

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL FEEDINGSTUFFS

44th Meeting of ACAF on 3 December 2008

Information Paper

**Horizon Scanning Workshop: Future food production for
healthier eating - opportunities and challenges**

December 2008

Horizon scanning Workshop: Future food production for healthier eating - opportunities and challenges

Purpose

1. This paper updates the Committee on progress regarding the setting up of a workshop on the manipulation of animal feeds to improve the nutritional quality of foods.

Background

2. At the November 2004 ACAF meeting, the Committee suggested that a workshop should be held to discuss the manipulation of animal feeds to improve the nutritional quality of foods. As the subject area had implications for consumers, the ACAF secretariat approached the secretariat of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) to request their collaboration in the workshop.
3. Initially, the ACAF discussion focused on the manipulation of the amount and composition of fats in foods. However, in later discussions, members of the Committee were keen for the workshop to cover wider issues. Some members said that it would be important to consider consumer desire for and acceptance of, such products.

Progress

4. The General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS) has now agreed to progress the workshop as the concept fits well with the work GACS has now taken on related to horizon scanning, particularly on cross-cutting issues. The work also fits well with discussions at the first GACS meeting on the need for better intelligence on developments in food production and the food industry, and on enhancing engagement with other funders, Committees, and experts (including those from industry).
5. Proposals for the workshop were developed by the GACS Secretariat and were discussed at its meeting held on 29 October 2008. These proposals were drawn from previous discussions in SACN and ACAF and a meeting of Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) secretariats in the Agency earlier this year. A copy of the proposal is set out at Annex A.
6. It is proposed that the workshop will identify and discuss likely developments in primary production which could lead to foods promoting a healthier diet. These developments may be 'man-made' (e.g. manipulation

of animal feed to alter food composition) or consequences of wider environmental changes (e.g. opportunities in crop production arising from climate change). The intention is for discussions to focus on potential developments, the consumer acceptance of such developments and potential for unforeseen impacts on food safety, as well as impacts on other areas such pricing and food security.

7. The Committee agreed the proposal, subject to further development of the ideas. A working group was set up and charged with refining the proposal for the horizon scanning workshop.
8. The GACS Secretariat intends to finalise the proposal with GACS members shortly, and secure speakers and participants from academia and industry early in 2009. It is envisaged that the workshop will be held in late spring/early summer of 2009.
9. The Secretariat will ensure that the Committee is kept informed of further significant developments.

Secretariat: December 2008

Horizon scanning workshop: 'Future food production for healthier eating – opportunities and challenges'

Background

Members will be aware from discussions on the GACS work plan of a proposal for GACS to host a horizon scanning workshop on impacts of trends in food production on food safety, diet and health. This idea originated in horizon scanning by ACAF and SACN, who had been developing the idea for a joint ACAF/SACN workshop. However, the concept fits well with the work GACS has now taken on related to horizon scanning, particularly on cross-cutting issues. It also fits well with discussions at the 1st GACS meeting on the need for better intelligence on developments in food production and the food industry, and on enhancing engagement with other funders, Committees, and experts (including from industry).

The GACS Secretariat has developed the proposals set out below, for GACS to consider. These have drawn on previous discussions in SACN and ACAF and a meeting of SAC Secretariats in the Agency earlier this year.

Scope

While ACAF and SACN would be two of the key committees in this area, it is proposed that the workshop should aim to engage across the SAC interests as far as practicable. The proposed scope is deliberately fairly broad, to encourage discussion and agreement by GACS on the focus of the issue(s) to be tackled, and also to try to relate more to the wider remit and interests of GACS. If the event is taken forward, GACS and other SACs will be consulted further in the near future on more detailed proposals, including on subject matter, speakers, format and timing.

Subject

The proposed subject is identifying and discussing the more likely developments in primary production, over a 10- to 20-year horizon, which would lead to foods that support Agency objectives to promote healthier diets. This discussion could also take account of practices which are current or

imminent. These developments may be 'man-made' (e.g. manipulation of animal feed to alter food composition) or consequences of wider environmental changes (e.g. opportunities in crop production arising from climate change).

The discussions should not focus only on what is scientifically/technologically feasible, but also draw in issues around consumer acceptance of likely developments, the potential for unforeseen impacts on food safety, and other wider issues such as economics, food security etc.

Format

The aim would be to invite speakers (6 to 8?) from academia and industry, with an international perspective, to give a strategic view and to act as an expert panel for the workshop. An expert panel chair would be identified to act as moderator for the day. There would be time for Q&A after each presentation and further general discussion in plenary with the panel after all of the presentations. Other formats may be considered to ensure the best use of time and opportunity for input.

The focus would be on exchange of informed opinion across a range of perspectives and disciplines, rather than on public engagement. The suggested format is for a one-day workshop in London, by invitation only for around 100+ people, with the aim to include a good spread of appropriate expertise to facilitate informed discussion on issues raised. It is hoped that all relevant SACs would be represented by their Chairs (or deputies) and interested members. Invites would also be extended to other experts from the academic, food industry, retail and consumer sectors, and to other Government Departments (e.g. Defra) and funders (e.g. Research Councils).

Objectives and outputs

A key objective of the workshop would be for GACS and the other relevant SACs to be better informed of, and in a better position to advise the Agency on, possible future developments and their implications and perhaps to identify issues which require further work or exploration.

A detailed report of the workshop would be prepared and published on the Agency website, and could be used as a stimulus to further on-line discussion. Publication in an appropriate peer reviewed journal could also be explored.

Timing

It is envisaged that the workshop would be held in late spring/early summer of 2009. Speakers/venue etc would need to be identified as soon as possible once the format is agreed, to secure bookings and dates in diaries.