

Scientific research and its application to risk assessments carried out by the Scientific Committee established at the FASFC



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“PROTECTING PLANTS, PROTECTING LIFE” Symposium - 15/10/2020



SciCom

The Food Safety Authorities in Belgium

Safety of the Food Chain
= Food Safety + Animal Health + Plant Health



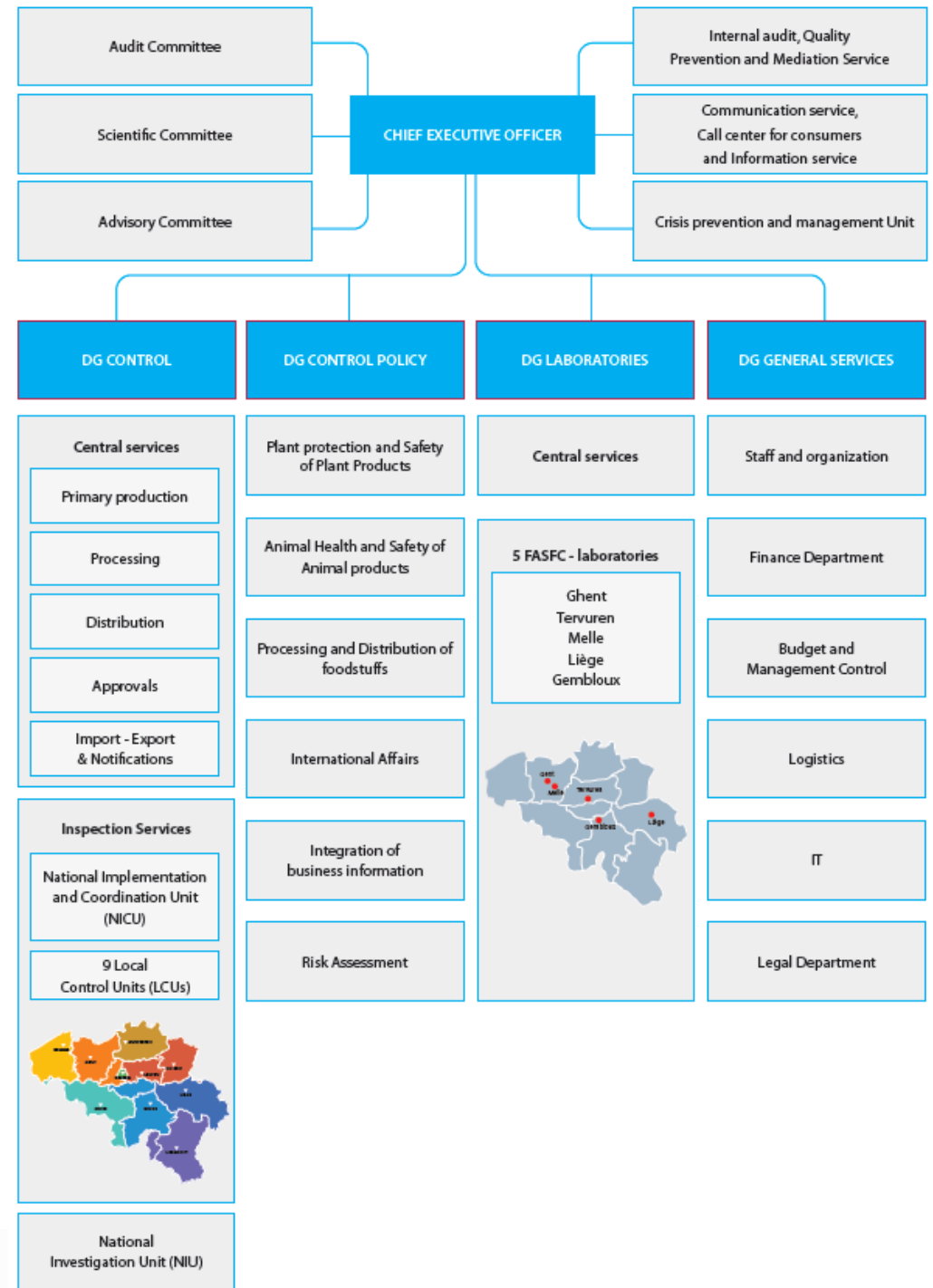
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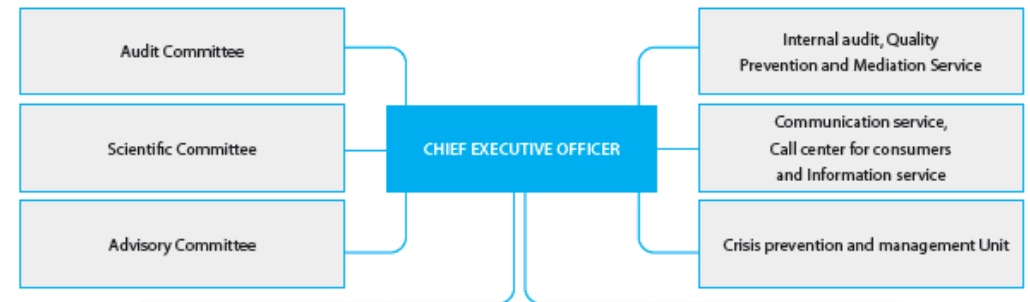
- Responsible for the preparation of policy, relevant legislation and the preparation of standards

