

TECHNICAL REPORT

Focal Point Activities 2011¹

European Food Safety Authority^{2, 3}

European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Parma, Italy

SUMMARY

As a follow up of the positive evaluation of the Focal Point work, all Member States, as well as Norway, have prolonged their Focal Point Agreements in 2011, while Iceland signed its first Agreement with EFSA. In addition to these countries, the four EU Candidate Countries - Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey - have actively participated in the activities and meetings of the Focal Point network as observers.

Over 2011, Focal Points continued to collect and share information amongst themselves and with EFSA on a variety of issues on risk assessment or data collection. A total of 144 requests for assistance and input have been sent to Focal Points in 2011, either from EFSA (via the Advisory Forum and Scientific Cooperation Unit), or from other Focal Points. While certain specific requests have supported the work of EFSA's Scientific Committee, Scientific Panels and Units, other requests supported Member States on their scientific research and risk assessments activities. The number of requests sent by Focal Points, for information, to other Focal Points has increased from 32 in 2010 to 63 in 2011, demonstrating the consolidation of the Focal Point network. On the other hand, the number of requests sent directly by EFSA to Focal Points has slightly decreased from 95 in 2010 to 81 in 2011, suggesting the efficient targeting of these requests to EFSA's dedicated scientific networks. Approximately two thirds of Focal Points have also shared planned work and activities with other Member States and EFSA, so as to contribute to a more coordinated planning of risk assessment and data collection activities in the EU, avoiding duplication of work.

At the end of 2011, the Information Exchange Platform contained over 1052 documents uploaded by Member States and EEA/EFTA countries. These included risk assessment outputs and mandates, country profiles related to EFSA's remit, quality and crisis manuals, and annual and strategic work plans. As a general recommendation, Focal Points should continue to actively collate and upload information on risk assessment onto the Information Exchange Platform. Furthermore, efforts should continue to be made to upload documents from all/other official risk assessment bodies in the area of food and feed safety, animal health and plant health.

Regarding Article 36 cooperation, Focal Points have further strengthened their networks with additional Article 36 organisations. They have also encouraged Article 36 organisations to apply for the 8 calls for proposals published during the course of the year. Use of the two Article 36 IT tools was facilitated, thereby fostering active networking between and amongst Article 36 organisations, Focal Points and EFSA. Focal Points have also supported EFSA in ensuring that the Article 36 List

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was kept up-to-date and functional, in terms of contact details and organizational changes impacting at national level on Article 36 organisations.

The number of scientific experts applying to EFSA's Expert Database has continued to grow, reaching a total of 3559 submitted applications by end of 2011. Focal Points played an important role in this growth by presenting, distributing or publishing information, as well as directly encouraging scientists to apply to EFSA's Expert Database. Focal Points have also used and promoted the Expert Database as a source of scientific expertise available for use at national level.

Focal Points have continued to raise awareness, understanding and outreach of EFSA's and of the Focal Point work by disseminating information through an increasing number of communication channels, newly developed communication tools, as well as via extended and targeted networks within Member States. These activities have often resulted from a strong collaboration between Focal Points and the respective Advisory Forum Communications Working Group representatives at national level.

In 2011, 23 Focal Points have organised 44 events in their countries, which ranged from small targeted national seminars to international conferences. Representatives from EFSA's Scientific Directorates have also presented EFSA's work and cooperation activities in different types of events as per invitation of Focal Points. Furthermore, 28 Focal Points contributed to national and international events with over 115 presentations, posters and written contributions. All of these activities raised the visibility of the Focal Point network and of EFSA's work.

To further consolidate the scientific cooperation between Member States and EFSA, the following priorities are proposed for Focal Points in 2012:

- to continue the exchange of scientific information/data on key topics at EU level, namely by actively collating and uploading information on risk assessments onto the Information Exchange Platform from all official risk assessment bodies operating within EFSA's remit;
- to maintain the Article 36 List of competent organisations, ensuring it is kept fit for purpose, as well as stimulate Article 36 organisations to apply for Article 36 calls and foster the networking between Article 36 organisations via the available IT tools (Article 36 Database, Article 36-NET);
- to continue the promotion of EFSA's database of external scientific experts, contributing to its steady growth, and stimulate the use of the respective search tool at national level;
- to further extend national networks in cooperation with the Advisory Forum Communications Working Group (AFCWG) Member, allowing for a wider audience when disseminating information;
- to maintain and further develop Focal Point websites as a central communication tool on food safety in Member States;
- to continue the organisation of national scientific events, considering namely the 10th anniversary of the General Food Law;
- to actively promote training on risk assessment by liaising directly with the national BTSF contact point.

KEY WORDS

Focal Points, Scientific Cooperation, Information Exchange

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BACKGROUND

The “Strategy for Cooperation and Networking between EU Member States and EFSA”⁴, from December 2006, called for the establishment of the Focal Point network, which became operational in early 2008. In 2011, EFSA and Member States continued, for the fourth year, their cooperation, formally agreed upon via the respective Focal Point Agreements. Norway and Iceland have also signed Focal Point Agreements during 2011, the first for the second consecutive year, and the latter for the first time. The EU Candidate Countries Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey joined the Focal Points as observers in 2009, while Montenegro joined for the first time in 2011.

The main task of the Focal Points is to provide technical support to their Advisory Forum Member. The Focal Point ensures the exchange of relevant scientific information amongst Member States, EEA/EFTA and candidate countries, as well as with EFSA; provides advice and assistance to EFSA for the Article 36 network and EFSA’s Expert Database; and helps raising EFSA’s scientific visibility and outreach in the EU Member States and beyond.

In line with the Focal Point Agreements, all Member States, Norway and Iceland provided EFSA with detailed reports of their key activities performed in 2011, together with a justification of the financial resources used in the implementation of tasks carried out by each one of them. The current report on “Focal Point Activities 2011” is based on these annual national Focal Point reports and gives an overview of the activities of the entire Focal Point network in 2011.

The activities of the Focal Points in their first three years of existence are summarised in three separate reports⁵

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Advisory Forum and Scientific Cooperation Unit of EFSA – based on request from the EFSA Management – compiles all national Focal Point reports in a yearly summary report to provide a comprehensive overview on the work of the Focal Point network.

