



The European Food Safety Authority

GEOFFREY PODGER
Executive Director EFSA

European Food Safety Authority



What EFSA Can Do

Contribute to improved EU food safety by:

- Improving the way that EU risk assessment is carried out
- Increasing consumer confidence in EU risk assessments
- Ensuring close collaboration between national bodies and EFSA
- Enabling improved collaboration between the many different stakeholders and coordinating their input
- Providing the right information to consumers at the right time
- Providing the right information to government, industrial, NGO and other stakeholders at the right time

European Food Safety Authority

What EFSA Cannot Do

- Be responsible for food safety/nutrition policy and legislation
- Take charge of food safety controls, labelling or other such issues
- Act as a substitute for national authorities
- Solve all the problems of the world!

EFSA Management Board

Key decisions

- Self-tasking
- Priority setting
- Openness
- Issues relating to deadlines for Opinions
- Communication to Council and Parliament

EFSA Staff

- Increased from c. 20 (Feb 2003) to c. 135 (Jan 2005)
- Genuinely multinational and multicultural
- National secondees

Scientific Expert Panels

- Established from June 2003
- c200 + opinions already produced
- 170 opinions expected 2005
- Open meetings
- Disclosure of interest
- Further support from creation of Scientific Expert Services

Coping with the Scientific Workload

- 1) Prioritisation
- 2) Separation between issues requiring formal opinions and those needing internal advice
- 3) Creation and use of expert networks
- 4) Greater use of European scientific institutions to take over parts of workload

EFSA Relations with National Authorities - I

Fundamental Principles

- EFSA and National Authorities are not in a position of hierarchical dependency
- EFSA has obligation to co-ordinate work with national authorities
- EFSA is the final arbiter on certain EU dossiers
- National issues remain for national authorities
- Member States have right to put issues to EFSA
- Formation of Advisory Forum

EFSA Relations with National Authorities - II

EFSA Scientific Opinions

- EFSA Scientific Opinions are independent and not subject to agreement by National Authorities
but
- There is an obvious need:
 - (a) to ensure that national authorities can input into the work of the EFSA Scientific Committee/Panels;
 - (b) to enable national authorities to comment on opinions issued in draft for general comment;
 - (c) to seek to avoid duplication of effort, where possible and desirable.

EFSA Relations with National Authorities - III

Food Crisis/"Food Scare"

- EFSA has role in assisting the Commission
- EFSA involvement will depend on nature of crisis
- EFSA would wish to involve national food authorities in risk assessments outside formal "opinions"
- Investment in crisis scenario rehearsals

EFSA Relations with National Authorities - IV

Communication

- Effective EU communication requires full involvement of national authorities
- National authorities given advance notice of EFSA announcements
- Investment in technology to improve communication between EFSA and national authorities
- Formation of Advisory Forum Working Group on Communication

EFSA Involvement of Stakeholders

- The Ostend Colloque
- GMO and FEEDAP Panel Meetings
- Scientific Colloque :
 - Dioxins and PCB exposure - June 2004
 - Micro-organisms in Food and Feed – December 2004
 - Further colloques 2005
- Berlin Stakeholder Conference 9-10 November 2004
- Frequent bilateral meetings and conferences

EFSA's Role in Nutrition

- Currently linked to requests from the European Commission
- Major activities to date :
 - 31 opinions issued 2004 by Panel on dietetic products, nutrition and allergies
 - include :
 - ? evaluation of 12 allergenic foods for labelling purposes
 - ? setting tolerable upper levels of intake for vitamins and minerals (vitamin C, iron, boron, vanadium and silicon)
 - ? effect on human health of consumption of trans fatty acids)

EU Commission Initiative EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health

- A spectrum of stakeholders who wish to contribute to promoting healthier lifestyles and diets
- Members include :
 - Confederation of Food and Drink Industries of the EU
 - European Modern Restaurant Association
 - World Federation of Advertisers
 - World Health Organization
 - EFSA
- Platform
 - Voluntary but
 - Transparent regarding plans and actions taken to allow public scrutiny
 - "Last chance saloon"

EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health

1. Role is to provide independent scientific work
2. New mandate on Population Reference Intakes for macro- and micronutrients
3. Guidance on development of food based dietary guidelines
4. Commissions proposals for future regulation on nutrition and health claims foresee role in assessing claims and determining “nutritional profiles”

French National Nutrition Programme 2000

- Holistic – health, pleasure, culture, economic issues
- Aimed at public health
- Takes account of energy output as well as input
- Multisectoral based on public and private enterprises
- Involves professionals

French National Nutrition Programme Objectives include

1. Reduce low fruit and vegetable consumes by 25%
2. Reduce by 25% proportion of population deficient in calcium
3. Reduce alcohol consumption to 20 grams of alcohol per day for the general population
4. Reduce average cholesterol levels by 5%
5. Reduce by 20% obesity amongst adults
6. Increase by 25% proportion of population undertaking ½ hours rapid walking per day

Paeps Report - I

- High level of appreciation for quality of EFSA's Scientific Opinions and Communications Work
- Disagreement amongst stakeholders over EFSA's main functions
- Recognition for EFSA's staff
- Concerns over timelines of future EFSA Advice

Paeps Report - II

- Criticism of slow start-up
- The “Gray Zone” between Risk Assessment and Risk Management
- Creating of networks and further “outsourcing”

Parma

- High level of existing EFSA staff commitment (90% +)
- Excellent support from Italian Authorities
- Long-term value of Parma association
- Transport issues – improvements promised
- Phased move from Autumn 2004 to Autumn 2005
- No reduction in EFSA’s appearance on the wider stage

Future challenges

- EFSA review 2005
- Prioritisation and workload management
- Further staff build-up whilst temporarily split between two locations
- Reinforcement of links with national authorities
- Continued forging of links beyond the EU
- Making a difference : increasing the impact on risk managers