



TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE EFSA SCIENTIFIC NETWORK ON ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

July 2023

OBJECTIVES

Establishing a system of Networks of organisations operating in the fields within EFSA's mission is among the tasks of EFSA, according to its Founding Regulation (Article 22(7) and Article 23(g) of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002), in order 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.

In accordance with Article 22(7) and Article 23(g) of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002, EFSA shall promote the networking of scientific organisations of EU Member States operating in the fields within the Authority's mission.

A new regulation on the transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain (EU Regulation 1381/2019 on the transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain and amending Regulation (EC) No 178/2002, which has been in application since 27 March 2021, strengthens the Authority's ability to carry out its risk assessment functions in accordance with the highest transparency standards.

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 whose purpose is to optimise the operational procedures of EFSA scientific networks in accordance with the remit and strategic objectives of the Authority, specifically considering a greater involvement of Member State expertise in support of EFSA's mission.

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.

Overall, this applies within the framework of the following provisions:

- Regulation (EU) 2016/429 animal health law¹

¹ Regulation (EU) 2016/429 Of The European Parliament And Of The Council of 9 March 2016 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health ('Animal Health Law')



- Council directive 98/58/EC²
- Council Regulation No. 1099/2009³
- Council Regulation No. 1/2005⁴
- Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2018/772⁵
- Council Regulation No. 576/2013
- Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/687⁶
- Council Directive 1999/74/EC of 19 July 1999 laying down minimum standards for the protection of laying hens (OJ L 203, 3.8.1999, pp. 53–57)
- Council Directive 2008/119/EC of 18 December 2008 laying down minimum standards for the protection of calves
- Council Directive 2008/120/EC of 18 December 2008 laying down minimum standards for the protection of pigs
- Council Directive 2007/43/EC of 28 June 2007 laying down minimum rules for the protection of chickens kept for meat production

Taking into account art. 7.3 of the above-mentioned Management Board Decision, concerning the establishment and operation of European Networks of scientific organisations operating in the fields within the Authority's mission, 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;

² Council Directive (EC) No 98/58/EC of 20 July 1998 concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes

³ Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 of 24 September 2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing

⁴ Council Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations and amending Directives 64/432/EEC and 93/119/EC and Regulation (EC) No 1255/97

⁵ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2018/772 of 21 November 2017 supplementing Regulation (EU) No 576/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to preventive health measures for the control of *Echinococcus multilocularis* infection in dogs, and repealing Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1152/2011

⁶ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/687 of 17 December 2019 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and the Council, as regards rules for the prevention and control of certain listed diseases



- 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;
- 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 non-foodborne 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.

SUBGROUP(S) OF THE NETWORK

Subgroup on One Health surveillance (EFSA mandate M-2022-00084)

Subgroup on *Echinococcus multilocularis* surveillance (Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2018/772)

Subgroup of the National Contact Points (NCPs) for scientific support on the protection of animals at the time of killing (Art 20 of Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009)⁷.

Subgroup on Animal health data reporting on diseases for which EFSA holds a recurrent mandate: Avian influenza (mandate number M-2017-0221) and African swine fever (mandate number M-2022-00109)

MEMBERS

According to art. 6.1 of the Management Board Decision concerning the establishment and operation of European Networks of scientific organisations operating in the fields within the Authority's mission, following the receipt of all necessary information from EFSA, the Advisory Forum shall identify organisations in EU Member States which are capable of contributing to the tasks of the AHAW Network.

The Members of the AHAW Network are organisations appointed for three-year terms through the EFSA Advisory Forum Members, in accordance with Articles 2 and 3 of the Decision of the

⁷ The topic of the protection of animals at the time of killing ([Council Regulation \(EC\) 1099/2009](#)) is mainly (not exclusively) discussed in the sub-network of the NCPs.



Management Board of EFSA on the establishment and operations of networks⁸. These organisations preferentially cover two areas of competence:

- Experience in animal health risk assessment, animal health data collection, monitoring & surveillance, and knowledge of the national animal health status and of the European and/or international context of animal health risk assessment (AH).
- Experience in animal welfare risk assessment, animal welfare data collection, monitoring & surveillance and knowledge of the national animal welfare status and of the European and/or international context of animal welfare risk assessment (AW).