⁴ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/networks.htm>

⁵ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/networks/fp.htm>

OVERVIEW OF FOCAL POINT WORK IN 2011

1. Prolongation of Focal Point Agreements

Focal Point Agreements were signed with all EU Member States for the first time in 2008. In 2009, new Focal Point Agreements were signed. These extended until 31 December 2009 and allowed for the possibility of four annual renewals. The first renewals of the Agreements were concluded in 2010 and later repeated in 2011.

After entry into force of the EEA Joint Committee Decision No. 134/2007, Norway and Iceland became full Members of EFSA's Advisory Forum. Subsequently, Norway joined the Focal Point network as observer in 2008 and signed Focal Point Agreements with EFSA in 2010 and 2011, while Iceland signed its first Focal Point Agreement with EFSA in 2011.

Switzerland and the EU Candidate Countries Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey have participated in the work of the Focal Point network and its meetings as observers during 2011.

Within EFSA, the Advisory Forum and Scientific Cooperation Unit is the main contact for Focal Points. The Unit has managed all formal correspondence between Focal Points and EFSA, the 2011 Focal Point Agreements and the national Focal Point reports, and the annual Focal Point Activities Report. The Unit also provides the secretariat for the Focal Point meetings.

All Member States, as well as Norway, have prolonged their Focal Point Agreements in 2011, while Iceland signed its first Agreement with EFSA. In addition to these countries, the four EU Candidate Countries - Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey - have actively participated in the activities and meetings of the Focal Point network as observers.

2. Focal Point activities

Focal Points were established to support their Advisory Forum Members and have the following tasks: (1) to facilitate the exchange of scientific information; (2) to support activities under Article 36; (3) to support the growth of EFSA's database of external scientific experts; and (4) to raise the visibility of EFSA's scientific work and EFSA's outreach at national level.

Following a proposal from the Focal Point network, the Advisory Forum, at its 39th meeting in Parma (15 March 2011), agreed upon the main priorities for Focal Points for 2011:

- support their Advisory Forum members in initiating and organising discussions on medium-term planning at Member State level to identify capacities and core competences of competent authorities and scientific organisations in each Member State;
- support EFSA in promoting the call on the renewal of the Scientific Committee and Panels for 2012-2015;
- support EFSA and the Permanent Representations in their Member States in consolidating the Article 36 list of competent organisations, thereby improving its functionality,
- stimulate Article 36 organisations to apply for Article 36 calls and foster the networking between Article 36 organisations, particularly by promoting and using the newly developed IT tools (Article 36 Database, Article 36-NET);
- increase the outreach to Member States' target audiences by strengthening the cooperation with their AFCWG member; and

- continue the work on:
 - sharing information on risk assessment with a view to improve the harmonisation of risk assessment methodologies, by uploading all relevant risk assessment documents onto the Information Exchange Platform, including planned activities in the area of risk assessment;
 - promoting the application of experts to EFSA's Expert Database, in particular in scientific and geographical areas currently underrepresented, and stimulating the use of the Expert Database by Member States for their own risk assessment activities; and
 - using the Focal Point websites and national events as tools to disseminate information and to raise the visibility of Focal Points' and EFSA's work.

The Advisory Forum and Scientific Cooperation Unit organised three Focal Point meetings in 2011. These aimed at supporting Focal Points in their tasks by providing background information, guidance, training and a platform for networking. Priority continued to be given to the exchange of views and experiences in the practical implementation of Focal Point tasks, as well as to the exchange of information on the Focal Point activities. These meetings, set up in the frame of network meetings and therefore allowing for a direct contact amongst its member, are seen as highly valuable as they allow free discussion of subjects and exchange of experiences, personal contacts with other Focal Points, and the exchange of information about other countries' and EFSA's work.

The basis for all Focal Point activities is a strong national network. In 2011, nearly all Focal Points have further broadened their networks and established corporate e-mail addresses, which are published on EFSA's website and national Focal Point web pages. These enable experts and organisations to directly contact Focal Points in their countries.

2.1. Exchange of scientific information

One of the main tasks of the Focal Points is to facilitate the exchange of scientific information at EU-level, a key activity to help support the delivery of the Strategy for Cooperation and Networking between the EU Member States and EFSA⁴. As in previous years, Focal Points have continued to collect and share scientific data and information amongst themselves and with EFSA. Depending on the nature of the information, it was either disseminated by e-mail or uploaded directly onto the Information Exchange Platform.

2.1.1. Requests for sharing information and data

EFSA and Member States have requested assistance and input on specific issues to mutually benefit from existing information and data. The national Focal Point reports document that all Focal Points have actively disseminated information throughout their national networks, and have responded to the various requests received within their own countries. In addition, Focal Points have collected data and information, which they shared with EFSA and other countries.

A total of 144 requests for assistance and input have been sent to Focal Points in 2011, either from EFSA (via the Advisory Forum and Scientific Cooperation Unit), or from other Focal Points. These included: calls for data (e.g. aspartame, 'paprika' extracts), calls for expression of interest (e.g. renewal of the membership of EFSA Panels and Scientific Committee), a call for tender under the procurement scheme (on the organisation and implementation of training activities on principles and methods of food safety risk assessment), calls for proposals under Article 36, a survey from EFSA on its database of external scientific experts, the 12 Information Exchange Platform monthly reports, requests for the uploading or sharing of scientific documents on specific subjects via the Information Exchange Platform (e.g. dioxins in animal feed, Shiga-toxin-producing *E. Coli*), specific requests/information originating from Focal Points (e.g. use of hypochlorite for vegetables hygienization, dioxins and PCB like-dioxins in freshwater fish, new study on the effect of salt,

caffeine in foodstuffs, lead content in honey), and specific requests/information originating from EFSA (e.g. Shiga-toxin-producing *E. Coli*, *Fusarium* toxins in food and/or feed).

The total number of requests has increased from 88, 103 and 127 in the previous 3 years (2008 - 2010), to 144 in 2011. While the number of requests originating from Focal Points and sent to all other Focal Points has significantly increased again (from 32 requests in 2010 to 63 in 2011 – see Figure 1), reflecting the consolidation and growing importance of the Focal Point network, the number of requests sent by EFSA to Focal Points has slightly decreased in 2011 (from 95 in 2010 to 81 in 2011), indicating a more efficient targeting of messages from EFSA directly to the different dedicated scientific networks.

