

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL FEEDINGSTUFFS

58th Meeting of ACAF on 15 June 2012

Information Paper

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

**Secretariat
May 2012**

UPDATE ON THE WORK OF OTHER ADVISORY COMMITTEES

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 next meeting of the ACMSF will be on 29 May 2012.

Items on the agenda include:

- a presentation on pathogen internalisation by fresh produce and recent research on this topic from the James Hutton Institute;
- following a discussion at the January 2012 meeting of a paper proposing a possible framework for undertaking risk assessments more consistently in future, the ACMSF Secretariat will present a paper on the output options for ACMSF risk assessments;
- the Committee will be invited to comment on the report of a workshop on application of molecular epidemiology to investigations of outbreaks;
- the Social Science Research Unit will present an update on research of relevance to microbiological food safety including the evidence review of food safety behaviour in the home, the in-home food safety behaviours study and the Food and You survey;
- Dr Rick Holliman (ACMSF member) will present the response to the public consultation on the Ad Hoc Group on Vulnerable Groups' risk profile in relation to toxoplasma in food chain; and
- reports on the recent work of the ACMSF's subgroups:
 - catering horizon scanning group;
 - ad hoc group on foodborne viral infections;
 - working group on newly emerging pathogens; and
 - surveillance working group.

Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP)

3. The ACNFP met on 26 April 2012.
4. At this meeting, assessments were carried out on applications for the authorisation of the following novel ingredients:
 - clostridium butyricum as a probiotic food supplement;
 - isomaltooligosaccharides;
 - methylcellulose;
 - vitamin D enriched yeast product; and
 - methyltetrahydrofolic acid, glucosamine salt.
5. The Committee also discussed whether the approaches currently used for the estimation of exposure to novel food ingredients are sufficient, particularly in cases involving multiple sources of the same ingredient or component.
6. Members were also given an update on the despatch of Committee papers and on options for accessing electronic versions of the papers. This included web based networks currently being investigated by other Committees.
7. The next ACNFP meeting is planned to be held on 4 July 2012.

Advisory Committee on Releases into the Environment (ACRE)

8. ACRE met on 3 May 2012 when it discussed the Commission's working group report on new techniques in biotechnology, which considered the regulatory status of organisms generated by new techniques mostly developed since the GM legislation was drafted.
9. There is ambiguity as to whether organisms generated using these techniques meet the definitions of a GMO as set out in the GM legislation. In many cases these techniques result in changes which are indistinguishable from changes which occur naturally or could be produced by conventional breeding methods. ACRE noted the publication of the report, considering that it provides a useful description of the techniques and issues to be considered. The Committee expressed concern, however, that the definitions provided in the legislation could be interpreted in different ways. There were differences of opinion amongst members of the Commission's working group as to how these terms should be interpreted. ACRE recommends that a logical, evidence-based framework should be used to determine whether the techniques fall within or outside the legislation. A draft report prepared by ACRE's sub-group on new techniques was considered at the meeting.
10. Members also discussed ACRE's future work plan. ACRE noted that EFSA would be consulting on it guidance on the environmental risk assessment of GM animals in the summer and that this would include a consideration of GM insects, fish, mammals and birds. The outputs of

ACRE's work on post market environmental monitoring and new techniques will be published this year. ACRE highlighted the issues/problems associated with providing advice on these issues within the existing regulatory framework. ACRE concluded its earlier report on 'Managing the Footprint of Agriculture: Towards a Comparative Assessment of Risks and Benefits for Novel Agricultural Systems' was a useful report that maps out a broader more consistent approach to assessing the potential impacts of novel products and practices, but that it would benefit from an update that reflects current thinking on the provision of goods and services from land. ACRE considered the possibility of holding an 'evidence-gathering' meeting to inform this work stream. The ACRE chair agreed to write to Defra to discuss the Committee's plans and to ensure that its output would have maximum impact.

11. The new framework document setting out the working relationship between Defra and ACRE was signed and published after the May 2012 meeting.
12. In March 2012 members agreed advice by e-mail on a GM food & feed application to import MON87701 x MON89788 soya beans, concluding these was as safe as conventional varieties.

The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT)

13. The COT met on 8th May 2012, agenda items included:

- first draft over-arching statement on the chemicals and food allergens of relevance to complementary feeding in 0 – 12 months old infants

The Committee was asked to comment on the over-arching statement on chemicals and food allergens of relevance to complementary feeding in 0 – 12 months old infants as part of the COT input into SACN review of complementary and young child feeding

- review of potential risks from high levels of lead in infant nutrition

The Committee was asked to comment on the potential risks from high levels of lead in infant nutrition and consider the inclusion of this paper as part of the COT input into the SACN review of complementary and young child feeding

- review of potential risks from high levels of vitamin A in infant nutrition

The Committee was asked to comment on the potential risks from high levels of vitamin A in infant nutrition and consider the inclusion of this

paper as part of the COT input into SACN review of complementary and young child feeding

- default values to be used in risk assessment in the absence of actual measured data

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) recently published guidance on selected default values to be used by the EFSA Scientific Committee, Scientific Panels and Units in the absence of actual measured data. Members were asked to consider the extent to which the EFSA guidance should be adopted in risk assessments of the COT.

- update on toxicogenomics

Following on from the discussion at the February 2012 meeting, this paper provides further information on the aspects of chemical risk assessment to which toxicogenomics tools could contribute.

