI situation in the US. This was followed by interventions by Switzerland, who outlined how the country is starting to look into testing the virus, particularly in cheese produced from raw milk, and France who is interested to know the results from the Swiss study. The presentation continued with an update on the Workshop for Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) which was the first opportunity to show the tools EFSA has available in the area of animal health and, more importantly, have a discussion with the CVOs if or how these tools could be used by the MSs, and if or how we could join forces to close remaining data gaps and prevent double reporting. Main outcomes of the workshop included: an expression of interest in collaborating more closely with EFSA to improve the efficiency of risk assessments and leverage common digital visualization and analysis tools; the identification of harmonizing data collection models as a priority, together with the simplification of data submission processes; and the possibility of organizing a second workshop potentially in November 2024.

Discussion focused on existing data gaps (e.g., animal population data for both farming animals and wildlife), tools at disposal (e.g., traceability tools), how to facilitate and improve the effectiveness of reporting from the MS side making full use of existing data gathering pathways, and the stage of involvement of IPA countries in terms of data submission.

Action 6.a: AF Secretariat to share with AF members the [link](#) to the platform gathering EFSA Tools and Applications for Animal Health

Action 6.b: MS to share info with EFSA on current HPAI testing of cattle or milk products

b. EFSA's opinion on surveillance vaccinations strategies for HPAI

The Chair gave the floor to **Francesca Baldinelli** (Scientific Officer in the BIOHAW unit) who presented on the effectiveness of different surveillance schemes for early detection and demonstration of freedom from HPAI, as well as restrictions and risk-mitigation measures, in vaccinated farms and areas. The aim was to explain and clarify to the AF members what are the surveillance options recommended by EFSA in the areas after emergency and preventive vaccination against HPAI virus in poultry.

France indicated how, thanks to vaccination, the country only registered 10 clusters of avian influenza at the end of March 2024, against the 400 registered on the same date the previous year. A complete analysis of this first vaccination campaign, and of the 10 clusters, is ongoing with the aim of finalising it around the end of June. EFSA emphasised the importance of the vaccination plan under implementation by France, considering the lack of similar exercises at the European level, and voiced interest for the outcomes of the evaluation of the plan once they will be available.

Action 7: France to notify AF members when the report on evaluation of HPAI vaccination campaign in poultry will be available

c. EFSA communication activities

The Chair gave the floor to **James Ramsay** (Head of COM unit) to debrief the plenary on the main communication highlights stemming from the three EFSA outputs on Avian Influenza (AI) published in 2024. These include reports on the latest epidemiology of the virus, the possible drivers of further expansion of the virus, and post-vaccination surveillance options and risk mitigation measures to contain it.



Discussion was held around the uptake in the media of the AI reports (and other EFSA communication outputs on the topic) which has been significant. This is a reflection of how important the topic of AI has become in the public debate in recent months.

7.9. Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales in the food chain - self-task mandate

The Chair gave the floor to **Beatriz Guerra** (Scientific Officer in the BIOHAW unit) to update the plenary on EFSA's self-task mandate to investigate the sources and dissemination pathways of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales (CPEs) detected in food-producing animals, products derived thereof and the food-producing environment, as well as to better characterise the magnitude of their occurrence. The terms of reference (ToR) of the mandate include: 1) the state of the art 2024, revising literature and collecting information from the activities performed by the MSs/NRLs since the last EFSA opinion in 2013; 2) new data generation through a framework partnership agreement with the EURL-AR Network laboratories (eg., EURL_AR and mainly National Reference Laboratories involved in the AMR monitoring); 3) the state of art 2027, reviewing all new data and evidence generated and issuing one or more scientific opinion(s) targeting the different topics identified in ToRs 1 and 2.

Denmark voiced support for EFSA's initiative on such a paramount issue, although emphasising the need MSs have to take into account financial or administrative involvement in these projects at an earlier stage, so to allow sufficient time for discussion with their respective national authorities. The Netherlands raised a question on the levels of CPEs found in the countries listed in the presentation and how testing occurred as well as the issue of data reporting on AMR by MSs, suggesting that - if this represents only a fraction of the available data - a data mapping or data flow exercise could be a proposal for the way forward (e.g. To report further data to EFSA). EFSA outlined its awareness that MSs might have national monitoring systems and be testing more than what is reported to EFSA, some MSs often inform EFSA on these findings, and some of them report data on additional specific monitoring (as is the case of NL). Furthermore, within this specific mandate EFSA is planning to collect further data via a survey and then consider future possibilities to expand reporting. Germany outlined that the core issue lies in the origin of AMR, hence the focus should be expanded also to the whole food chain and not only to food-producing animals with the ultimate aim of identifying the root cause. EFSA reassured that the mandate will cover the food chain domain as well and is meant to be a supportive initiative to existing national activities.

