



29 May 2018

### **PFP position on transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain**

#### **Context**

In December 2017, the European Commission published a Roadmap on the transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain. PFP provided comments to the public consultation in January 2018 and more details to the subsequent public consultation in March 2018.

In April 2018, the European Commission proposed a revision of the General Food Law Regulation and published a legislative proposal.

#### **Overall**

PFP welcomes the Commission proposal on the transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain. As an EFSA accredited stakeholder, its members support all work undertaken so far by EFSA to increase transparency.

In general, PFP supports increased transparency, provided that it is framed clearly and does not lead to undermining EFSA's independence or its risk assessment process but also provided it does not damage industry's competitiveness and image, and does not create unfounded fears. In this respect, PFP would like to highlight the following points:

#### **a) Give access to data not supporting an authorisation dossier together with EFSA opinion**

In the last years, several PFP members have provided data to EFSA related to occurrence of given contaminants, nutrient or ingredients content in food products. After assessment by EFSA, all or part of those data have been used in the exposure assessment which has led to EFSA's risk assessments and opinions.

PFP is therefore particularly concerned that the Commission legislative proposal provides access to such types of data<sup>1</sup> *without delay*, as per revised article 38 (c) and article 39 a) and b).

**PFP would like to stress that such sensitive data need to be put into context and should only be published together with EFSA's opinion.**

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<sup>1</sup> As described in the Commission legislative proposal as *supporting scientific data and other supplementary information supporting requests from the European Parliament, the Commission and the Member States for a scientific output, including a scientific opinion*

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- Data screened first by EFSA before being used or not in risk assessment

Such data need first to comply with quality criteria and EFSA decides next what is used in the risk assessment. It can therefore happen that part of submitted data will actually not be used for EFSA's output. Therefore only data actually used for EFSA's output should be provided together with the EFSA's opinion. One has also to consider that confidentiality can also be breached by providing analytical information. In practice, the method used – which is often seen as trivial - can *de facto* lead to identifying the company behind. This is particularly the case in very concentrated sectors like PFP members' sectors.

- Creating misinterpretations and possible fears whilst a data has only meaning within the risk assessment

PFP further questions the benefits of providing out of context access to such data, compared to the misinterpretations and possible fears that this would cause to consumers. Indeed, before being processed and assessed by EFSA, the levels of a substance in a food or a feed product have no particular meaning. It does not say anything about population exposure or toxicity. It is only in the context of the risk assessment that it takes its full meaning and enables to evaluate whether there is a risk for human health, animal health or the environment.

**PFP therefore calls upon the release of such data not supporting an authorisation dossier together with EFSA opinion exclusively. This should further consider: 1) that only data actually used by EFSA in its risk assessment are made available; 2) that a single data is not representative of the full exposure and 3) that such data should only be released together with the final EFSA opinion.**

### b) Towards further risk communication

PFP acknowledges the need to improve risk communication as provided for by the new section 1a on risk communication. At the same time, it also supports EFSA's work and improvements achieved so far. Improvements can still be made to better target the general public, which we recognise as a very challenging task. One should also further look at how to communicate effectively to the public, building upon learnings from recent issues.

Dedicated campaigns explaining how food is produced and what the risk assessment is, would clearly prove beneficial to target the general public – through educational campaigns (TV, web *etc.*), additional web-based interactions with consumers, school visits *etc.* Coordination with Member States is also key. This would avoid false messages and public fear. Timely and clear information is therefore of the utmost importance. Therefore, PFP welcomes *accurate, appropriate and timely information (...) to provide a sound basis for understanding risk management decisions, (...) whilst taking into account risk perceptions and promoting appropriate involvement of all interested parties (...)* as key objectives and principles set under article 8a and 8b.

### c) Improving risk assessment and Member States involvement

Maintaining a high level of scientific expertise within EFSA to guarantee its risk assessments robustness is crucial. Today, Member States' involvement varies from country to country. Compensations for the work done could be one way to increase MS involvement. EFSA should not be influenced by any political interventions or considerations. PFP therefore supports the principle of independence of experts from Member States,

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including from *any instruction at national level* (article 5d). The conflict of interest concept, which is not explicitly defined in the proposal, should equally encompass industry, NGOs and Member States.

With the setting of such new tasks and increased work for EFSA, PFP trusts that EFSA resources should be increased, to ensure that the quality of EFSA staff and overall work is maintained, whilst the new tasks are also addressed simultaneously.

The **Primary Food Processors of the EU (PFP)** is composed by:

**European Committee of Sugar Manufacturers (CEFS)**  
**European Cocoa Association (ECA)**  
**European Flour Milling Association (European Flour Millers)**  
**European Vegetable Protein Federation (EUVEPRO)**  
**European Oil and Proteinmeal Industry (FEDIOL)**  
**European Starch Industry Association (Starch Europe)**

PFP members process approximately 220 Mio tons of raw materials (cereals, sugar beet, rapeseeds, soybeans, sunflower seeds, crude vegetable oil, cocoa products, starch potatoes...) employing over 120 000 people in the European Union.

