

The European Food Safety Authority at a glance





**Committed to ensuring
that Europe's food is safe.**

**The European Food Safety Authority
is the keystone of European Union
risk assessment regarding food and
feed safety.**

**In close collaboration with national
authorities and in open consultation
with its stakeholders, EFSA provides
independent scientific advice and
clear communication on existing
and emerging risks.**

About EFSA

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was formally set up in January 2002, following a series of food crises in the late 1990s, as an independent source of scientific advice and communication on risks associated with the food chain. EFSA was created as part of a comprehensive programme to improve EU food safety, ensure a high level of consumer protection and restore and maintain confidence in the EU food supply.*

In the European food safety system, risk assessment is done independently from risk management. As the risk assessor, EFSA produces scientific opinions and advice to provide a sound foundation for European policies and legislation and to support the European Commission, European Parliament and EU Member States in taking effective and timely risk management decisions.

EFSA's remit covers food and feed safety, nutrition, animal health and welfare, plant protection and plant health. In all these areas, EFSA's most critical commitment is to provide objective, science-based advice and clear communication grounded in the most up-to-date scientific information and data. A growing part of the Authority's work relates to the safety assessment of regulated products, such as genetically modified organisms, pesticides, and health claims submitted for authorisation in the EU.

EFSA's scientific advice underpins the European food safety system. Thanks to this system, European consumers are among the best protected and best informed in the world regarding the food chain.



* EFSA's Founding Regulation (EC) No 178/2002

Who we are

Based in Parma, Italy, EFSA is an EU-funded Agency. It is governed by a **Management Board** whose members are appointed to act in the public interest and do not represent any government, organisation or sector. The Board sets EFSA's budget, approves the annual work programme and ensures that EFSA works effectively and co-operates successfully with partner organisations across the EU and beyond. It also plays an important role in the appointment of EFSA's Executive Director and members of the Scientific Committee and Panels.



There are fifteen Board members. One represents the European Commission, while fourteen including the Chair and two deputies, are selected on the basis of their expertise, knowledge and experience following a call for expressions of interest. Candidates are proposed by the European Commission and are appointed for four years by decision of the EU Council of Ministers in consultation with the European Parliament.

Board meetings usually take place at least four times a year and are open to the public. To maximise transparency, all can be listened to on demand on the EFSA website.

EFSA's Executive Director, Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle (reappointed for a second five-year term from June 2011), is the legal representative of the Authority. She is responsible for all operational matters, staffing issues and drawing up the annual work programme in consultation with the European Commission, the European Parliament and EU Member States.

EFSA's Scientific Committee and Panels carry out EFSA's scientific risk assessment work. They are composed of highly qualified risk assessment experts from all across Europe with a range of relevant expertise. All members are appointed through an open selection procedure on the basis of proven scientific excellence, including experience in risk assessment, and peer-reviewing scientific work and publications. Appointments are made by the Management Board for three-year terms which may be renewed.

The Scientific Committee (SC) prepares scientific advice in the areas of new and harmonised approaches for risk assessment of food and feed, and provides strategic advice to the Executive Director. The Scientific Committee supports the work of EFSA's Scientific Panels on scientific matters of a horizontal nature. The SC also prepares advice on scientific co-operation and networking with scientific experts and research organisations nationally and internationally. The Scientific Committee is composed of the Chairs of each of the Panels plus six other independent scientists.

EFSA's Scientific Panels carry out risk assessment work in their respective specialised fields, as follows:

- **Animal health and welfare** (AHAW)
- **Food additives and nutrient sources added to food** (ANS)
- **Biological hazards** (BIOHAZ)
- **Food contact materials, enzymes, flavourings and processing aids** (CEF)
- **Contaminants in the food chain** (CONTAM)
- **Additives and products or substances used in animal feed** (FEEDAP)
- **Genetically modified organisms** (GMO)
- **Dietetic products, nutrition and allergies** (NDA)
- **Plant protection products and their residues** (PPR)
- **Plant health** (PLH)



