

ACMSF Horizon Scanning Workshop (June) 2024 summary of discussions and outputs

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ACMSF horizon scanning workshop 2024 summary of discussions and outputs

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Executive Summary

The ACMSF Committee held a horizon scanning workshop in York on the 19th of June 2024 to help identify and further understand the effects of climate change on UK food safety, in line with the FSA's commitments under the Third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3).

The workshop concluded that the greatest food safety risk during flooding and drought was likely to be from Verotoxigenic and Shigatoxigenic *Escherichia coli* (VTEC/STEC) contaminating crops and RTE fruit and vegetables, while the greatest risk during a heatwave was likely to be from *Listeria* in chilled food due to disruption to the cold chain. Overall, the greatest risk is likely to be of faecal contamination of crops and ready-to-eat (RTE) fruit and vegetables during flooding, drought, and heatwaves.

Introduction

The Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF) held a horizon scanning workshop in York on the 19th of June 2024. The format of the workshop was devised by the secretariat and was intended, among other things, to help identify and further understand the effects of climate change on UK food safety, in line with the FSA's commitments under Risk Action H9.1 of the government's Third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3). All committee members were invited to attend, and collectively represent expertise in microbiology, food safety, public health, epidemiology, veterinary science, and food industry practices.

Methods

The FSA sought member input on which emerging microbiological issues and food sectors to prioritise, particularly in identifying probable indicators of climate change. Members were asked to score the risk of specific pathogens emerging during flooding, drought, and heatwave:

- *Escherichia coli*
- *Campylobacter*
- *Listeria*
- Norovirus
- *Salmonella*
- *Vibrio*
- Viruses such as Hepatitis A and B
- Verotoxigenic and Shigatoxigenic *E.coli* (VTEC/STEC)

The food sectors considered were:

- Fish
- Shellfish
- Beef
- Poultry
- Eggs
- Dairy (milk and cheese)
- Raw dairy
- Imported eggs
- Crops
- Ready-to-Eat (RTE) fruit and vegetable
- Chilled food sectors

Prior to the workshop, the secretariat sent the questions to committee members to gather responses before discussions took place. The responses can be found in Annex 1.

During the workshop, three discussion groups were created and randomly assigned. Each group was provided with the same information, guidance, and table template (Annex 2). Groups were asked to assign scores from ten (most significant) down to one (least significant) to emerging microbiological issues within specific food groups that could arise following changes to the climate. Members were asked to consider the effects severe weather conditions (flooding, heatwaves, and drought) may have on food production, processing, and supply chain as well as the impact on food consumption and imports. Members were also asked to summarise key causes of the risks and mitigation strategies. Once each group had completed their scoring, a discussion was held to form a consensus. This paper summarises the main consensus and outcomes based on workshop discussions. General thoughts and deliberations have also been captured.