

The European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) alleged leak of confidential information on an active substance used in pesticides

Case 1107/2020/NH - Opened on 17/07/2020 - Decision on 12/02/2021 - Institutions concerned European Food Safety Authority (No maladministration found) | European Food Safety Authority (No further inquiries justified) |

The complainants alleged that the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) was responsible for leaking to the press a confidential document that was part of a process for renewing the authorisation of an active substance used in pesticides. The complainants also contended that EFSA did not have appropriate safeguards in place against unauthorised disclosure of confidential information by staff members, and had not been objective and impartial in its statements to the press. The Ombudsman found that, since the document was not held only by EFSA, it was not possible to determine with certainty that EFSA was responsible for the disclosure to the press. EFSA had conducted two internal inquiries into possible leaks, which concluded that there was no evidence the leaks had come from EFSA. The Ombudsman found nothing to suggest that EFSA lacked proper safeguards against leaks. Regarding EFSA's statements to the press, the Ombudsman concluded that EFSA had not breached its duties of objectivity and impartiality. The Ombudsman closed the inquiry with the finding that there had been no maladministration by EFSA.