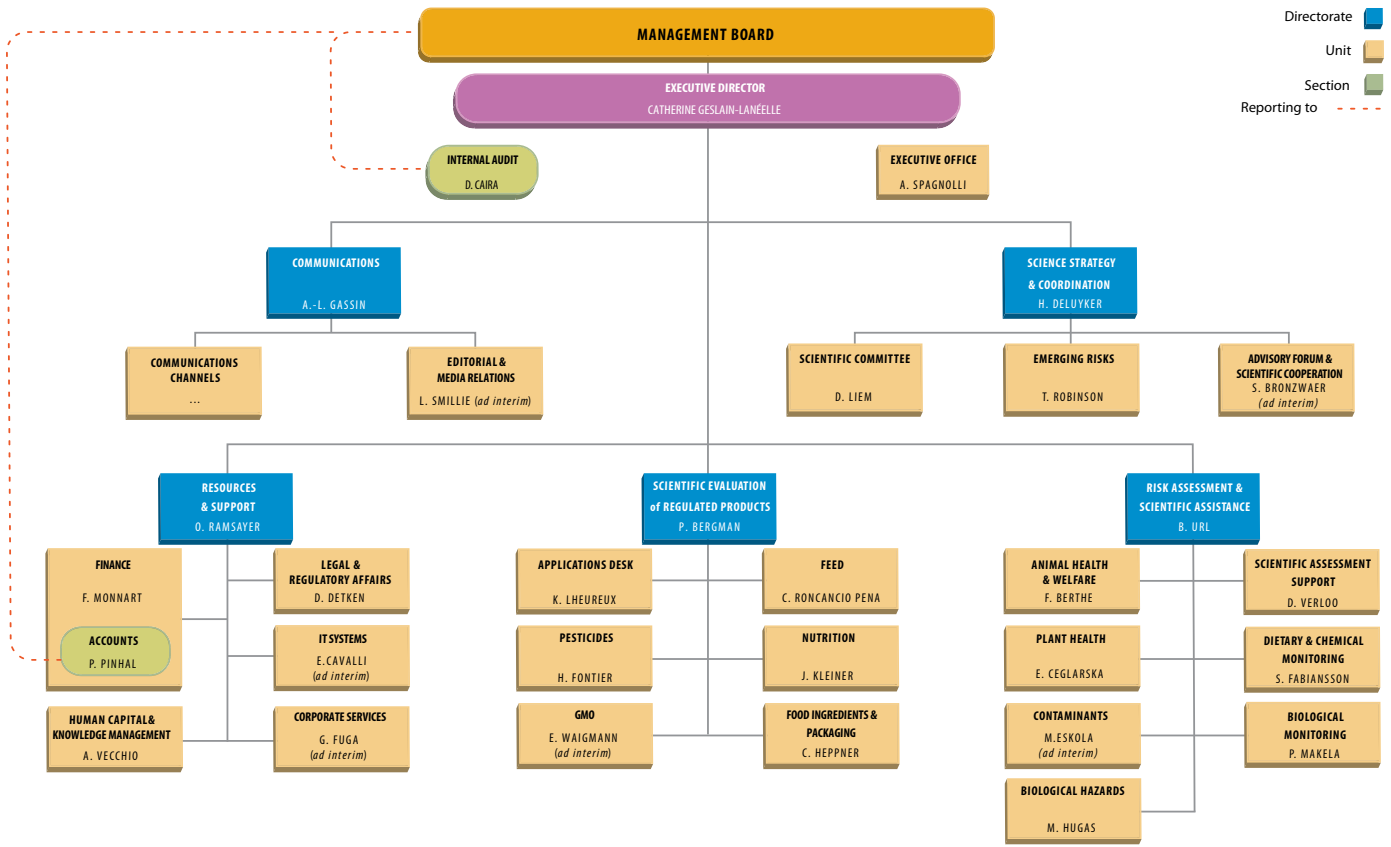
Working groups involving external scientists with relevant expertise are regularly set up by the Panels to deal with specific issues and to help produce scientific opinions.

The experts on EFSA's Scientific Committee and Panels are supported by EFSA's **own scientific staff** in three directorates. The **Risk Assessment and Scientific Assistance Directorate** includes animal health and welfare, biological hazards, biological monitoring, contaminants, dietary and chemical monitoring, plant health and scientific assessment support. The **Scientific Evaluation of Regulated Products Directorate** supports EFSA's work related to the risk assessment of substances, products and processes intended to be used in the food chain and to the substantiation of claims made on foods. Its units focus on feed, food additives and nutrient sources, food contact materials, enzymes and flavourings, GMOs, nutrition, and pesticides. The **Science Strategy and Coordination Directorate** co-ordinates the implementation of EFSA's science strategy and reinforces engagement and co-operation with its Advisory Forum, stakeholders and international partners. The directorate also supports the Scientific Committee and work in the area of emerging risks.