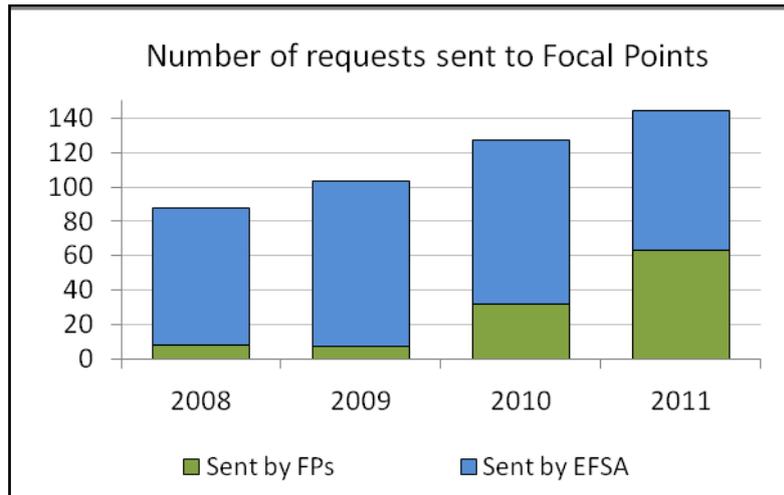


Figure 1: Number of requests sent to Focal Points (FPs) by EFSA and Focal Points

During 2011 Focal Points continued to collect and share information amongst themselves and with EFSA on a variety of issues on risk assessment or data collection. While certain specific requests (e.g. Shiga-toxin-producing *E. Coli*, *Fusarium* toxins in food and/or feed) have supported the work of EFSA’s Scientific Committee, Scientific Panels and Units, others supported Member States on their scientific research and risk assessments activities (e.g. dioxins in animal feed, caffeine in foodstuffs, lead content in honey). In 2011, the number of requests for information sent by Focal Points to other Focal Points has doubled, when compared to 2010, demonstrating the consolidation of the network. On the other hand, the number of requests sent by EFSA to Focal Points has slightly decreased in 2011, indicating their efficient targeting to EFSA’s dedicated scientific networks.

2.1.2. Information Exchange Platform

The aim of the Information Exchange Platform is to facilitate the exchange of information on risk assessment activities mainly by sharing data on risk assessment outputs in one single central web-interface. Focal Points within each Member State are responsible for collating and uploading relevant documents in the platform.

The Information Exchange Platform continues to be a valuable tool for facilitating the sharing of relevant scientific risk assessment information, which includes non-confidential unpublished documents and others that are often not easily accessible. In 2011, following the recommendations from the Information Exchange Platform evaluation report⁶, access to the platform was extended to contact points from the Article 36 List of organisations, as well as to EFSA Working Group Members. In addition, Advisory Forum Members can nominate individuals who express their interest in accessing the Information Exchange Platform. In 2011, 191 individuals were nominated for access and, in total, 451 nominated individuals have been granted access to the Information Exchange Platform.

During 2011, 219 documents originating from 21 countries were uploaded onto the platform. These were: 171 risk assessment outputs; 13 risk assessment requests/mandates; 9 country profiles; and 26 work plans. Since the launch of the Information Exchange Platform in 2008, the total number of documents has increased from 196 to 1052 (see Figure 2).

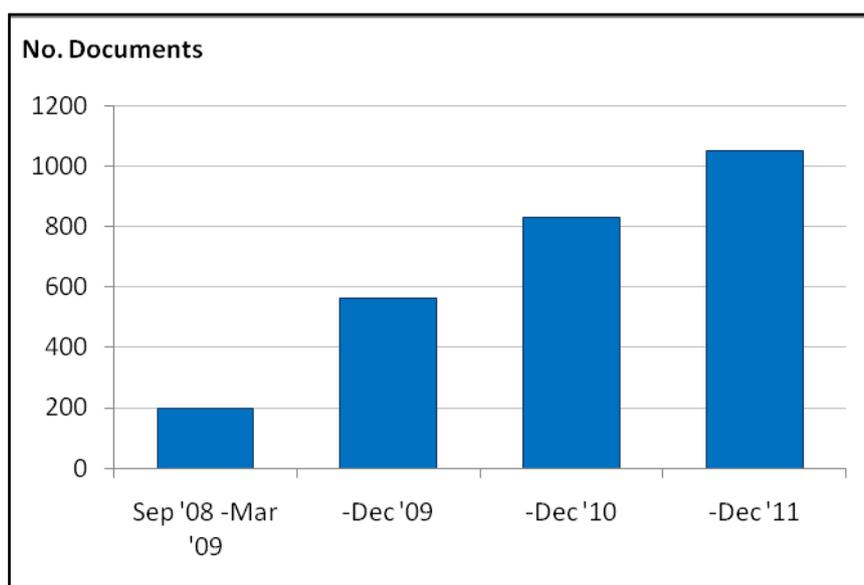


Figure 2: Number of documents uploaded onto the Information Exchange Platform overtime by end of 2011

Although the total number of uploaded documents has increased since 2008, the number of uploaded risk assessment outputs has decreased each year. The number of risk assessment mandates uploaded has been consistently low and is considerably lower than the number of risk assessment outputs (see Figure 3). It is understood that in some countries there is no formalised procedure for mandate requests. Therefore, it is difficult to upload such information when a risk assessment has started. In other countries, the information is confidential and therefore cannot be shared via the Information Exchange Platform.

⁶ <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/supporting/pub/134e.htm>