- Verifies that all legislation and standards are respected by all actors within the food chain
- Also responsible for the preparation of process standards

FASFC: organization



FASFC: organization



Audit Committee

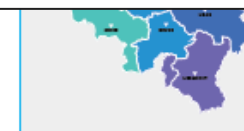
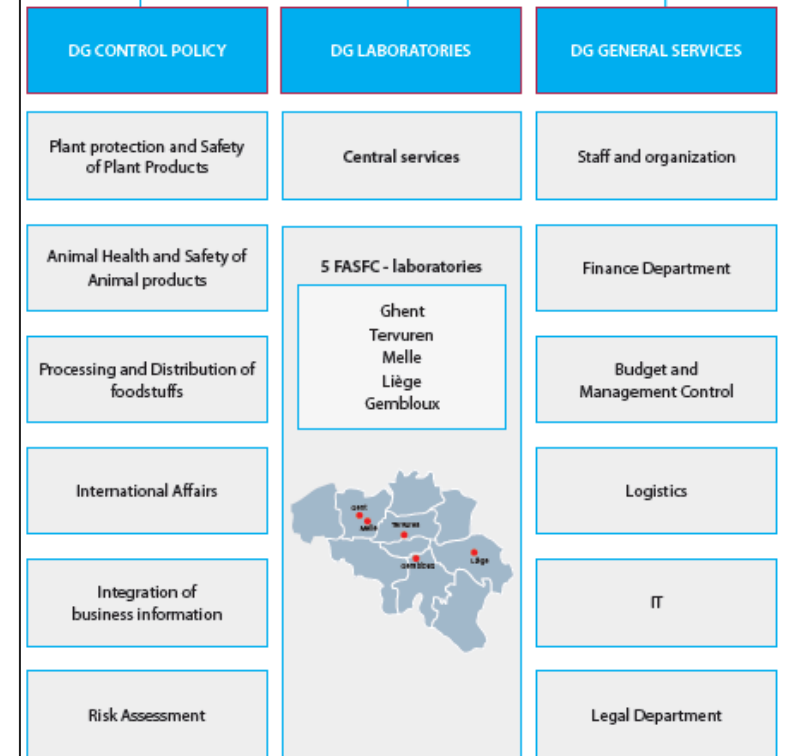
- 5 members: 1 FASFC, 2 Advisory Committee representatives, 1 person designated by the Minister, 1 external expert
- monitoring of FASFC internal audit activities

Advisory Committee

- 36 members; includes all FASFC partners
- advice on risk management, financing, communication,...

