

## Network on Chemical Occurrence Data Minutes of the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting

**Held on 11-12 April 2018, Parma  
Meeting room: MTG SEAT 00/M06**

**(Agreed on 15 May 2018)**

### Participants

- **Network Representatives of Member States (including EFTA Countries):**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Name</b>
Belgium	Valerie Vromman
Bulgaria	Emil Simeonov
Cyprus	Agathi Anastasi (via web conference)
Croatia	Danijela Strazanac
Czech Republic	Irena Rehurkova
Czech Republic	Jana Prochazkova
Denmark	Pernille Bjorn Petersen
Estonia	Kadi Padur
Finland	Kati Hakala
France	Jean-Cedric Reninger
Germany	Eva Scharfenberg
Greece	Leonidas Palilis
Hungary	Kata Kerekes
Ireland	Martina Stack
Italy	Michele de Martino
Italy	Augusto Pastorelli
Latvia	Elina Ciekure
Lithuania	Agniet Grusauskien
Luxembourg	Danny Zust
Netherlands	Rob Theelen
Poland	Andrzej Starski
Portugal	Luisa Oliveira
Romania	Madalina Georgescu
Slovakia	Angela Svetlikova
Spain	Victoria Marcos Suarez (via web conference)
Spain	Maria Jose Rubio
Sweden	Petra Fohgelberg
Sweden	David Foster
United Kingdom	Adam Locker

Norway	Waleed Ahmed
Norway	Per Bratterud

- **EFSA**

Evidence Management (DATA) Unit Jane Richardson: (Chair), Doreen Dolores Russell: (Scientific Secretary), Monica Giulivo, Valentina Bocca, Stefano Cappe, Alessandro Carletti, Mary Gilsean, Sofia Ioannidou, Friedemann Ringwald

- **Others (Pre-Accession Countries)**

Merjem Bushati (Albania), Biljan Markovska (FYR of Macedonia), Snezana Savcic Petric (Serbia), Fatiih Serdaroglu (Turkey), Danijela Sukovic (Montenegro), Dragan Tomovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

### 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

Apologies were received from Austria, Malta and Slovenia.

### 2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

### 3. Agreement of the minutes of the 11th meeting of the Network on Chemical Occurrence held on 5 May 2017, Parma

The minutes were agreed by written procedure on 30 June 2017 and published on the EFSA website on 6 July 2017.

### 4. Topics for discussion

#### 4.1 Contaminants monitoring: the Swedish perspective

Contaminant monitoring and data collection in Sweden was presented to the meeting by the Swedish representatives. The annual numbers of contaminant samples taken was indicated; not just for contaminants but also pesticides and VMPP (Veterinary Medicinal Product Residues) as well as data flow mechanisms. Data is received from the laboratories and other sources, subjected to a range of processing algorithms "the machine" and exposed in a SSD (Standard Sample Description) like format via API (Application Programming Interface) and other services. In relation to data sharing, the speakers emphasised the distinction between providing data and giving access to data.

Germany asked if analytics are included among the activities outlined which Sweden confirmed, while Hungary asked if laboratories collect data in the same structure and what is the 'machine' mentioned in the presentation. Sweden clarified that laboratories use the same schema and that the machine corresponds to various software running different scripts to perform the data conversions. Hungary also asked how Sweden handles differently structured data and Sweden elaborated that this is why they have built the machine. Norway sought further information on the feedback received from experts/institutions and whether Sweden would recommend the 'machine' to all countries. In relation to the machine Sweden suggested using the same thinking and for data access to experts this is provided with the caveat that data changes will incur a charge. The United Kingdom asked how scripts are managed and Sweden advised that considerable time and effort are required to do this. EFSA's follow-up question on the sharing the machine's scripts to make data conversion

easier in other MSs (Member States) received a positive reply. Norway described the importance of connecting laboratories to simplify the mechanism for sending data and they are in the process of developing such a system for SSD2 (Standard Sample Description version 2). Hungary added that this is their plan too but it is challenging since zoonoses is not currently using SSD2. EFSA advised that for some pathogens reporting is done in SSD2 and asked the network to promote the use of SSD2 to their colleagues working in the microbiological area. Sweden acknowledged that what they have developed is easier in a small MS and the importance of using platforms such as GitHub.

#### **4.2 Future network meetings**

The Chair explained the background to a proposal for a single chemical network covering contaminants and VMPPR. The objective is to bring the two different domains together, which have many similarities, and this will have the added benefit of reducing the high financial cost of maintaining two networks.

