

To  
Ms Sue Davis  
Chair of EFSA's Management Board  
European Food Safety Authority  
43126 Parma  
ITALY

Open letter

15 June 2016

Dear Ms Davis, dear Members of the EFSA Management Board

*The Board needs to respond to conflicts of interest*

In a letter to EFSA in March 2016,<sup>1</sup> Testbiotech pointed out several cases of conflicts of interest at EFSA. The cases concern:

- Barbara Gallani, who moved from the UK food industry lobby group, the Food and Drink Federation, to EFSA as communications director without any cooling-off period.
- Four EFSA experts involved in the risk assessment of genetically engineered organisms with an active role in organisations with close affiliations to the biotech industry.
- Alfonso Lampen, who is active in the industry-funded International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) but failed to mention this in his declaration of interest.

At the end of May, EFSA executive Director Bernhard Url replied to the letter sent by Testbiotech. The reply is clearly inadequate and likely to further undermine EFSA credibility. As shown in the Annex, the reply in regard to Ms Gallani is insufficient, for Mr Lampen inconclusive and in the case of the GMO experts incorrect.

We are seriously concerned that the independence of EFSA will be undermined by inadequate standards, and its credibility put into question by the way EFSA deals with these problems. It is also a matter of serious concern that Mr Url appears to be unaware of the facts or - if he is aware - appears to be possibly trying to mislead public perception.

There were attempts in 2011 and 2012 to strengthen the independence of EFSA. This was in

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<sup>1</sup> [www.testbiotech.org/en/node/1587](http://www.testbiotech.org/en/node/1587)

response to several individuals being actively involved with EFSA and ILSI at the same time. Further, there are some well-documented cases of revolving doors in the recent past. In 2015, in response to a complaint from GeneWatch UK, the Ombudsman concluded that EFSA had failed to ensure that those experts who work in academia declare all relevant information to the EFSA, and recommended that EFSA should revise its conflict of interest rules.<sup>2</sup> No action appears to have been taken in response to these important findings. If the Board does not now take serious action to protect EFSA independence, its credibility could be severely compromised.

Testbiotech and GeneWatch UK would be pleased to assist the Board if further information is needed.

With kind regards



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Annex:  
Backgrounder March and June 2016  
Letter to Mr Url, March 2016  
Answer from Mr Url, May 2016

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<sup>2</sup> [www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/cases/decision.faces/en/58868/html.bookmark](http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/cases/decision.faces/en/58868/html.bookmark)