

**SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE AND ADVISORY FORUM UNIT**

Parma, 10 April 2008

EFSA/AF/M/2008/124/PUB/FIN

**Minutes**

**TWENTY FIFTH MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM**

**PARMA (ITALY), 31 JANUARY-1 FEBRUARY 2008**

**MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY FORUM**

**Chair:** *Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle*, Executive Director, EFSA

Austria	<i>Roland Grossgut</i>	Italy	<i>Agostino Macrì</i>
Belgium	<i>Herman Diricks</i>	Latvia	<i>Gatis Ozoliņš</i>
Bulgaria	<i>Stefka Petrova</i>	Lithuania	<i>Ingrida Miliute</i>
Cyprus	<i>Stella Canna-Michaelidou</i>	Netherlands	<i>Evert Schouten</i>
Czech Republic	<i>Klára Zuzánková</i>	Poland	<i>Jan Krzysztof Ludwicki</i>
Denmark	<i>Henrik C. Wegener</i>	Portugal	<i>Manuel Barreto Dias</i>
Estonia	<i>Küllli Rae</i>	Romania	<i>Liviu Rusu</i>
Finland	<i>Kirsti Savela</i>	Slovakia	<i>Zuzana Bírošová</i>
France	<i>Valérie Baduel</i>	Slovenia	<i>Urška Blaznik</i>
Germany	<i>Reiner Wittkowski</i>	Spain	<i>Jesús Campos Amado</i>
Greece	<i>Vassilios Krestos</i>	Sweden	<i>Leif Busk</i>
Hungary	<i>Maria Szeitzné Szabó</i>	United Kingdom	<i>Judith Hilton</i>
Ireland	<i>Alan Reilly</i>		

**Observers and Invitees of the Executive Director**

Norway	<i>Kirstin Færden</i>	European Commission	<i>Jeannie Vergnettes</i>
Switzerland	<i>Michael Beer</i>	European Parliament	<i>Thomas Gijsselaers</i>

## Staff of the European Food Safety Authority

<i>Monika Adamova</i>	<i>Riitta Maijala</i>
<i>Ana Afonso</i>	<i>Elena Marani</i>
<i>Silvia Bellocchio</i>	<i>Torben Nilsson</i>
<i>Bernhard Berger</i>	<i>Ilias Papatryfon</i>
<i>Gian Luca Bonduri</i>	<i>Sérgio Potier Rodeia</i>
<i>Bernard Bottex</i>	<i>Tobin Robinson</i>
<i>Stef Bronzwaer</i>	<i>Pilar Rodriguez Iglesias</i>
<i>David Carlander</i>	<i>Reinhilde Schoonjans</i>
<i>Hubert Deluyker</i>	<i>Carola Sondermann</i>
<i>Anne-Laure Gassin</i>	<i>Karen Talbot</i>
<i>Kerstin Gross-Helmert</i>	<i>Ariane Titz</i>
<i>Djien Liem</i>	<i>Victoria Villamar</i>

### **1 WELCOME AND OPENING OF THE MEETING**

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle, Executive Director of EFSA, opened the meeting and expressed her best wishes for a successful year. She welcomed the new Advisory Forum (AF) member of Cyprus, the recently appointed AF alternates of Finland and Germany, the Lithuanian representative replacing the AF member at this meeting, and the observer representing the European Parliament. She mentioned that apologies were received from Iceland, Luxembourg and Malta. Finally, she emphasised the importance of receiving the few missing declarations of interests.

### **2 ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The agenda was introduced by the Chair and adopted with three additional issues (probiotics trial, draft regulation on novel foods, and Community Reference Laboratories) under agenda item 7 (Update and exchange of views on matters raised by the Member States).

### **3 MINUTES OF THE 24<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM**

The Chair apologised for late circulation of the draft minutes of the 24<sup>th</sup> AF meeting. It was agreed that the AF members would be given two weeks for providing written comments, and that the minutes would then be finalised and adopted by written procedure. At the meeting, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic suggested minor corrections to the draft minutes. [Following the meeting, the minutes were revised taking into account these minor corrections

and sent to the AF members for additional comments. No further comments were received, so the minutes are considered as adopted].

