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The European Food Safety Authority at a glance



European Food Safety Authority

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European Food Safety Authority 2009



**Committed to ensuring
that Europe's food is safe**

**The European Food Safety Authority
is the keystone of European Union
risk assessment regarding food and
feed safety.**

**In close collaboration with national
authorities and in open consultation
with its stakeholders, EFSA provides
independent scientific advice and
clear communication on existing
and emerging risks.**

About EFSA

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was formally set up in January 2002, following a series of food crises in the late 1990s, as an independent source of scientific advice and communication on risks associated with the food chain. EFSA was created as part of a comprehensive programme to improve EU food safety, ensure a high level of consumer protection and restore and maintain confidence in the EU food supply.*

In the European food safety system, risk assessment is done independently from risk management. As the risk assessor, EFSA produces scientific opinions and advice to provide a sound foundation for European policies and legislation and to support the European Commission, European Parliament and EU Member States in taking effective and timely risk management decisions.

EFSA's remit covers food and feed safety, nutrition, animal health and welfare, plant protection and plant health. In all these fields, EFSA's most critical commitment is to provide objective science-based advice and clear communication grounded in the most up-to-date scientific information and data.

EFSA's scientific advice underpins the European food safety system. Thanks to this system, European consumers are among the best protected and best informed in the world as regards risks in the food chain.



* White Paper on Food Safety, European Commission, January 2000

Who we are

Based in Parma, Italy, EFSA is an EU-funded Agency. It is governed by a **Management Board** whose members are appointed to act in the public interest and do not represent any government, organisation or sector. The Board sets EFSA's budget, approves the annual work programme and ensures that EFSA works effectively and co-operates successfully with partner organisations across the EU and beyond. It also appoints EFSA's Executive Director and members of the Scientific Committee and Panels.



There are fifteen Board members. One represents the European Commission, while fourteen including the Chair and two deputies, are selected on the basis of their expertise, knowledge and experience following a call for expressions of interest. Candidates are proposed by the European Commission and are appointed for four years by decision of the EU Council of Ministers in consultation with the European Parliament.

Board meetings usually take place at least four times a year and are open to the public. To maximise transparency, all can be viewed live or on demand on the EFSA website.

EFSA's Executive Director, currently Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle (appointed in July 2006 for a five-year term), is the legal representative of the Authority. She is responsible for all operational matters, staffing issues and drawing up the annual work programme in consultation with the European Commission, European Parliament and EU Member States.

EFSA's Scientific Committee and Panels carry out EFSA's scientific risk assessment work. They are composed of highly qualified risk assessment experts from all across Europe with a range of relevant expertise. All members are appointed through an open selection procedure on the basis of proven scientific excellence, including experience in risk assessment, and peer-reviewing scientific work and publications. Appointments are made by the Management Board for three-year terms which may be renewed.

The Scientific Committee (SC) prepares scientific advice in the area of new and harmonised approaches for risk assessment of food and feed, and provides strategic advice to the Executive Director. The Scientific Committee supports the work of EFSA's Scientific Panels on scientific matters of a horizontal nature. The SC also prepares advice on scientific co-operation and networking with scientific experts and research organisations nationally and internationally. The Scientific Committee is composed of the Chairs of each of the Panels plus six independent scientists.

EFSA's Scientific Panels carry out risk assessment work in their respective specialised fields, as follows:

- **Animal health and welfare** (AHAW)
- **Food additives and nutrient sources added to food** (ANS)
- **Biological hazards** (BIOHAZ), including BSE/TSE-related risks
- **Food contact materials, enzymes, flavourings and processing aids** (CEF)
- **Contaminants in the food chain** (CONTAM)
- **Additives and products or substances used in animal feed** (FEEDAP)
- **Genetically modified organisms** (GMO)
- **Dietetic products, nutrition and allergies** (NDA)
- **Plant protection products and their residues** (PPR)
- **Plant health** (PLH)



Working groups involving external scientists with relevant expertise are regularly set up by the Panels to deal with specific issues and to help produce scientific opinions.

The experts on EFSA's Scientific Committee and Panels are supported by EFSA's **own scientific staff** in the **Risk Assessment Directorate**. The **Scientific Cooperation and Assistance Directorate** supports EFSA's risk assessment activities and manages projects in the areas of scientific co-operation with Member States, data collection, emerging risks and assessment methodology. It also deals with specific risk issues by directly involving experts from Member States in:

- **Zoonoses Data Collection** - collection and analysis EU-wide data on animal diseases that can be transferred to humans (known as zoonoses);
- **Pesticide Data Collection** - collection and analysis of EU-wide data on pesticide residues in food;
- **Pesticide Risk Assessment Peer Review** - an EU-wide review of the safety of all active substances used in pesticides.