Poland asked if the new network would have 2 representatives per MS to which EFSA replied that it will make enquiries. Germany asked about organising network meetings that address technical issues separately from data collection coordination activities. EFSA advised that there would continue to be an annual meeting but task forces could be created to examine specific issues identified for chemical reporting. The Netherlands asked if the network should also include pesticides and any deadline for streamlining chemical monitoring. EFSA agreed in principle with the proposal which would in any case be discussed the pesticides network. Belgium indicated that consultation with colleagues would be needed and also asked for a formal proposal to be drafted from EFSA which EFSA agreed to provide. No network member indicated their opposition to the proposal.

#### **4.3 Timeframe for 2017 contaminants data collection**

Monica Giulivo (DATA Unit), updated the network on the timelines for 2017 contaminants reporting, the priority chemicals and revised continuous call for chemical contaminants.

Norway asked about the catalogue browser and Cyprus indicated some issues with installing the application. Cyprus asked about the overlap in reporting contaminants and pesticides in the VMPPR data collection and when these should be reported. EFSA replied that if the national VMPPR plan includes contaminants samples should be reported in VMPPR and do not need to be reported again for contaminants. The intention to move towards harmonised chemical reporting in the future is partly driven by the need to avoid such overlaps and prevent double reporting. On the overlap discussion Belgium said they may need to report in both collections; EFSA indicated that it is acceptable as long as the same sample identification code is used to enable duplicates to be identified.

#### **4.4 SSD1>SSD2 progress: Draft guidelines for harmonised chemical reporting**

Jane Richardson (DATA Unit) asked which countries intend to report contaminant data in SSD2 format: Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, France, Hungary Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Spain indicated that they will report 2017 data in SSD2 format.

In connection with reporting in SSD2 the Chair advised the network of the draft technical report on harmonised chemical reporting, already circulated to the network prior to the meeting. Written comments on the draft should be provided to EFSA by 30 April 2018. EFSA also indicated that it would like to remove all compound data elements to simplify reporting.

Sweden reacted positively to the suggestion for compound data elements while France advised that although each compound element is stored in one field this is not the case when reporting in FoodEx2. EFSA advised that this can be addressed as EFSA stores data at the level of facets. Denmark asked about the action taken code as this is reported as a compound field to which EFSA replied that it would need to be analysed.

Germany raised a point about the variables PARAM type and maximum limits and EFSA emphasised its request for written feedback to fully gather inputs on all issues. Spain added that they use the compound elements in the domain definitions of samples and EFSA agreed that some internal conflicts are evident in FoodEx while Hungary requested a guideline for converting the data to SSD2. On this latter point EFSA suggested collaboration with MSs who have already made progress in this area. Belgium asked when there are no legislative requirements for an analysis method such as in the framework of research projects can variables be omitted? EFSA responded that a default value could be used but cautioned against removing variables as additional information may be needed when dealing with a crisis situation. Further removing mandatory variables will also impact on the schema used for reporting data. In relation to the draft harmonised chemical reporting technical report, feedback is needed from the VMPP and Pesticides networks and EFSA will also work on harmonising data validation rules.

#### **4.5 SSD2: The simplified Excel tool**

Friedemann Ringwald (DATA Unit) presented the newly created SSD2 mapping tool for contaminants to the participants. The main functionalities of the tool were outlined, including the term mapping and the fact that an xml file for submission to the DCF can be generated.

Cyprus asked if they have an EFSA file with the values it is possible to use copy/paste. EFSA replied that this is possible but if a schema is available there are alternative methods. Norway asked if the validation rules are included the tool which EFSA advised was not the case.

France asked if the tool is already available and was informed that after some final testing the tool will be published in [Zenodo](#). Spain and Sweden asked about how the tool maps FoodEx; EFSA indicated that the base term and a limited number of facets are included. EFSA said a video could be developed to assist completion.

#### **4.6 Improved error reports and business rule alignment**

Valentina Bocca (DATA Unit) gave an overview of how detailed DCF error messages were displayed in the past (which limited the number of times an error can be displayed thus restricting the correct identification and correction of a large number of errors) to how errors are displayed (aggregated) in the new DCF error report in a more user-friendly format.

Sweden asked if the changes were made to the detailed or summary error file, and EFSA confirmed that changes were made to the detailed file. Norway, Belgium and Hungary welcomed the changes as it is frustrating to make corrections to a file only for new errors to appear in the next transmission. Norway asked about the malformed character errors (due to the xml coding using UTF8) while Hungary asked if the data validation process in the DCF could be made faster. On this point, EFSA advised there is a queuing system in the DCF when a large number of files are uploaded around the same time and suggested early reporting where practicable.