Scientific Committee (SciCom)

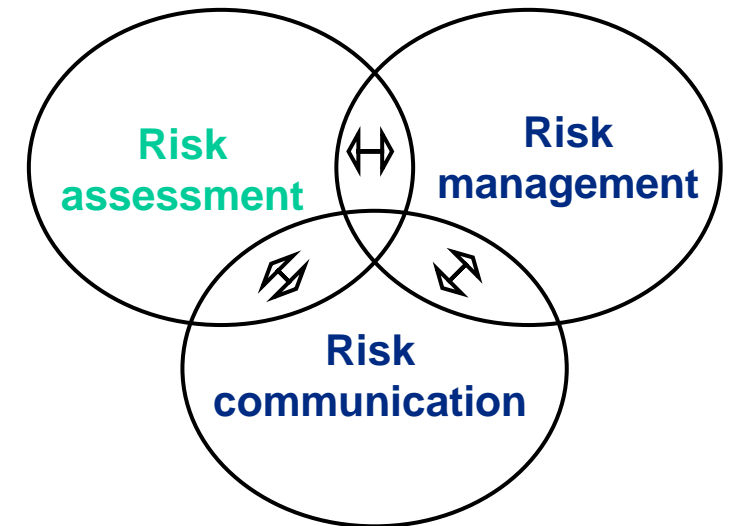
- 22 members: scientific experts
- independent risk assessment & scientific advice incl. quick reactions in case of incidents



National Investigation Unit (NIU)

Scientific Committee (SciCom)

- The SciCom is a **consultative body** established at the Federal Agency for the Safety of the Food Chain (FASFC). It has a **central position** in the **assessment of the risks** in the food chain (food safety – animal health – plant health).
- The SciCom consists of **maximum 22 members** nominated by royal decree (mandate of 4 years) + **network** of more than **200 (inter)national experts**.
- Supported by the Staff Direction for Risk Assessment (DirRisk) of the FASFC (DG Control Policy).