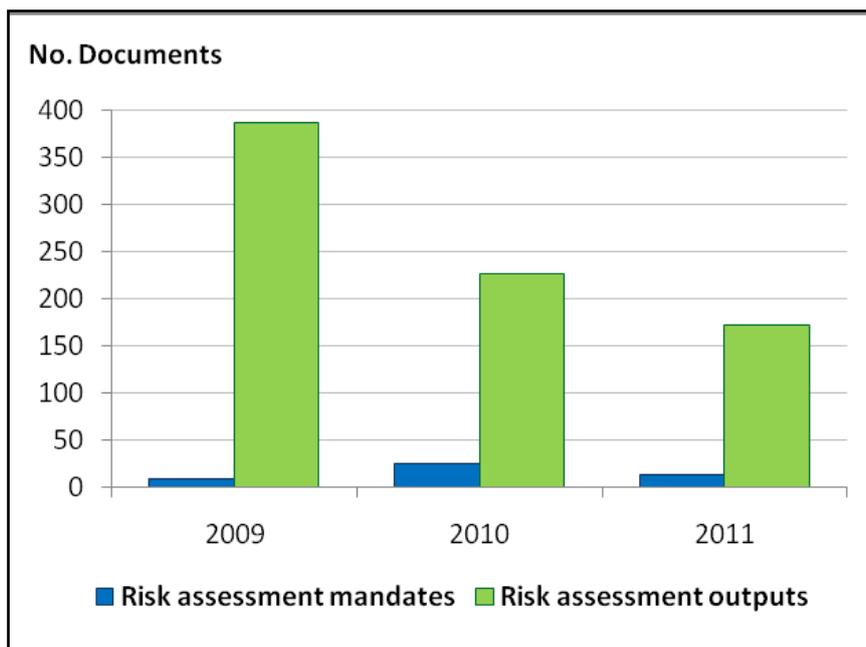


Figure 3: Number of risk assessment mandates and outputs per year by end of 2011

The main difficulties reported by Focal Points limiting the uploading of documents onto the Information Exchange Platform in 2011 continued to be (1) the availability of risk assessment requests or mandates; (2) acquiring relevant documents from other institutions in the country; (3) availability in time to collect and upload relevant documents; and (4) the translation of summaries into English. To further improve these constraints, efforts should continue to be made by Focal Points to establish better contacts with all /other official risk assessment bodies in the area of food and feed safety, animal health and plant health so to have access to their risk assessment documents for uploading onto the IEP .

The 2nd revised edition of the BfR EU Food Safety Almanac was published in September 2011. In 2010 and 2011 BfR and EFSA Focal Points collaboratively prepared an update of each country profile, describing the food safety system in each individual EU Member State and in neighbouring countries. Hard copies of the 2nd revised edition of the EU Food Safety Almanac were distributed and the EU Food Safety Almanac has been uploaded onto the IEP. Individual files for each country profile are currently in preparation and will be made available on the IEP.

The Information Exchange Platform monthly reports continued to be sent throughout 2011 to all users of the platform via e-mail and, as well as uploaded onto the platform. These reports contain a summary of all documents which have been uploaded onto the platform, including EFSA mandates and outputs published in the EFSA Journal in a given month. In 2011, as part of the implementation of the recommendations from the Information Exchange Platform evaluation report, Focal Points were encouraged (and started) to freely and widely distribute the monthly reports within their countries, targeting in particular all official risk assessment bodies.

At the end of December 2011, the Information Exchange Platform contained over 1052 documents uploaded by Member States and EEA / EFTA countries. These included risk assessment outputs and mandates, country specific profiles relevant to EFSA's remit, quality and crisis manuals, and annual and strategic work plans. As a general recommendation, Focal Points should continue to actively collate and upload information on risk assessment onto to the Information Exchange Platform. Furthermore, efforts should also be made to collect and upload documents from all / other official risk assessment bodies in the area of food and feed safety, animal health and plant health.

2.1.3. Planned activities

To avoid duplication of work and help allocate limited resources according to priorities, Member States have the possibility to share information on planned activities by (1) uploading annual and strategic (or multi-annual) work programmes / plans onto the Information Exchange Platform (see section 2.1.2); and / or (2) filling in the standardised reporting table available on EFSA's Extranet site with other planned activities related to risk assessment, research and data collection.

During the course of 2011, 12 Focal Points shared annual work programmes, while 11 shared strategic (or multi-annual) work plans onto the Information Exchange Platform. Moreover, 11 Focal Points shared information on planned risk assessment, research and data collection activities via the reporting table available on EFSA's Extranet. Overall, 19 Focal Points shared at least one of the above planned activities with EFSA and with other Focal Points. The total number of planned risk assessment activities has increased from 178 in 2010 to 256 in 2011, complementing the information on started, ongoing or concluded activities shared through the Information Exchange Platform.

In 2011, approximately two thirds of Focal Points have shared planned work and activities with other Member States and EFSA, contributing to a more coordinated planning of risk assessment and data collection activities in the EU, avoiding duplication of work.

2.2. Article 36 network

Article 36 of EFSA's Founding Regulation⁷ is a key tool for the achievement of scientific cooperation activities between organisations in Member States and EFSA. In 2011, EFSA launched a total of 8 calls for proposals under the Article 36 grant scheme for a total value of 2 million Euros. In addition, 85 calls for tender and other procedures were launched under the procurement scheme in the scientific area, bringing the total value of projects to be outsourced to 7.4 million Euros.

Over 2011, 22 Focal Points organised meetings concerning specifically the Article 36 List of organisations in their respective countries. These meetings either had a broader objective of informing attendees (including participants from potential Article 36 organisations and stakeholders) about EFSA's work with Member States in the context of Article 36 or had a very specific agenda addressed at current Article 36 organisations. An important part of the latter meetings was to explain how to best use the Article 36 IT tools, namely the Article 36 Extranet workspace (Art36-NET) and the Article 36 Database.

The Art36-NET aims to foster active networking amongst Article 36 organisations, Focal Points and EFSA, as well as to facilitate project management. The Art36-NET home page functions as an entry point for three main pages on (1) networking, providing a search tool to find an organisation's contact information and its fields of competence; (2) open calls, giving information on currently open EFSA calls for proposals; and (3) ongoing and finalised projects, calls under evaluation, as well as unsuccessful ones, offering project partners the opportunity to have a project-specific workspace where to share information and documents. Access is restricted to project participants and folders are administered by the project leader and the EFSA Unit involved.

Focal Points provided an important support to Article 36 organisations in encouraging and assisting organisations in their countries to submit proposals for Article 36 calls published on EFSA's website. These activities included: (1) the sending of information (and reminders) to Article 36 organisations regarding launched calls for proposals; (2) publishing calls in newsletters; (3) providing information on the IT tools and the application procedure at special events; and (4) providing direct support in the application process. Relevant to note that the current framework of the calls for proposals favours the establishment of consortia of European organisations, since more than 50% of the launched calls in 2011 were won by such consortia. On that regard, Focal Points have played an important role in bridging organisations from different Member States.

The second IT tool, named Article 36 Database, assists Member States and EFSA in managing (i.e. maintaining and updating) the Article 36 List of organisations. The database allows users to (1) fill in application questionnaires for new Article 36 organisation to join the list; (2) update the profile of existing Article 36 organisations; and (3) query the database for contact persons in the organisations or for organisations according to their competences.

