Engagement and External Relations Unit

Engage Department

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NOTE TO THE MANAGEMENT BOARD

Shaping engagement with stakeholder feedback

Background

The presentation updates the Board on EFSA's engagement approach, highlighting its evolution to respond to scientific and societal demands, building on feedback received from stakeholders.

Evolution of EFSA's engagement approach

EFSA's engagement strategy moved from affiliation-based to topic-based, allowing for a more inclusive approach by bringing diverse knowledge together around a specific topic. This approach is part of the strategic objectives of the EFSA Strategy 2027.

A topic-based approach allows for earlier and more regular engagement with stakeholders throughout the risk assessment (RA) process, not only via public consultations but using a mix of engagement methods and tools. The change responded to both external demand (addressing the need of stakeholders to mobilize the right expertise/knowledge within their constituencies to contribute to EFSA's work more effectively) and internal needs (introducing novel engagement mechanisms beyond traditional public consultations).

EFSA's value is rooted in the **quality** of its scientific advice and in the **relevance** of that advice for risk managers and society. Engagement is an enabler of such value creation, and the RA process offers multiple opportunities to involve partners and stakeholders in EFSAs' work:

- For applications on regulated products, the minimum level of engagement is legally mandated by the Transparency Regulation (i.e., public consultation on the list of intended studies for application renewal and public consultation on submitted applications). Additional engagement activities may be defined on a case-by-case basis to address specific needs (e.g., sensitivity due to controversial topics).
- For generic mandates, the most appropriate engagement actions are defined on a case-by-case basis depending on the topic, using EFSA's engagement toolkit.

Practical examples of the topic-based engagement approach in action

1. **Novel foods guidance update:** the participatory process on novel foods started in 2022 by building an overview of the main actors worldwide (stakeholder mapping) and by deepening the understanding of the main challenges and innovations associated to culture-derived foods (scientific colloquium). These activities highlighted the need for EFSA to stay abreast of the latest innovations in this domain. By engaging with the novel food applicants, EFSA could consider their needs in updating the guidance document. The participatory process - which lasted two years from 2022 to 2024 - will be concluded with a webinar to present the final output to the users. In addition to the applicants, EFSA has also engaged regularly with Member States competent authorities and other regulatory bodies in Europe and beyond to ensure methodological alignment.

2. **Animal welfare**: EFSA is supporting the review of the EU animal welfare legislation with its scientific advice following an indicative roadmap of mandates from the European Commission. Considering the number of expected mandates, to ensure predictability and consistency in the way EFSA will engage with stakeholders, EFSA has conceived an ad-hoc engagement approach for all farm-to-fork animal welfare mandates. The participatory

process involves the early and regular engagement of stakeholders throughout RA based on several fixed activities.

Concluding remarks
- Science is not impactful without engagement
- Engagement needs to happen throughout the risk assessment process
- EFSA is committed to listening to stakeholders to shape its engagement approach

More information is available at the following public links:
- Engagement opportunities during the risk assessment of applications and generic mandates: https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/stakeholders/engagement-risk-assessment
- Upcoming stakeholder events: https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/advanced-search
- Upcoming and past public consultations: https://connect.efsa.europa.eu/RM/s/