EFSA at a glance:

- **Over 1200** external scientific experts (SC and Panel members)
- **Almost 1000** scientific opinions adopted
- **More than 400** staff members
- **Advisory Forum network:**
27 Member States plus the European Commission and **3** countries as observers

MANAGEMENT BOARD

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE & ADVISORY FORUM

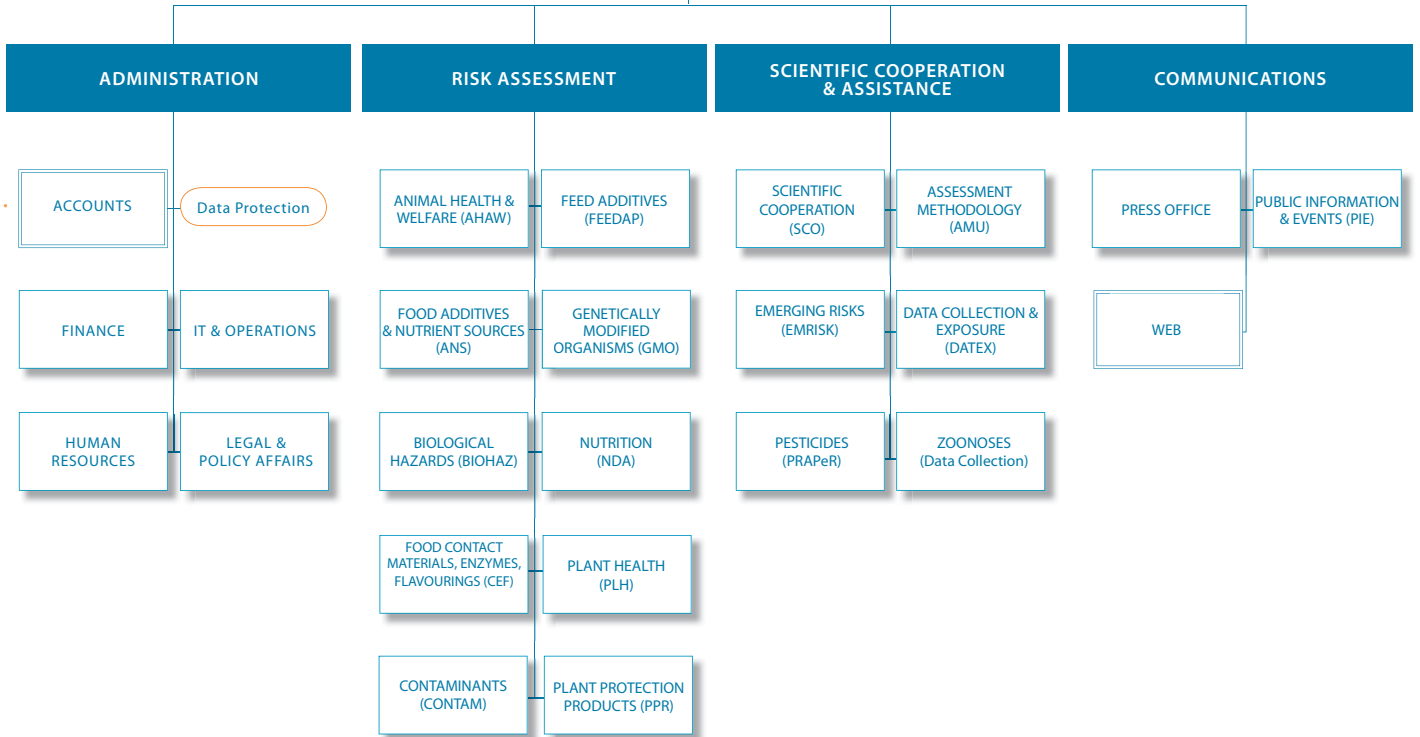
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & MANAGEMENT BOARD

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle

STRATEGY & PROSPECTIVE

INTERNAL AUDIT

QUALITY MANAGEMENT



Organigramm 2009

What we do

EFSA's main work is to assess and communicate on all risks associated with the food chain. Since EFSA's advice supports the policies and decisions of risk managers, a large part of EFSA's work is undertaken in response to specific requests for scientific advice. Requests are mainly received from the European Commission but are also transmitted by the European Parliament and EU Member States.

