

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL FEEDINGSTUFFS

61st Meeting of ACAF on 8 May 2013

Information Paper

UPDATE ON THE WORK OF OTHER ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Secretariat: April 2013

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 ACMSF met on 31 January 2013 when the following topics were discussed:
 - developments and emerging issues in relation to antimicrobial resistance, including a presentation from the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. ACMSF members agreed to set up a working group to consider antimicrobial resistance in relation to the food chain and to include Dr Stephen Forsythe from ACAF as a co-opted member of the group.
 - the application of molecular epidemiology to investigations and outbreaks following an FSA workshop on this subject.
 - an update on the last 2 meetings of the Epidemiology of Foodborne Infections Group and a presentation by AHVLA on Salmonella surveillance in Great Britain
 - the updated version of the FSA's science governance documents and the implications for the Scientific Advisory Committees.
3. The next meeting of ACMSF will be on 27 June 2013. It is expected that the ad hoc Group on Foodborne Viral Infections will present its draft report. There will also be a presentation by AHVLA on progress on a risk assessment for Q fever¹ and unpasteurised milk and milk products. Other items to be added to the draft agenda will be confirmed nearer the time.

Advisory Committee on Releases into the Environment (ACRE)

4. ACRE met on 2 February 2013 when it considered an application to market GM drought-tolerant maize (MON 87460) for import and processing. The Committee then discussed the function of the transgene, which is associated with common stress signalling pathways (including those associated with cold and drought). As would be predicted from plants with natural stress tolerance, five years of field trials involving

¹ **Q fever** is a disease caused by infection with [*Coxiella burnetii*](#)^[1] a [bacterium](#) that affects humans and other animals. This organism is uncommon, but may be found in [cattle](#), [sheep](#), [goats](#) and other [domestic mammals](#), including [cats](#) and [dogs](#). The infection results from [inhalation](#) of a spore-like small cell variant, and from contact with the milk, urine, feces, vaginal mucus, or semen of infected animals. Rarely, the disease is tick borne.^[2] The [incubation period](#) is 9–40 days. A human being can be infected by a single bacterium.^[3] The bacterium is an [obligate intracellular](#) pathogen.

this GMO have demonstrated that there is a complex environmental interaction. The genetic modification facilitates recovery of the plants after exposure to stress. ACRE concluded that there was no reason to expect that this GMO would present a greater risk to the environment than its non-GM counterparts.

5. ACRE was also asked to consider issuing final advice on two applications to cultivate Bt maize events (Bt11 and MON810). It was asked to take into consideration: (i) previous iterations of its advice on these applications; (ii) EFSA's latest reviews of the relevant literature; (iii) a safeguard action against MON810 maize taken by Greece; and (iv) ACRE's advice on 1507 maize. ACRE concluded that the information in EFSA's literature reviews and in the Greek safeguard action did not raise any additional issues/ concerns and noted some shortcomings in a paper on the impact of Bt maize pollen on butterflies.
6. ACRE provided a critical appraisal of a Defra-funded review of the environmental impacts of global cultivation of GM crops. The study is one of a pair commissioned to review systematically the impacts of cultivating GM crops. ACRE welcomed the initiative taken by Defra in commissioning systematic reviews of the literature in these important areas. ACRE noted the important role played by organisations such as the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence (CEE) in quality control for systematic reviews and in providing guidance and support to authors. The environmental review had not met the standards required by CEE. ACRE agreed with this assessment but noted that the review process represented an important step towards developing a systematic approach for reviewing the literature on the environmental impacts of cultivating GM crops and that lessons could be learnt for future analyses. The Committee recommended that Defra publish the report, but that the weaknesses in the methodology and the limitations of the data used should be clearly acknowledged and the results interpreted with caution.
7. ACRE held an evidence-gathering meeting open to the public on 21 March 2013, with presentations from four experts. The objective of this meeting was to help ACRE consider how evidence could be used more effectively in environmental risk assessments under the current GMO legislation. Key issues were what constitutes a proportionate measure of harm, how could existing evidence be used to inform Environmental Risk Assessments (ERAs) more effectively, how should on-going experience and worst case scenarios be balanced and how can the uncertainties of ERA be reduced by post-market monitoring and compensatory measures. ACRE will produce a report drawing on the findings emerging from this meeting.