#### **4.7 FoodEx2 – sharing experiences from 2016 data reporting**

Sofia Ioannidou (DATA Unit) provided an overview on how to use the FoodEx2 browser and the structure of the catalogue. She explained that it is the nature of the food rather than the origin that needs to be considered when codifying foods. FoodEx2 contains three principle types of food, namely RPCs (raw primary commodities), RPC derivatives/ingredients and composite foods. EFSA agreed to circulate the link to the latest guidelines and informed the network of a new tasking grant under Article 36 that will be launched, for a FoodEx2 expert. The link to the call is now available at <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/art36grants/article36/180418>

Portugal asked if the browser stores the coding to which EFSA replied that it does not but it is possible to store the codes in local copies of the catalogue at the level of the MS for future use. Hungary expressed concern that as their coding is used for different data domains and not only contaminants, it could be in conflict with EFSA codes. This is particularly the case when reporting on animal sub-species and hybrids. EFSA advised to report any questions and issues of this nature to the catalogues mailbox ([catalogues@efsa.europa.eu](mailto:catalogues@efsa.europa.eu)).

EFSA asked if any countries are using FoodEx2 at sampling or laboratory stages and Norway replied positively. France informed the network that they use FoodEx2 for consumption and contaminants data. France and Iceland asked about FoodEx2 updates. EFSA provided the link to the latest version of the catalogue browser on the [GitHub platform](#). Norway stated that it is better to ask EFSA to create codes rather than producing them at national level, but it could be possible to use a national prefix.

**12 April 2019**

## **5. Topics for discussion**

### **5.1 Data quality dashboards for contaminants in the Framework Partnership Agreement and progress**

Alessandro Carletti (DATA Unit) gave an overview of the pilot FPA (Framework Partnership Agreement) on data quality. The data quality objectives of the project are intended to be realised through the cycle of define, measure, analyse and improve together with the KPIs (key performance indicators). In particular the scoring against the different KPIs was shared – currently timeliness and completeness are the lowest scoring KPIs. The future actions needed for improvements in timeliness, completeness and validity were described.

Germany made that point that timeliness is an issue but to meet this objective the data quality definition, including business rule requirements, are needed prior to taking the sample that is earlier in the process cycle than is currently the case. EFSA asked how this could be managed and Germany suggested that putting the business rules, catalogues and specific requirements in place early would be a major improvement. France agreed with Germany adding that the business rules should be fixed before sampling takes place so ideally should be in place two years before; there should also be a test platform to be used before sending the data formally to EFSA. EFSA replied that catalogues are available on GitHub and that the dashboards allow checking of the data before the deadline.

The Netherlands put forward the link between the quality of data and their use; EFSA clarified how data is used is part of the data quality framework that EFSA is currently piloting. Sweden reinforced the point of Germany that data requirements must be available before sampling (therefore two years before the data collection). EFSA advised the network that when reviewing the draft document on harmonised chemical reporting to keep these comments in mind adding that changes should only be made if they are scientifically justified while acknowledging that the BRs (Business Rules) are an issue. Belgium asked also to clarify the process of actual use of the data in scientific opinions. Denmark remarked that they would like to report back to their laboratories and samplers the problems that impact on the subsequent dataset. The deadlines are also an issue as often EFSA data providers are waiting for answers from the laboratories so EFSA should not be so stringent with deadlines and should also report back to the Commission regarding deadlines and data quality.

## **5.2 Update from the data publication working group**

The United Kingdom representative presented the draft EFSA report on proactive data publication from monitoring programmes and surveys from the EFSA working group on this subject. He emphasised that more countries are adopting open data policies and becoming open by default. The EFSA working group looked at the benefits of open data and highlighted the need for metadata maintenance. The main recommendations of the working group described in the draft report were outlined, and he encouraged the network to comment on the report via a survey which will be shortly launched. In relation to publishing data platforms such as GitHub and Zenodo are available as well as support from EFSA and the working group.

In the discussion that followed France cited a disadvantage regarding misuse of data leading to wrong conclusions potentially being reached and then time is needed to explain why data has been wrongly used. The United Kingdom replied that this is a small risk as in their view there would be few occasions of data misuse. The Netherlands added that they are still discussing what information should not be publically accessible. EFSA advised that experience from Public Access to Document (PAD) requests was used when developing the draft report of the working group. Norway added that it is inspiring to read the report – but that there is a need to get the data clean before it is published. Germany added that open data is happening so the need to move forward and moving away from public access to documents requests is positive. Denmark asked about timeframes to which EFSA replied that the draft technical report will be circulated to all networks and the EFSA Advisory Forum for comments; thereafter a working group meeting is planned to consider the comments in



September 2018. EFSA added that the proposed amendments to the EFSA Founding Regulation (Regulation (EC) 178/2002) [announced on 11 April 2018](#) include, among others, measures that would allow citizens to have automatic and immediate access to all safety related information submitted by industry in the risk assessment process, to further increase transparency in EU decision making and risk assessment. It is therefore reasonable to aspire to proactive publication of monitoring data that are funded by the European taxpayer. In this context, network members were reminded of their role to share discussions and outputs relating to this network at national level.

