

ACAF/11/18

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL FEEDINGSTUFFS

55th Meeting of ACAF on 28 September 2011

Information Paper

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

**Secretariat
September 2011**

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 Committee's last meeting was held on 27 June 2011. Four new Members attended: Dr Roy Betts (food microbiology), Dr Bob Adak (epidemiology and public health), Ms Jenny Hopwood (food retailing), and Prof Jim Gray (virology).
3. Ms Geraldine Hoad (FSA) presented a paper on risks to consumers associated with *M. bovis* and unpasteurised milk and milk products. Dr Michael Rowe and Dr Richard Forgrave from Queen's University Belfast also presented their research on the survival of *M. bovis* in unpasteurised milk cheeses. The Committee was asked to give a view on the potential for unpasteurised milk and milk products contaminated with *M. bovis* to enter the food chain and the risk to human health associated with these products. The Committee did not consider the data sufficient to draw a robust conclusion. A small group of Members were asked to consider a revised risk assessment with additional data and report back to the next meeting on 22 September.
4. Members discussed the report of the Quinquennial Review of the ACMSF and commented on a response to the recommendations drafted by the Secretariat.
5. Members received a presentation from Miss Robyn Ackerman (FSA) on the findings of the Agency's Food and You survey.
6. Dr Paul Cook (FSA) provided an overview of the May 2011 meeting of the Epidemiology of Foodborne Infections Group. Dr Cook also updated the Committee on the ongoing *E.coli* outbreaks in Germany and France.

Subgroups

7. The Ad Hoc Group on Foodborne Viral Infections is focussing its work on norovirus and Hepatitis E. Summaries of meetings held so far can be found on the subgroups page of the ACMSF website at <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfsubgroups/foodborneviralinf/>. The next meeting of the Group is to be held on 14 September 2011.
8. The Ad Hoc Group on Vulnerable Groups has completed its draft report: a risk profile in relation to toxoplasma in the food chain. The draft report will be considered by the full Committee at its September meeting.

Next meeting: 22 September 2011.

9. As well as the items mentioned above, the Committee will receive a presentation of the findings of the Second Study on Infectious Intestinal Disease in the community (IID2) and will be briefed on the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) report on use of digestates in UK agriculture.

Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP)

10. The ACNFP's next meeting will be held on 21 September 2011. Agenda items include:
 - a discussion on an EFSA response to a consultation on draft guidance on the risk assessment of food and feed derived from GM animals;
 - an information paper on maternal and foetal exposure to pesticides associated with GM foods; and
 - an information paper on a review of the ACNFP.
11. The ACNFP will be holding an open event on 24 November 2011. The provisional agenda for the event includes:
 - effectiveness of labelling (e.g. conjugated linoleic acid and eicosapentaenoic acid);
 - borderline medicines (follow up from 2010);
 - allergenicity (in relation to novel foods);
 - risk perception; and
 - ACNFP advice.
12. Further details including how to attend the event can be obtained from the ACNFP Secretariat: acnfp@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk.

Advisory Committee on Releases into the Environment (ACRE)

13. ACRE met on 4 August 2011 when it discussed the following:

National decision making proposal

14. Members were updated on the state of play on the Commission's national decision-making proposal that would allow Member States the option to ban cultivation of GM crops for various reasons. The UK has concerns with the proposal on the grounds of questionable legality, incompatibility with the Single Market and the move away from science-based decision

making. Amendments voted through by the European Parliament have also caused concern. The Hungarian Presidency was unable to secure a deal so this has passed to the Polish presidency. ACRE shared the UK Government's concerns about the move away from evidence-based policy making and offered its support for the UK's position in ongoing discussions.

GM wheat trial

15. ACRE discussed an application from Rothamsted Research for a two year field trial of GM wheat. The trial is to test whether the GM wheat plants under field conditions are better able to resist aphids by expression of a natural alarm pheromone. Plant and seed material arising from the trial will not enter the food and feed chain. The modified wheat will emit the (E)- β -farnesene pheromone which is naturally emitted as a warning signal by aphids under attack and will attract aphid predators into the area. Two GM lines are intended for release. Both have been transformed with a (E)- β -farnesene synthase (EBFS) gene. Both gene sequences are synthetic and optimised for expression in wheat. ACRE advised that the use of synthetic genes was common and within accepted practice.
16. ACRE noted that the applicant had not conducted a thorough molecular characterisation; instead the applicant had adopted a precautionary approach in assuming that the entire plasmid had been inserted into the wheat genome. ACRE did not request further data on the molecular characterisation of the GMO but concluded that a more considered assessment of some of the associated risks was required in the environmental risk assessment.
17. ACRE also asked of more information on the risks to plants if horizontal gene transfer into wild type *Agrobacterium* were to occur. The Committee discussed the use of the nptI marker gene and asked for a full analysis of the risks in the environmental risk assessment.
18. In considering the risks posed to human health and the environment by the pheromone produced by the GM wheat plants, ACRE advised that the applicant should be requested to provide further information on the levels of the (E)- β -farnesene pheromone naturally emitted from plants and further information on the levels of (E)- β -farnesene produced in the semiochemical trials. This would provide context for the environmental risk assessment.
19. The statutory public consultation on this proposed trial produced 842 responses and ACRE has considered any scientific issues these have raised. Ministers will issue a decision to grant or refuse consent in September 2011.

