

Work Plan 2012



Committed since 2002 to ensuring that Europe's food is safe

WORK PLAN 2012

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) marks its 10th anniversary in 2012. It will be a time for looking back on past achievements as well as anticipating new challenges. The work programme for the year reflects the demands which EFSA continues to face as it pursues the broad remit laid down in its Founding Regulation addressing key public health priorities to protect consumers, animals and the environment.

EFSA moved into new, purpose-built premises in Parma in January 2012. From its new home it will carry out its risk assessment work to support EU decision making in key areas for public health. These include meat inspection, transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs), zoonoses, dietary reference values and the cumulative risk from pesticides. Concerning the evaluation of regulated products, the focus will be on food and feed additives, novel foods, food contact materials, genetically modified organisms and micro-organisms, and pesticides.

The recently established Applications Desk Unit will be at the heart of the Authority's work in this area.

Central to the Authority's work over the coming year will be the implementation of the Science Strategy 2012-2016, which highlights how the Authority has grown into its pivotal position within the European food safety system and lays out the vision for its scientific development for the next five years. The main objectives of the Science Strategy are: to further develop EFSA's scientific excellence and other core values, such as openness, transparency, independence and responsiveness; to optimise the use of European risk assessment capacity across the EU; to develop and harmonise risk assessment methodologies; and to strengthen the scientific basis for risk assessment and risk monitoring.



Protecting the independence of its scientific advice has been a key priority for EFSA since it was set up in 2002. Over the past 10 years, EFSA has put in place a range of initiatives to safeguard its core values and build trust in its work and this year Authority will implement its Policy on Independence and Scientific Decision-Making Processes, which was adopted at the end of 2011, with a new set of rules related to the declarations of interests of its scientific experts.

Membership of eight of EFSA's Scientific Panels and its Scientific Committee will be re-established over the coming year and the Management Board will be partially renewed. The results of the ongoing external evaluation of the agency – due to be completed in June 2012 – will help to inform discussions on the future of the Panel system and the balance between internal and external expertise.

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EFSA will continue to strengthen its cooperation with national food safety agencies and scientific organisations in the Member States in order to pool risk assessment resources more effectively across the EU. This will be particularly important as the difficult economic climate will restrict budgets at both national and EU level. The Authority will allocate grants and contracts worth €9.2 million to Member State organisations, an increase of €1 million over 2011.

To improve dialogue with stakeholders, the Stakeholder Consultative Platform will continue to be strengthened and will be renewed when its current mandate expires in mid-2012. EFSA is constantly looking for ways to improve the transparency of its work and, taking stock of stakeholder feedback, will implement in 2012 a pilot project allowing observers to attend a number of Scientific Panel meetings.

At an organisational level, EFSA will pursue its efficiency drive, concentrating in 2012 on optimising its information technology and science and support activities, and establishing a Human Capital and Knowledge Management Unit. EFSA will submit to its Management Board a preliminary rolling multi-annual plan for 2013-2015 outlining the main challenges and deliverables and integrating the support activities critical to its development (information technology, human capital development and knowledge management).

The Authority will also benefit from the new organisational model put in place in 2011 aimed at strengthening efficiency and providing a higher quality service to its clients. A “scorecard” system will be introduced in 2012 to monitor performance and a quality management system is to be implemented, the first stage of which will cover EFSA’s scientific outputs and is expected to be completed by December 2013.

EFSA will use the occasion of its 10th anniversary to communicate to a range of parties the contribution the Authority makes to the European food safety system in cooperation with its key partners at European and national levels. The year will culminate with a scientific conference in November and, in association with the European Commission, an event that will build on the results of EFSA's external evaluation, reflecting on EFSA's achievements over the past 10 years and looking forward to the challenges ahead. This will pave the way for the update of EFSA's five-year strategic plan.



ROBUST SCIENTIFIC ADVICE THROUGH INDEPENDENT RISK ASSESSMENTS

The structural reorganisation introduced in 2011, in particular the creation of the Risk Assessment and Scientific Assistance Directorate, will bear fruit in 2012.

EFSA will continue to harmonise its risk assessment approaches and to share best practices internally among its Panels and externally with other risk assessment bodies. The Scientific Committee will provide guidance on issues such as the risk assessment of chemical mixtures (the “cocktail effect”) and endocrine active substances, and the harmonisation of methodologies for environmental risk assessment.

Key areas of the Authority’s risk assessment work will include the development of animal welfare indicators. These will underpin programmes to guarantee standards of animal welfare on farms and to help control diseases. Advice covering all the major farmed species will be delivered by the end of 2012.

