

Framework for interaction between the European Food Safety Authority and the Stakeholder Discussion Group on Emerging Risks (StaDG-ER)

Knowledge, Innovation & Partnership
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FRAMEWORK FOR INTERACTION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY AND THE STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSION GROUP ON EMERGING RISKS (STADG-ER)

(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 Emerging Risks as one of targeted platforms established under the Stakeholder Engagement Approach (SEA)¹ through which EFSA engages with stakeholders on technical issues. In 2021, EFSA updated its stakeholder engagement approach to comply with the new regulatory framework introduced by Regulation (EU) 1381/2019² (the 'Transparency Regulation') and support the implementation of the EFSA Strategy 2027³. The revision implied a shift towards a topic-based engagement approach and the launch of new interaction mechanisms.

1. BACKGROUND

In June 2016, the EFSA Management Board adopted the Decision on the criteria for establishing of a list of stakeholders and the establishment of the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau, setting the frame for the new way EFSA engages with its stakeholders. This Decision⁴, has been revised to take stock of some enhancements proposed by stakeholders during a systematic review of EFSA's Stakeholder Engagement Approach (SEA) conducted in 2019 and 2020.

Once registered, stakeholders are able to take part to the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau, the two permanent mechanisms for engagement. Registered stakeholders are also invited to interact with EFSA through targeted engagement platforms, based on their interest and technical expertise (e.g., Roundtable meetings, Question Framing Working Groups, Discussion groups, Communicators Lab, etc.).

¹Stakeholder Engagement Approach

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

²Regulation (EU) 1381/2019

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32019R1381>

³ EFSA Strategy 2027

<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/corporate-pubs/efsa-strategy-2027-science-safe-food-sustainability>

⁴ Decision of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority on the criteria for establishing a list of stakeholders and the establishment of the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau

<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Document18992.pdf>



Networking with stakeholders, MSs, EU and international agencies is seen as a key step in developing the effectiveness of the emerging risks identification process⁵. The Stakeholder Discussion Group on Emerging Risks (StADG-ER) is a targeted platform that has allowed EFSA to capitalise on stakeholders' specialist knowledge in the identification of new or emerging issues since 2010. The group was created to improve the exchange of information about emerging risks identification and to enhance communication and dialogue on issues pertaining to emerging risks with stakeholders.

The new EFSA environmental scanning process to which the emerging risks workflow belongs aims at contributing to the definition of EFSA's work agenda by identifying knowledge gaps and anticipating issues and opportunities for EFSA to fulfil its mission as efficiently as possible. The revised EMRISK workflow foresees a collaborative approach between Member States Competent Authorities, Stakeholders and Regulatory Agencies to identify and analyse drivers for emerging risks, weak signals, or possible emerging issues.

The current StADG-ER is composed of EU-wide stakeholder organisations working in the food chain and organisations representing consumers, food and feed 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 the European Food Safety Authority and the Stakeholder Discussion Group on Emerging Risks 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

In order to strengthen the overall emerging risks identification process at EFSA, members of the StADG-ER will contribute, together with the EFSA Emerging Risks Exchange Network (EREN)⁶ to the identification and characterisation of emerging risks for the European food and feed chain, as well as regarding plant health and animal health in Europe. The group will support EFSA's emerging risk identification system by providing its knowledge and additional data. To ensure coordination and efficient collaboration at different levels, the activities of StADG-ER will be regularly presented to the EFSA's Emerging Risk Engaging Network (EREN) and vice versa. The discussion group offers opportunities to strength ER identification and characterisation with EFSA and MS complementing EREN with a stakeholder's perspective. Issues and topics for considerations by the StADG-ER may be brought up by EFSA registered and non-registered stakeholders, by other parties such as Member States Competent Authorities, EU Institutions, International organisations or EFSA itself.

⁵ Piloting a process for emerging risks identification: lessons learnt and next steps;
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/supporting/pub/310e.htm>

⁶ Emerging Risks Exchange Network
<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/science/scientific-committee-and-panels/scientific-committee>
<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/science/scientific-committee-and-panels/scientific-committee>



3. GENERAL OBJECTIVES

StaDG-ER members shall:

- present to the group information, data and knowledge concerning identified emerging risks and/or issues as well as the methods used to identify them;
- provide access to data related to the reported emerging risks/issues;
- provide additional information on on-going issues discussed at the previous StaDG-ER meetings;
- offer views and complementary information to support the characterisation of issues presented for assessment by EFSA through the EFSA Environmental Scanning process activities including;
 - those collected via EREN,
 - outcomes of projects on identification for emerging risk
 - those retrieved via EFSA Partners such as European Agencies, JRC or international organisations (e.g., FAO, WHO).