General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS)

8. GACS held an open meeting on 21 March 2013, agenda items are reported below:

Report from the FSA Chief Scientist on science activities and plans

9. GACS was positive about the FSA's handling of the horse meat incident, and were pleased that the framework for sharing data (developed by GACS) had been useful in helping FSA agree its approach to sharing industry test data. The Committee noted that transparency on evidence (including testing, methods, interpretation and communication) was important and challenging in incidents and it agreed to establish a Working Group on the Use of Science in Emergencies.

Presentation on the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP) by Professor George Griffin, ACDP Chair

10. The presentation included a report on the ACDP subgroup on TSE Risk Assessment, which took on provision of independent expert advice in this area for FSA when SEAC was disbanded in 2010. The Committee supported the work to review guidance on frameworks for control of biological agents Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) and Specified Animal Pathogens (SAPO) which were relevant to some elements of FSA's research and of the work of the SACs, and were interested in whether the waste material from use of eggs in vaccine production had been considered for use in animal feed.

Science in the Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) – update on activities in the SACs.

11. GACS was encouraged to see that this standing discussion item was fostering increasing co-ordination and joint working across SACs, and noted further opportunities for co-operation. The SSRC Chair reported progress in developing work on social sciences within the global food security programme.

Reviews of the SACs

12. GACS noted the review of the SSRC and endorsed the draft responses to the review from SSRC and from FSA. For the future programme of reviews GACS felt these should be streamlined, focussing on outcomes and exceptions, and proportionate to the relatively low risk and cost represented by the SACs.

Working Group on Science Communication and Engagement final report

13. GACS endorsed the Working Groups' (WGs') report which did not identify any significant gaps or concerns in FSA's approach; identified aspects of good practice; and made ten recommendations for improvement or where good practice could be applied more consistently. The FSA communications team will report on FSA communications and engagement activities at SSRC's September 2013 meeting.

FSA evidence portfolio – annual discussion at strategic level

14. GACS did not identify any significant gaps in the portfolio, and welcomed the plans to develop strategic evidence, including the challenge call for high-risk/high-reward

ideas and the FSA's work to develop applications of next generation sequencing in food safety. GACS noted the pressures on admin resource to manage research and exploit the evidence generated and will monitor this through future discussions.

Working Group (WG) on exploitation of data

15. The WG gave a first report on its work to explore the potential for FSA to exploit new data tools and data sources to support its work.
16. The next GACS meeting is on 8 October 2013.

Social Science Research Committee (SSRC)

17. The SSRC will meet on 18th April 2013. Items for discussion will include:
 - the review of the SSRC and the General Advisory Committee on Science view of this;
 - the SSRC forward workplan;
 - the Agency's Forward Evidence Plan (FEP);
 - the implications of the FEP in relation to the horizon scanning carried out at the last meeting;
 - the work of the Social and Business Surveys Review Working Group with consideration of the approach;
 - merit of social science experts on individual scientific advisory committees compared with a social science research committee; and
 - review of membership and use of the Register of Specialists.

Veterinary Residues Committee (VRC)

18. The VRC met on 6 March 2013.
19. Discussion items included:
 - antimicrobial resistance surveillance – update paper;
 - matrix ranking presentation (including emerging risks);
 - FSA activity on horsemeat;
 - report of Communications Subgroup;
 - honey Position Paper;
 - format of VRC year;
 - Statutory Surveillance Scheme

- imports surveillance;
- non-statutory surveillance scheme results 2012;
- National Monitoring Plan - Border Inspection Posts;
- update on review of legislation;
- Food and Veterinary Office mission; and
- FSA surveys and research on contaminants.

20. The minutes of 6 March 2013 meeting will be available on the VRC website:

<http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/vrc/meetings>

Appointments and Recruitment Exercises

ACMSF

21. Interviews for a new member with expertise in microbiological risk assessment were held in February 2013 and the process for appointing the successful candidate is underway.

ACRE

22. The current Chairman Prof Pollock retires in August 2013, ACRE is advertising to find a replacement.

**ACAF Secretariat
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