

Meeting

# **Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food**

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD (ACMSF) - HYBRID MEETING HELD ON 8<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2024 (ONE-HUNDRED AND FIFTH MEETING)**

Present:

Chair: Prof Bill Keevil

Members: Prof. Dan Tucker

Prof Peter McClure

Mr Alec Kyriakides

Mrs Ann Williams

Miss Heather Lawson

Dr Jane Gibbens

Prof Francis Butler

Dr Nicol Janecko

Dr Rohini Manuel

Prof Linda Scobie

Dr Edward Fox

Mr Martin Briggs

Dr Wayne Anderson

Prof Cath Rees

Dr Dragan Antic

Prof. Andrew Page

Dr Inaki Deza-Cruz

Ms Adri Bester

Departmental representative:

Dr Stephen Wyllie (APHA)

Dr Lesley Larkin (UKHSA)

Secretariat: Dr Anthony Wilson

Dr Elaine Pegg

Dr Johanna Jackson

Ms Azuka Aghadiuno

Presenters: Dr Edward Haynes

Dr Helen Heard

Dr Thomas Mills

Dr Erica Kintz

Dr Amie Adkin

Members of the public: see Annex 1.

1. **Chair's introduction**

1.1 The Chair welcomed members of the Committee and members of the public to the 105<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ACMSF. The Chair welcomed Edward Haynes (FERA) who presented agenda item 7, an update on the PATH-SAFE programme, Helen Heard and Thomas Mills, (FSA) who presented agenda item 8, the results of the Kitchen Life 2 study, Erica Kintz, (FSA), who presented agenda items 13 and 14, a review of an ongoing FSA project on Campylobacter and an update on the IID3 project and Amie Adkin, (FSA) who presented agenda item 15, a paper on Regulated Product Service and continuous improvements.

1.2 As part of the meeting was opened to the public, the Chair mentioned that a full set of papers had been made available to members of the public via the ACMSF webpage.

## 2. **Apologies for absence**

2.1 Apologies from Dr Roberto Vivancos.

## 3. **Declaration of interests**

3.1 The Chair asked members if they wished to declare any potential conflicts of interest associated with the agenda items to be discussed.

3.2 Dr Francis Butler informed the committee that he has been appointed to the International Scientific Advisory Board of the Saudi Food and Drug Authority but doesn't see any conflict of interests with any of the items on the agenda at this meeting.

## 4. **Minutes of the 104<sup>th</sup> meeting**

4.1 The chair requested page numbers be added to the minutes.

4.2 It was highlighted that on paragraph 6.1 John Threlfall was stated to be retired, formally of Protection Health England but should be Health Protection Agency.

4.3 Paragraph 7.9 senses should be sensitivity.

## 5 **Matters arising (ACM/1419)**

5.1 ACM/1419 provided a summary of actions on matters arising from previous meetings. Dr Anthony Wilson reported that:

5.2 The minutes from the 103<sup>rd</sup> meeting is now available on the ACMSF website.

5.3 In response to a query on what advice FSA provides to restaurants around the risk of botulinum outbreak, the secretariat informed the committee that guidance around producing foods at home is currently being redrafted. No publication date is currently scheduled but the final version will be made available to the committee once published. A committee member pointed out that the query was around guidance for restaurants, but the action mentioned advice for the home and requested in future that the action matched the request. Secretariat confirmed the guidance for business is currently live and up to date, which we can add to the action. **ACTION:** A further request was made that timelines are added to report of actions for indication of when things are going to happen.

5.4 The secretariat informed the committee that the amendments suggested for the Botulinum Neurotoxin-producing Clostridia report had been incorporated into the final report which has now been published.

5.5 In response to a request from the committee that acronyms are fully defined in reports, acronyms have been fully defined in the update from other committees, paper ACM/1423.

5.6 As requested by a committee member, *Yersinia* has been added to the items of literature paper.

5.7 In response to the action around delays to the IID3 project the secretariat informed the committee that they had followed up with contract management team. The committee reiterated that the problems around data sharing and ethics delays should be addressed so similar delays are not encountered again.

5.8 EFIG updates will be given later in meeting.

## **6. Committee update**

6.1 Update on the AMR working group - Prof. Bill Keevil, as Chair of the AMR working group, gave an update on the group's latest work.

6.2 The last working group meeting was held on 24/1/24.

6.3 The issues considered during this meeting included a presentation by Genever Morgan from the University of Liverpool who gave a talk on AMR and the risk associated with raw pet food.