The environmental risk assessment of GM stacked events – an ecological assessment of the risks posed by plants containing multiple insecticidal traits

20. This was part of a wider discussion on proposed EU guidance on the environmental risk assessment of GM plants. ACRE was requested to consider how applicants should undertake an assessment of the potential impact on target and non-target organisms in GM plants in which insecticidal proteins have been stacked. ACRE noted there are established approaches for assessing multiple toxins in ecotoxicological assessments. The Committee considered that the approach taken should be directed by problem formulation and hypothesis testing (the null hypothesis being that the effects of the individual toxins are independent). It considered that the assessment should be underpinned by a discussion on the mode of action of (e.g.) insecticidal proteins. ACRE advised that subsequently a decision tree approach should be adopted. If an evidence-based analysis (based on the mode of action and exposure to non-target organisms in the field) suggests a divergence from the null hypothesis, experimental data (from the laboratory or field) should be provided. ACRE considered this systematic approach would aid in the identification of important comparators. The Committee noted that the consequences of segregation of GM events in seed should also be considered on a case by case basis.

Other items

21. The Committee also discussed the role of insect resistance management plans in applications for Bt crops and was updated on an application to use a psyllid as a biological control agent in the control of Japanese knotweed.

Post-market environmental monitoring sub-group

22. ACRE's sub-group on post-market environmental monitoring met in June, July and August 2011 and is expected to present its final report to the full Committee in October 2011. The sub-group's aim is to advise ACRE on implementation of post-market environmental monitoring of genetically modified crops according to provisions in the Deliberate Release Directive 2001/18/EEC, Council Decision 2002/811/EC and EFSA guidance. It will build on the 2004 ACRE guidance on post market monitoring plans, provide further advice on monitoring measures needed to identify any anticipated or unanticipated adverse effects resulting from commercial cultivation of GM crops. It will advise on post market monitoring of GM herbicide tolerant crops and how mitigation measures might influence monitoring requirements.

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

23. At its meeting on 21 July 2011 the COC discussed the following:
- a strategy for reviewing the relative vulnerability of children to asbestos in response to a request from the Department for Education for advice. Detailed discussion papers will be considered at following meetings;
 - the latest draft of the COC's new overarching Guidance statement. This is part of the current review of the COC guidance on the risk assessment of chemical carcinogens;
 - an update review of the latest studies on cancer incidence near municipal solid waste incinerators; and
 - an item for information, i.e. a recent publication estimating the alcohol attributable burden of incidence of cancer in eight European countries based on results from prospective study of the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition cohort.

Committee on Mutagenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COM)

24. At its meeting on 16 June 2011 the COM discussed:
- post consultation amendments to its document 'COM Guidance on a strategy for testing chemicals for genotoxicity'. Following some amendments, the guidance document was published on the Committee's website during the first week of September 2011 and can be viewed using the link below:

<http://www.iacom.org.uk/guidstate/documents/COMGuidanceFINAL2.pdf>
 - a paper was considered which gave further information on the use of QSARS (Quantitative Structure Activity Relationships) by the Secretariat; and
 - in closed session, there was an evaluation of additional genotoxicity data on Fumagillin Dicyclohexylamine, which is an antibiotic authorised for use with honey bees for the prevention of infections caused by the *Nosema apis* parasite present in the gut of infected bees. Fumagillin DCHA is fed to the colony in winter over a period of several weeks in a medicated syrup as a supplementary food source to eradicate the parasites. This evaluation was undertaken in order to provide a response to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate who asked the COM to give an opinion on the available genotoxicity data of the product.

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

25. COT met on 13 September 2011, agenda items included:
- use of toxicogenomics data in risk assessment;
 - a draft statement on a systematic review of the epidemiological literature on para-occupational exposure to pesticides and health outcomes other than cancer;
 - a draft statement on the FSA-funded T05 research programme on phytoestrogens;
 - a WRAP risk assessment on anaerobic digestates;
 - FSA Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) update; and
 - an update on regulatory and biomonitoring activities with regard to phthalate esters.

General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS)

26. GACS published its Annual Report for 2010-11 on 12 July 2011 coinciding with the annual report given by the GACS Chair to the FSA Board at its open Board meeting.
- The GACS report is available at: <http://gacs.food.gov.uk/gacsreports/>
 - Board meeting papers, agendas and audio/video recordings of discussions are available at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/aboutus/ourboard/boardmeetings/>
27. GACS holds its next, open meeting on 9 November 2011. The agenda is being finalised but discussions are expected to include:
- Report from the FSA Chief Scientist;
 - Science in the SACS (including a presentation from the ACMSF Chair, Professor Sarah O'Brien, on the work of the ACMSF);
 - Responses to the reviews of the COT and the ACMSF;
 - Report from the Working Group on Strategic Evidence;
 - Responses to the consultation on the GACS framework for sharing data and funding with industry and NGO partners; and
 - Update on science governance.

Social Science Research Committee (SSRC)

28. Members of the Committee have been advising the FSA, via advisory groups, on new research projects: social science evidence to support the review of meat controls, the evaluation of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme/Food Hygiene Information Scheme, a study to explore kitchen practices and impact on food safety, and further work to improve understanding of culture in regulatory bodies and food businesses.

29. The SSRC has also been working on its Annual Report for 2010/2011, which was published in August 2011.
30. The next meeting of the SSRC will be held on 4 November 2011 members of other SACs are welcome to attend as observers.

Veterinary Residue Committee

31. The Government's Veterinary Residues Committee (VRC), which oversees the UK's surveillance for residues of veterinary medicines, was reconstituted as a Defra expert scientific committee on 14 July 2011, following a review of Defra's Arms Length Bodies. The VRC will continue to advise Defra, the devolved administrations and the Food Standards Agency on the scope and operation of surveillance for residues of veterinary medicines in food and the significance to consumers of any residues detected.
32. The VRC will be holding its first open meeting since its reconstitution on 12 October 2011. Further details of this meeting can be viewed using the link below:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2011/sep/vrcopenmeeting>

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