EFSA at a glance:

- **1,500** external scientific experts contributing to its work in 2012
- **More than 3,000** scientific outputs adopted
- **More than 430** staff
- **Advisory Forum network: members from 27 Member States plus Iceland and Norway and observers from Switzerland, the candidate countries and the European Commission**
- **Network of more than 400** national scientific organisations

Organisational chart as from 01/06/2012



What we do

EFSA's main work is to assess and communicate on risks associated with the food chain. Since EFSA's advice supports the policies and decisions of risk managers, a large part of EFSA's work is undertaken in response to specific requests for scientific advice. Requests are mainly received from the European Commission but are also transmitted by the European Parliament and EU Member States.

Accordingly, EFSA's advice frequently feeds into risk management and policy-making processes. This may involve the process of adopting or revising European legislation on food or feed safety, deciding whether to approve regulated substances such as pesticides and food additives, or developing new policies, for instance in the field of nutrition. EFSA is not involved in these management processes, but its independent advice gives them a solid scientific foundation.

Established in May 2003, the Scientific Panels have delivered almost 2000 scientific opinions on a wide variety of risk issues. These include: Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) and other zoonoses; food additives and other food ingredients; animal cloning; genetically modified organisms (GMOs); nanotechnology; contaminants in the food chain; pesticides; and animal health issues such as avian influenza and Q fever.

EFSA also undertakes scientific work on its own initiative, such as advice published in 2011 on measures to control and prevent food-borne viruses – the second most important cause of food-borne outbreaks in the EU after *Salmonella*. The Authority's Scientific Panel on Biological Hazards reviewed the biology, epidemiology, diagnosis and public health importance of viruses and identified possible control options. These included introducing microbiological criteria for certain viruses and further training of food handlers on viral contamination of foods and the environment.

The Authority has an important role in collecting and analysing scientific data to ensure European risk assessment is supported by the most complete scientific information available. It does this by working with EU Member States to gather, share and analyse EU-wide data. EFSA's work in this field includes an EU-wide baseline study on the prevalence of *Salmonella* in laying hen flocks, and the European summary report on zoonoses. EFSA also works with Member States to collect data on food, food consumption and consumer exposure to substances found in food and feed.



How we work

EFSA works by openly consulting with its many stakeholders and proactively seeking input from interested parties on its work and activities. It also works closely with national food safety authorities across the EU, and co-operates with the European Commission, the European Parliament, other EU bodies and international organisations active in food and feed safety.

Core values

All of EFSA's activities are guided by a set of core values which are fundamental to the Authority's operating principles:

Scientific excellence

Besides the excellent scientific credentials of the experts working for EFSA, the Authority applies rigorously high scientific standards to its risk assessment work, and ensures that the latest scientific knowledge and approaches are taken into account in its opinions.

Independence

The Authority applies a robust set of internal mechanisms to safeguard the independence of its scientific work. All experts are required to sign a commitment of independence and an annual declaration of interests which are published on the EFSA website, as well as specific declarations made in regard to the agenda items for each panel meeting. EFSA has further safeguarded its independence by adopting a Policy on Independence and Scientific Decision-Making Processes, which was made available for public consultation. Together with specific guidance on the mechanics of making declarations, these measures will bring even greater consistency, transparency and clarity to the whole process.

EFSA's scientific opinions are the result of a collective decision making process, with each Panel member having an equal say, which reinforces the impartiality and balance of EFSA's conclusions and recommendations.

Openness and transparency

EFSA consistently publishes its scientific opinions as well as the agendas and minutes of meetings, and other key documents on its website. To maximise transparency, EFSA also webcasts important meetings and events.

EFSA listens to the views of outside parties, particularly its stakeholders. Many stakeholder groups take a close interest in EFSA's work, from the food industry to environmental and consumer groups. EFSA proactively seeks their input and exchanges different points of view, particularly through its Stakeholder Consultative Platform and

technical meetings. EFSA also consults outside parties by holding open consultations via the EFSA website, face-to-face meetings and multilateral discussions at scientific conferences and seminars. EFSA has launched public consultations on issues such as the guidance EFSA provides on the risk assessment of GMOs, the approach for carrying out environmental risk assessment of additives used in animal feed and guidance on the substantiation of health claims related to gut and immune function.

