

# Work Plan 2013

Committed to ensuring that Europe's food is safe

## WORK PLAN 2013

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*The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has another busy year ahead with a full programme of activities that reflects the broad remit laid down in its Founding Regulation to address key public health priorities in order to protect consumers, animals and the environment and support innovation in the agri-food sector.*

Demand for scientific advice will remain high in 2013, with EFSA expecting to deliver approximately 690 scientific outputs. Specific aspects of the risk assessment work programme will include the delivery of advice on the use of animal-based welfare indicators, and meat inspection. Other aspects related to public health will include transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs), dietary reference values for micronutrients, plant toxicants, mycotoxins, heavy metals, acrylamide, and perfluoro compounds.

In relation to crisis preparedness, the annual crisis training and simulation exercises will be held with Member States and EU institutions. The procedures for responding to

urgent requests will be tested and, if necessary, revised according to the experience gained from both simulation exercises and actual events.

The evaluation of regulated products and claims will continue to be a prominent feature of the work programme. Specific activities in 2013 will also include evaluations of feed additives, plastic food contact materials, recycling processes, food enzymes, active and intelligent packaging, process aids, flavourings, as well as new and previously authorised food additives. Key priorities will be the delivery of a full risk assessment of bisphenol A and a re-evaluation of aspartame.



EFSA's activities in 2013 will be guided by its key strategies, in particular the Science Strategy 2012-2016 and Communications Strategy 2010-2013 as well as the overarching Strategic Plan 2009-2013. The latter two will be reviewed before the end of the year. To provide clarity and predictability on expected workloads and facilitate the involvement of national food safety agencies and other stakeholders in EFSA's work, a rolling multiannual work programme will be issued in 2013 with input from the European Commission, Member States and other key stakeholders. EFSA's contracts and grants programme will be deployed with a focus on areas with particularly heavy workloads such as the evaluation of regulated products.

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The work programmes for 2013 and beyond will be shaped by the recommendations of EFSA's Management Board following the outcomes of the second external evaluation of the organisation, which took place last year. The views of key stakeholders and staff have been solicited and the outcomes of the evaluation were discussed at the high-level conference co-organised with the European Commission in November 2012.

EFSA will continue to engage with a wide range of stakeholders and partners through its Stakeholder Consultative Platform as well as workshops, technical meetings and public consultations. Following the pilot project initiated in 2012, EFSA will review its policy of allowing observers to attend its scientific meetings. The Authority will launch a major initiative designed to

facilitate access to data, enhancing transparency in risk assessment. The programme, to be developed in cooperation with partners and stakeholders, will consider how best and to what extent technical data used in risk assessments can be made available to the broader scientific community and interested parties.

In relation to risk communication, EFSA's Communications Strategy 2010-2013 will be reviewed in light of the outcomes of the external evaluation. The effectiveness of communications on independence in particular will be revisited.

Work on a fully integrated quality management system will continue with a view to completing the component related to scientific outputs by the end of 2013.



## EFSA AT A GLANCE

- **1,200** external scientific experts contributing to its work in 2013
- More than **3,500** scientific outputs adopted since 2002
- Advisory Forum: **27** EU Member States plus Iceland and Norway (representatives from the national food safety authorities of Switzerland and the Candidate Countries participate as observers)
- Network of more than **400** national scientific organisations
- **€78** million budget, **480** staff members for 2013

# ROBUST SCIENTIFIC ADVICE THROUGH INDEPENDENT RISK ASSESSMENTS

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*EFSA will continue to develop and harmonise its risk assessment approaches whilst delivering scientific opinions on areas as diverse as food contaminants and animal health.*

As EFSA implements its Science Strategy, it will continue to develop and harmonise its risk assessment approaches and to share best practices both internally between the Scientific Panels and externally with other risk assessment bodies. The Authority will consult its Scientific Committee on issues given high priority in the Science Strategy in relation to general risk assessment principles; the establishment of medium- and long-term planning of EFSA's activities in the areas of guidance development and the implementation of new risk assessment methodologies; and topics of a multi-sectoral nature.

Harmonised methodologies will be developed for environmental risk assessment, characterisation of uncertainties, and the risk assessment of chemical mixtures. At the request of the European Commission, the Scientific Committee will also advise on the human health and environmental risks of endocrine disruptors.

EFSA's activities in the identification of emerging risks will be based on the 2012 Emerging Issues Annual Report and the Science Strategy. The work will move from an emphasis on method development and pilot studies to implementation. It will continue to be supported by outsourcing on identified issues, particularly in the area of data collection, such as the outsourced project on the EFSA chemical hazards database. The database will be completed in 2013 and will provide summary toxicological data on all of EFSA's chemical risk assessments. The project to identify data and risk assessment gaps in the area of bee health will continue with a view to building a multi-sectoral approach.

EFSA's animal health and welfare experts will provide advice on the use of animal-based welfare indicators; having previously delivered scientific opinions on dairy cows, pigs and broilers, they will look at beef cattle in 2013. They will also report on the monitoring of stunning procedures at slaughterhouses.