EFSA will also continue to assist the European Commission in the modernisation of meat inspection practices by providing the scientific basis for a risk-based approach at all stages of the production chain. Following their work on swine meat in 2011, the Authority’s experts will turn their attention to poultry in 2012.

Other key areas will include work on setting dietary reference values for micronutrients, a key element in establishing food-based dietary guidelines across the region. In the area of contaminants, risk assessments will cover mercury, natural toxicants and the re-evaluation of substances listed as acceptable previous cargoes for edible fats and oils. A request for advice on risk-benefit assessment of fish will be prioritised.



The Authority's pesticides experts will prioritise the cumulative risk assessment of pesticide residues and an assessment of the risks to bees and other pollinators from pesticides.

EFSA's plant health specialists will focus on EU-wide plant risk assessments (PRAs) and evaluating PRAs conducted by Member States and third countries. In line with EFSA's crisis preparedness procedures, the units that carry out generic risk assessments will respond to urgent scientific requests as required.

EFSA's risk assessment work will continue to be bolstered by its specialists in data collection, monitoring of biological hazards, statistics, modelling, data management and risk assessment.

Reports will be issued on selected groups of contaminants, and the harmonisation of food consumption data collection will continue with a particular focus on dietary survey execution protocols. To further implement evidence-based, systematic and transparent approaches to risk assessment, EFSA will continue to allocate significant resources to providing methodological and hands-on support for systematic literature reviews including training for experts and staff.

The Authority will prioritise the development of IT tools that enhance data collection in the areas of chemical compounds, food consumption and zoonoses as well as the processing of scientific information.

EVALUATION OF REGULATED PRODUCTS

EFSA will continue to allocate a significant amount of its resources to the evaluation of regulated products and health claims, a crucial part of the Authority's work to protect consumers from food-related risks.

A key development in this area is the creation of the Applications Desk Unit, which will become fully operational in 2012. It will serve a dual purpose: to improve the service to applicants through “front office” support; and to ease the workload on EFSA's scientific units by taking responsibility for the registration and administration of applications related to regulated products, substances and claims. A helpdesk area has been set up on the website where applicants can access advice and submit questions related to legal and technical requirements.

In line with EFSA's Science Strategy 2012-2016, and following a review of the way the Authority handles the

evaluation of regulated products and health claims, staff within scientific units will be more involved in the evaluation of applications. More preparatory work will be outsourced, much of it through national competent authorities in Member States, while core scientific work remains with the panels. Workshops, technical meetings and other forms of consultation will continue to be prioritised.

Assessment and advice

EFSA has a full programme of evaluations or re-evaluations of products and processes over the coming year. These include:



- food additives, with the highest priority given to the re-evaluation of aspartame;
- food contact materials such as bisphenol A and flavourings;
- diagnostic tests for TSEs;
- new and existing feed additives;
- GMOs in food and feed as well as for cultivation. EFSA will also assess the safe use of GMOs and post-market environmental monitoring;
- specific health claims and re-evaluation of some “general function” claims;
- final conclusions on existing active substances in pesticides and peer review of new substances. First conclusions on new substances are expected in 2012.

The Authority will develop guidance on statistical reporting; evaluating exposure calculations submitted by applicants; and helping to harmonise exposure methodologies used by the Authority’s scientific panels.

The Authority will also deliver guidance for applicants on genetically modified animals and advice on the environmental risk assessment of GM animals. Further guidance will be provided on the scientific requirements for health claims, including those related to bone and joint health, and weight management.

DATA COLLECTION, SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION AND NETWORKING

EFSA's data collection, scientific cooperation and networking activities underpin the Authority's risk assessments and evaluations of regulated substances.

As outlined in the Science Strategy 2012-2016, EFSA plans to adopt a multi-annual approach to its grants and contracts programme, with an emphasis on medium-term planning to strengthen links with national food safety agencies. The Authority will continue to strengthen cooperation and networking with Member States through its Advisory Forum and related Focal Point network and specific networks in areas such as animal health and welfare, genetically modified organisms, and plant health. Collaboration will be strengthened through improvements to electronic tools such as the Information Exchange Platform, and dialogue with stakeholders will continue through workshops and technical meetings.

