

Framework for interaction between the
European Food Safety Authority and the
Stakeholder Discussion Group on Food
Chemical Occurrence Data (StaDG-
ChemOccD)

Integrated DATA Unit



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(Amended on the 20 January 2023)

The scope of this document is to provide a framework for interaction between EFSA and the Stakeholder Discussion Group on Food Chemical Occurrence Data (StaDG-ChemOccD), one of the targeted platforms established under the Stakeholder Engagement Approach (SEA)¹ through which EFSA engages with stakeholders with an interest on technical issues of specific knowledge areas of EFSA's work.

Driven by the new EU Transparency Regulation (*Regulation (EU) 1381/2019*² applicable since March 2021), in 2022 EFSA has updated the Stakeholder Engagement Approach linking it to policies of transparency, independence, accountability and looking for a broadened engagement with a wider range of stakeholders as also reflected in the strategic objectives 1 and 2 of the EFSA Strategy 2027³.

1. BACKGROUND

In June 2016, the EFSA Management Board adopted the Decision on the criteria for the establishment of a list of stakeholders, the Stakeholder Forum and the Stakeholder Bureau, setting the frame for the new way EFSA engages with its stakeholders. This Decision has been revised in 2022 when a new Stakeholder Engagement and consultative Approach (SEA) has been agreed and implemented⁴ defining the guiding principles which govern EFSA's engagement with stakeholders. The revision took stock of some enhancements proposed by stakeholders during a systematic review of EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Approach (SEA) in 2019 and 2020,

¹ Stakeholder Engagement Approach

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EFSA%20Stakeholder%20engagement%20approach_FINAL.pdf

² Regulation (EU) 2019/1381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on the transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2019.231.01.0001.01.ENG

³ EFSA Strategy 2027: <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/efsa/strategy-2027/en/>

⁴ http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EFSA%20Stakeholder%20engagement%20approach_FINAL.pdf



considering the strategic objectives formulated in the EFSA Strategy 2020⁵ taken up by the EFSA Strategy 2027⁶. The EFSA Strategy includes specific aims to prioritise public and stakeholder engagement within the process of scientific assessment and to widen EFSA's evidence base and optimise access to its data.

The overall purpose of EFSA's stakeholder engagement is to provide stakeholders with a better understanding and keep them up to date about EFSA's scientific decision-making processes, and to improve the quality of EFSA's scientific outputs expanding both EFSA and stakeholder's access to the evidence base and expertise needed for high quality scientific risk assessment. Networking with stakeholders, MSs, EU and international agencies is seen as a key step to widen the evidence base, and to get new knowledge and expertise by developing and improving methodologies and techniques for the collection of high-quality data.

Article 33 of the EFSA Founding Regulation⁷ requires the Authority to 'search for, collect, collate, analyse and summarise relevant scientific and technical data in the fields within its mission'. EFSA has established standard methods and procedures to collect, validate and collate data on food consumption, as well as monitoring data on contaminants, pesticide residues, veterinary medicinal products' residues, antimicrobial resistance, zoonoses, food additives and food contact materials. Most chemical occurrence data that the Integrated Data Unit (IDATA) receives, comes from annual monitoring programmes conducted in the EU Member States. Relatively few data have been received from industry or academia.

Within the domain of chemical contaminants, the CONTAM Panel (Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain) may require ad hoc data on levels of contaminants in food when such data are not available in EFSA's contaminant occurrence database. This task represents an integral part of EFSA's data collection activities.

Regulation (EC) No 1331/2008 establishes a common procedure for the assessment and authorisation of food additives, food enzymes and food flavourings, and requires that all additives, enzymes and flavourings currently on the EU market as well as all new ones shall be subject to a safety evaluation by EFSA and approval via a Community list.

For this purpose, within the domain of food additives, a programme to re-evaluate the safety of food additives already permitted in the Union before 2009 has been set up under Regulation (EU) No 257/2010 of 25 March 2010. This Regulation also foresees that food additives are re-evaluated whenever necessary in the light of changing conditions of use and new scientific information. To this end, the FAF Panel (Panel on Food Additives and Flavourings) has a need to collect data on additive in foods, use levels and analytical occurrence data, in accordance with the timetable for re-evaluation.

Within the domain of food enzymes, the CEP Panel (Panel on Food Contact Materials, Enzymes and Processing Aids) has a need for input data on process specific food categories and technical factors to allow a linkage between enzyme usage and food consumption data, to support the new methodology for estimating dietary exposure to food enzymes.

