



COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY  
THE SECRETARIAT

Brussels, 19 June 2008

### **Summary Note**

## **ENVI Committee delegation to the European Food Safety Authority, Parma, Italy 14 April 2008**

### **1. Introduction**

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety has visited the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) for the third time since the establishment of the Agency. The last ENVI delegation visited EFSA in November 2005.

This time, the ENVI delegation consisted of three members. It was chaired by Mrs Kartika Tamara Liotard (The Netherlands, GUE/NGL), who is also the Committee's contact person for EFSA. The other members of the delegation were Mrs Erna Hennicot-Schoepges (LUX, PPE) and Mr Magor Imre Csibi (ROM, ALDE). The delegation was accompanied by Mr Siegfried Breier (Environment Committee secretariat), Gian Paolo Meneghini (Policy Department A), Mrs Tamara Miczki (ALDE - Staff), Mr Thomas Gijssels (Assistant to MEP Liotard), Mr Georges Weisgerber (Assistant to MEP Hennicot-Schoepges) and Mr Paul Peters (Dutch Senator from the National Socialist Party).

EFSA was represented by Ms Catherine Geslain-Laneelle, Executive Director, Patrick Wall, Chair of the EFSA Management Board, Vittorio Silano, Chair of the EFSA Scientific Committee and representatives from EFSA staff.

### **2. Structure of the visit**

The visit started in the early afternoon of 14 April 2008 with opening statements by Patrick Wall, Chair of the EFSA Management Board, Vittorio Silano, Chair of the EFSA Scientific Committee and the chairman of the ENVI delegation, MEP Liotard.

The opening was followed by an overview of Ms Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle, Executive Director, on EFSA's priorities in 2008 and a number of presentations by senior staff members on horizontal as well as specific issues, such as staffing issues, communication, scientific cooperation and budget. All presentations were followed by short discussions with the ENVI delegation.

All presentations by EMEA staff have been provided to the members of the ENVI delegation.

### **3. Horizontal Issues**

Ms Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle outlined EFSA's priorities for 2008. To ensure that it meets its objectives, in 2008 EFSA will

- streamline its procedures and adapt its working practices to meet its target outputs of scientific opinions and statements and
- increase its presence and visibility in the Member States in order to consolidate the network of national bodies essential for exercising its mandate.

By the end of 2007, EFSA had 200 external scientific experts (SC and Panel members) and 311 staff. The Scientific Committees adopted 650 opinions. Due to new legislation, technologies and scientific developments, such as nanotechnology and cloning, the number of staff, scientific output and budget will increase. EFSA's scientific work will continue to focus on providing scientific opinions and advice to the Commission, European Parliament and Member States. EFSA is currently working on general rules regarding transparency and conflict of interests.

In order to further position EFSA in the national and international food safety environment, collaboration with Member States and international organisations, such as FAO, WHO, ECDC and EMEA has been enhanced and will continue playing an important role to fulfil the authority's mandate. EFSA has organised crisis management seminars to exchange experience and create networks with relevant authorities at Member State level.

Ms Riitta Maijala gave an overview on the role and mandate of the nine scientific EFSA Panels carrying out risk assessments and scientific advice. In 2007, the most significant number of requests for EFSA advice came from the Commission (127) and Member States (59). Ms Maijala explained in detail the procedures for the selection of experts for the Scientific Committees and Panels. Expert's compensation is granted by way of travel reimbursements and daily allowances (specific allowances: 300-600 Euro per day). She also highlighted the ambitious approach in relation to the Annual Declaration of Interest and the Specific Declaration of Interest (related to specific items on the agenda) of experts participating in Scientific Committees and Panels.

Mr Hubert Deluyker explained the role of EFSA in scientific cooperation and assistance with Member States, including data collection activities, risk assessments and scientific cooperation support.

Ms Anne-Laure Gassin presented EFSA's role in risk communications. She pointed out that EFSA's communication policy is aiming at ensuring visibility of EFSA as

Europe's food safety watchdog and at open and transparent access to all EFSA output largely via website. EFSA Communication is carried out in close cooperation with Member States and the Commission. In order to ensure coherence in communication a network of communications units from EFSA, Member States and Commission has been set up.

Ms Alexandrine Maviel-Sonet gave an overview on the development of EFSA's budget and staff. From 2007 to 2008 EFSA's budget increased from 47, 4 to 66, 4 Mio Euro (PDB 2009: 73, 0 Mio Euro). Other agencies budget in 2008: ECHA – 66 Mio Euro, ECDC – 40, 0 Mio Euro, EMEA – 173 Mio Euro. Also, staff allocation increased significantly from 228 (2006) to 310 (2007) to 412 (2008). For 2009, 455 staff is expected.

#### **4. Specific Issues**

7 specific presentations covered the following areas of EFSA remits:

- Mr. Chris Lythgo reported on the state of play regarding the EFSA peer review of pesticide risk assessments carried out by Member State Authorities. 90 active substances are proposed for inclusion in Annex I of Directive 91/414/EEC, 481 are suggested for non-inclusion in Annex I. For 281 active substances the pesticides peer review is still ongoing.
- Ms Hermine Reich outlined EFSA's role in the risk assessment of pesticide residues Regulation 396/2005 and Ms Muriel Dunier-Thomann reported on the current and future work of the Panel on Plant Protection Products and their residues.
- Mr. Per Bergmann presented tasks and mandate of the Scientific Panel on Genetically Modified Organisms and outlined cooperation between risk assessors and risk managers in this highly sensitive policy area. In 2008, the Panel dealt with 89 applications under Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 and under Directive 2001/18/EC (28 adopted opinions so far). 39 new applications are expected for the next 3 years.
- Mr. Peter Have presented the Animal Health and Welfare Panel. From 2003-2007 the panel adopted 20 opinions in relation to animal diseases (incl. zoonoses), 15 opinions in relation to animal welfare and 3 opinions in relation to self-mandates/guidelines. With regard to 2008/2009, there are 11 opinions pending.
- Ms. Juliane Kleiner outlined the tasks of EFSA in the scientific substantiation of health claims and in relation to conditions for the use of health claims. Mr Hugues Kenigswald presented the tasks of the Panel on Food Additives Flavourings, Processing Aids and Materials in Contact with Food.

#### **5. Discussion**

The discussion mainly focussed on questions regarding the role of EFSA in relation to EU institutions, GMOs, cloning, pesticides and animal testing.

EFSA underlined its role as an independent scientific and advisory body for decision makers at European level. It pointed out that the outcome of risk assessments is to a large extent depending on the way how requests for risk assessments are formulated.

In this respect, EFSA reiterated its role as a risk assessor in comparison with the role of risk managers in the area of GMOs.

Several members of the ENVI delegation raised the issue of cloning. EFSA gave a short overview on the state of play and the ongoing internal discussions on this issue. It recalled the Draft Scientific Opinion on Food Safety, Animal Health and Welfare and Environmental Impact of Animals derived from Cloning of 19 December 2007 which did not identify any human health risks in relation to the use of cloned animals for food purposes at the moment. Public consultations on cloning have been closed in February 2008 and EFSA is currently working on the final opinion. The opinion of the European Group on Ethics and New Technologies complements the ongoing scientific work of EFSA on this issue.

EFSA pointed out that the conditions for animal testing to ensure food safety differ to a large extent depending on the substances used in food and feed. The conditions, test endpoints and test methods are mainly laid down in guidance documents for the intended use of substances in food and feed.