

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL FEEDINGSTUFFS

52nd Meeting of ACAF on 15 December 2010

Information Paper

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

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Purpose

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

Advisory Committee on Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF)

2. The ACMSF's last full Committee meeting was held on 23 September 2010. At that meeting the Committee discussed the following topics:
 - the FSA's Foodborne Disease Strategy and Food Hygiene Delivery Programme;
 - a paper from the Surveillance Working Group on isolation of *Campylobacter* species from food and environmental samples;
 - possible health risks from consuming chicken liver pâtés;
 - *Mycobacterium bovis*: possible health risks from pasteurized milk and milk products;
 - the findings of a UK survey of microbiological contamination of red meat on retail sale; and
 - comments on a risk assessment by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) on the use of source segregated composts.
3. Draft minutes of the meeting will shortly be available on the ACMSF website at:

<http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmeets/>
4. A small group of members are to meet in November 2010 to consider horizon scanning topics for future discussion.
5. The Ad Hoc Group on Vulnerable Groups has been meeting to consider current information on toxoplasmosis in the food chain, and whether there is a need to revise current food safety advice. Work on the report is nearing completion and an update will be provided at the next meeting on 20 January 2011.

Advisory Committee on Releases into the Environment (ACRE)

6. ACRE has survived the review of public bodies intact and will retain its status as a statutory non-departmental public body (NDPB).
7. ACRE held an open meeting on 14 October 2010 on GM insects. The aims of this workshop were to provide ACRE members and members of the general public with an overview of different types of GM insects currently

under development, potential future applications and specific issues raised by GM insects for risk assessment and the regulatory system.

8. Following three presentations by experts, ACRE concluded research was being centred around achieving two objectives in two situations. The first objective is the self-limiting approach where the aim is to eliminate the target population by releasing sterile GM insects. The second is the self-sustaining approach where the aim is to drive population change, for example driving the persistence of parasite resistance genes, introduced by genetic modification, in wild mosquito populations. These two objectives could both be used either to combat human and animal disease or to control populations of crop pests. ACRE also concluded that the current regulatory system offered a sound basis for effective risk assessment but it was important to give careful consideration to how this should be applied to GM insects. Issues included giving consideration to how the balance between risks and benefits should be considered; an issue which is drawn into particularly sharp focus when considering GM insects developed to combat human diseases such as malaria.
9. ACRE will take the outputs of the workshop forward by preparing a document summarising the issues raised for regulation of GM insects.

General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS)

10. GACS held its open meeting on 19 October 2010. The papers and draft minutes of the meeting are available on the GACS website at: <http://gacs.food.gov.uk/>. The Committee discussed the impacts of the Agency's change in remit, the Spending Review and the Public Bodies review on FSA science.

Priorities for FSA science

11. In times of reducing budgets, GACS advised it will be important for the Agency to focus on priorities and risks to health, but that this should include strategic, cross-cutting and longer-term issues as well as immediate priorities.

Change in remit

12. The Committee wished to maintain effective links with the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition - responsibility for which has moved to the Department of Health - to ensure collaboration on cross-cutting food safety and nutrition issues.

Public Bodies Review

13. The Public Bodies Review had led to a change of status of some scientific advisory committees (SACs) that jointly advise the Agency and other Government departments, although no changes were proposed to the committees for which the Agency is lead or sole sponsor. GACS felt that SACs must retain their openness or independence of operation whatever their status and the Agency will need to continue to monitor this to ensure it happens in practice.
14. The Chief Scientist (Andrew Wadge) urged SAC Chairs to raise any concerns they may have about the consequences of the changes with the Agency (Secretariats and Chief Scientist) in the first instance and if not satisfied to bring their concerns to the attention of Professor Sir John Beddington – Chief Scientific Adviser to HM Government and Head of the Government Office for Science.

Cross-SAC working

15. The Committee also discussed more generally how to ensure the SACs advising the Agency collaborate effectively on cross-cutting issues, drawing on a model proposed by the Agency's Social Science Research Committee, which the Committee considered was good practice.
16. The Committee on Toxicology (COT) Chair provided an update on the Committee's work on ways of improving both the evaluation and communication of uncertainty, in carrying out and reporting risk assessments.
17. The Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP) has volunteered to report back on its work on nanotechnologies at the next meeting in March in order to pick up any issues in this area that would benefit from cross-SAC working.

Sharing data and funding

18. GACS felt that partnership working (e.g. co-funding research) will be even more important for the Agency to make the most of available resources. Considering potential benefits and economic pressures, GACS felt the Agency should set out clearly when and how this would be accepted, ensuring scientific quality, openness and independence. GACS agreed an outline proposal from its Working Group to produce a short guidance note on principles, issues and possible approaches for partnership working with industry/ non-government organisations for consideration by the full Committee by the end of the year.

Risk Assessment/Risk Management (RA/RM) Working Group

19. GACS discussed a second report from its Working Group on RA/RM. A short pilot study had illustrated some useful points on understanding and practice across the SACs. GACS will pick out key messages from the work to date and previous discussions to highlight key principles, issues and good practice to report back at the next meeting.

Dates for next meetings

20. Future GACS meetings are planned for Thursday 3 March and Wednesday 9 November 2011.

Spongiform Encephalopathies Advisory Committee (SEAC)

21. On 14 October 2010 the Government announced that SEAC is to be abolished and its function of advising on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy will transfer to a Department of Health Committee. Discussions on implementation of these arrangements are ongoing. It is possible that matters might arise that should be discussed by the Committee before the new arrangements are put in place. Therefore, a final SEAC meeting has been provisionally scheduled for 25 February 2011.

Social Science Research Committee (SSRC)

22. The SSRC met on 7 October 2010 for its sixth meeting. The minutes are about to be published on the SSRC website. The Committee discussed a range of issues including the relevance of the Science Checklist to Social Science, the Food and You Survey and a paper, 'Public attitudes and Behaviour - the work of the Social Science Unit (SSRU)' that was presented at the Agency Board meeting on 12 October 2010 and was well received by Board Members.
23. There have been changes in the SSRC secretariat as a result of the transfer of nutrition policy, including its social science research support functions, to the Department of Health on 1 October 2010. Sian Thomas is now the SSRC Secretary with support from Derrick Jones, Chief Economist and Head of FSA's Analysis and Research Division.

Appointments and Recruitment ExercisesACMSF

24. Two new Members have been appointed to the ACMSF and attended their first meeting in September 2010. They are Professor David McDowell (research microbiologist) and Mr David Nuttall (caterer). Pen portraits of

the new members can be found on the ACMSF website at:
<http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmembers/>.

Committee on Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment/ Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment

25. Three new vacancies to the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) will be advertised shortly, via the Appointments Commission.

SSRC

26. The SSRC currently have three vacancies and deputy chair Professor Peter Jackson is currently the acting chair.

**ACAF Secretariat
December 2010**