Responsiveness

EFSA aims to be a responsive and reliable source of support for decision-makers who require complete, up-to-date and timely scientific information on which to base policies and decisions. EFSA prioritises its work accordingly, and in 2010 demonstrated its ability to respond rapidly by issuing advice on the risks to public and animal health in the European Union posed by ash-fall from the eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland.

Co-operation with EU Member States

EFSA's Advisory Forum connects EFSA with the national food safety authorities in all 27 EU Member States as well as Norway and Iceland. The Forum's members represent each national body responsible for risk assessment in the EU (plus observers from Switzerland, the candidate countries and the European Commission). It is chaired by EFSA's Executive Director.

The Forum is at the heart of EFSA's collaborative approach to European risk assessment. Through it, and its working group on communications (AFCWG), EFSA and the Member States can join forces in addressing European risk assessment and risk communications issues.

EFSA also uses the Forum to consult Member States on scientific matters and its work programme and to identify and address emerging risk issues as early as possible. Whilst EFSA's Advisory Forum concentrates on the strategic issues related to co-operation and networking, national Focal Points support their Advisory Forum member in setting up a well functioning network in the Member States, for instance to exchange scientific information and to provide advice and support to EFSA on various scientific activities.



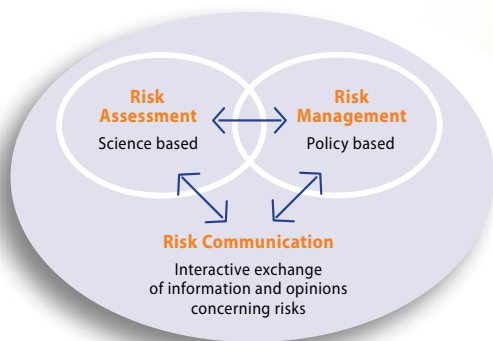
Risk Communications

EFSA aims to provide appropriate, consistent, accurate and timely communications on food and feed safety to all interested parties based on its scientific findings. EFSA does this by:

- analysing public perception of risks linked to food.
- explaining and contextualising risk.
- working with key actors including national authorities, stakeholders and media to tailor messages to the needs of different audiences.
- ensuring consistency by co-ordinating communications with other risk assessment bodies and risk managers such as the European Commission and EU Member States.

EFSA co-ordinates its communications with and takes advice from the communications representatives from the national food safety authorities, through the Advisory Forum Communications Working Group. In addition, EFSA has established a multidisciplinary expert Advisory Group on Risk Communications, which provides advice to the Executive Director.

Risk Analysis Framework



Source: WHO/FAO (1997)

Looking to the future

The Authority will continue working openly and transparently to deliver timely, impartial scientific advice of the highest standards to support the policies and decisions of European risk managers.

In 2008 the Management Board adopted its Strategic Plan 2009-2013. The plan outlines how EFSA will maximise the benefits of the scientific expertise at its disposal across Europe and strengthen its integrated approach to risk assessment to provide Europe's decision makers with relevant, up-to-the-minute scientific advice.

Six key strategic areas have been identified:

1. Provide an integrated approach to delivering scientific advice, field to plate.
2. Produce timely, high-quality evaluation of products, substances and claims subject to regulatory authorisation.
3. Collate, disseminate and analyse data in the fields within EFSA's remit.
4. Position EFSA at the forefront of risk assessment in Europe and internationally.
5. Reinforce confidence and trust in EFSA and the EU food safety system.
6. Assure the responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness of EFSA.

The Strategic Plan is intended to be a live, dynamic document that will be revisited regularly. This will allow EFSA to continue to tackle 21st century issues with regard to the food chain, evolving scientific approaches and new technologies, whilst remaining vigilant and responding to existing and emerging risks.

EFSA's vision is to become globally recognised as the European reference body for risk assessment in food and feed safety, animal health and welfare, nutrition, plant protection and plant health.



European Food Safety Authority

**Via Carlo Magno 1A
43126 Parma
ITALY**

Tel. +39 0521 036 111

Fax +39 0521 036 110

www.efsa.europa.eu



Photo credits: Getty Images, EFSA

© European Food Safety Authority, 2012.

Reproduction is authorised, except for commercial purposes, provided that the source is acknowledged.



Publications Office

ISBN 978-92-9199-448-9

doi: 10.2805/17837