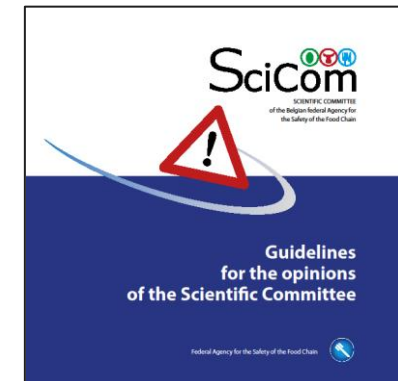


Risk analysis scheme

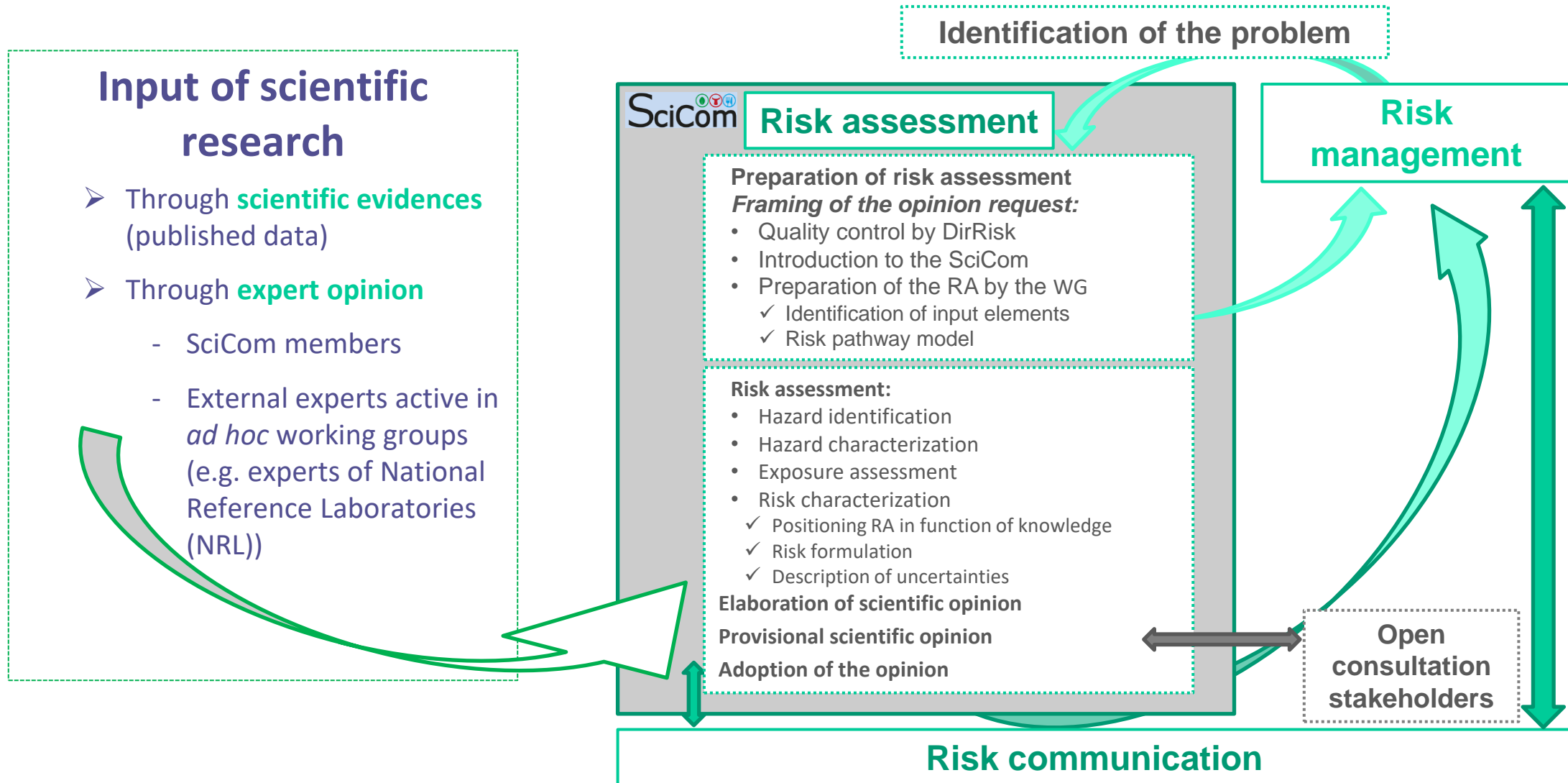


Scientific Committee (SciCom)

- The main task of the SciCom is to provide **independent scientific advices**
 - on risks affecting the safety of the food chain and in connection with the competencies of the FASFC
 - formal (3-6 months) - rapid (within 1 month) - urgent Opinions (in a crisis; within 24-48 h)
 - on request of the CEO of the FASFC or the Minister + self-tasking activities
 - ± 25 opinions / year > see <http://www.favv-afsca.fgov.be/scientificcommittee/opinions/>
- **Via ad hoc working groups** (SciCom members + external experts)
- According to different transparent procedures
- Following guidelines



SciCom risk assessments and scientific research



SciCom opinions: example (1/2)

Rapid advice 03-2019 ([FR](#) – [NL](#) – [EN Summary](#)) : The risk assessment concerning the presence of the **bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa*** in Belgium on olive trees imported from Spain (dossier SciCom 2019/04).

- To assess the **risk of vectorial spreading** of the bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa*, the working group has taken into account, among others, data from the **Belgian research project** « RT 15/7 XYLERIS: Fitness of *Xylella fastidiosa* in plant hosts and vectors in Belgium with investigation of specific plant growth conditions on disease development » on the evolution of population abundance of *Philaenus spumarius* and of *Cicadella viridis* in Belgium during the year.



