

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL FEEDINGSTUFFS

46th Meeting of ACAF on 5 June 2009

Information Paper

**UPDATE ON THE WORK OF OTHER ADVISORY
COMMITTEES**

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Purpose

1. This paper outlines issues from other relevant advisory committees that may be of interest to ACAF.

Advisory Committee on Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF)

2. An ACMSF meeting was held on 26 March 2009. The following items were discussed:
 - an update from the Health Protection Agency on the changing age pattern of *campylobacteriosis* in England and Wales; and
 - the response to the public consultation on the Ad Hoc Group on Vulnerable Groups Report on investigation of the incidence of *listeriosis* in the UK.
3. The Committee also received a presentation from the FSA on the development of a risk assessment model for Salmonella in eggs, and an update on work to implement the recommendations of the ACMSF report on botulism in sheep and goats.
4. The next meeting of ACMSF is scheduled for 4 June 2009.

Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE)

5. ACRE met on 29 April 2009. The main points of interest were:

Safeguard actions

6. The Chairman communicated his concern that EU Member States had supported (by a qualified majority) safeguard actions invoked by Hungary (on MON810 maize) and Austria (on MON810 and T25 maize) in a vote taken at Environment Council on 2 March 2009. This contradicts the scientific advice of the Commission's expert scientific committee (EFSA's GMO Panel), which ACRE endorsed. ACRE noted that the UK had voted in line with scientific evidence but agreed with the Chairman that it was important to write to UK Ministers highlighting the loss of scientific credibility, which undermines the regulatory process.

59122 x 1507 x NK603 maize

7. ACRE concluded this did not pose any more risk than its non-GM counterparts and advice would be included in the generic category on GM crops which have a limited potential to grow and flower outside of agricultural conditions applies in this case.

BT11 maize

8. EFSA has published its Opinion on an application to re-authorise Bt11 maize for import and use. In February 2009 ACRE agreed advice on an application to cultivate, import and process this GMO. It concluded that Bt11 maize is 'unlikely to pose a greater risk to human health or the environment..... as compared with its non-GM counterparts'. ACRE confirmed that its view had not changed and that its advice on GM crops that have a limited potential to grow and flower outside of agricultural conditions in the UK applied in this case

European Commission Working Group on New Techniques

9. ACRE was informed that an European Commission working group had been set up to identify and consider a list of new techniques that may challenge the definitions of what constitutes a GMO/ GM technique in the GM Deliberate Release and Contained Use Directives. ACRE noted the difficulty in identifying organisms whose genomes have been altered using recombinant nucleic acid techniques but which do not contain transgenes.
10. ACRE concluded that these considerations should be pursued in a sub-group that will consider how new techniques used in biotechnology fit within existing definitions. In addition, it will consider alternative approaches to regulating novel organisms.
11. The next ACRE meeting will be held on 4 June 2009.

General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS)

12. The GACS met on 25 February 2009 in open session. The main issues discussed are referred to below.

Development of the Agency's next Science Strategy

13. GACS suggested that the Agency should set out the main kinds of science it will need to employ, and how it will go about getting and using them to inform and evaluate its policies. The final Strategy itself might focus on high-level principles and strategic priorities, while detailed activities to ensure these were achieved could be set out in a separate delivery plan. This plan could be a living document to be reviewed and updated regularly, to reflect progress and new developments.

Performance indicators for the Agency's science

14. GACS agreed a revised set of performance indicators (PIs) for the Agency's science, focusing on the quality of the questions posed and the research done as a result, and how the research results have been used. The Agency

will now apply these and do some further work to develop the supporting tools and processes.

Community of experts

15. GACS discussed principles for a community of experts which would aim to widen the field of scientists the Agency can draw upon; for example, in assessing the quality of research proposals and reports. It advised that criteria for selecting members to participate must be transparent, and the resources needed to support such a community should not outweigh the benefits. The Agency will now develop more detailed proposals to reflect these points.
16. GACS also discussed plans for a conference for members of scientific advisory committees to meet and share views on issues of common interest.
17. GACS also held a reserved business session on 25 February 2009 on progress on the Science Review of the Agency by the Government Office for Science. This was taken as reserved business because the Review was still in progress at the time and the report was not scheduled to be published until 16 April 2009.
18. GACS advised the Agency on key issues and priorities for the Agency's response to the recommendations contained in the Review. As the Science Review Report is now publicly available, the GACS paper and a note of its discussion will be published. A copy of the report can be viewed using the link below:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2009/apr/scireview>
19. The next, open meeting of the GACS will be on 8 September 2009. It will look again at the best way to establish a community of experts, discuss progress on developing the Agency's Science and Evidence Strategy, and start a discussion on how scientific evidence and advice should be used to inform the different stages of the policy process.

Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee

20. The Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) met on 4 March 2009, one of the items the Committee discussed was an update on Animal TSEs.

Update on Animal TSEs

21. SEAC was updated on UK surveillance of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) in cattle, sheep and deer.
22. The Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) epidemic in cattle peaked in 1992, with over 37,000 confirmed cases, but has since declined with 37 cases confirmed by active and passive surveillance in the UK in 2008. Only four of these cases were found in healthy slaughter animals destined for human consumption.
23. Active surveillance of sheep over 18 months of age in Great Britain shows that the incidence rate of classical scrapie has declined from 0.2% in 2005 to below 0.05% in 2008. The incidence of atypical scrapie has remained relatively constant at around 0.07%, a similar level to several other European countries.
24. No TSEs have been found in relatively small surveys of deer in the UK and other European countries.
25. The next meeting of SEAC will be held on Wednesday 10 June 2009.

Social Science Research Committee (SSRC)

26. The Social Science Research Committee (SSRC) is helping the ACMSF investigate why there is an increase in the incidence of *listeria* in the over 60s by reviewing existing social science evidence to identify gaps in knowledge. The SSRC working group is developing an advice paper to present at the next ACMSF meeting in June 2009.
27. Other work streams from the SSRC include: the development of a consumer attitudes and behaviour survey commissioning the first projects as a result of the Agency's strategic partnership with the Economic and Social Research Council that the committee helped establish; continuing to implement the strategy for social science research in the Agency and responding to ad hoc requests e.g. inputting into the Strategic Plan consultation and the consultation on the review of nutrition research.
28. The next SSRC meeting will be held on Wednesday 20 May 2009.

Recruitment Exercises

29. ACNFP - will be running a recruitment exercise for a new Chairman and a member shortly.
30. SACN - is in the process of appointing a new Chairman for 2010 and new members.

**ACAF Secretariat
May 2009**