Accordingly, EFSA's advice frequently feeds into risk management and policy-making processes. This may involve the process of adopting or revising European legislation on food or feed safety, deciding whether to approve regulated substances such as pesticides and food additives, or developing new policies for instance in the field of nutrition. EFSA is not involved in these management processes, but its independent advice gives them a solid scientific foundation.

Established in May 2003, the Scientific Panels have delivered almost 1000 scientific opinions on a wide variety of risk issues. These include Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE), food additives such as aspartame, allergenic food ingredients, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), contaminants in the food chain, pesticides, and animal health issues including Avian Influenza.

EFSA also undertakes scientific work on its own initiative, such as advice on the origin and occurrence of blue tongue, the viral ruminant disease that spread to northern Europe for the first time in 2006, in order to get a better understanding of how the virus evolves and spreads. EFSA's work has included developing a harmonised approach to compare the risks posed by substances with the potential to cause cancer, and guidance on how to assess the safety of botanicals, food supplements products made from plants, algae, fungi or lichens, such as ginseng that have become widely available in the EU as food supplements.

The Authority has an important role in collecting and analysing scientific data to ensure European risk assessment is supported by the most complete scientific information available. It does this by working with EU Member States to gather, share and analyse EU-wide data. EFSA's work in this field includes an EU-wide baseline study on the prevalence of Salmonella in laying hen flocks, and the European summary report on zoonoses. EFSA is also working with Member States to set up EU-wide databases with comprehensive data, for instance, on food, food consumption and consumer exposure to substances found in food and feed.

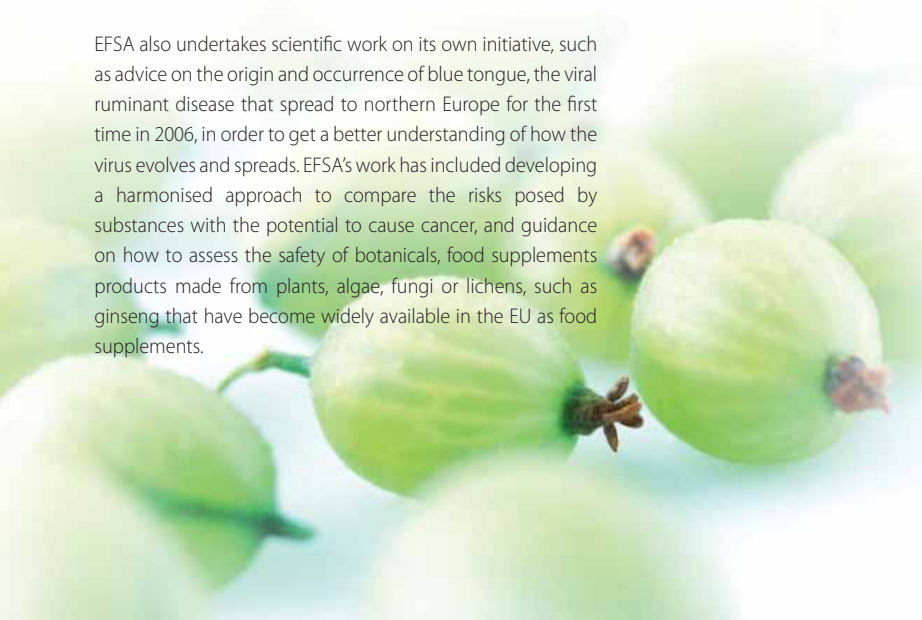


How we work

EFSA works by openly consulting with its many stakeholders and proactively seeking input from interested parties on its work and activities. It also works closely with national food safety authorities across the EU, and co-operates with the European Commission, the European Parliament, other EU bodies and international organisations active in food and feed safety.

Core values

All of EFSA's activities are guided by a set of core values which are fundamental to the Authority's operating principles:



Scientific excellence

Besides the excellent scientific credentials of the experts working for EFSA, the Authority applies rigorously high scientific standards to its risk assessment work, and ensures that the latest scientific knowledge and approaches are taken into account in its opinions.

Independence

The Authority applies a robust set of internal mechanisms to safeguard the independence of its scientific work. All experts are required to sign a commitment of independence and an annual declaration of interests which are published on the EFSA website. Recently EFSA further safeguarded its independence by strengthening its policy on such declarations. Together with specific guidance on the mechanics of making declarations, these measures will bring even greater consistency, transparency and clarity to the whole process.