Philaenus spumarius, source: Flickr
(https://www.flickr.com/photos/overton_cat/2766563572/)



Cicadella viridis, source: Flickr
(<https://www.flickr.com/photos/51044789@N02/45289806874/>)

Working group composition: F. Verheggen (SciCom), C. Bragard (UCLouvain), J.-C. Grégoire (ULB), M. Höfte (UGent), H. Jijakli (ULiège – GxABT), J. Van Vaerenbergh (ILVO), B. Watillon/S. Steyer (CRA-W).



SciCom opinions: example (2/2)

Advice 19-2015 ([FR](#) – [NL](#) – [EN Summary](#)) : The evaluation of a draft royal decree modifying the royal decree of 22/06/2010 on the control of **the potato cyst nematodes** (dossier SciCom 2015/12)

- The working group has recommended to **remove the exception** to the requirement of **rotation for potatoes** harvested before the 20th June, because these potatoes may already be infested by cyst nematodes on that date.
- Based on the following **scientific reference** « Ebrahimi N., Viaene N., Demeulemeester K., Moens M., 2014. Observations on the life cycle of potato cyst nematodes, *Globodera rostochiensis* and *G. pallida*, on early potato cultivars. *Nematology*. 16, 937-952. », published in the framework of the **Belgian research project** « RF 12/6264 DEVIRGENCY: Detectie van lage besmettingsdichtheden, kennis van virulentiegroepen en generatietijd van aardappelcysten (*Globodera* spp.) als tools voor inperking van aardappelmoeheid. ».



Cysts of *Globodera pallida*,
source: EPPO Global
Database (<https://gd.eppo.int/>)



Cysts of *Globodera
rostochiensis*, source:
EPPO Global Database
(<https://gd.eppo.int/>)

Working group composition: A. Legrève (SciCom), N. Viaene (ILVO).



SciCom assessments: links with UN SDG 13 and UN SDG 15

Under the topic “Biosecurity and Environment Protection”, the SciCom can contribute:

- **to the UN SDG 13 “Climate Action”:**

- through early identification and assessment of **emerging risks** to the safety of the food chain (included to plant health) related to climate change

Advice 01-2017 ([FR](#) – [NL](#) – [EN Summary](#))
on the control of “**noxious thistles**”

- **to the UN SDG 15 “Life on Land”:**

- through early **identification** of new (invasive) plant pests and diseases threatening Belgian agro-ecosystems
- through **assessment** of their **risk**
- through identification of **prevention/mitigation measures** which can be implemented by the FASFC

Advice 12-2017 ([FR](#) – [NL](#) – [EN Summary](#))
on a **list of plants**, plant products or other objects with a high phytosanitary risk

Rapid advice 03-2019 ([FR](#) – [NL](#) – [EN Summary](#))
on **Xylella fastidiosa**



Current SciCom (until 24/01/2021)



*Prof. Dr. Ir. Mieke Buntinx
Prof. Dr. Antoine Clinquart
Dr. Philippe Delahaut
Prof. Dr. Ir. Bruno De Meulenaer
Prof. Dr. Ir. Nick De Regge
Prof. Dr. Apr. Sarah De Saeger
Prof. Dr. Jeroen Dewulf
Prof. Dr. Lieven De Zutter
Prof. Dr. Ir. Mia Eeckhout
Prof. Dr. Ir. Annemie Geeraerd*

*Vice-chair - Dr. Lic. Wet. Lieve Herman
Prof. Dr. Ir. Peter Hoet
Prof. Dr. Ir. Jacques Mahillon
Prof. Dr. Claude Saegerman
Prof. Dr. Lic. Marie-Louise Scippo
Prof. Dr. Ir. Pieter Spanoghe
Prof. Dr. Ir. Niko Speybroeck
Chair - Prof. Dr. Etienne Thiry
Prof. Dr. Thierry van den Berg
Dr. Ir. François Verheggen*

<http://www.favv-afsca.fgov.be/scientificcommittee/>