14. The draft minutes of the meeting will shortly be available on the COT website, and can be reviewed using the link below:

<http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotmtgs/cotmeets/>

15. The next COT meeting will be on 26th June 2012.

The Committee on the Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COC)

16. The COC met on 19th April 2012.

17. The Committee was asked to provide advice on the relative vulnerability of children to asbestos compared to adults for the Department for Education and has reviewed data on epidemiology and case-reports in children. It has also considered data on asbestos in schools for background information. The Committee wishes to consider how the relative respiratory physiology of children and adults might affect the response to asbestos and suggestions of individuals with expertise in this area would be welcome. This work is ongoing, and it is hoped to have an expert in respiratory physiology in children to attend the next meeting on 12th July 2012.

18. It is progressing with the updating and expanding of the following COC guidance on:

- overarching guidance statement;
- the use of biomarkers in carcinogenic risk assessment; and
- risk characterisation methods.

General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS)

19. The GACS held their ninth meeting on 14 March 2012, items discussed included:

Chief Scientist's report - strategic science and evidence

- GACS welcomed progress on developing more strategic/innovative evidence work, including the Strategic Challenge call and the workshop on molecular epidemiology.

Review of science governance

- GACS endorsed the draft conclusions of the review of science governance, including revisions to the Science Checklist, Good Practice Guidelines for the SACs and supporting procedures and guidance. GACS highlighted some areas that could be brought out more clearly, particularly two-way dialogue between FSA and SACs, and feedback to SACs on how their advice has been used in policy decisions. Following further iteration and input from GACS and internally, final proposals on the review of science governance will go to the FSA Board in July 2012.
- GACS noted in this context the lack of information on the final policy decision resulting from the SACs' extensive work on folate, although FSA's recommendation was clear. The GACS Chair wrote to the FSA Chair drawing this discussion to his attention.

Science and co-ordination in the SACs

- Professor Peter Aggett, (SACN Deputy Chair) outlined SACN's work. This reinforced the need, discussed previously at GACS, for close co-ordination across the food safety and nutrition agenda and between SACN and the other SACs that advise FSA.

Independent reviews of ACNFP and of GACS; GACS work plan and recruitment

- These reviews concluded there was an ongoing need for the each Committee and that their work was of value to FSA and stakeholders.
- GACS endorsed the draft responses from ACNFP and FSA to the review of ACNFP.
- GACS agreed its response to the review of GACS and its recommendations, including measures to increase engagement with the Board. GACS also discussed its forward work plan in light of the review.

- GACS felt it could develop further its work on science communication and agreed to establish a Working Group to scope out what GACS might contribute in this area, and how. It will report back at the next meeting.
- GACS considered its membership and expertise in light of the review and work plan. It felt that replacing the expertise on nutrition left by the departure of Jeya Henry was essential but was not convinced there was a clear net benefit in recruiting an additional member with (food) industry experience (which the review recommended GACS should consider), although this experience could be a desirable quality.

Co-ordination with SACN

- Since the change in FSA remit the SACN Chair has attended GACS as 'invited observer'. GACS asked FSA to explore formalising this arrangement by reinstating the SACN Chair as a GACS member ex officio.

Interdisciplinary working

- There was a presentation by Professor Philip Lowe, Director of the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme (Relu). FSA will consider the experience of Relu in assessing interdisciplinary research.

Forthcoming meeting

20. The next GACS meeting is on 31 October 2012 at which the following is planned:

- report on NDNS (National Diet and Nutrition Survey);
- report on IID2 (Infectious Intestinal Diseases 2);
- report from the Chair of the ACDP (Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens) TSE Risk Assessment subgroup;
- report back on discussion of assessment of aggregate exposures from novel foods and ingredients; and
- discussion of outcomes of a pilot to develop approaches to support horizon scanning in the SACs.

Social Science Research Committee (SSRC)

21. The SSRC held their ninth meeting on Wednesday 18th April 2012. Items discussed included:

- evaluation of the food hygiene rating scheme/food hygiene information scheme;
- the FSA Forward Evidence plan (evidence needs for 2012/13);
- ethics in Government Social Research;
- regulatory behaviours (social science evidence to help;
- support enforcement and compliance strategy); and

- Advisory Group Updates from members (research to understand behaviours in slaughter houses, Kitchen Practices observational research and the Agency's Food and You survey).

Veterinary Residues Committee (VRC)

22. The next VRC meeting will take place on 20 June 2012.

23. Agenda items will include:

- Statutory Surveillance Scheme
 - GB results – 2012
 - NI results
 - Brassica –rich feeds and thiouracil – response from ACAF
- Funding for non-statutory surveillance
- Imports surveillance
 - National Monitoring Plan: Border Inspection Post questionnaire
 - Border Inspection Post - results
- FSA update on Honey issues
- Outcome of Codex meeting on residues of veterinary drugs in food
- Howard Dalton Lecture¹
- FSA's Surveillance and Surveys papers; and
- EU Legislation Review – oral update.

Appointments and Recruitment Exercises

ACRE

24. ACRE will be interviewing in June 2012 for 3 posts on ACRE due to become vacant later this year. The vacancies are in the areas of insect ecology, agronomy and farming practice and community ecology.

COC

25. Two new members, Dr Lesley Rushton and Dr Heather Wallace attended their first COC meeting on 19 April 2012.

**ACAF Secretariat
May 2012**

¹ On 2 May 2012 Defra hosted a lecture by Howard Dalton on Risk Awareness.