⁵ Trusted science for safe food: <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/corporate/pub/strategy2020>

⁶ EFSA Strategy 2027 – Science Safe food Sustainability: <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-07/efsa-strategy-2027.pdf>

⁷ Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32002R0178>



Within the domain of food contact materials (FCM) and in accordance with Article 29(1)(a) of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002⁸, a mandate of the European Commission⁹ in 2020 asks EFSA to re-evaluate the risks to public health related to the presence of phthalates, structurally similar substances and replacement substances, because of migration from food contact materials (FCMs). In order to meet the panels needs and requirements, a series of dedicated open calls will be issued to collect data on additive usage and occurrence in food, on chemical contaminants level in food, and to request feedbacks on the pre-selected food categories and pre-defined technical factors needed to allow a linkage between enzyme usage and food consumption data. In the frame of the FCMs mandate EFSA might issue ad hoc calls for data on occurrence of the prioritised substances in food or migration levels from plastic and rubber to support dietary exposure estimates.

In the frame of the last updated SEA, the Stakeholder Discussion Group on Food Chemical Occurrence Data (StaDG-ChemOccD, formerly the Stakeholder Consultative Platform Discussion Group on Food Chemical Occurrence Data) falls within the remit of the EFSA targeted engagement platforms (e.g., Roundtable meetings, Question Framing Working Groups, Discussion groups, Communicators Lab, etc.). Discussion Groups work with EFSA at a technical level to enable stakeholders' specialist knowledge to be used in specified areas. One of these areas concerns data collection and collation for risk assessment. In line with the SEA guiding principles, stakeholders should register with EFSA to become part of Discussion Groups. Once registered, stakeholders are also eligible to take part to the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau, the two permanent mechanisms for engagement. However, also according to the latest updated SEA, registration is not an absolute requirement for participation in the implementation of specific projects, programmes or partnerships. EFSA may invite a non-registered organisation or individual, on the basis of their competency, expertise and experience, to participate in panels or thematic discussions on topics of relevance, as appropriate. Such participation will be in line with EFSA's core principles of openness and transparency

The current StaDG-ChemOccD is composed of EU-wide stakeholder organisations working in the food chain and organisations representing consumers, food operators, food industry, food trade and NGOs, providing a balanced representation of the interests of the stakeholders that interact with EFSA.

The present Framework for interaction between EFSA and the StaDG-ChemOccD substitutes the previous one in accordance with the reviewed EFSA Stakeholder Engagement Approach (SEA) and introduces an updated overview on the way the group performs.

2. SCOPE OF INTERACTION

With the aim to improve and make the data provision process to EFSA leaner, members of the StaDG-ChemOccD shall discuss and exchange information, coordinated by EFSA, on the practical aspects, challenges and improved solutions regarding the provision to EFSA of data on food additives, chemical contaminants, food enzymes and food contact materials. The discussion

⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32002R0178>

⁹ https://www.plasticisers.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ToR-phthalates_remmandate-Part-1.pdf



group offers opportunities to identify possible improved steps of the process of data preparation and transmission to EFSA with a stakeholder perspective.

According to the updated SEA, also non-registered organisations or individuals may be occasionally invited to the discussions based on their competency, expertise and experience. The topics for discussion may be proposed by registered and non-registered stakeholders, by other parties such as Member States Competent Authorities, EU Institutions, International organisations or EFSA itself.

3. GENERAL OBJECTIVES

This framework for interaction proposes to the Discussion Group the following objectives:

- a) To provide a forum for discussing openly the challenges encountered and the opportunities identified in relation to the provision of data to EFSA.
- b) To elicit members' knowledge and experiences in order to improve on the practical aspects of data collection and provision to EFSA and to determine solutions to issues identified.
- c) To promote and share EFSA's data collection activities and associated work programmes particularly within the field of food additives, food enzymes and chemical contaminants, including plans for training/webinars on reporting tools or other EFSA tools.
- d) To share and discuss all relevant matters concerning how data are collected, processed, stored and used in EFSA scientific outputs.
- e) To share and discuss all the relevant topics concerning changes in the regulatory aspects related to chemical contaminants, food additives and food enzymes, in view of offering support to the dedicated Panels for re-evaluation and risk assessment.
- f) To commit the Discussion Group to a continuous improvement of the quality of data provided to EFSA and explore with EFSA opportunities for open data, including proactive data sharing and publication.
- g) To discuss the option of including food flavourings and food contact materials as possible new domains of the StaDG-ChemOccD.