#### **4 MATTERS ARISING SINCE THE 24<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE ADVISORY FORUM**

##### **Management Board meetings in Lisbon on 13 December 2007 and in Parma on 23 January 2008**

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle informed the AF that the Management Board had adopted EFSA's Management Plan for 2008, including the establishment plan and budget, at its meeting in Lisbon on 13 December 2007, and that also the article 36 institutions of Bulgaria and Romania had been approved.

At the Management Board meeting in Parma on 23 January 2008, EFSA presented a round-up of activities in 2007 in its draft Annual Activity Report, highlighting some of the over 200 Scientific Opinions produced. Philippe Vannier, Chair of the Animal Health and Welfare Panel, presented the work of the Panel. His presentation was much appreciated and led to a discussion on some of the key issues, driving forces and working processes in the area of animal health and welfare. The Management Board agreed that this would continue to be an important area for EFSA risk assessment in the future. Two AF members, Leif Busk (Sweden) and Alan Reilly (Ireland), presented the AF's input into the work of EFSA and the AF's involvement in implementing the Strategy on Cooperation and Networking. The Management Board welcomed the progress to date and the future plans to further strengthen EFSA's cooperation with the Member States. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle also informed that the Management Board had postponed the adoption of the revised Decision on the operation of the AF in order to provide further comments aiming at ensuring the legal consistency of the document and clarifying the observer role. However, it was emphasised previously by the European Commission that it would be difficult to depart from the original wording of EFSA's Founding Regulation. A revised Decision on the operation of the AF will be submitted to the Management Board for adoption at its meeting in March 2008.

*Action 1: EFSA to come back soon with more information on its role within Animal Health.*

*Action 2: EFSA to circulate the AF presentation given to the Management Board.*

Following the feedback from the Management Board meetings, Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle gave a presentation on EFSA's achievements in 2007 and an outlook on challenges and key objectives for 2008 and the years beyond. In summary, the following items were highlighted:

- In 2007, the total number of opinions adopted passed the 500 mark, with more than 200 adopted in 2007 alone. During 2007, more than 1000 applications and renewals were received, and in the area of food additives, food contact

materials, feed additives, GMOs, food allergies and novel foods 1552 applications were completed.

- EFSA continued to review its activities, operational procedures and structures. It strengthened its declaration of interests process, and consulted the Scientific Committee on possible approaches to handle urgent questions and methods to review the quality of its scientific work. To coordinate cooperative activities and provide assistance to the risk assessment units, the Scientific Cooperation and Assistance Department became operational.
- The year 2007 also saw the first initiatives to implement the Strategy on Cooperation and Networking. The newly created Steering Group on Cooperation met three times to develop and discuss proposals for scientific cooperation projects involving EFSA and the Member States, and seven ESCO projects were launched in various areas of common interest.
- EFSA worked closely with the national agencies and beyond to share scientific information. Twelve calls were issued under article 36 of EFSA's Funding Regulation, 18 focal point agreements were signed, and a confidentiality agreement was signed with the United States' Food and Drugs Administration.
- The Fifth Anniversary of EFSA's inception provided an excellent opportunity to strengthen EFSA's networks in Parma and also among the European Institutions in Brussels. A series of events, including the Scientific Forum and Scientific Summit were held.

For 2008, the key objectives will be as follows:

- Continue to deliver high quality opinions in a timely manner in the context of an increasing workload.
- Build on the quality of EFSA's scientific outputs.
- Be at the forefront of risk assessment methodologies in Europe.
- Enhance the impact and effectiveness of EFSA communications.

To achieve these key objectives, EFSA will strengthen the level of scientific support to the Scientific Committee (SC) and Panels, streamline procedures and processes, enhance scientific cooperation with Member States, further improve risk assessment methodologies, and monitor the quality of its scientific work. In addition, EFSA will develop and implement strategies on the enhancement of the visibility of its scientific outputs, targeted communication and media monitoring.