Emerging risks

The Authority needs to sustain its capacity to respond rapidly to food scares and other crises. To this end, it will continue to develop its ability to identify and deal with emerging risks, in line with the 2010 *Emerging Risks Report* and the Science Strategy. Working groups and outsourcing will be used to implement previously developed methodologies for evaluating signals of emerging issues. A crisis training and simulation exercise will be organised with Member States and, if necessary, procedures for responding to urgent requests will be revised.



Sharing data

The food classification system developed in 2010-2011 will be progressively integrated into EFSA's activities and made available to Member States, and the Comprehensive Food Consumption Database, which increases the accuracy of exposure assessments, will continue to be updated with information from national dietary surveys. EFSA will continue to consolidate and harmonise its chemical hazard characterisation databases in order to improve the sharing of data with other agencies.

In 2012 the Authority will start to analyse the results of the EU-wide baseline survey on *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods. It will also once again produce the annual EU summary reports on food-borne outbreaks and antimicrobial resistance, in close collaboration with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. The use of automatic data transfer tools and the reporting of sample-based data will be further expanded among Member States, assisted by grants from EFSA.

EFSA will continue to set and revise maximum residue levels for active substances in pesticides and publish the Annual Report on Pesticide Residues.

COMMUNICATION AND DIALOGUE

EFSA will continue to implement the Communications Strategy 2010-2013, working with stakeholders and Member States to further improve dialogue and outreach.

The reorganisation of the Communications Directorate will streamline content development, editorial services and the dissemination of information. Recognising the importance of a holistic approach to communicating public health issues, and to increase the relevance and understanding of its work among its target audience, the Authority will continue to develop a thematic approach in areas such as zoonoses, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), nutrition and pesticides. EFSA will produce integrated communications in these key areas in cooperation with Member States and stakeholders, thereby increasing the impact and effectiveness of its communications.

EFSA will also pursue proactive communications on the independence of its scientific decision-making processes to build awareness and shared understanding of the procedures in place to ensure the impartiality of its scientific advice.

EFSA aims to reflect the thematic approach on the website and, drawing on the learning from the dedicated communications session of its Stakeholder Consultative Platform in 2011, to broaden the user base to include a wider range of stakeholders and interested parties. A video series entitled *Understanding Science* will be launched. Aimed primarily at a lay audience, it will support communications in key thematic areas such as zoonoses, GMOs and health claims.



A set of risk communication guidelines, developed in collaboration with Member States, will be published and shared with other communications professionals aiming to improve coherence in approaches to risk communication across the EU. EFSA will also start to develop, again in tandem with national risk communicators, a lexicon of risk assessment terms.

A wider audience

EFSA will continue to increase its outreach in Member States by cooperating closely with the Advisory Forum and Focal Points and the Advisory Forum Working Group on Communications. It will deploy its full range of communications tools, particularly its online presence, including multimedia. Social media will be added to the mix in 2012 with a view to increasing the outreach of EFSA's news stories and press releases to interested communities through new channels such as Twitter.

Further training and simulation exercises will be conducted in 2012 to hone the communication element of EFSA's crisis preparedness procedures.

HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2012

- Provision of animal-based welfare indicators
- Review of meat inspection procedures for poultry
- Opinions on dietary reference values (DRVs) for micronutrients
- Review of advice on bisphenol A and aspartame
- Assessments of contaminants such as mercury and natural toxicants including mycotoxins
- Re-evaluation of acceptable previous cargoes for edible fats and oils
- Risk-benefit assessment of fish
- Evaluation of food additives
- Evaluations of nutrient sources, food contact materials, recycled materials, smoke flavourings, GMOs, new active substances in pesticides
- Guidance on genetically modified animals
- Cumulative risk assessment of pesticide residues
- Update on risk assessment of foods derived from cloned animals
- Renewal of membership of Scientific Committee and Scientific Panels
- EFSA moves into new, purpose-built headquarters in Parma



EFSA's 10th anniversary

During its 10th anniversary year EFSA will be highlighting how its scientific work has contributed to the protection of European consumers and will help to shape the future. The Authority will mark its anniversary by setting up a dedicated section on its website highlighting examples of EFSA's work over the past decade and giving information on upcoming events. The section will be updated throughout the year. In addition, it will be possible to follow EFSA's anniversary year on Twitter.

Throughout the year the Authority will organise events for key partners and stakeholders as well as with Member States.

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: 29 members comprising 27 EU Member States plus Iceland & Norway. Observers from European Commission, Switzerland and 5 candidate countries.
- Network of more than **400** national scientific organisations
- **€78.76** million budget for 2012

ORGANISATIONAL CHART AS FROM 01/01/2012