To fulfil its complex mandate on meat inspection, EFSA is drawing on its expertise in a wide range of fields: biological hazards, biological monitoring, chemical contaminants, and animal health and welfare. Scientific opinions were delivered on domestic swine and poultry in 2011 and 2012; the remaining species – solipeds, beef, small ruminants, and farmed game species – will be covered in 2013. The Authority's biological hazards experts will also work on several opinions related to TSEs to enable further adaptation of risk management measures in response to the reduced incidence of BSE in the EU.

Activities related to contaminants in the food chain will include risk assessments of natural toxicants, heavy metals and processing contaminants. EFSA's plant health specialists will use the newly developed environmental risk assessment guidance document for their work on *Pomacea insularum*, the island apple snail. At the request of the Directorate-General for Trade, they will also perform a review and pest categorisation of common pests and

diseases of apple and chrysanthemum as part of the preparations for a free-trade agreement between the EU and Canada.

EFSA's risk assessment work will continue to be supported by its specialists in data collection, monitoring of biological hazards, statistics, modelling and data management. They will, amongst other tasks, provide an assessment of the Schmallenberg virus in Europe, and data for microbiological risk assessments. They will also assess dietary exposure to hazardous compounds using occurrence data for food and feed and information stored in the Comprehensive European Food Consumption Database.

# EVALUATION OF REGULATED PRODUCTS

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*The increasing complexity of evaluations of GMOs and active substances in pesticides means that the workload will remain high in this important area of EFSA's work.*

The workload associated with the evaluation of regulated products and health claims will remain considerable in 2013; the proposed budget for this activity is €19.8 million. While the overall number of scientific outputs is expected to fall – partly due to the uncertainty surrounding the evaluation of botanicals – the increasing complexity of evaluations in fields such as GMOs and pesticides coupled with the need to enhance stakeholder engagement means the workload will be high.

The helpdesk service for applicants will continue to enhance the dialogue and quality of the service provided to applicants, Member States, stakeholders and other interested parties and, in particular, will enhance interactions with small and medium enterprises. The unit will also coordinate and streamline the registration and administrative procedures associated with applications. In line with its strategy to increase the efficiency of

processing of applications, EFSA aims to establish an electronic submission system; to this end a feasibility study will look at the tools used by other European agencies, such as the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA). The development of an application template for electronic submission will be a priority for 2013 as will the organisation of information sessions with stakeholders and the harmonisation of workflows.

In line with the Science Strategy, efforts will be made to strengthen scientific cooperation and data exchange at European and international levels to better support applicants with updated guidance documents and risk assessment methodological approaches based on the latest scientific developments. Colloquia, workshops, technical meetings and other forms of consultation will continue to be prioritised.



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

- Food additives, particularly the full risk assessment of aspartame;
- A comprehensive risk assessment of bisphenol A;
- New applications for food enzymes;
- Health claim applications and safety assessments of novel foods;
- New and existing feed additives;
- GMOs in food and feed, including cultivation and post-market monitoring;
- Neonicotinoid active substances in pesticides;
- First conclusions of the peer review of new active substances used in pesticides.

EFSA's experts will develop guidance in a number of areas, including food contact materials, the environmental risk assessment of GM animals, exposure of workers and operators to plant protection products, and risks to bee health from plant protection products. EFSA's nutrition experts will continue their work on dietary reference values, an integral part of establishing food-based dietary guidelines in the Member States. On pesticides, work will continue on the cumulative risk assessment of pesticide residues through the investigation of further modes of combined toxicity.

# DATA COLLECTION, SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION AND NETWORKING

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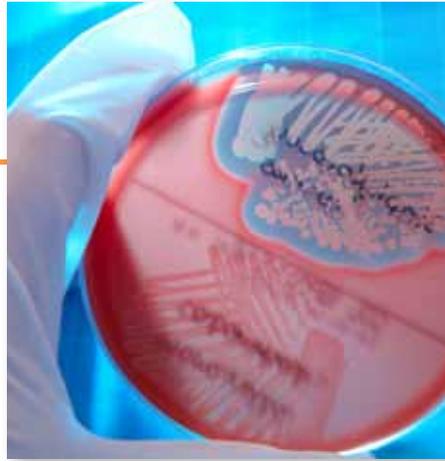
*EFSA's data collection, scientific cooperation and networking activities underpin the Authority's risk assessments and evaluations of regulated substances.*

Scientific cooperation and networking with Member States will remain a high priority for EFSA in 2013. The Advisory Forum and Scientific Cooperation Unit will further the dialogue with the national competent authorities responsible for food and feed safety risk assessment in the Member States. Cooperation beyond the EU Member States will continue to take place via the Pre-accession Programme and the European Neighbourhood Policy. A review of planning in scientific cooperation will be undertaken with a view to adopting a more strategic and multi-annual approach in line with the Science Strategy. This medium-term planning process, along with a grants (Article 36) list revised to achieve its full potential, will make the network of stakeholders and partners even more effective in supporting EFSA. The organisation of scientific colloquia and training on risk assessment both for EFSA staff and scientific experts will strengthen risk assessment capacity in Europe, also as recommended in the Science

Strategy. Networks in fields such as animal health and welfare, GMOs, TSEs, food ingredients and packaging, micro-biological risk assessment, and plant health will continue to develop. Several calls for data will be launched in relation to areas such as food additives, flavourings and GMOs.