The successful implementation of these objectives will require changes in governance in 2008, and, as a result, two new Scientific Directorates have been created: Risk Assessment Directorate and Scientific Cooperation and Assistance Directorate. In addition, the prioritisation of resources to scientific activities in the period 2006-2008 has doubled the number of staff allocated to scientific activities. In total, by the end of 2008, 61% of EFSA staff will be allocated to scientific activities compared to 51% in 2006. The budget allocated to scientific activities has also been increased by 4% in 2008 alone. Presently, a Management

Team composed of the two Scientific Directorates, the Administration Directorate, the Communication Directorate, the SC and AF Unit, and the External Relations Unit is assisting the Executive Director in the daily management of EFSA.

Denmark asked if EFSA has adequate resources to influence the programmes of DG Research in order to promote important research areas. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle said that EFSA has the capacity to positively influence risk assessment and already cooperates with DG Research. She added that also the national authorities can play a role. Djien Liem, Head of the SC and AF Unit, explained that there are annual meetings between EFSA and DG Research to discuss the outcomes of the Framework Programmes and new plans, as well as regular interaction in the Panels with DG Research colleagues. Italy said that there is a great potential in the national research communities to support EFSA's scientific work. France emphasised the importance of involving existing networks and cooperate with the national agencies, *e.g.* the Community Reference Laboratories. Cyprus suggested that EFSA could contribute to focusing research, mentioned that it is an important challenge for the AF members to interact with the many national research institutions, and therefore suggested that a common "idea paper" could be very useful.

*Action 3: EFSA to present its current cooperation with DG Research and the Member States to share their views with a senior officer from DG Research at the AF meeting in June 2008.*

The Netherlands asked how EFSA would face the ever increasing workload, and why the previous Science Directorate had been replaced by the two new Scientific Directorates. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle explained that ways to face the increasing workload included 1) close cooperation with the European Commission to agree on priorities, 2) regulatory streamlining of procedures, 3) careful consideration of the best use of the Panels, since some requests can be handled directly by EFSA staff, 4) scientific cooperation and assistance, in particular the cooperation under article 36, and 5) the creation of the two scientific directorates to enhance the scientific activities in close cooperation between the scientific directorates and the SC and AF Unit. Bulgaria agreed on the importance of setting priorities. France expressed appreciation of EFSA's constructive approach and new management structure.

Belgium mentioned the need to handle scientific uncertainty, and said that credibility cannot be measured through the declarations of interests, so other ways of maintaining a high level of credibility of EFSA and the national authorities should be considered. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle said that the credibility does not only depend on the declaration of interests, but also on the quality of the opinions and the procedures used for the adoption of scientific outputs. She confirmed that scientific uncertainties are addressed. Finally, she added that confidence is difficult to measure and welcomed a dialogue on impact indicators.

Germany asked how to proceed for certain strategic issues falling between EFSA and EMEA, e.g. certain toys. Denmark shared an example of a toy that could as well be food causing an allergic reaction.

*Action 4: EFSA to provide information on issues falling on the borderline between EMEA and EFSA.*

## **28<sup>th</sup> Scientific Committee plenary meeting in Brussels on 19 December 2007**

Djien Liem informed the AF that the 28<sup>th</sup> SC plenary meeting in Brussels on 19 December 2007 had been dedicated to animal cloning and he therefore referred to agenda item 9.2 (Animal cloning).

## **5 COOPERATION AND NETWORKING**

### **Presentation of a strategy paper for the databases**

Hubert Deluyker, Director of Scientific Cooperation and Assistance, presented EFSA's draft strategy with regard to collection of food safety data: needs, available data collection systems, and priorities for new databases.

