

Minutes of the First Meeting of New Members

A. BORSCHETTE CENTER, BRUSSELS, 11 NOVEMBER 1997

ATTENDANCE LIST - LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS - TEILNEHMERLISTE

Members/Membres/Mitglieder

MM. M. CABOCHE, H.V. DAVIES, F. FAHR, C.L. GALLI, R. HANS, A.R. HARDY, S.O. KARENLAMPI, H.A. KUIPER, J.J. LEGUAY, M. MARONI (Vice-Chairman, Vice-Président, Stellv. Vorsitzender)*, H.G. NOLTING, F.T. O'GARA (Vice-Chairman, Vice-Président, Stellv. Vorsitzender)*, E. RODRIGUEZ-CEREZO, A.M.S. SILVA FERNANDES (Chairman, Vice-Président, Vorsitzender)* (*Elected during the meeting.)

Apologies/Excusés/Entschuldigt

Mme M.P. DELCOUR-FIRQUET

Commission/Kommission

Mr B. CAR SIN (DG XXIV/B), MMmes M. de SOLÀ DOMINGO (DG XXIV/B/2), S. VAN DE LOUW (DG XXIV/B/2), MM. J. KREYSA (DG XXIV/B/1), W. DECKART (DG XXIV/B/1), A. VERLEYSSEN (DG XXIV/B/3), A. SCHARPE (DG VI/B/11.1),

Secretariat/Secrétariat/Sekretariat

Mr M. WALSH (DG XXIV/B/2), Mme F. DELCOURT (DG XXIV/B.2)

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted and apologies for absence noted.

2. Introduction by the Commission

The meeting was opened on behalf of the Commission by Mme M. de Solà Domingo who welcomed the Members and congratulated them on their nomination to the Scientific Committee on Plants (SCP) as announced in the Commission Decision dated 4 November 1997. She explained that the nomination of the Members of the 8 scientific committees had required the evaluation of more than 1100 applications in a very short time and that the SCP alone had received some 103 applications. Mme de Solà apologised for the fact the meeting had been called at very short notice. This had been necessary because of the urgent need to elect the Chairpersons of each committee, who would automatically be nominated as members of the Scientific Steering Committee (SSC), the first full meeting of which was scheduled for 21 November 1997. She recalled that M. Santer, in his address to the European Parliament in January 1997 on the BSE affair, had undertaken to introduce a series of organisational reforms one of the most important of which was the separation of the Commission's scientific committees from the services responsible for the corresponding policy and legislation. The eight scientific committees were now grouped under common management in a single Directorate within Directorate General XXIV - "Consumer policy and consumer health", which had also been given responsibility for inspection and control in relation to food safety matters. M. Santer would shortly return to the EP to explain in person the measures that had now been put into place.

Mme de Solà stressed the improvements that the new procedures for establishing the scientific committees had brought. The selection procedure was fully independent. Members had been chosen on the basis of scientific excellence by an independent panel from candidates who had responded to the open call for expressions of interest. The procedure thus reinforced the requirements for independence of the scientific advice given to the Commission.

Although the Commission Decision setting up the scientific committees (Commission Decision 95/579/EC of 23 July 1997, OJ No L 237, p. 18) allowed for up to 19 Members, the Commission had decided not to fill all the places until the needs of the Committees had been fully evaluated. If it were shown that the SCP for example lacked an important area of expertise, up to four additional Members could be nominated at a later date.

The Commission Decision emphasised that questions put to the scientific committees would not be limited to those where legal acts made consultation obligatory, but could include any problem where there was a concern for consumer health. The Decision also made provision for scientific committees to draw the attention of the Commission to any specific or emerging problem on matters of consumer health falling within their remits.

Mme de Solà explained that the role of the Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) would include the examination of questions that did not fall within the remits of the specific committees, to advise on questions of a multi-disciplinary nature and to resolve any divergence in the advice from different specific committees on related questions.

The role of the Commission's Secretariat was essentially to support the Committees in their work. Committee Secretariats were expected to be pro-active and to provide an interface between the Commission and the Committees. Their task thus goes beyond the mere drafting of minutes but does not extend to the formulation of actual scientific opinion which was the exclusive responsibility of the Committee.

Mme de Solà emphasised the importance of maximum participation of members in the work and meetings of the Committees to ensure that their heavy work-load was discharged as efficiently as possible. She added that the Decision foresaw the possibility of replacement of Members in the event that for any reason they were no longer able to fulfil their responsibilities.

3. Overview of Directive 91/414/EEC on the placing of plant protection products on the market and the ongoing implementation of the Directive

The Secretariat explained that it had the intention to have the legislative background to the Committee's work presented over a number of meetings. At the first meeting, Mr A Scharpe of DG VI B. II.1 presented an overview of Directive 91/414/EEC including progress with the implementation of the Directive. He reported on the 38 plant protection product active substances currently in various stages of the evaluative process of DG VI and which will progressively arrive for opinion to the SCP. Similarly, he reported on progress with the first list of existing active substances pursuant to Article 8(2) of Directive 91/414/EEC. He stated that it was the intention to keep the Committee informed on progress in the plant protection product legislative area by making available on a routine basis the document 'Overview of the state of the main works in DG VI.B.II.1 with regard to the implementation of Directive 91/414/EEC'.