7.10. African Swine Fever (ASF) update: epidemiological analysis of 2023 and new data on ASF virus survival project

The Chair gave the floor to **Lina Mur** (Scientific Officer in the BIOHAW unit), who presented an update on the African Swine Fever (ASF) epidemiological situation in 2023 and information on the survival of the virus in different conditions and types of vectors. In 2023, ASF was notified in 14 Member States, spread to three new countries, and caused the highest number of outbreaks in domestic pigs (1,929) since the introduction in the EU in 2014. ASF outbreaks in wild boar increased by 10% in wild boar in 2023. While ASF was introduced to new countries and spread in certain areas of Italy, the epidemiological situation improved in Germany, Hungary and Slovakia. In this context, EFSA funded a project to generate new data on the survival of ASF virus in 14 matrices used for feed and bedding of swine and three different arthropods, with the aim of clarifying their role in ASF transmission.

The Netherlands raised a question on the contribution of hunters to the spread of the virus on a European scale and the effectiveness of fences as counter measure. EFSA outlined there is not yet data available on the possible contribution of hunters to the issue, although it is considered to be one of the important routes for the circulation of the virus. As regards fences, EFSA is working on the effectiveness of different types of barriers and will include this information in the upcoming October report on ASF, together with a number of best practices based on the experience of other MSs.

7.11 Safety in the Game Meat Chain



The Chair gave the floor **Dr Anneluise Mader** (external speaker from the BfR, Germany) to present the project "[Safety in the Game Meat Chain](#) (SafeGameMeat; COST Action CA22166)". The project is funded by the EU, and its main objective is to determine differences and similarities between European countries in terms of hunting practices, game meat processing and inspection, legislation, game meat commodity flows, trade and game meat consumption, investigating all stages of the supply chain from the wild animal to the consumer - "from forest to fork". In addition a special focus is set on chemical hazards (ammunition and contaminants) as well as on biological hazards (hygiene and zoonoses). Its overall purpose is to support informed decisions in regional, national and international risk assessment, management and communication on game meat safety by creating a comprehensive knowledge base and providing concrete recommendations for action, which will contribute to strengthening food safety and consumer protection across Europe.

The Netherlands expressed support to the project and interested in collaborating with the network. Questions were also raised by Denmark on whether the data generated by the project will be made available at EU level. Dr Mader reassured that the results of the project will be disseminated via dedicated conferences and webinars and will be published in peer reviewed journals.

7.12. Emergency authorisations of pesticides and available alternative control methods

The Chair gave the floor to **Franz Streissl** (Scientific Officer in the PLANTS unit) to inform the plenary on the project currently being carried out by EFSA with a consortium of contractors on the development of protocols for emergency authorizations of pesticides and the stocktaking of alternatives to chemical pesticides. The presentation provided an overview on the mandate from the Commission to develop protocols for emergency authorisations of pesticides. First results on the analysis of past emergency authorisations and a proposal on evaluation criteria for alternative pesticides were presented. Moreover, MSs were informed on the timelines of deliverables of the ongoing project. EFSA informed that feedback from MSs is sought on the first results, the proposal of evaluation criteria and issues with previous protocols developed under article 4(7) of Regulation 11107/2009.

Discussion focused on the fact that the existence of absence of alternatives to pesticides is mainly a socio-economic approach (like in SEAC for REACH) rather than a scientific based approach, it is not only a product-by-product substitution but can be a combination of products and practices in terms of reasonably cost-effective options. EFSA indicated that it asked the EC whether to conduct socio-economic analysis as part of this mandate and the EC answered no.

A question was raised on the appropriate way forward for the identification of experts at the national level since the topic is at the limit of risk assessment and clearly overlapping on risk management: whether risk managers have been informed and contacted directly via the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (PAFF Committee)?

