

NOTE TO THE MANAGEMENT BOARD

Update on Coordinated Communication

Background

The presentation seeks to update the Board on EFSA's coordinated communication's approach, highlighting ongoing and future plans performed in cooperation with Member States.

Coordinated communication at EFSA – EU Framework

The Transparency Regulation mandates EFSA, the European Commission, and Member States to **enhance food safety risk communication** in Europe. This directive spurs continuous initiatives to establish a unified approach for coordinated risk communication in the food chain to both the general public and relevant stakeholders by EU and national entities. EFSA is actively **allocating resources to collaborate with Member States**, agreeing on shared objectives, processes, and tasks for coordinated communication.

Under the Focal Point Operational Framework, EFSA has established clearly defined administrative and financial instruments to enable the delivery of the activities to develop a model and methodology for coordinated communication. 2023 was 1st year of Focal Points (FP) Operational Framework for coordinated communications.

EFSA identified the need for an integrated framework for risk communication, to develop a common understanding of what we mean by coordinated comms, what we wanted to achieve and how we would achieve it (**EU Framework for coordinated communications**). We looked at way to strengthen or create new networks among the risk communication actors in the EU's food safety system to better share information and we worked together to define tools and activities that we could develop.

The goal of the **newly proposed Member State Communication Coordinator (MSCC)** is to provide a key resource dedicated to facilitating and implementing the EU Framework for Coordinated Communication. This function aims to strengthen coordinated communication efforts to provide citizens with accurate, accessible, timely and tailored information about risks and advice related to food. Each country can choose whether or not to select it, depending on its specific conditions. If chosen by the MS, the function will support and enhance the part of the work of the Communication Expert (CEN) and Focal Point (FP) networks dedicated to communicating with citizens on food safety issues.

Campaigns – the success of joint efforts

Campaigns are a highly effective method of building capacity in Member States and reaching defined audiences to achieve specific goals. EFSA and Member States have been conducting the joint campaign model since 2020. Evidence of the success is 1) the increased number of campaigns EFSA launched since 2020 and 2) increased number of MS signing up to participate to them. The joint campaign approach is taking shape in the following phases of the process:

- Selection of campaign themes
- Campaign development
- Support for Member States
- Campaign delivery
- Results and analysis

This approach optimises resources and expertise, as well as ensuring that communication efforts are locally relevant and consistent.

#Safe2Eat campaign

These are the communication objectives of this campaign: 1) increase awareness and trust in EU food safety system, drawing on fact safe food is backed by EU science; and 2) encourage critical thinking and promote audience engagement on food safety. There was a clear increase of participating countries: from 16 in 2023 to 18 in 2024.

#PlantHealth4Life campaign

#PlantHealth4Life aims to raise collective awareness about risks to plant health and about the role each one of us has to play to protect plants. Also here, clear increase in terms of participation: from 12 participating countries in 2023 to 22 in 2024.

#StopASF

2023 was the fourth edition of the StopASF campaign, which targets farmers, hunters and veterinarians. It was the last year of the campaign, but EFSA will continue communicating on this matter as part of the business as usual and with ad hoc communication initiatives. In 2024, EFSA implemented a mini social media campaign in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Serbia, Italy. We migrated the website integrating the toolkit with all the communication material on the EFSA website.

Strengthening and enhancing coordinated communication

1. EFSA will present some data (e.g. no of published articles) by **Food Risk Assess Europe (FRAE)**, an open access repository of selected scientific articles from national food safety agencies across the EU. As an addition to our EFSA Journal on Wiley, FRAE aims to promote collaboration and provide a stronger evidence base for the EU risk assessment community.
2. EFSA will outline some of the actions taken in order to improve the **usability of digital platforms**, allowing them to be more accessible, multilingual, harmonised. Among the sources of users' insights analysed: 1) continuous feedbacks on each website page 2) a top-task survey and customer centric index survey (1300+ users), 3) EJ Survey, etc.

Conclusion and next steps

EFSA will continue to implement its Framework for Coordinated communication as a basis to move forward to meet the requirements of the TR and to support the European Commission in relation to its General Plan for Risk Communication (GPRC). The creation of a function, MSCC, will contribute to all types of coordinated communication activities, either to support the CEN member or to work independently depending on the wishes of the Member State. Based on the experience gained in the past years, the collaborative approach of developing and running joint communication campaigns has been highly effective in building communication capacity in Member States and enhancing outreach to citizen audiences on food safety issues.