France appreciated the work and wished to submit detailed comments in writing. France emphasised the cooperation with the WHO and national agencies, as well as the need to define the responsibility of the data transmitted. The United Kingdom said that food consumption data are a top priority for risk assessment and asked why radioactivity data were not reflected. Austria said that EFSA should collect and evaluate pesticide residue data in the future and suggested to optimise the system together with the Member States. Austria also mentioned the need to establish criteria for the procedure around the borderline between risk assessment and risk management, e.g. control programmes. Italy mentioned that control data are often useless for risk assessment purposes due to the data collection method applied. The Netherlands suggested developing a roadmap with indication of the different steps and who to involve, as well as to take into account combination of exposures. Germany mentioned that food consumption data would need to be classified not just by food type, but also by their processing. Sweden found that the paper represented a major step forward, but questioned the idea of a Pan-European database. Ireland liked that the database could contain food consumption and nutrition data, but mentioned that very different data formats are used today in these two areas, and that there are differences between the Member States too. Norway drew the attention to existing networks on food consumption data and said that the database could never answer all questions. Belgium suggested that the food consumption database could be a platform for sharing with explanations provided on how the data collection methods differ. Belgium also mentioned that many data are available in commercial firms. Hubert Deluyker welcomed written comments and said that small changes in data collection criteria can often make the data useful.

He also clarified that the process would be stepwise and welcomed a discussion on how to set priorities for the pesticide residue work. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle concluded that EFSA would take onboard the comments, since the document would constitute an important reference for EFSA. She also took note that the AF wanted more clarity on priorities with indications on timeline and operational aspects.

*Action 5: EFSA to update the AF regularly on the progress in the field of data collection.*

### **Update on the status of the ESCO working groups/networks**

Alan Reilly (Ireland), Chair of the ESCO working group on folic acid, briefed the AF on the outcomes of the ESCO meeting in Parma on 30-31 January 2008 and the next steps. He also thanked the EFSA secretariat for its support. The working group had discussed that the issue may be more complex than initially expected, and that certain changes to its terms of reference may therefore be proposed to the Steering Group on Cooperation. A workshop on folic acid with invited experts who recently published new information is tentatively scheduled for September 2008. The outcome of the work of the ESCO would serve as an input to the work of the Dietetic products, Nutrition and Allergies (NDA) Panel. Sweden added that the ESCO may also suggest terms of reference for an article 36 call on folic acid. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle welcomed this idea. Bulgaria mentioned that recommended daily intake values differ from country to country.

*Action 6: The ESCO working group on folic acid to produce an update report on its activities for the AF.*

Roland Grossgut (Austria), Chair of the ESCO working group on fostering harmonised risk assessment approaches, informed the AF that an ESCO meeting would take place in mid-March 2008 and thanked the EFSA secretariat for its support in setting up the Extranet platform for the ESCO.

Djien Liem informed that the second meeting of the ESCO working group on emerging risks would take place on 13 February 2008 and referred to agenda item 9.3 (Botanicals) for the update on the ESCO working group on botanicals.

Sergio Potier Rodeia, Scientific Cooperation Unit, presented the work of the ESCO working group on setting up a database of scientific experts that held its first meeting in Parma on 18-19 December 2007, including the suggested strategy to populate the database and the next steps. The draft expert database project plan would be submitted to the AF for discussion and endorsement in April 2008. The European Commission emphasised the need to limit the search for experts to areas of relevance for EFSA's work. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle confirmed that it would be limited to experts within EFSA's remit. Norway asked for clarity on the expected quality control of the experts. Sergio Potier Rodeia said that the

suggestion is to screen the experts at the time of selection, not upon entry into the database. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle confirmed that the AF will be consulted on the expert database project plan and the draft decision of the Executive Director on the selection of experts at the AF meeting in April 2008.

*Action 7: EFSA to share the draft expert database project plan and the draft decision of the Executive Director on the selection of experts with the AF prior to the AF meeting in April 2008.*

### **Update on the status of article 36 calls and contracts**

Bernhard Berger, Head of the Scientific Cooperation Unit, presented an update on the status of article 36 calls and the list of institutions. France said that the possibility to work with networks was important and asked about the role of the AF in relation with article 36. Bernhard Berger replied that consortia can indeed apply, and that the AF would be consulted on the identification of calls. Also the results of the selection procedures would be published.