EFSA's scientific opinions result from a collective decision making process, with each Panel member having an equal say, which reinforces the impartiality and balance of EFSA's conclusions.

Openness and transparency

EFSA consistently publishes its scientific opinions as well as the agendas and minutes of meetings, and other key documents on its website. To maximise transparency, EFSA also webcasts important meetings and events.

EFSA listens to the views of outside parties, particularly its stakeholders. Many stakeholder groups have a close interest in EFSA's work, from the food industry to environmental and consumer groups. EFSA proactively seeks their input and exchanges different points of view, particularly through its Stakeholder Consultative Platform, technical meetings and an annual Stakeholder "Colloque". EFSA also consults outside parties by holding open consultations via the EFSA website, face-to-face meetings and multilateral discussions at scientific conferences and seminars.

To date EFSA has launched public consultations on issues such as the guidance EFSA provides on the risk assessment of GMOs, the methodology for assessing the risk of BSE in different countries, and the approach for carrying out environmental risk assessment of additives used in animal feed.

Responsiveness

Responsiveness EFSA aims to be a responsive and reliable source of support for decision-makers who require complete, up-to-date and timely scientific information on which to base policies and decisions. EFSA prioritises its work accordingly, and in 2008 demonstrated its ability to respond rapidly for instance by issuing advice on the public health risks of melamine in Chinese milk products and of dioxins in pork from Ireland.

Cooperation with EU Member States

EFSA's Advisory Forum connects EFSA with the national food safety authorities in all 27 EU Member States. The Forum's members represent each national body responsible for risk assessment in the EU (plus observers from Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and the European Commission). It is chaired by EFSA's Executive Director.

The Forum is at the heart of EFSA's collaborative approach to European risk assessment. Through it, EFSA and the Member States can join forces in addressing European risk assessment and risk communications issues.

EFSA also uses the Forum to consult Member States on scientific matters and its work programme and to identify and address emerging risk issues as early as possible. Whilst EFSA's Advisory Forum concentrates on the strategic issues related to co-operation and networking, national Focal Points support their Advisory Forum member in setting up a well functioning network in the Member States, for instance to exchange scientific information and to provide advice and support to EFSA on various scientific activities.



Risk Communications

EFSA aims to provide appropriate, consistent, accurate and timely communications on food and feed safety to all interested parties based on its scientific findings. EFSA does this by:

- Analysing public perception of risks linked to food;
- Explaining and contextualising risk;
- Working with key actors including national authorities, stakeholders and media to tailor messages to the needs of different audiences;
- Ensuring consistency by co-ordinating communications with other risk assessment bodies and risk managers such as the European Commission and EU Member States.

EFSA co-ordinates its communications with and takes advice from the heads of communications of national food safety authorities, through the Advisory Forum Communications Working Group. In addition, EFSA has established a multidisciplinary expert Advisory Group on Risk Communications, which provides advice to the Executive Director.

Risk Analysis Framework



Source: WHO/FAO

Looking to the future

The Authority will continue working openly and transparently to deliver timely, impartial scientific advice of the highest standards to support the policies and decisions of European risk managers.

In 2008 the Management Board adopted its Strategic Plan 2009-2013. The plan outlines how EFSA will maximise the benefits of the scientific expertise at its disposal across Europe and strengthen its integrated approach to risk assessment to provide Europe's decision makers with relevant, up-to-the-minute scientific advice.

Six key strategic areas have been identified:

1. Provide an integrated approach to delivering scientific advice, field to plate;
2. Produce timely, high-quality evaluation of products, substances and claims subject to regulatory authorisation;
3. Collate, disseminate and analyse data in the fields within EFSA's remit;
4. Position EFSA at the forefront of risk assessment in Europe and internationally;
5. Reinforce confidence and trust in EFSA and the EU food safety system;
6. Assure the responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness of EFSA.

The objectives set out in the Strategic Plan will guide EFSA over the coming years. The Strategic Plan is intended to be a live, dynamic document that will be revisited regularly. This will allow EFSA to continue to tackle 21st century issues with regard to the food chain, including emerging risks, evolving scientific approaches and new technologies, whilst remaining vigilant and responding to existing and emerging risks.

EFSA's vision is to become globally recognised as the European reference body for risk assessment in food and feed safety, animal health and welfare, nutrition, plant protection and plant health.