Regarding the Article 36 List, Focal Points supported the sending of notifications to EFSA of almost 70 changes in the status or contact details of listed Article 36 organisations. In addition, Focal Points facilitated the designation of new organisations for the list. During 2011, Permanent Representations of eight countries have proposed 22 new organisations to be designated for the Article 36 List. It is important to highlight that, despite the existence of the Article 36 Database, all new designations, as well as significant organisational changes in the structure of Article 36 organisations, are required to be notified to EFSA via the Permanent Representations in Brussels in order to ensure that the provisions of Commission Regulation (EC) No. 2230/2004 are observed.

⁷ Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety, OJ L 31, 1.2.2002, p. 1–24

Over 2011, Focal Points have further strengthened their networks, including new Article 36 organisations. They have also encouraged Article 36 organisations to apply for the 8 calls for proposals published during the course of the year. Use of the two Article 36 IT tools was facilitated, thereby fostering active networking between and amongst Article 36 organisations, Focal Points and EFSA. Focal Points have also supported EFSA in ensuring that the Article 36 List is kept up-to-date and functional, in terms of contact details and structural changes occurring in the Article 36 organisations.

2.3. EFSA’s Expert Database

The number of experts applying to EFSA’s Expert Database continued to grow in 2011 with the support of Focal Points. Since its launch in June 2008, the database has reached a total of 3559 applications by December 2011 (Figure 4). Figure 5 shows the number of experts, by country of origin, that have been included in the Expert Database. Following a thorough assessment process, 3000 experts were included in the database by 31st of December 2011.

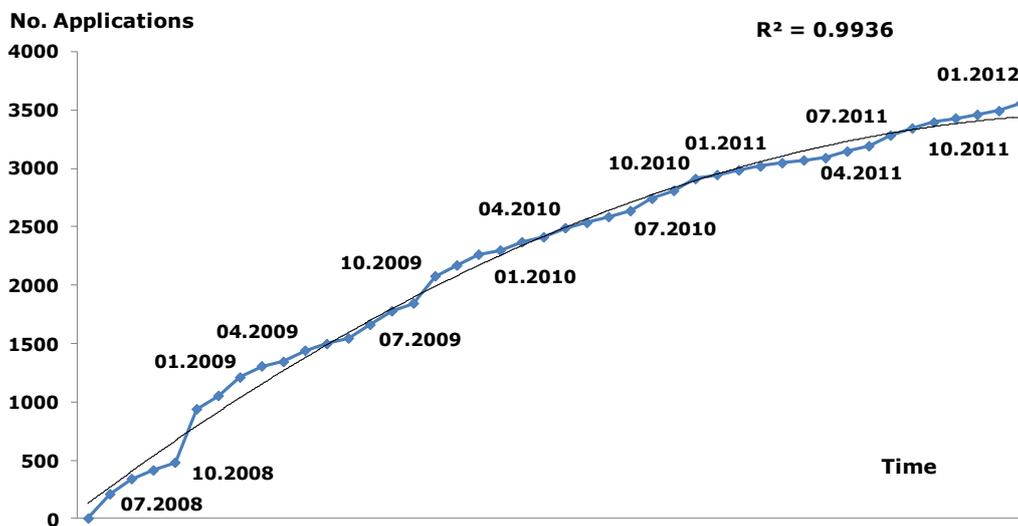


Figure 4: Number of applications submitted to the Expert Database by end of December 2011

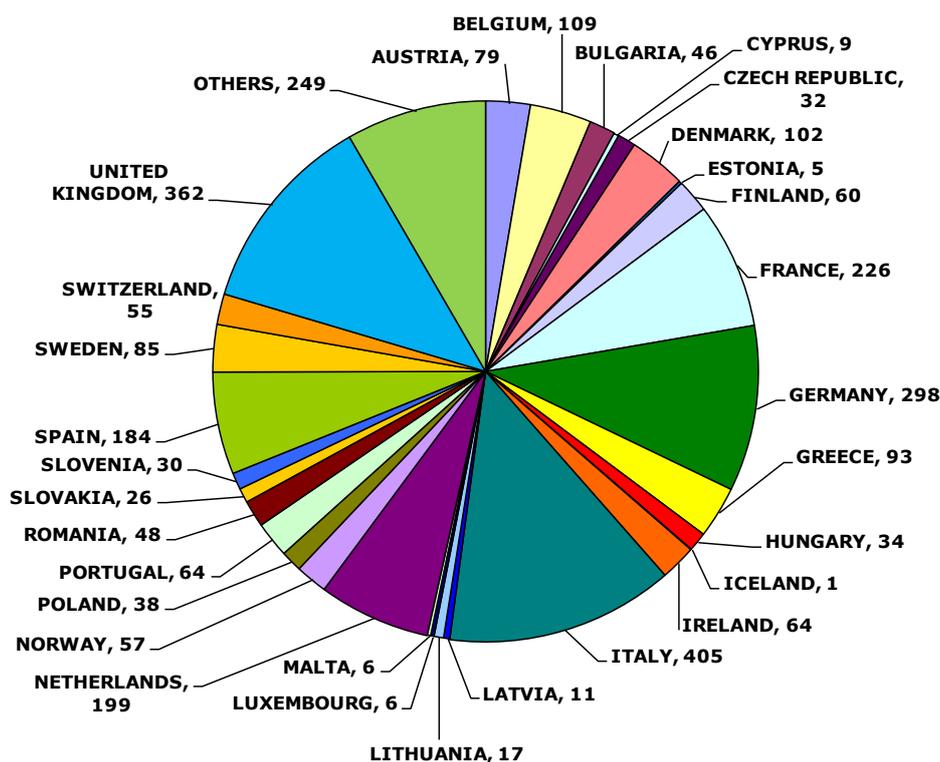


Figure 5: No. experts, by country of origin, included in the Expert Database by December 2011

A user survey on the Expert Database was carried out between the 25th of October and the 18th of November 2011. The survey included a questionnaire targeting external users of the Expert Database (i.e. Advisory Forum and Focal Point representatives of Member States and EEA/EFTA countries). While 86% of all Focal Points have indicated to have used the Expert Database to extract information on their own national experts, 41% indicated to have also used it to identify expertise for own national projects. The Expert Database tools were considered user friendly by 67% of all replying countries. The most frequent improvement recommended concerned the speed of the search tool. The survey also revealed that required expertise was not always identified in the database, which is a clear indication that general promotion aimed at increasing the total number of experts should continue with the support from Focal Points.

