

## DISCUSSION PAPER

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD (ACMSF)

#### FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY SURVEY OF RAW CHICKEN

##### Background

1. In its 1996 report on poultry meat the ACMSF recommended "that the Government considers conducting such further microbiological surveillance of finished raw poultry meat at an appropriate time in the future as is necessary to map progress towards the reduction and ultimate elimination of pathogens". The committee also "saw no reason in principle why the prevalence of *Salmonella* contamination in the finished raw product should not within the next few years be reduced to a single percentage, on the basis of existing technology". The last national survey of retail UK-produced chicken for *Salmonella* was carried out in 1993/94 and the Agency is planning to carry out another survey.

##### Objectives of the survey

2. The primary purpose of the survey will be to set a baseline against which the Agency can monitor progress towards the target of a 50% reduction in *Salmonella* contamination over the next 5 years. This target was announced at the Agency's launch in April. The survey will also provide an indication of whether progress has been made in reducing *Salmonella* contamination since the previous survey. The Agency will also be including *Campylobacter* in the survey to provide the first national picture of the extent of contamination. In its 1999 report on microbial antibiotic resistance in relation to food safety, the ACMSF recognised the need for more data on antimicrobial resistance of *Campylobacter* spp. isolated from poultry meat and the Government in its response acknowledged the need to include this aspect in the chicken survey being planned by the Agency.
3. The proposed chicken survey is important to the Agency in setting a baseline for monitoring *Salmonella* reduction. It also provides an opportunity to address ACMSF recommendations. To maximize the value of the survey the Agency is seeking the views of ACMSF members on factors that should be given priority in this survey. Development of the protocol will be undertaken in conjunction with the Agency's statisticians.

## **Selected factors for consideration**

- A. Survey should cover the whole of the UK
- B. Imported chicken (EU and non-EU)
- C. Sampling at retail according to market share
- D. Whole chickens rather than portions
- E. Different production types (e.g. free range, corn fed, organic etc)
- F. Test packaging (external surfaces and after unwrapping)
- G. Should bacteria other than *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* be included (e.g. *Escherichia coli*, Enterococci)?
- H. Carcass rinse methods for *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* but include neck skin method for *Salmonella* to provide data comparable with the previous survey.
- I. Preliminary work suggests enumeration is feasible for *Campylobacter*
- J. Seasonality in contamination? The 1993/94 survey of *Salmonella* contamination ran from December to March.
- K. Typing and antimicrobial resistance of isolates.
- L. Archiving

**Secretariat  
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