## **6 DISCUSSION ON THE FOLLOW-UP AFTER THE SPECIAL ADVISORY FORUM MEETING ON THE RISK ASSESSMENT OF GMOs**

Riitta Maijala, Director of Risk Assessment, presented the approach, conclusions and suggested follow-up on the Special AF meeting on the Risk Assessment of GMOs held in Brussels on 13 November 2007. The replies from the Member States to a detailed questionnaire on the risk assessment of GMOs had been useful in identifying the five key areas for scientific discussions at the meeting, *i.e.* risk assessment approaches, biological relevance versus statistical significance, environmental risk assessment, use of animal models for safety testing, and future developments, as well as to gain more insight into the work in different Member States. A key conclusion of the meeting was that the Member State experts agreed that EFSA's guidance document was a proper basis for the risk assessment of GMOs, while certain aspects would need to be further developed, bearing in mind also the scientific progress. The majority of these aspects were already being addressed through EFSA self-tasking. Reinhilde Schoonjans, GMO Unit, mentioned that the environmental impact assessment would comprise non-target organisms and encouraged field trials in the Member States. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle thanked the AF for the support in identifying the national experts, mentioned that the meeting report would be published, and said that EFSA would work on the environmental risk assessment based on a mandate from DG Environment.

France and Austria asked for further information on risk-benefit assessment. Hubert Deluyker informed that EFSA would issue a general paper on risk-benefit assessment by the end of February 2008.



The United Kingdom suggested applying the approach used for the GMO sub-groups also within other Panels. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle said that EFSA would discuss this suggestion with the SC and Panels.

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle concluded that the questionnaire had offered a good opportunity to get an overview and that the information would need to be updated regularly through meetings with GMO experts.

*Action 8: EFSA to follow up on the conclusions of the GMO report.*

*Action 9: EFSA to provide further clarification on risk-benefit assessment.*

## **7 UPDATE AND EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON MATTERS RAISED BY THE MEMBER STATES**

### **Quantitative risk assessment of STEC (shiga toxin producing *E. coli*) in minced meat**

France presented a new model for the quantitative assessment of STEC in minced meat, taking into account exposure assessment and effect assessment of *E. coli* O157:H7 for children under the age of sixteen in France. The model had been developed when the relationships published previously at international level did not correspond to the *E. coli* O157:H7 epidemic that occurred in France in 2005. The report would soon be available at [www.afssa.fr](http://www.afssa.fr).

Tobin Robinson, Biological Hazards (BIOHAZ) Unit, said that the BIOHAZ Unit would look into the methodology. Denmark asked if the study had changed the view of risk managers, but France replied that it was still so new that it was too early to tell. Italy and Germany saw possibilities to strengthen the cooperation in this field, and France confirmed its willingness to share the raw data. The Netherlands asked about the robustness of the model, and France replied that it had been applied to the French situation and would need further validation for application elsewhere. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle encouraged the sharing of such new information.

### **AFSSA's opinion on claims**

France presented an opinion prepared by the French Food Safety Agency (Afssa) relating to the evaluation of generic claims in the context of the elaboration of a list according to the provisions of the Regulation on nutrition and health claims made on foods (Regulation 1924/2006). Only a minority of the claims compiled by France were considered as scientifically substantiated.

Pilar Rodriguez Iglesias, Head of the NDA Unit, mentioned EFSA's guidelines from July 2007 on general criteria and said that EFSA would address the health claims as soon as the compiled list was received from the European Commission. Ireland, Germany, France, Netherlands and Greece shared information on the

present situation at national level. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle noted the interesting differences, and Hubert Deluyker suggested that it would be useful to know how the national lists were compiled. The European Commission informed that all Member States were to submit their lists of health claims by the end of January 2008, but that many Member States had not replied yet. The compiled list would be send to EFSA in May 2008.

