

EU Commission shortlists ex-Monsanto employee for EFSA Management Board

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The European Commission has recommended that one of Europe's chief food lobbyists – who is also a former Monsanto employee – sits on the management board of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Testbiotech and Corporate Europe Observatory say that the appointment of Mella Frewen, lobby chief at FoodDrinkEurope (previously known as the CIAA) will create a conflict of interests for the food agency's management board.

Frewen has been the chief lobbyist at the food industry lobby group since 2007 where she actively lobbied to allow contamination of the food chain with genetically engineered plants which were not authorised in Europe. Christoph Then from Testbiotech said: “Appointing a food lobbyist with a past history of lobbying to allow contamination with genetically engineered plants would seriously undermine public trust in the European Food Safety Authority. There is simply no justification to have industry lobbyists on the board of EFSA.”

Another candidate selected by the Commission, Jiri Ruprich, is already a member of EFSA's Management Board despite having worked with the Czech Danone Institute's scientific committee for more than 10 years. The list, brought to the attention of Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) and Testbiotech, contains 14 names, seven of whom will be selected to serve a term on the Management Board. This means that half of the members of the management board will be replaced. The EU Council will make a final decision on the appointments in the next few months.

This week EFSA published details of how it would implement its new policy on conflicts of interest – including an improved definition of “conflicts of interest”, but tougher action is needed, including fundamental changes to EFSA's founding regulations, which are due for review later this year. Nina Holland from Corporate Europe Observatory said: “The regulation should be revised to ban industry lobbyists from EFSA's management. Instead, there should be more representatives from consumer and also environmental organisations on the board.”

Some of the previous members of the Management Board have come under attack for conflicts of interest, especially its chair, Diana Banati. The new board members will be installed in the next few months. Research by CEO showed that individuals linked to industry occupied four places on the current management board [ref1]. The management board plays an important role in EFSA, approving its working program and deciding which scientists are selected for the expert panels. The Board is also crucial for establishing internal rules on conflicts of interest at the Authority.

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Further information: [1 Serial conflicts of interest on EFSA's management board, Corporate Europe Observatory, 23 February 2011](#) [5]

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