4. Rules of procedure

The Secretariat (XXIV/B.1) explained the Commission Decision of July 1997 called upon the Committees to adopt harmonised rules of procedure in collaboration with the SSC. The rules would be designed to clarify the functioning of the Committee as concerns for example, the election of its officers, declarations of independence, confidentiality, the personal responsibility of Members for their advice, minimum time for calling meetings and submission of documents, the use and role of *ad hoc* experts, structure and adoption of opinions, written procedures for adoption of urgent opinions, structure and publication of opinions and the contents of minutes.

The Secretariat would develop draft rules for consideration by each specific committee. It was however stressed that the harmonised rules should be adopted as soon as possible in the life of the new committees.

The XXIV/B.1 Secretariat outlined the proposed modalities for reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs and the additional indemnity to be paid to Members and *ad hoc* experts. In addition to reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs, Members and *ad hoc* experts would receive an indemnity for each day of participation at a meeting of a scientific committee. Provision was also being made for the payment of an additional indemnity to a Rapporteur on a subject specified by a committee. The Secretariat will prepare a document setting out the details of the new arrangements.

5. Introduction of Members

Members were invited to introduce themselves with a brief summary of their professional background, affiliations and areas of scientific expertise.

6. Election of Chairpersons and vice chairpersons

The Secretariat explained that, in accordance with the Commission Decision of July 1997, the Committee was required to elect a chairperson and two vice-chairpersons by simple majority of the Members that make up the Committee. The Chairperson would automatically be nominated as a Member of the SSC and therefore, Members wishing to be considered for chairperson should therefore be aware of the additional demands that this role would have on their time. It was explained that candidates could either nominate themselves for consideration or be nominated by another member of the Committee.

Chairperson

Professor A. Silva Fernandes was unanimously elected as Chairman.

Vice-chairpersons

Professors M. Maroni and F. O' Gara were unanimously elected as vice-Chairpersons in two separate votes.

7. Current work programme.

The Secretariat outlined the work programme for the Committee as follows:

- I. Four Plant GMOs – very high priority,
- II. Two new active substances kresoxym methyl and axoxystrobin – high priority,
- III. Risk assessment for pesticide residues – high priority,
- IV. Data requirements for the assessment of micro-organisms used in and as plant protection products – high priority;
- V. New active substance quinoxifen – intermediate priority
- VI. Criteria for assessment of plant protection products for persistence – intermediate priority,
- VII. Criteria for assessment of operator exposure to plant protection products - intermediate priority,
- VIII. Criteria for the assessment of plant protection products for aquatic toxicity – intermediate priority
- IX. Existing active substance fenarimol - intermediate priority,

8. Committee Working Groups

The Committee held a short exchange of views on possible working groups which would need to be created in order to effectively deal with the anticipated work-load. The discussion centred on the optimum number and scope of working groups to be formed. The Committee came to the overall conclusion that it was probably better to limit the number of working groups in order to achieve a broader overview on the topics to be examined. Due to time limitations the Committee will return to this topic at its next meeting.

Due to the need to deal urgently with a number of questions dealing with Plant Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), the Committee established a working group to deal with this issue (see item 9 of report).

9. Genetically Modified Plants (Plant GMOs)

The Commission services explained to the committee the need for urgent opinions on four plant GMOs in the context of Directive 90/220/EEC on the deliberate release into the environment. The four GMOs are as follows:

BT - Maize (Mon 810), notified by Monsanto Europe.

This application covers both import for processing and also sowing in the Community.

Glufosinate tolerant and Bt maize (T25) by Agrevo

This application covers both import for processing and also sowing in the Community

Maize Novartis - Bt

This application concerns importation for industrial processing for human, animal and industrial uses and does not seek authorisation for sowing in the Community.

Glufosinate tolerant swede rape by AgrEvo

The notification concerns importation for industrial processing for human, animal and industrial uses and does not seek authorisation for sowing in the Community.

The opinions requested would need to address the potential risk of the four plant GMOs from the point of view of food safety and consumer health in its widest sense: this implies addressing the risk to the environment. The Committee noted that the matter touches on the mandates of several scientific committees and must therefore be considered as having clear multidisciplinary implications and would accordingly need to be discussed in the Scientific Steering Committee. Pending the outcome of such a discussion the SCP decided to nominate its members to the working group to deal with the question. The nominated members are as follows:

Dr. Caboche, Dr. Davies, Prof. Galli, Dr. Hans, Prof. Hardy, Prof. Kärenlampi, Dr. Kuiper, Mr. Leguay, Prof. O'Gara, Dr. Rodriguez-Cerezo.

It was decided that the date for a first meeting of the working group could only be decided once the documentation had been circulated to members. However, the Committee decided due to the urgency of the question to advance the date of its next plenary meeting.

9. Date and venue of next meeting

22 December 1997 in Brussels