*Action 10: Discuss health claims again with the AF.*

### **Other issues raised by the Member States**

The Netherlands informed the AF about the unexpected results of a recent probiotics trial in severe acute pancreatitis patients that also raised concern over the use of probiotics in food supplements. The unexpected findings may possibly be explained by a failed randomisation. Given the specific patient group as well as the way of administration of the product, the VWA saw no reason to advise healthy people to refrain from taking these products

*Action 11: The Netherlands to share the probiotics study report when it becomes available.*

France commented on the draft regulation on novel foods transmitted by the European Commission to the European Council on 15 January 2008 that the suggested centralisation is in opposition to the shared intention of cooperation. The European Commission mentioned that the draft regulation is now with the European Parliament, and that it would hence be difficult to reopen the discussion at EFSA level. Instead, it should be discussed at the European Council and all examples of how to cooperate would be welcome. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle concluded that the implementation and the cooperation with the national level could be discussed based on the decision of the European Parliament and when the views of the European Parliament and the European Council were clearer.

France expressed its support to the collaboration between EFSA, the European Commission and the Community Reference Laboratories. Hubert Deluyker thanked for the support. Italy thanked the European Commission for their efforts in supporting the cooperation.

Ireland requested an update on activities related with Aspartame. Djien Liem said that a national experts meeting would be organised tentatively in December 2008, and that a small organising committee would assist in preparing the meeting.

The United Kingdom requested an update on the progress of the work on colours of the Panel on Food Additives, Flavourings, Processing Aids and Materials in Contact with Food (AFC). Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle informed that colours would be on the agenda of the AFC Panel plenary meeting on 5-6 March 2008.

## **8 UPDATE ON ESTABLISHING FOCAL POINTS IN THE MEMBER STATES FOR COOPERATION WITH EFSA**

Torben Nilsson, Team Leader Advisory Forum Secretariat, updated the AF on the establishment of focal points in the Member States: All Member States have confirmed their interest in establishing a focal point for cooperation with EFSA. Nineteen Member States have already signed a focal point agreement, five agreements are presently being finalised, and three Member States have informed that they need more time to clarify issues at national level before signing. Torben Nilsson also mentioned that the focal point network would be used for information sharing and requests on operational aspects from now on, while the AF would continue to address strategic issues. He announced that a focal point introductory meeting (including an Extranet training session) would be organised in Parma on 5-6 March 2008, and said that those countries that had not yet nominated a focal point would continue to receive all the information through their AF member who would also be invited to the focal point meeting. Finally, he said that the initial experiences with the focal points would be evaluated as part of the review of the Strategy on Cooperation and Networking towards the end of 2008. Bernhard Berger informed that the invitations for the focal point meeting would be sent out during the second week of February 2008.

Belgium, Austria, Hungary, Sweden, Netherlands, Italy, France and Germany commented on Extranet access rights for the focal points, the need to be flexible as regards who should receive copies of which information, and the nature of the focal point meeting. Bernhard Berger replied that the focal point meeting would focus on the practical aspects of scientific cooperation. Torben Nilsson explained that the Extranet structure could be tailor-made to suit the wishes of the AF with different access rights to different parts of the Extranet. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle confirmed that EFSA would indeed be flexible, and that the different roles of the AF members and the focal points would be clearly reflected.

*Action 12: EFSA to prepare a proposal on the future Extranet structure and access rights for discussion and endorsement at the AF meeting in April 2008.*

## **9 UPDATE AND EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON MATTERS RAISED BY EFSA**

### **Fish welfare of farmed fish**

Ana Afonso, AHAW Unit, informed the AF that EFSA is currently developing an opinion on animal welfare in relation with farmed fish. Five working groups have been created to look at the five major fish species in Europe. A consultation meeting including national experts and other interested stakeholders will be held in Parma on 4 March 2008 with an aim to discuss the current farming and husbandry systems and how these systems may affect the well-being of fish. Ana Afonso thanked for the national expert nominations received so far and said that

the final chance for nominating national experts for the consultation meeting was 11 February 2008. Also the meeting report would be shared for information.