Topics of possible interest are identified at the beginning of the Emerging Risk Identification process; they may consist in specific issues (e.g., new or increased exposure to a chemical substance or a pathogen), or in drivers of change (e.g., climate change) or weak signals. As per the EU General Food Law, risk management issues resulting from a lack of compliance with existing regulations are out of EFSA's remit of activity.

4. WORKING METHODOLOGY

4.1 COMPOSITION AND SELECTION OF MEMBERS

To ensure balance and to be aligned with the updated EFSA Stakeholder Engagement Approach (SEA), the composition of the StaDG-ER shall be regularly revised and renewed. The mandate of the current StaDG-ER, initially foreseen from 2018 to 2020 was extended until the end of 2022 due to the Covid pandemic.

The StaDG-ER shall 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 StaDG-ER.

Following the launch of an official call to stakeholder organisations for nominating experts to the EFSA Discussion Group on Emerging Risk, registered organisations may submit nominations for up to three experts. The experts shall be selected on the basis of their technical expertise.

As emerging risks may concern all areas of the food and feed chain and animal-plant health, a group of up to 30 experts with a wide range of expertise shall be selected from the candidates



proposed by the organisations on the list of registered EFSA stakeholders⁷ to participate in the StaDG-ER. 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 stipulated in Article 3 of the Decision on the criteria for establishing a list of registered stakeholders and the establishment of the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau⁸, non-registered stakeholder may be invited to participate in targeted engagement platforms where EFSA considers that non-registered stakeholder's specific and/or technical expertise would be useful to the discussion or activity being carried out. Any involvement of non-registered Stakeholders will be communicated in transparent and timely manner.

4.2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The StaDG-ER should be composed by a group of people who share interest in and knowledge on emerging risks related to food and feed chain, as well as regarding plant health and animal health. The members of the Discussion Group work together for their mutual benefit and in compliance with EFSA's interests.

The role of StaDG-ER members is to facilitate the access to and sharing of information on potential emerging risks, aiming at the identification and characterisation of these emerging risks.

The success of this 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 StaDG-ER group fulfils adequately its role (see section 6). EFSA reserve the right to resign non-contributing members from the StaDG-ER.

The StaD-ER will be coordinated by EFSA that will also provide the chair, rapporteur and secretariat and be responsible for drafting the minutes of the meetings, reporting on emerging risks activities as well as ensuring efficient collaboration and exchange of information between EREN, StaDG-ER and EFSA Scientific Units.

Frequency of meetings: the StaDG-ER shall meet at least twice a year.

4.3 EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

Meeting minutes summarising the issues discussed and the agreed follow-up actions.

Public or topic reports on issues identified by the StaDG-ER including data exchanged related to on-going issues and information on the latest developments in the area of emerging risks identification i.e., methods, data sources and drivers of emerging risks not described in previous EFSA's annual report on activities on emerging risks.

⁷ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/stakeholders-registered-list.pdf>

⁸ Decision of the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority on the criteria for establishing a list of stakeholders and the establishment of the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau
<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Document18992.pdf>



5. TRANSPARENCY REQUIREMENT

Openness and transparency are fundamental aspects of EFSA and are enshrined as concepts in EFSA's regulatory framework (art. 38 of EFSA's Founding Regulation (EC) No 178/2002) and in the Decision of the Management Board establishing the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau.

The transparency of the work of the Stakeholder Discussion Group on Emerging Risk will be made available through the timely announcement of EFSA's upcoming activities on Emerging Risks identification as well as through the publication of agendas, participant' lists and the outcome of each of the meetings of this group on the EFSA website.

6. MONITORING AND REVIEW

A review of the effectiveness of EFSA's stakeholder engagement, including activities related with the Stakeholder Discussion Group on Emerging Risk, 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 and the establishment of the Stakeholder Forum and Stakeholder Bureau and, at any time, upon request of the Management Board, Article 9.