Focal Points have promoted the Expert Database through a variety of activities, including:

- giving over 40 presentations on the Expert Database at national events in more than 18 countries;
- publishing information about the Expert Database on 19 national Focal Point web pages;
- disseminating promotion material (leaflets, postcards and banners, as well as articles in newsletters, newspapers or national scientific journals) on the Expert Database to Members of the national Focal Point networks in more than 11 countries;
- sending e-mail messages and having personal contact with experts to give information on the Expert Database in more than 11 countries.

Focal Points have assisted experts in filling in the online application form in eight countries and promoted the use of the Expert Database search tool amongst their national networks of experts and

organisations in 22 countries. Almost 94% of experts included in the Expert Database have indicated to share their profile information also with Member States, which is a clear sign of their willingness to cooperate directly with other Member States.

Focal Points play a key role in stimulating the application of experts to the Expert Database within their countries. In parallel, given that the Expert Database is a cooperation tool, made available at Member State level, Focal Points have further reinforced the promotion of its use amongst their networks.

The number of scientific experts applying to EFSA's Expert Database has continued to grow in 2011. Focal Points played an important role for this growth by presenting, distributing or publishing information, as well as directly encouraging scientists to apply to EFSA's Expert Database. Focal Points have also used and promoted the Expert Database as a source of scientific expertise available for use at national level.

2.4. Raising visibility of EFSA's scientific work and Focal Points

Member States and EFSA produce high quality scientific output which needs to be made visible for appropriate acknowledgement within Europe and beyond. To further contribute to the building of awareness and recognition of the scientific work generated by Member States and EFSA, Focal Points have carried out during 2011 several activities, summarised below.

2.4.1. Communication materials and activities

In 2011, Focal Points have continued to increase awareness, understanding and outreach of their own and EFSA's work, through the development and promotion of specific outreach materials as well as through the distribution of readily available EFSA communication materials. In particular, Focal Points have continued to create and expand their own networks, to which they disseminate EFSA information and communication materials.

The majority of Focal Points (26) reported close collaboration and regular contacts with their Advisory Forum Communications Working Group (AFCWG) representative, often liaising and collaborating on the development and adaptation of their own as well as EFSA's communication and outreach material. These materials are reported to be primarily disseminated via the Focal Point websites but also through tools such as dedicated events.

Almost all Focal Points have now established dedicated institutional web pages, where they provide information about their collaboration with EFSA, links to key EFSA news and announcements, as well as covering their own national topics. Many Focal Point web pages promote EFSA's newsletters, the Expert Database, calls for EFSA's Scientific Committee and Panels, as well as important EFSA public announcements, such as press releases and opinions, either by directly reporting these topics in the dedicated areas of their web pages or through hyperlinks to the relevant EFSA source.

Sixteen Focal Points produced own outreach materials, such as printed brochures, leaflets and articles on their role, activities and cooperation with EFSA. Six Focal Points have focused instead on distributing EFSA communication materials, such as newsletters in printed format, as well as other outreach materials disseminated electronically either directly via their website or through e-mails.

Focal Points have continued to raise awareness, understanding and outreach of EFSA's and their work by disseminating information through an increasing number of communication channels, newly developed communication tools, as well as via extended and targeted networks within Member States. These activities have often resulted from a strong collaboration between Focal Points and the respective AFCWG representatives at national level.

2.4.2. National Focal Point meetings and scientific events

In 2011, 23 Focal Points have carried out a total of 44 scientific events, ranging from small targeted seminars to broader conferences, thus supporting a thorough exchange of information about ongoing activities at national, EFSA and international level, as well as to allow further consolidation of national networks.

Representatives from EFSA's Advisory Forum and Scientific Cooperation Unit were invited to 14 events in 2011 in order to present EFSA's work. Besides highlighting the importance of scientific cooperation within Europe and updating the national Focal Point networks on EFSA's activities, information on particular cooperation projects, including the Expert Database and the Article 36 IT tools, was presented. Furthermore, EFSA scientific experts participated in meetings organised by Focal Points on very specific subjects, e.g. risk assessment, animal nutrition, emerging risks, food additives, health claims, dioxins and zoonoses.

Focal Points have also presented their own and/or EFSA's work at national or international conferences. Overall, 28 Focal Points participated in such type of events, having prepared more than 115 presentations/posters in total. Focal Points have therefore raised the visibility of their own national work, as well as of the various scientific cooperation activities occurred between EFSA and European countries (e.g. Expert Database, Article 36 network, Information Exchange Platform) and of EFSA at large.

In 2011, 23 Focal Points have organised 44 events in their countries, which ranged from small targeted national seminars to international conferences. Representatives from EFSA's scientific Directorates have also presented EFSA's work and cooperation activities in different types of events as per invitation of Focal Points. Furthermore, 28 Focal Points have contributed to national and international events with over 115 presentations, posters and written contributions. All of these activities have raised the visibility of the Focal Point network and of EFSA's work.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2012

The main task of Focal Points is to provide technical support to their Advisory Forum Members, in particular in the context of implementing the Strategy for Cooperation and Networking⁴. Taking into account the work carried out by Focal Points and the experience gathered over the past four years, the following priorities are proposed for Focal Points in 2012:

- to continue the exchange of scientific information/data on key topics at EU level, namely by actively collating and uploading information on risk assessments onto the Information Exchange Platform from all official risk assessment bodies operating within EFSA's remit;
- to maintain the Article 36 List of competent organisations, ensuring it is kept fit for purpose, as well as stimulate Article 36 organisations to apply for Article 36 calls and foster the networking between Article 36 organisations via the available IT tools (Article 36 Database, Article 36-NET);
- to continue the promotion of EFSA's database of external scientific experts, contributing to its steady growth, and stimulate the use of the respective search tool at national level;
- to further extend national networks in cooperation with the Advisory Forum Communications Working Group (AFCWG) Member, allowing for a wider audience when disseminating information;
- to maintain and further develop Focal Point websites as a central communication tool on food safety in Member States;
- to continue the organisation of national scientific events, considering namely the 10th anniversary of the General Food Law;
- to actively promote training on risk assessment by liaising directly with the national BTSF contact point.