### **5.3 Collaboration platform**

Doreen Russell (DATA Unit) presented a new collaboration platform (JIVE) which forms part of the EFSA Digital Transformation programme. She highlighted that it can be used to answer questions, search for replies, initiate blog discussions etc. not only between data providers and EFSA but also among data providers themselves. The platform is currently being piloted in the VMPR data collection and the speaker encouraged those network members who are also VMPR data providers to share their experiences of the platform with the rest of the participants. The platform is not intended to replace email exchange but is seen as a more progressive way to interact on matters of mutual interest and concern.

Favourable feedback was received from Norway and Sweden on the platform while France cautioned against the introduction of another platform but asked if input from the network is needed which EFSA confirmed it was. The network requested a list of all available platforms and what information can be found where. Belgium agreed with France in relation to locating documents on the platform while Denmark remarked that the platform can be useful to find a quick reply to a query (if available).

### **5.4 Publication of contaminants aggregated statistics: a possible approach starting from mycotoxins**

Stefano Cappè (DATA unit) described a possible way forward for publishing aggregated statistics of contaminant occurrence data, starting with mycotoxins. This would be done through a harmonised database of opinion level data and would complement the annual chemical contaminants report produced by EFSA.

### **5.5 Inclusion in the Scientific Data Warehouse of contaminants data before 2010 previously excluded due to incompatibility with SSD structure and BRs**

Stefano Cappè explained to the network that it had not previously been possible to load in the EFSA S-DWH (Scientific Data Warehouse) some of the data received before 2010 (around 1000000 records). This was due to the data not being in SDD format, missing mandatory information and the validation rules being very different in the past. To include this data, a project was undertaken to verify the data, flag and track modifications and perform assumption and plausibility checks. By undertaking this, it is now possible to recover the records directly from the S-DWH to address PAD requests for old data and requests from the Commission.

### **5.6 Data management and analysis: a collaborative cloud approach and discussion**

Stefano Cappè outlined the benefits of a cloud approach in managing and analysing data. He clarified that a concrete project in this direction is not yet approved on EFSA side but EFSA is considering it. The progression would be from a data warehouse (a storage where only structured data can be analysed) to a data lake (a storage where structured and unstructured data can be jointly analysed). For this reason, the scope of his presentation is to understand if any national constraints exist limiting the use of this type of technology. Norway asked if the cloud would better support data sharing versus data transmission, which EFSA confirmed, since data in the cloud are natively shared (although data security and confidentiality is ensured). Sweden informed that it is also planning to use data lakes, and complimented EFSA on considering this innovative approach. The United Kingdom asked whether this technical issue deserves a specific IT working group. EFSA asked that network representatives take back this presentation and discuss the use of cloud systems for contaminants data in the MSs, and inform EFSA, if issues exist, by the end of May 2018.

## 6. Any Other Business

No additional items were raised.

## 7. Date for next meeting

The proposal for a joint network with VMPPR will be taken forward. Although no date has been selected, a meeting after both data collections have closed would be a good option. The draft terms of reference of a new joint network on chemical monitoring data collection will be circulated to both networks for comments. Slovakia asked about including pesticides in the network which EFSA said would be discussed internally. Norway suggested that a joint meeting with pesticides could also be a way forward. France asked whether the 2018 VMPPR network would go ahead as planned which was confirmed as a new joint network would not be in place until 2019.

## 8. Conclusions

The Chair thanked the network and all presenters for their contributions to the meeting, the main actions arising from the discussion were outlined (see table below) and the Chair advised that the link to the presentations will be sent in the coming days. The draft minutes of the meeting will be circulated to the network for comments.

Action	Who
Prepared draft terms of reference for a proposed joint chemical monitoring network group to be prepared and distributed to relevant networks for comments/input	EFSA/Networks
Comments on draft guidelines for harmonised chemical reporting (already sent to network in word format)	Network
EFSA to provide the survey link for commenting on the technical report 'Publication of scientific data from EU coordinated monitoring programmes and surveys'	EFSA

## 9. Closure of the meeting



The meeting was closed at 13:00 as anticipated.