4. WORKING METHODOLOGY

4.1 COMPOSITION AND SELECTION OF MEMBERS

In line with the updated SEA, the composition of the StaDG-ChemOccD shall be regularly revised and renewed. The mandate of the current Discussion Group, initially foreseen from 2018 to 2020, was extended until the end of 2022 to benefit for a longer period of activity of this group of experts (regular meetings/trainings, information sharing, etc), and to maintain dialogue and interaction among EFSA and Discussion Group's experts



The StaDG-ChemOccD shall ideally be composed of representatives from registered stakeholders in each of the following categories: consumers; environmental/health NGOs and/or advocacy groups; farmers and primary producers; business and food industry; distributors and HORECA (food service industry preparing and serving food and beverages), associations of practitioners working in fields relevant to EFSA's food safety and public health remit and academia. A given registered stakeholder may have more than one representative in the Discussion Group. To benefit fully from this Discussion Group¹⁰, EFSA will select one member and one alternate member per registered organisation.

Following the launch of an official call to stakeholder organisations for nominating experts to the Discussion Group, registered organisations may submit nominations and the experts shall be selected on the basis of their technical expertise. Organisations interested in nominating a member for this Discussion Group should send first a request to become registered as an EFSA stakeholder; information on how to submit a request is available at [this web link](#).

As already mentioned in this document and in line with the latest updates to the SEA, non-registered stakeholder may be invited to participate to specific events or forum of the targeted engagement platforms where EFSA considers that non-registered stakeholder's technical expertise would be useful to the discussion. Any involvement of non-registered Stakeholders will be communicated in transparent and timely manner.

4.2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The StaDG-ChemOccD should be composed by a group of people who share interest and knowledge on concepts, methods and technologies related to the collection of data on food additives, chemical contaminants, food enzymes and their provision to EFSA. The members of the Discussion Group work together for their mutual benefit and in compliance with EFSA's interests.

The success of this Discussion Group relies on the commitment of its members to contribute to group's deliverables, activities, and outputs. EFSA may monitor the active participation and contributions from the group members as part of its review of whether the Discussion Group fulfils adequately its role (see section 6). EFSA reserves the right to resign non-contributing members from the Discussion Group.

The Integrated Data Unit (IDATA) of EFSA will coordinate the Discussion Group, and will also provide the chair and administrative support, including the drafting of the meeting minutes.

EFSA staff of the concerned scientific units may take part to the meetings of the Discussion Group and report on activities related to data collection, data analysis or risk assessment, trying to ensure efficient collaboration and exchange of information between the StaDG-ChemOccD and EFSA concerned Scientific Units.

Representatives of the European Parliament and the European Commission may participate in meetings of this Discussion Group as observers.

¹⁰ Decision of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority on the criteria for establishing a list stakeholders and the establishment of the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Document18992.pdf>



4.3 FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

The StaDG-ChemOccD will meet at least once per year and registered stakeholders will be invited. The option and convenience of establishing more frequent meetings will be discussed.

4.4 EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

- Meeting minutes summarising the issues discussed and the agreed follow-up actions.
- Public or topic reports on issues identified by the StaDG-ChemOccD related to collection and provision to EFSA of data on the occurrence of chemical contaminants, food additives and food enzymes.

In case of need, topic specific web-conferences or targeted sessions can be arranged. The coordinator of the Discussion Group will also be the Chair of the meeting (from EFSA) and be responsible for drafting the meetings' minutes and reporting updates back to EFSA.

4.4 FINANCIAL ASPECTS

The costs of participation in the meetings organised by EFSA will be borne by each individual stakeholder organisation.

Exceptionally, EFSA may contribute to financing the costs of those organisations that could not otherwise afford to participate in meetings. Financial contributions may only be awarded to stakeholder organisations which are non-governmental, not-for-profit, independent of industry, commerce and business, and that they have as their primary objectives and activities the promotion and protection of public health and the safety of consumers.

Requests for financial support shall be assessed by EFSA on a case-by-case basis.

5. TRANSPARENCY REQUIREMENT

EFSA is fully committed to openness and transparency in line with the EFSA's regulatory framework (art. 38 of EFSA's Founding Regulation (EC) No 178/2002) and with the Decision of the Management Board establishing the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau.

Details of the meetings of the StaDG-ChemOccD will be made available through the publication of agendas, participant lists and the outcome of each of the meetings on the EFSA website.

6. MONITORING AND REVIEW

A review of the effectiveness of EFSA's stakeholder engagement, including activities related to the StaDG-ChemOccD, shall be carried out every three years, as of the entry into force of the Decision of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority on the criteria for



establishing a list of stakeholders, the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau and, at any time, upon request of the Management Board, Article 9.

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