

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD

EFIG updates for ACMSF

Issue

1. Members have raised a number of issues and suggestions for enhancements concerning the summaries of the twice- yearly Epidemiology of Foodborne Infections Group (EFIG) meetings provided to the committee. This paper provides background information on EFIG and its terms of reference, previous discussions the committee has had concerning EFIG data and seeks to address some of the more recent points raised by members. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) who collate the bulk of the UK data and present the data in the reports have contributed to this paper along with the Food Standard Agency.

Background

2. EFIG was established in 1995 and has regularly provided updates on its activities to ACMSF since then, initially as oral reports and more recently in written form. EFIG is an inter-departmental group and currently brings together representatives from the FSA, UKHSA, APHA, Public Health Scotland (PHS), Public Health Wales (PHW) and Public Health Agency Northern Ireland. EFIG currently meets twice a year and considers current trends in animal, food surveillance and human surveillance data. The meetings provide a useful forum for the surveillance organisations to share information and identify where further action might be needed by the departments involved and not necessarily requiring input from ACMSF. Surveillance information for foodborne pathogens in humans and animals is also available through other sources such as the APHA *Salmonella* in livestock reports and human epidemiological data on the gov.uk website.
3. EFIG's terms of reference are ***To collate and assess available information on animal and human infection and to identify through the evaluation of that information the need for action to ensure the microbiological safety of food and to advise accordingly.***
4. In 2010 the committee was provided with background on EFIG and was asked to comment on the input it received from this interdepartmental group (ACM/MIN/73) The Committee considered that the information provided by EFIG was useful to inform them about trends and suggested that future update papers include a short bullet point summary of important trends and some graphs and figures. It was noted that the Human Animal Infections Risk Surveillance Group (HAIRS) has some similarities with EFIG, but their remits do not overlap as HAIRS focuses more on new and emerging hazards.

5. EFIG has previously reflected on its role. It was recognised that that EFIG was a unique group bringing together human, food and veterinary epidemiological and microbiological information which can be integrated and discussed at UK and country level. The remits of other groups are different although these groups should be made more aware of the role of EFIG. It was agreed that the membership and the frequency of meetings (twice a year) was about right. EFIG recognises its commitment to reporting the main outcomes from their meetings to ACMSF and that ACMSF should also be asked to comment on the input that they receive from EFIG.
6. In 2013 the committee raised the issue of denominators for the human data and for the animal data and received presentations on the challenges around providing denominators for the *Salmonella* isolates from animals and for human infections with foodborne pathogens. Further details are available in the committee's minutes and papers from the January and June 2013 meetings. Subsequent EFIG updates included more information on data source and caveats for the animal and human data.

Response to points raised by the committee

7. Members have raised a number of issues concerning the data in the reports of EFIG meetings provided to the committee. Responses to many of the specific points, particularly regarding the human data, are included in Annex 1. Members are invited to:
 - a) Comment on the responses to the points raised in recent meetings.
 - b) Suggest any areas where the EFIG summaries could be more helpful to the committee and its work whilst recognising the limitations in the current data.

**Secretariat
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