The appointment (or confirmation) is done by the national Advisory Forum member.

For the **subgroup on One Health (OH) surveillance**, Members of the subgroup on OH surveillance are appointed based on nominations to be made by the MS who apply for direct grants CP-g-22-04.01⁹ under the EU4Health Program 2022. They consist of the relevant MS authorities responsible for public health, animal health and environmental health, as required by the division of responsibilities in the respective MS. EFSA's OH mandate M-2022-00084 aims at 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 ToRs of this mandate were presented to the Advisory Forum Members on 07/04/2022. The objectives of the subgroup are fully aligned with ToR 4 of the AHAW network.

For the **subgroup on *E. multilocularis* surveillance**, the Members of the subgroup are appointed based on nominations made by the countries listed in the Annex to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU)2018/878 (as amended by the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/2017 of 9 December2020): Malta, Finland, United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)¹⁰, Ireland and Norway.

For the **subgroup of the NCPs** for scientific support under Art 20 of Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009 on the welfare of animals at the time of killing, Members are appointed based on nominations made by the Member States (and EFTA Countries). According to Art 20, 2 of the Regulation, each MS identifies a single contact point for sharing technical and scientific information.

For the **subgroup on the animal health data reporting**, Members for the different data collections are a) those that had been previously appointed, in the event the data collection had been moved to EFSA from the EC, b) those appointed based on nominations made by the relevant countries.

⁸ MB 18 03 10 – items 7 doc 6 Management Board Decision concerning the establishment and operation of European Networks of scientific organizations operating in the fields within the Authority's mission, EFSA 2010

⁹ Direct grants to Member States' authorities: setting up a coordinated surveillance system under the One Health approach for cross-border pathogens that threaten the Union; page 38 in https://ec.europa.eu/assets/sante/health/funding/wp2022_en.pdf

¹⁰ In accordance with the Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, and in particular Article 5(4) of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland in conjunction with Annex 2 to that Protocol, for the purposes of this Annex, references to Member States include the United Kingdom in respect of Northern Ireland.



ACCESS TO MEETINGS

Representatives of AHAW Network Member organisations shall be invited to the AHAW Network meetings: per country and per meeting, one expert should represent the Animal Health Member organisation and one expert should represent the Animal Welfare Member organisation. For meetings of the **One Health surveillance subgroup**, each Member organisation can be represented by one participant. In addition, representatives of countries that have not applied for a direct grant under initiative CP-g-22-04.0¹ of the EU4Health Program 2022 can attend the meetings of the OH surveillance subgroup as observers. For meetings of the **NCPs subgroup**, according to Art 20 (2) of Council Regulation (EC) 1099/2009, each MS identifies a single contact point for sharing technical and scientific information and best practices.

Representatives of the European Commission and of the EFTA countries are entitled to attend meetings of the AHAW Network and its subgroups as observers. EFSA may invite representatives of other agencies, bodies or institutions of the European Union, third countries or international organisations to attend meetings of the AHAW Network as observers. EFSA may invite scientific experts from regulatory or academic bodies of the European Union or third countries, or from international organisations, as speakers, to update the AHAW Network on developments in the field of AHAW risk assessment.

WORKING METHODS

The Network shall meet twice a year (one meeting related to AH and one related to AW). The One Health surveillance subgroup shall meet at least once per year, and further meetings can be organized if necessary. The *E. multilocularis* surveillance subgroup shall meet once a year prior to the publication of the annual assessment. The NCPs subgroup shall meet at least once a year, and further meetings can be organized if necessary. The members of the subgroup of the animal health data reporting shall meet depending on the requirements of the specific data collection.

The meeting of the Network and its subgroups shall be recorded, and the records published on the EFSA website.

In addition, the Network and its subgroups will use other means of collaboration:

- exchanges of MS RA activities and other relevant information via the digital exchange platform (Teams / SharePoint);
- conversations on the digital exchange platform (Teams) on specific questions or issues

MS' representatives in the Network and its subgroups shall commit to liaise as appropriate at national level before and after each network meeting in order to make sure all the necessary information is shared with relevant scientific organizations operating in the fields within the Authority's mission.

DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES

- Agenda of the meeting
- Minutes of the meeting



TIMELINE

The terms of reference for the network will be due for revision in 2026.