

10 November, 2008

New Co-operation Agreement Signed: Between the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)

A Co-operation Agreement signed in Brussels today (10 November) will advance scientific co-operation and the development of international standards in the fields of food and feed safety.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, EFSA's Executive-Director Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle said: *"EFSA is delighted to strengthen its co-operation with the JRC in areas such as GMOs, BSE, the effects of climate change on food safety and feed additives. The scientific research and related technological expertise of the JRC and its institutes play an important role in the European food safety system. Our increased co-operation will help keep EFSA's work at the forefront of scientific knowledge and expertise"*.

The Joint Research Centre's Director-General Roland Schenkel added: *"In a short period of time, EFSA and its partners have put in place a comprehensive programme to improve EU food safety and ensure a high level of consumer protection. This is essential to maintain confidence in the EU food supply. The JRC is committed to working with EFSA to provide essential scientific data to contribute to informed and responsible policy decisions in industry as well as in government"*.

The context behind this agreement

The safety and quality of food and feed is a growing public concern and research plays an increasingly important role in this sector to ensure European consumers' confidence that they are among the best protected and the best informed in the world. Following a series of food crises in the 1990's, the *European Food Safety Authority* (EFSA) was created in 2002 as the keystone of European Union risk assessment. In close co-operation with national authorities and in open consultation with its stakeholders, EFSA provides independent scientific advice and clear communication on existing and emerging risks.

To do this, EFSA works closely with partners including the European Commission's *Joint Research Centre* (JRC), a network of seven research institutes in five member states providing customer-driven scientific and technical support for the conception, development, implementation and monitoring of EU policies. In the area of food and feed safety and quality, the JRC hosts six *Community Reference Laboratories* (CRLs). These are created under EU legislation to support national authorities in their efforts to keep food and feed free from dangerous substances. The CRLs for heavy metals, mycotoxins, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and food contact materials have a control role in the food and feed area. The role of the CRLs for feed additives and genetically modified food and feed is central to the market authorisation procedure, and for these CRLs the close co-operation between the JRC and EFSA - established by legislation - is of particular importance.

What will this agreement mean in practice?

The detailed *Memorandum of Understanding* signed by both organisations sets out how the JRC and EFSA will aim to ensure that additional robust data is provided for risk assessment, that harmonised standards are applied to data generation and that analytical best practices are shared. The Agreement will

also contribute to the better understanding of the relationship between food and health in areas such as food allergens, acrylamide and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.

The Memorandum should optimise working together in identifying problem areas impacting upon European consumers and in developing innovative scientific solutions.

Staff development and training programmes will be enhanced while exchanges of scientists will increase.

The Agreement also provides for greater exchange of scientific and technical information and the hosting of joint seminars and conferences.

The thematic areas given the greatest prominence under the new framework are Food and Feed Safety, with an extension to Animal Health and Welfare, Impact of Climate Change on Plant Health, and Nutrition.

Further information

- **Memorandum of Understanding & JRC activities:** <http://www.jrc.ec.europa.eu>
- **EFSA activities:** <http://www.efsa.europa.eu>
- **Media enquiries:**

Aidan Gilligan, JRC Press Officer, aidan.gilligan@ec.europa.eu: +32 (0)2 2986482

Lucia de Luca, EFSA Press officer, press@efsa.europa.eu: +39 0521 036 149.