## **Collecting and sharing data**

EFSA's data collection specialists will issue reports on selected contaminants, requested by the Commission, as well as the annual report on veterinary drug residues. The food classification system launched in 2010-2011 will be progressively implemented and made available to Member States. EFSA's data collection specialists will promote and support planning and collection of harmonised occurrence and food consumption data, including post-market monitoring of food additives. Data



collection for the EU Menu project, the pan-European food consumption survey, will continue.

EFSA will continue its work on the harmonisation and quality assurance of environmental monitoring of GMOs and pesticides. It will also provide guidance on the harmonised collection and analysis of tracing data – data obtained from forward- and back-tracing of food items through the food supply chain – based on experience gained during the 2011 Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* crisis.

### Reporting together

In the field of biological monitoring, EFSA will continue to produce the EU Summary Reports on zoonoses and foodborne outbreaks, and antimicrobial resistance, both in collaboration with the European Centre for Disease

Prevention and Control (ECDC). The reporting of foodborne outbreaks will be further harmonised and improvements in the reporting on human pathogenic *E. coli* will be initiated. An important new project in 2013 will be the establishment of an EU-level data collection system for molecular typing data from foodborne pathogens in collaboration with EU reference laboratories and ECDC. Another important task will be the analysis of results from the EU-wide baseline survey on *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods; two reports on the analysis of results will be produced in 2013.

EFSA will continue to deliver opinions on applications for new or revised maximum residue levels in pesticides and publish the Annual Report on Pesticide Residues.

## COMMUNICATION AND DIALOGUE

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*EFSA will focus on strengthening its communications on independence while continuing to work with stakeholders and Member States to improve outreach and streamline communications on scientific issues*

The priority for EFSA in 2013 will be to improve the effectiveness of its communications on independence and to widen understanding of EFSA's role in the EU regulatory system. The Policy on Independence and Scientific Decision Making Processes and its implementing rules, which were introduced in 2012, significantly strengthened EFSA's systems for ensuring the independence of its science. But, as the final report of the second external evaluation points out, it is crucial that the robustness of the system is communicated effectively to all stakeholders. EFSA will review its Communications Strategy 2010-2013, building on the outcomes of the external evaluation and the experience gained in the implementation of the strategy. The implementation of a thematic approach to communication will be widened to include the areas of nutrition and innovation.

EFSA will continue to work closely with stakeholder groups, the Advisory Forum Working Group on Communications and Focal Points to streamline communication efforts at national level, thus further enhancing effectiveness of outreach in the Member States.

The reorganisation of the Communications Directorate will be completed, and will include a specialised, full-time internal communications resource that will facilitate an integrated, comprehensive approach to communicating to staff and scientific experts.

The use of social media will be reviewed with a view to increasing the visibility of public announcements and engaging with new users. EFSA will continue to develop



its risk communication guidelines in collaboration with the Member States, to integrate new case studies, share best practice and support greater coherence in risk communication approaches. In collaboration with national risk communicators, EFSA will agree terms of reference for the development of a lexicon of risk assessment terms. A call will be launched for target audience research to assess EFSA's image and perceptions of its work with the aim of strengthening coordination of communications with Member States.

### Reaching out

EFSA will continue to engage a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties in its work via the Stakeholder Consultative Platform, consultative workshops, technical meetings and other means. Dialogue will be fostered with key institutional partners, including the European Commission, European Parliament and the Council of EU Ministers. Regular support will be provided to the Parliament and EFSA will communicate regularly with MEPs to increase awareness of its work in the EU food safety system. In addition, EFSA will participate in the Heads of Agencies meetings to address areas of common interest and will continue to visit key Member State institutions and national agencies to enhance cooperation and information sharing.

# HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2013

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- Advice on human health and environmental risks from endocrine disruptors;
- Advice on animal-based welfare indicators (cattle);
- Updated exposure assessment for acrylamide;
- Opinions on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs);
- Continuation of work related to modernisation of meat inspection practices in the EU;
- Dietary reference values for micronutrients;
- Full risk assessment of aspartame;
- Full risk assessment of bisphenol A;
- Guidance on risk assessment for pesticides and bees;
- Guidance on food contact materials and environmental risk assessment of GM animals;
- Feasibility study for electronic submission system for applicants;
- Harmonised risk assessment methodologies for environmental risk assessment, characterisation of uncertainties, and chemical mixtures;
- EU Summary Reports on zoonoses and antimicrobial resistance;
- Renewal of membership of ANS and CEF panels;
- Proactive involvement in driving the EU research agenda/Horizon 2020;
- Transparency initiative;
- Human capital development: continuing professional development for experts and EFSA staff, increasing proportion of knowledge workers.

# ORGANISATIONAL CHART AS FROM 01/03/2013