Action 8: AF members to identify and inform relevant experts involved in plant health and in emergency authorisations of pesticides (risk assessors and risk managers) about the upcoming consultations (July-August) on available alternatives to conventional pesticides, evaluation criteria and existing protocols. The contact points in MSs should be provided to EFSA

7.13. Guidelines for the establishment of an animal welfare labelling reference framework

The Chair gave the floor to **Matthieu Schuler** (AF Member from France), who presented on the expert appraisal carried out by ANSES. This establishes a scientific basis for animal welfare labelling that can be put forward to livestock sector players. ANSES published guidelines for labelling products of animal origin specifically with respect to farm animal welfare. Implementing this proposal would harmonise current and future labelling systems (ANSES website: <https://www.anses.fr/en/content/animal-welfare-labelling-food-products>). In its guidelines, the Agency recommends adopting a system of five welfare levels, from the highest (A) to the lowest (E). This classification, which is easy for consumers to understand, should also help producers to gradually take better account of animal welfare. One of its main features is that the welfare assessment is based on scientific indicators measured directly on the animals, and not just on their



rearing conditions. Another of its distinguishing features is that it takes account not only of the living conditions of the food-producing animals themselves, but also those of their parents.

The Netherlands expressed interest and support for the proposal developed by ANSES, highlighting its great potential benefits also for risk managers and the wider sector. This system could also represent the correct basis upon which socio-economic considerations can be formulated. EFSA also expressed interest in the work implemented by ANSES, outlining the possible benefits for risk assessors and EFSA as this initiative could support the gathering of additional data in animal welfare risk assessment and be an opportunity for risk assessors and the sector to come together on an issue of common need. France also addressed questions regarding the existing margin in the market for consumers to pay higher prices for better-quality products as long as it is certified by a reliable and science-based labeling system.

Action 9: France to disseminate to AF members the opinion and report once it will be available in English.



SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Action reference	Who	Agenda topic	What
Action 1	MS	Item 6.1 - Partnership call for the assessment of Novel Food applications	MS to disseminate the call at the national level and consider forming or joining a consortium to provide the expertise needed for the assessment of applications received.
Action 2	MS	Item 6.2 - The EU Pollinator Hub: a platform for sharing data on bee/pollinator health in EU	MS to inquire about institutions potentially interested in supporting and providing long-term sustainability to the EU's pollinator Hub
Action 3.a	EFSA	Item 7.2 - EFSA Networks 3-year evaluation report	AF Secretariat to share the 3-year evaluation report on 27 May
Action 3.b	MS	Item 7.2 - EFSA Networks 3-year evaluation report	MS to provide non-binding recommendation via written procedure by 15 July
Action 4	MS	Item 7.5 - EFSA and Member States: joining forces on Engagement	AF members to take note of the upcoming engagement initiatives presented by the ENREL unit and seek more information on any activity of interest through the AF Secretariat. AF members are also encouraged to signal any engagement plans for 2025 in the prospect of related discussions at the next AF meeting – by 15 September.
Action 5	MS	Item 7.7 - Update on the Initiative Group on PFAS	The Initiative Group on PFAS and CEN to continue seeking alignment in the area of coordinated communication on PFAS
Action 6.a	EFSA	Item 7.8.a - EFSA work on Avian Influenza (HPAI) - Introduction and state-of-play	AF Secretariat to share with AF members the link to the platform gathering EFSA Tools and Applications for Animal Health
Action 6.b	MS	Item 7.8.a - EFSA work on Avian Influenza (HPAI) - Introduction and state-of-play	MS to share info with EFSA on current HPAI testing of cattle or milk products
Action 7	MS	Item 7.8.b - EFSA's opinion on surveillance vaccinations strategies for HPAI	France to notify AF members when the report on evaluation of HPAI vaccination campaign in poultry will be available

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Action 8	MS	Item 7.12 - Emergency authorisations of pesticides and available alternative control methods	AF members to identify and inform relevant experts involved in plant health and in emergency authorisations of pesticides (risk assessors and risk managers) about the upcoming consultation (July-August) on available alternatives to conventional pesticides, evaluation criteria and existing protocols. The contact points in MSs should be provided to EFSA
Action 9	MS	Item 7.13 - Guidelines for the establishment of an animal welfare labelling reference framework	France to disseminate to AF members the opinion and report once it will be available in English