APPENDIX

A. MESSAGES SENT TO FOCAL POINTS (FPS) IN 2011⁸

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
Requests for data and contributions		
Call for data on Indigo Carmine (ANS)	26/01/2011	-
Call for data on silver and gold (ANS)	25/02/2011	-
Call for data - Paprika extracts (ANS)	31/03/2011	-
New call for data on Aspartame (ANS)	06/06/2011	-
Call for data on Patent Blue V (ANS)	06/06/2011	-
Calls for expressions of interest		
EFSA will launch a call for membership of its Scientific Panels and Scientific Committee	28/03/2011	-
Further promote: call for membership of its Scientific Panels and Scientific Committee	27/04/2011	-
EFSA has launched a series of managerial positions	03/05/2011	-
EFSA's call for membership of its Scientific Panels and Scientific Committee closes on 31 May 2011	11/05/2011	-
Deadline extended to 14 June 2011: EFSA's call for membership of its Scientific Panels and Scientific Committee	27/05/2011	-
Calls for tender		
Call for tender - EAHC/2011/BTSF/04 - Lot 3 - organization and implementation of training activities on principles and methods of food safety risk assessment	08/08/2011	-

⁸ Not included in this list: messages and feedback regarding agendas, minutes, working documents, DoIs. etc.

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
Information on public consultations		
EFSA Scientific Committee consultation on a guidance on 90-day feeding trials , and on a guidance on default values	08/07/2011	-
Public consultation on a Policy on Independence and Scientific Decision-Making Processes of the European Food Safety Authority	08/07/2011	-
EFSA publishes two Public Consultations of the Scientific Panel on Plant Protection Products and their Residues	22/07/2011	-
Public consultation on EFSA's independence policy	05/09/2011	-
EFSA launches draft Science Strategy 2012-2016 for public consultation	07/11/2011	21/11/2011
Article 36 and other scientific cooperation projects		
Planned grants/procurement calls published on the EFSA website	06/01/2011	-
EFSA - work programme 2011 for grants - Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002	04/03/2011	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - CFP/EFSA/AMU/2011/01	28/04/2011	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - CFP/EFSA/DATEX/2011/01	28/04/2011	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - CFP/EFSA/BIOMO/2011/01	24/05/2011	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - CFP/EFSA/DCM/2011/02	24/05/2011	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - CFP/EFSA/PRAS/2011/01	23/06/2011	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - CFP/EFSA/AHAW/2011/01	29/06/2011	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - CFP/EFSA/AHAW/2011/02	30/08/2011	-
Extended deadline /EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002	10/10/2011	-

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
Expert Database		
EFSA's Expert Database – User Survey	25/10/2011	07/11/2011
User survey on EFSA's Expert Database - timeline extended	08/11/2011	18/11/2011
REMINDER: User survey on EFSA's Expert Database - timeline due in 2 days (18.11.2011)	16/11/2011	18/11/2011
Information Exchange Platform (IEP)		
Dioxins in animal feed – upload documents onto IEP	13/01/2011	-
IEP - December 2010 report	14/01/2011	-
IEP reminder- January 2011	25/01/2011	-
IEP - January 2011 report	11/02/2011	-
Aspartame – request to share information via the IEP	23/02/2011	-
IEP reminder- February 2011	25/02/2011	-
IEP - February 2011 report	14/03/2011	-
IEP - March 2011 report	13/04/2011	-
IEP reminder - April 2011	27/04/2011	-
Implementing recommendations of the IEP Evaluation Report	06/05/2011	-
IEP - April 2011 report	13/05/2011	-
Access to the Information Exchange Platform (IEP)	20/05/2011	-
IEP reminder- May 2011	25/05/2011	-
New folder on IEP - Shiga toxin producing E. coli	26/05/2011	-
Shiga-toxin-producing E. coli - upload documents onto IEP	08/06/2011	-

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
Information Exchange Platform (IEP)		
Monthly IEP May 2011 report - May 2011	09/06/2011	-
IEP reminder- June 2011 uploads	24/06/2011	-
IEP - June 2011 report	15/07/2011	-
IEP reminder - July 2011 uploads	22/07/2011	-
IEP - July 2011 report	16/08/2011	-
IEP reminder- August 2011 uploads	29/08/2011	-
IEP - August 2011 report	15/09/2011	-
IEP reminder- September 2011 uploads	23/09/2011	-
IEP - September 2011 report	14/10/2011	-
IEP reminder - October 2011 uploads	25/10/2011	-
Link pages of IEP - by 18/11/11	11/11/2011	18/11/2011
IEP October 2011 report	15/11/2011	
Link pages of IEP - by 18/11/11	17/11/2011	18/11/2011
IEP reminder- November 2011 uploads	25/11/2011	
IEP reminder- December 2011 uploads	12/12/2011	
IEP November 2011 report	15/12/2011	
Requests/information from FPs		
products without "E" (from LT, sent by SCO)	03/01/2011	-
replies available - request on monosodium glutamate (from LT, sent by SCO)	05/01/2011	-

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
Requests/information from FPs		
Dioxins in animal feed (sent by DE)	07/01/2011	-
Request on aspartame (sent by FR)	12/01/2011	-
Question from Belgium - honey bees & HMF - Advice 32-2010 - Scientific Committee (sent by BE)	02/02/2011	-
UK FSA publishes its Forward Evidence Plan for initial comment by 16 Feb (from UK, sent by SCO)	04/02/2011	-
Use of hypochlorite for vegetables hygienization (sent by ES)	23/02/2011	-
National programmes concerning fats (sent by PL)	23/02/2011	-
Hydrogen Peroxide as a processing aid (sent by ES)	09/03/2011	-
Polish national programmes concerning fats – feedback (sent by PL)	06/04/2011	-
Use of "Garra Rufa" fishes for skin peeling (sent by CZ)	27/04/2011	-
RE: Use of "Garra Rufa" fishes for skin peeling (clarification) (sent by CZ)	27/04/2011	-
Dioxins and PCB like dioxins in freshwater fish (sent by FR)	27/04/2011	-
New study on the effect of salt (sent by GR)	05/05/2011	-
The 28th workshop of SSCT and FINCOPA seminar "Towards toxicity assessment without animals" (sent by FI)	06/05/2011	-
Social sciences in risk assessment and risk management? (sent by FR)	18/05/2011	-
EFSA - Call for proposals - Framework Art.36 of Reg. (EC) 178/2002 - CFP/EFSA/DATEX/2011/01 - seeking for potential candidates to form a consortium (sent by BG)	25/05/2011	-
Enterohaemorrhagic Escherichia coli - Outbreak in Germany – summary and information sources (sent by DE)	27/05/2011	-
Request on information related to a systematic quantitative protocol for defining the frequency of inspections in food companies (sent by GR)	01/06/2011	-
EHEC outbreak in Germany – update II (sent by DE)	01/06/2011	-