6.4 Thomas Hornsby from the FSA's Regulated Products Risk Assessment Team presented a discussion paper on reviewing the implications of antimicrobial

compounds in food in the context of regulated product application RP42. Thomas asked the ACMSF AMR Working Group members the following questions:

- a. Based on the information considered as part of the AEJEG evaluation (noting the ESFA 2017 Opinion, the EU Commission Position and the stance of the Global Leaders on AMR) does the ACMSF agree that currently a risk of AMR from the proposed application for the extension of nisin cannot be excluded (or the risk cannot be determined).
- b. Does the Working Group have any other comments with regards to the information presented from the EU Commission, EFSA and the Global Leaders on AMR?

As this was the second time a nisin application had been presented to the subgroup, the subgroup felt that insufficient new information had been provided around the use of Nisin for the committee to be able to review their opinion.

6.5 Use of AMR terminology used in FSA reports drafted by John Threlfall was discussed. An issue has arisen concerning the use of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) terminology in FSA research and survey reports. At the April 2023 meeting of the AMR working group. John Threlfall, Roberto La Ragione, Chris Teale and Rohini Manuel were tasked to defining specific AMR-related terms including their applicability in different situations and to draft a statement for inclusion at the start of FSA AMR-related survey and research reports which acknowledges some of the issues around interpretation of terms. At the September 2023 meeting, John Threlfall presented a discussion paper on AMR terminology. Following the comments received by members and Gunnar Kahlmeter's presentation on antimicrobial testing and susceptibility, a revised discussion paper was presented by John Threlfall at the recent meeting. A finalised paper is to be circulated to members of the AMR subgroup and external stakeholders for final review.

6.6 Approach to assessing detriment of AMR genes in food risk assessments drafted by Paul Cook. Currently no framework has been developed in FSA risk assessments for assessing the severity of detriment resulting from exposure to microorganisms carrying specific AMR genes or combinations of genes or to phenotypic findings of resistance. An approach to assessing AMR detriment was proposed by Paul Cook and discussed at the September 2023 meeting which the members felt had potential but needed further refinement. Paul has since revised and added to the paper which he presented to members.

6.7 Date of next meeting will be **May 2024**

## 7. PATH-SAFE update (**ACM/1420**) (Edward Haynes, Fera)

7.1 Edward Haynes presented paper ACM/1420 which updated members on the progress of the PATH-SAFE programme.

7.2 A committee member commented that the difficulty around data sharing was disappointing and asked if there was any way forward with this or will some departments and other organisations be unlikely to ever share data. EH replied that the question was difficult to answer broadly but to give an example of how they are tackling this, they are looking at data sharing from private veterinary labs that can have a reticence to share information, but NBN (National bio surveillance network) is undertaking a piece of work to look at how data sharing from these sources could be incentivised. Work is at very early stages. The Chair added that historically organisations like DSTL have been reticent to share simply because of the security concerns. They have developed a lot of techniques and not always being willing to share them, so if we could break down those types of barriers, that would be very useful. EH agreed and added that the UK Microbial Forensics Consortium which focuses on microbial genomics is being led by DSTL; there will be data sharing aspects on that and good to know they are leading on it, hopefully it will bleed through to other areas of work.

7.3 The Chair commented on the difficulty PATH-SAFE had had in contacting people and getting them to join in with the programme. He asked if PATH-SAFE had tried through chief scientific advisors in government departments. EH informed the committee that during work phase 1 there was a discovery phase that took place at the start. All Chief Scientific Advisers (CSA's) from the participant departments were on the Strategic Board of PATH-SAFE. The chair asked has it been possible to establish a database of all the relevant people you have been able to contact across government, government departments and agencies. EH replied that for workstream 3 which was the onsite diagnostics work stream or watching 3A, there was a lot of end user discussion that took place there. There is a database of all the people who have been and fed into that workstream one they have now identified.

7.4 The Chair also asked if the meeting being organised on the 28th and the 29th, can be made available online for those who cannot attend in person. EH confirmed there will be an online sign up.

7.5 A committee member commented that they were glad to see that PATH-SAFE is working with the food safety research network as they are developing a proposal for sharing data under what is called the Food Microbiology intelligence

network across industry, so it is a good platform to engage with. EH agreed with the comment and informed the committee that he is attending the Food Safety Research Network event tomorrow in Birmingham, where he will talk about the interactions between the two programs. He added that it is been a valuable link and specifically on the data sharing aspect. The FSRN has been linked with teams such as Tamsin Dewe at VMD who is one of the core partners on PATH-SAFE and involved in the NBN and a piece of work that we will be looking at trying to access and share data from industry. So those links are being made via path safe, but between two different networks, which is rather nice.

7.6 A committee member asked about the legacy of the data, where the database will sit and long-term operation (will data be available beyond project completion). EH replied that the data system itself is sitting on the Climb infrastructure, which is national infrastructure for bioinformatic analysis.