Sweden mentioned that the Nordic Council of Ministers would discuss the relation between welfare and quality at its meeting on 16 April 2008.

### **Animal cloning**

David Carlander, SC and AF Unit, briefed the AF on the draft opinion on animal cloning, which was endorsed for public consultation by the SC on 19 December 2007. He mentioned that also the United States' Food and Drugs Administration had issued an opinion on animal cloning on 15 January 2008. There are some animal health concerns, but food products are considered safe, although there are some uncertainties due to the limited data available. Victoria Villamar, Acting Head of the External Relations Unit, provided information on the purpose of the stakeholder meeting in Brussels on 7 February 2008. Djien Liem invited the AF and organisations in the Member States to provide their comments before the deadline of the public consultation, *i.e.* 25 February 2008, in particular, if they felt that the SC had overlooked anything of importance. Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle added that risk communication on animal cloning is a sensitive issue, so EFSA's Advisory Group on Risk Communication was involved to consider also risk perception. The United Kingdom informed that public research on the public opinion on animal cloning was ongoing.

*Action 13: The United Kingdom to share the report on the public opinion on animal cloning when it becomes available in April 2008.*

### **Botanicals**

Bernard Bottex, SC and AF Unit, briefed the AF on the draft guidance document on the safety assessment of botanicals and botanical preparations intended for use as food supplements, which was endorsed for public consultation by the SC on 19 November 2007 with a deadline for comments on 15 February 2008. The SC working group on botanicals will then review the comments and update the document at its meeting on 19 March 2008. Thereafter, the newly established ESCO working group on botanicals will work to test the draft guidance document on real cases and to finalise the compendium, respectively, in two sub-groups that have been established in consultation with the Chair of the SC and that comprise the participation of thirteen Member States.

### **Pesticide review process**

Hubert Deluyker informed the AF about the work of EFSA's working group on evaluation of the pesticide review process, aiming at improving the efficiency of the process, while maintaining its scientific quality. Some key problems to address include the lack of uniformity of the completeness check of the dossier

from country to country and the late availability of draft conclusions. EFSA will involve the rapporteurs and arrange monthly telephone conferences.

*Action 14: Member States to help EFSA in identifying the competent people to involve at national level.*

#### **Other issues raised by EFSA**

No other issues were raised by EFSA.

### **10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

#### **Dates and venues of the special meetings of the Advisory Forum in 2008**

Torben Nilsson informed the AF about the tentative dates and venues of the special AF meetings and national expert meetings in 2008.

[The dates and venues were later confirmed as follows:

- Special AF meeting on Animal Health in Parma on 27-28 May 2008.
- Special AF meeting on Plant Health in Parma on 8-9 October 2008.]

#### **Dates and venues of the meetings of the Steering Group on Cooperation in 2008**

Torben Nilsson informed the AF that the Steering Group on Cooperation would meet in Copenhagen on 26 May 2008 and in Berlin on 23 October 2008.

#### **Seconded national experts for the SC and AF Unit**

Djien Liem informed the AF that EFSA is looking for seconded national experts for the SC and AF Unit.

*Action 15: EFSA to send more information to the AF on the required profile of the seconded national experts for the SC and AF Unit.*

#### **Other issues**

Austria requested information on the EFSA scientific colloquia foreseen in 2008.

*Action 16: EFSA to provide the AF with an overview of EFSA's scientific events and AF and related meetings in 2008.*

Sweden asked about the follow up by EFSA on the discussion of pyrolizidine alkaloids at the AF meeting in December 2007. Torben Nilsson informed that EFSA's opinion on pyrolizidine alkaloids had been shared with the AF through the Extranet and that no further follow up was foreseen at present.

## **11 CLOSURE OF THE MEETING**

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking the AF members, interpreters and EFSA staff for the good organisation and functioning of the meeting.