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
Requests/information from FPs		
EHEC outbreak in Germany – update III (sent by DE)	01/06/2011	-
EHEC outbreak in Germany – update IV (sent by DE)	03/06/2011	-
EHEC outbreak in Germany – update V (sent by DE)	08/06/2011	-
EHEC outbreak in Germany – update VI (sent by DE)	08/06/2011	-
Request on Bisphenol A (sent by FR)	09/06/2011	-
EHEC outbreak in Germany – update VII (sent by DE)	10/06/2011	-
New Press Release - EHEC outbreak in Germany (sent by DE)	11/06/2011	-
EHEC outbreak in Germany – update VIII (sent by DE)	14/06/2011	-
Social sciences in risk assessment - feedback (sent by FR)	15/06/2011	-
EHEC outbreak in Germany – update IX (sent by DE)	15/06/2011	-
Request on sterols, risks and benefits (sent by FR)	16/06/2011	-
EHEC outbreak in Germany – update X (sent by DE)	22/06/2011	-
Reply to Request from France on dioxins and PCB like dioxins in freshwater fish (sent by CZ)	22/06/2011	-
EHEC outbreak in Germany – update XI (sent by DE)	01/07/2011	-
EHEC outbreak in Germany – update XII (sent by DE)	04/07/2011	-
EHEC outbreak in Germany – update XIII (sent by DE)	05/07/2011	-
EHEC outbreak in Germany – update XIV (sent by DE)	06/07/2011	-
EHEC outbreak in Germany – update XV (sent by DE)	08/07/2011	-
New study on the effect of salt – summary table (sent by GR)	12/07/2011	-

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
Requests/information from FPs		
Menu posting of information on calorie content of food (sent by IE)	21/07/2011	-
Re: Ref: CFP/EFSA/BIOMO/2011/01 (sent by LU)	22/07/2011	-
EHEC outbreak in Germany – update XVII (sent by DE)	28/07/2011	-
Journal of reference No5 (sent by FR)	28/07/2011	-
Trans fatty acids methodology (sent by GR)	29/07/2011	-
Use of essential oils in food supplements (sent by BE)	12/08/2011	-
Risk Assessment 10th Anniversary Seminar in Finland (sent by FI)	26/08/2011	-
BfR events: Mineral oils in food packaging - developments and solutions/10th BfR Forum on Consumer Protection: Antibiotic resistance/Conference on precautionary principle	29/08/2011	-
A last roquets on BPA (sent by FR)	08/09/2011	-
Risk assessment 10th Anniversary Seminar in Finland II_FYI (sent by FI)	13/09/2011	-
Food Bank - leftover from restaurants (sent by HU)	14/09/2011	-
Summary available - analyses of trans fatty acids (from GR, sent by AFSCO)	26/09/2011	-
Second edition of EU Food Safety Almanac	27/09/2011	-
Caffeine in foodstuffs - available data (sent by IS)	10/10/2011	-
Workshop "Emerging risks in food safety: where are we?" - Parma, 21 ottobre 2011 (sent by IT)	12/10/2011	-
EFET conference_Dietary Habits in Greece and Food Safety: How safe Greek consumers feel? (sent by GR)	11/11/2011	27/11/2011
Food supplement Penisex (from LT, sent by AFSCO)	14/11/2011	-
Summary - leftover food from restaurants (from HU, sent by AFSCO)	17/11/2011	-
To monitor the consumption of food additives (sent by HU)	29/11/2011	-

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
Requests/information from FPs		
Training on cumulative pesticide risk (sent by NL)	02/12/2011	10/12/2011
Question from BELGIUM – PREDNISOLONE (sent by BE)	09/12/2011	-
Lead content in honey (sent by LV)	19/12/2011	-
Summary of responses - calorie information on menus (sent by IE)	22/12/2011	
Requests/information from EFSA's Communications Department		
EFSA video on risk assessment	11/02/2011	-
Requests/information from AFSCO		
Request regarding information on the budget and staff in your organisation	17/01/2011	21/01/2011
Request regarding information on the budget and staff in your organisation – year 2010 and 2011	18/01/2011	21/01/2011
Medium Term Planning - Publication of Report	23/02/2011	-
Scientific Colloquium XV - Emerging Risks - Report is published	02/03/2011	-
Advisory Forum appreciates FP work	18/03/2011	-
News story - EFSA's role regarding the nuclear power plant incident in Japan	28/03/2011	-
16th EFSA Scientific Colloquium "Emerging Risks in Plant Health - from plant pest interactions to global change" (9-10 June 2011, Parma)	08/04/2011	-
Technical specifications on training regarding principles and methods of food safety risk assessment	15/04/2011	-
Update contact details	02/05/2011	06/05/2011
Brochure available - "Scientific Cooperation between EFSA and Member States - Taking stock and looking ahead"	24/05/2011	-

Item	Date sent	Deadline for FPs
Requests/information from AFSCO		
Publication of joint EFSA/ECDC report - Shiga toxin/verotoxin-producing <i>Escherichia coli</i> in humans, food and animals in the EU/EEA, with special reference to the German outbreak strain STEC O104	10/06/2011	-
EFSA publishes report on E. coli O104:H4 outbreaks in DE and FR	05/07/2011	-
Launch of new Expert Support System	18/08/2011	-
2011 Focal Point Reporting	30/09/2011	15/11/2011
Renewal of Focal Point Agreements for year 2012	14/10/2011	04/11/2011
In-service training period at EFSA	15/12/2011	10/02/2012
Requests/information from other EFSA Units and Panels		
Fusarium toxins in food and/or feed (CONTAM)	04/02/2011	-
EFSA Crisis simulation exercise - Monday 16 May (EMRISK)	13/05/2011	-
Publication of Scientific Opinion and Technical Report - EFSA's Pesticides Unit	12/07/2011	-
Others		
ARES (2011)87429: National Authorities identification (from JRC-IRMM)	26/01/2011	-
Call for partial renewal of EFSA Management Board : closing date for applicants is 15 July 2011	08/07/2011	-