For the next year, if continuation funding is successful, then that will fund the maintenance and upkeep of the data system but where we go after that or how we fund it further is an open question still. He agreed that spending all this time building a data system and then just having it shut down would be a real shame. The committee member added that they were on the management committee for Climb and that they are running very old hardware, and they are due to run out of funding this year or next year suggesting it is a risk scenario for the data. EH will be inquiring with them as to what the plan is on that.

7.7 A committee member informed the committee that a number of the members present had been invited to be part of an expert working groups and for clinically vulnerable patients. She stressed that there is a need to look at the patients and not just the pathogens and to ask what the risk is to patients other than traditional vulnerable groups e.g. look at comorbidities. She asked if that's something that could be included in any future funding work. EH stated that although de novo sampling in humans wasn't in scope in the PATH safe project, it could be expanded. In the future the hope is to align with the IID3 study.

7.8 A committee member asked EH to clarify that when referring to foodborne disease in the context of your report, you're not talking about disease levels, you're talking about pathogen levels. Edward Haynes confirmed that they are looking at pathogens and not clinical disease.

## 8. Kitchen Life 2 (**ACM/1421**) (Helen Heard and Thomas Mills, FSA)

8.1 Helen Heard and Thomas Mills presented the results of the recently published Kitchen life 2 study.

8.2 The Chair thanked Helen and Tom for an excellent presentation and asked the committee for questions.

8.3 A committee member asked if the Kitchen Life 2 study had replaced the Food and You. HH informed the committee that Food and You was a flagship survey that now runs every six months. Kitchen Life 2 was not designed to replace Food and You and they are different in their design. Kitchen life is about observing what takes place in kitchens and Food and You is our flagship survey where we ask people for their different opinions about a range of topics in relation to food. Kitchen life is a one off, there is no plan to repeat it on a regular basis.

8.4 A committee member commented on the information provided during the talk on the use of tea towels which was quite shocking. They asked if there was any plan to try to get people to change their habits around the use of tea towels. HH confirmed that they are working with policy colleagues and others to change guidance. There are plans over the next few months and the coming year to look at specific areas of guidance that can be improved based on the findings. An example of one area of the findings that we are hoping to apply is around reheating practices. The study recognised that people were confused about how often and how long they should be reheating items for, including, whether they needed to stir things. There were lots of myths around things like rice or other food groups that they were not sure whether they could reheat after it has been cooked. We have recognized in our guidance, there is quite a few gaps in those areas. So that is a good example of one of the places we could try to improve that going forward.

8.5 Another committee member commented that in the case studies a number of behaviours were because people were tired, distracted or in a hurry and that the only way that you can try to get a reduction in the poor behaviours is to try and embed that into the habit so that even if people are tired or distracted, they automatically don't do something in the same way. TM confirmed that they would be working towards improving habit, with a focus to try and embed it into campaigns. HH added that Kitchen Life 2 helps us to understand why people are behaving in particular ways. The second part of the study, which we did not go into detail in the presentation, is called the behaviours change wheel. This effectively allows you to map the analysis we've done in a project like Kitchen Life 2 to help design interventions. We are going to be exploring this with teams across the FSA.

8.6 A committee member commented on how useful the data available from the project are, particularly the enormous database of fridge and freezer



temperatures, which is a huge resource.

8.7 A committee member picked up on the point that was raised about the behaviours change wheel and asked how well the methods for delivering behavioural change are validated? HH replied that the methods were not designed at the FSA but is a developed framework and resource that is commonly used. Using fridges as an example, you might know the correct fridge temperature, but you do not check or calibrate the fridge thermostat and that is the barrier, so it might be more around deciding is it worth making sure that people actually just have a little thermometer in their fridge or is it worth having one that beeps. The purpose of the behaviour change wheel is to think beyond knowledge and try to design intervention.

8.8 A committee member asked if they had considered wet dishcloths which can be breeding grounds and people use those to apparently clean a kitchen worktop? HH replied that they have a whole report about cloths and there is quite a lot of mention about how they get wet and people use them up until the point where they're sodden and smelly, and that prompts them to wash them.

9. AOB

9.1 No AOB was raised at this part of the meeting.

10. Public Q&A

10.1 The Chair opened up the floor to questions from the public.

10.2 No questions were asked by the public to the Chair who closed the open session of the meeting and asked committee members online to join the reserved session Teams link.

## **Annex 1**

Observers:

Paul Cook

Mike Peck

David McDowell

Gail Betts

Gary McMahon

Ali Aitchison

Karin Goodburn

Anna Zarasvand

Helen Davies

Stephen Batchford