

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD**DISCUSSION PAPER****OUTCOMES FROM 25 JANUARY 2018 HORIZON SCANNING WORKSHOP****Issue**

The purpose of this paper is for the Committee to agree to the ranking of topics identified as current and emerging microbiological issues of concern at the January 2018 horizon scanning workshop. Members have ranked the topics in terms of strategic priority and urgency.

Background

On 25 January 2018, the Committee held a horizon scanning workshop which preceded the plenary meeting that was held the following day. At the workshop the Food Standards Agency (FSA) gave two presentations: "Future of Food" provided by the FSA's Chief Scientific Adviser (Prof Guy Poppy) and a briefing on the Agency's preparations for the UK's exit from the European Union by: Carlos Orri (FSA, Food Policy, Head of Food Additives, Flavourings and Contact Materials Branch).

ACMSF Members completed a questionnaire before the workshop which had asked the following question:

- Emerging issues that might present a risk to the public?
- Information that needs to be brought to the FSA's attention to help consumers make choices based on current evidence?
- Are there risk/opportunities associated with emerging technologies not already considered by ACMSF?
- Main issues, risks and opportunities following UK exit from the EU?
- Anything else to bring to the FSA's attention?

Following group discussions at the workshop, the Committee shortlisted the key issues they considered. The shortlisted topics are:

Emerging issues that might present a risk to the public

- **Emerging issues resulting from real changes in behaviour**
 - reduction in packaging and a move away from plastics
 - Increased raw fruit and vegetable consumption and outbreaks associated with fresh fruit and vegetables including bagged salads
 - Access to food via uncontrolled channels e.g. Internet shopping

- How populations/providers interact with the ageing population e.g. meals on wheels for the elderly produced in a pub
- Risks associated with increasing use of raw pet food

Information that needs to be brought to the FSA's attention to help consumers make choices based on current evidence?

- Many choice issues should be accommodated into the risky foods framework
- Redouble efforts to remove cross-government inconsistency in safety messages
- Redouble efforts to connect choices with science/evidence
- Joined up effort needed on areas of waste and food safety

Are there risk/opportunities associated with emerging technologies not already considered by ACMSF?

- New technologies introduce new interaction with existing risks
- Understanding the microbiological risks of new packaging
- *Sous vide* was viewed to still be a problem
- High Pressure Processing was viewed as an opportunity but may be increased or decreased risk depending on the application

Main issues, risks and opportunities following UK exit from the EU

- ACMSF support the FSA approach summarised in the briefing given to the committee
- Possible changes in *modus operandi* for SACs including ACMSF in terms of resources and expertise and possible need to respond to an increasing number of fast-paced issues
- Being out of the EU network "no UK voice of reason"
- Loss of technical expertise/skill base and EU National reference labs disappearing

Anything else to bring to the FSA's attention?

- Do ACMSF assessments have a life span e.g. non-proteolytic *C. botulinum* in chilled foods?
- Is it time to introduce a 2-dimensional framework for food risks? Set up a sub group to revisit how risk is assessed and expressed.
- Genomics risk assessment subgroup could be set up.

At the May 2018 plenary meeting the Committee discussed the above shortlisted topics and asked the secretariat to condense them making them simple to rank. Following the circulation of a compressed list of topics to the Committee, 10 members ranked the topics in terms of priority and urgency (see below).

The Committee at the above meeting had agreed to the FSA's request on setting up a subgroup to consider a two-dimensional approach in defining risk assessment outputs.

Emerging issues that might present a risk to the public	
Emerging issues resulting from real changes in behaviour	
Issue to be considered	Urgency (High, Medium or Low)
Reduction in packaging and a move away from plastics**	H (3), M (4), L (3)
Increased raw fruit and veg consumption and outbreaks associated with fresh fruit, veg and bagged salads	H (4), M (3), L (3)
Access to food via uncontrolled channels e.g. Internet shopping	H (2), M (7), L (1)
Changes in the way that populations/providers interact with the ageing population e.g. meals on wheels for the elderly produced in pubs	H (2), M (3), L (5),
Risk associated with increasing use of raw pet food	Has been considered at the May 2018 plenary

Information that needs to be brought to the FSA's attention to help consumers make choices based on current evidence?	
Issue to be considered	Urgency (High, Medium or Low)
Many choice issues should be accommodated into the risky foods framework	This was a comment made by members and does not need ranking
Redouble efforts to remove cross-government inconsistency in safety messages ¹	H (3), M (4), L (3)
Redouble efforts to connect choices with science/evidence	H (3), M (4), L (3)
Joined up effort needed on areas of waste and food safety	H (4), M (5), L (1)

¹ A member highlighted that this issue is not for a risk assessment committee

Are there risk/opportunities associated with emerging technologies not already considered by ACMSF?

Issue to be considered	Urgency (High, Medium or Low)
New technologies introduce new interaction with existing risks	H (1), M (4), L (5)
Understanding the microbiological risks of new packaging ²	H (6), M (1) L (3)
<i>Sous vide</i> was viewed to still be a problem	H (3), M (5), L (2)
High Pressure Processing was viewed as an opportunity but may be increased or decreased risk depending on the application	M (4), L (6)

Main issues, risks and opportunities following UK exit from the EU

Issue to be considered	Urgency (High, Medium or Low)
Possible changes in <i>modus operandi</i> for SACs including ACMSF in terms of resources and expertise and possible need to respond to an increasing number of fast paced issues	H (6), M (4)
Loss of technical expertise/skill base and EU National reference labs disappearing (being out of the EU network)	H (8), M (2)

Anything else to bring to FSA's attention?

Issue to be considered	Urgency (High, Medium or Low)
Do ACMSF assessments have a life span e.g. non-proteolytic <i>C. botulinum</i> in chilled foods?	H (4), M (5), L (1)
Is it time to introduce a 2-dimensional framework for food risks? Set up a sub group to revisit how risk is assessed and expressed	Committee has agreed to setup group at the May 2018 plenary
Genomics risk assessment subgroup could be set up	H (2), M (7), L (1)

*Urgency: High (H) Medium (M) Low (L)

**Figure in bracket is the number people that ranked topic

² There was a suggestion to combine this with the topic reduction in packaging and a move away from plastics**

Action

Members are invited to:

- Prioritise these shortlisted topics and indicate what topics they would like to include in the ACMSF work plan.

**Secretariat
October 2018**