European Sustainable Phosphorus Platform

www.phosphorusplatform.eu

67 rue de Trèves, 1040 Bruxelles, Belgium
info@phosphorusplatform.eu

ESPP input to EU public consultation on

evaluation of EFSA (European Food Safety Agency)

1st April 2024

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14068-European-Food-Safety-Authority-evaluation-of-performance-2017-2024_en

ESPP recognises the quality of EFSA opinions and the added value of EFSA for EU food-chain safety and international consumer, operator and trade confidence. However, we suggest that dossier definition (questions for Opinions) could be streamlined and accelerated, to enable EFSA to more effectively support decision makers.

A priority should be **assessment of safety and risks for food-chain Circular Economy and recycled nutrients**.

Circularity, in particular valorisation of secondary nutrient flows, is important to improve EU food security, by reducing EU dependency on imported fertilisers (EU Critical Raw Material phosphate rock, natural gas necessary for nitrogen fertilisers) and on imported animal feeds (in particular soya and high-protein feeds). It also contributes to reducing greenhouse emissions, to carbon storage in soil and to soil health, to creating rural jobs in Europe and to farmers' incomes (reduced exposure to fertiliser or feed price fluctuations, valorisation of secondary materials).

Examples of food-chain circularity posing safety questions include: feeding of algae and other biomass with wastes (manure digestate, sewage …) to produce fertiliser or animal feed, insects for animal feed or food ; recovery of nutrient chemicals (P, K) from various waste ashes ; use of sewage sludge digestate/compost on crops ; nitrogen salts from anaerobic digestion offgas ; Animal By -Products in organic fertilisers ; hydrolysed proteins …

Current regulations, in particular the ABP, TSE and Animal Feed Regulations, include outdated and today-inappropriate obstacles to nutrient recycling and circularity in the food chain. Obstacles include conservative exclusions put into place during the BSE crisis and which may not be justified given the current near-absence of BSE in Europe and improved knowledge and practice in prion risk management.

At present, EFSA opinions are (in this area, in our experience) delivered on narrow questions formulated by the European Commission or by one company or sector (e.g. EFSA Opinion on inclusion of certain ABPs in EU Fertilising Products 30 October 2021, EFSA Opinion on alternative methods of tunnel composting 26 April 2024, currently-underway EFSA Opinion on use of Cat1 ABP ash in fertilisers). We understand the reasoning for opinions based on data appertaining to one specific case and one specific process, however this one-by-one approach is inefficient and slow, requiring a new request, evaluation and opinion for related questions or similar processes or different end-uses for the same material (e.g. other composting methods, other ABPs used in fertilising products in Member States, phosphates extracted from Cat1 ash for use in animal feed, …). The food-chain circular economy involves many varied, often local, recycling routes, from variable secondary materials, through different processes to a range of food-chain uses. Processes and valorisation routes are rapidly evolving with technological process in this high-innovation sector.

One-by-one assessment is inappropriate and ESFA should consider assessing wider classes of circularity, such as criteria for pathogen safety of materials recovered from incineration ashes, or from offgases, or from biomass grown using waste inputs (fed on secondary nutrients), based on specific cases, but with proposed criteria for extending to other materials or to future new processes/routes.