

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD

INFORMATION PAPER

UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE OTHER ADVISORY COMMITTEES

At the December 2004 meeting of the ACMSF, Members received a paper (ACM/670) providing information on the work of various other advisory committees. This paper provides a general overview of the work of the following committees in 2005:

- Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs (ACAF)
- Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP)
- Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN)
- Advisory Committee on Research (ACR)
- Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC)

Full details, including copies of agendas, minutes and papers are available at each committee website.

Secretariat
November 2005

1. ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL FEEDINGSTUFFS (ACAF)

1.1 The Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs met 5 times during 2005.

ACAF meeting – 8 February 2005

1.2 *Feed Law Enforcement Review* – subject to some agreed amendments, the Committee formally accepted the report and agreed that it should be published for relevant stakeholders to comment.

1.3 *Mycotoxins*: – implications for farmers and consumers – ACAF received a presentation from the FSA which described the occurrence of mycotoxins in animal feed, relevant legislative controls and the way they might affect consumers, producers and livestock. The Committee noted that the presence of many mycotoxins in animal feed appeared to pose a low risk for consumers, though members thought that the area needed further investigation.

1.4 *ACAF/EFSA bi-lateral* – Members received feedback on the recent bi-lateral between the ACAF Secretariat with representatives of EFSA.

ACAF Meeting – 19 April 2005

1.5 *Residues of feed additives in poultry products: request for a joined-up approach from the Veterinary Residues Committee (VRC)* – the Committee received a presentation which outlined the occurrence of residues of feed additives in poultry products and the work that had been done by the VRC and industry to address the problems. It was explained that the level of positive results of lasalocid and nicarbazin in poultry products had caused VRC some concern and as a result a sub-group has been set-up to address the problem. It was noted that the FSA and VRC did not consider current levels of these residues to be a risk to human health, but as an unwanted contamination issue which affect consumer confidence in products. It was agreed that this issue would be discussed at the July meeting.

1.6 *The Microbiological Risks Associated with Feed* – The European Community Feed Hygiene Regulation (183/2005) stated that feed business operators should comply with specific microbiological criteria. It was felt that ACAF should give a view to aid the FSA's negotiating in Brussels, therefore ACAF would be discussing this issue over the next few meetings.

ACAF Meeting – 5 July 2005

1.7 *Consequences of phasing out of antibiotic growth promoters (AGPs)* – The Committee received a presentation from the Veterinary Laboratories Agency outlining the effects and lessons learnt when Denmark voluntarily banned AGPs in February 1998. The Committee was informed that the

UK could expect a similar effect to Denmark when AGPs are fully phased out across the European Union from 1 January 2006. Members agreed that the banning of AGPs as feed additives was an important issue about which veterinarians should be made more aware. The Committee also noted that the EU would be the only significant food producing area in the world that would have this ban and therefore an increase in cheaper imports was possible.

1.8 *Scientific Advisory Committee for Nutrition Vitamin A Report* – The Committee had been asked to comment on a recommendation in the Vitamin A Report which suggested that a significant reduction in vitamin A supplement of animal feed as part of a strategy to reduce vitamin A intake by high consumers should be explored further taking into account the welfare of poultry and livestock. The Committee were specially asked to comment on the implications of lowering the levels of vitamin A supplementation in animal feed. Members commented that the issue was complex. For example, dairy cattle only receive 30-40% of their dietary intake from manufactured feed, the rest coming from grazing. They also commented that weaned calves would be particularly vulnerable to reductions in vitamin A supplementation. Furthermore, any research into the effects of reduced supplementation would be complicated (e.g. assessing immunity being a particularly difficult area).

1.9 *Residues of feed additives in poultry products* – Members received an update following the presentation they received at their April meeting. They were encouraged that industry action had already started showing improved results in a reduction in positive samples.

ACAF Meeting – 20 September 2005

1.10 *Microbiological risks associated with feed (Defra position paper)* – Members were reminded that they had discussed this issue at their April meeting and that they had been asked to provide a view on a requirement in the European Community Feed Hygiene Regulation (183/2005) which envisages that feed business operators should comply with specific microbiological criteria. The Committee were informed on the Defra policy aims in this area. The Committee commented that it was important that the work on RADAR meshed with the local authority enforcement priorities on the Feed Hygiene Regulation (183/2005). They also discussed that this was an area which went broader than just the UK. It was agreed that the Committee would discuss this further at a future meeting.

1.11 European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) presentation – the Committee received a presentation from EFSA on the the work of the EFSA Scientific Panel on additives and products or substances used in animal feed (FEEDAP), and other scientific panels within EFSA in the field of animal nutrition.

ACAF Meeting 21 November 2005

1.12 Items on the agenda for this meeting includes :-

- Genetically Modified Food and Feed;
- Rapid Analysis and Detection of Animal-related Risks (RADAR) project;
- Feed Hygiene Regulation (183/2005)
- Code of Practice: Feed Law Enforcement

Full minutes, agendas and papers relating to ACAF are available at <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/ouradvisors/animalfeedingstuffs/>

2. ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NOVEL FOODS AND PROCESSES (ACNFP)

2.1 The ACNFP met on 26 January, 30 March, 19 May and 29 September 2005.

During the year the Committee considered the following:

- High Amylopectin GM potato clone EH92-527-1: application under the Deliberate Release Directive 2001/18/EC
- An application submitted by Südzucker to market the novel sugar isomaltulose for use as a food ingredient
- An application for authorisation of fruit juices (including tomato juice) and nectars with added phytosterols as novel foods
- The use of oleoresin derived from lycopene-rich tomatoes to be used in a range of foodstuffs, including bread, juices and dairy products
- Concerns regarding the use of nanoparticles in food
- A letter received after the November 2004 open meeting concerning the basis for assessing the safety of foods derived from genetically modified sources
- An opinion from the Finnish competent authority on an application for authorisation of a plant sterol-enriched rice drink as a novel food
- An application submitted by Bioresco on behalf of Arla Food Ingredients, Denmark, for the authorisation of D-tagatose as a novel food ingredient
- Further data on the use of 1507 maize
- A request for an opinion on the equivalence of Noni juice to a similar product
- An application from Nutrinova to extend the range of food uses of its novel ingredient DHA-rich algal oil derived from the microalga *Ulkenia* sp
- The work programme of the Codex Intergovernmental Task Force on Foods derived from Biotechnology
- An application for the use of the novel ingredient phosphated distarch phosphate (PDP) as a source of fibre in a range of bakery products, where it would partially replace ingredients such as flour

- An application for the authorisation of clinoptilolite
- An initial opinion from the Dutch competent authority on an application from Bioresco for the novel food ingredient zeaxanthin
- A request from Prima Pharm for an opinion on the equivalence of their phytosterol products to those currently marketed by Teriaka
- Draft EFSA guidelines for the risk assessment of genetically modified micro-organisms
- EFSA GMO Panel opinions on applications for authorisation of grain and grain-derived food ingredients from GM maize hybrids

Full minutes, agendas and papers relating to ACNFP are available at <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/ouradvisors/novelfood/acnfpmeets/>

3. SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NUTRITION (SACN)

3.1. The Committee met on 23 February, 15 June (open meeting), and 19 October 2005.

3.2. The following items were discussed:

- The Folic Acid sub-group draft report on folate and disease prevention
- The Iron working group draft report
- The Maternal and Child Nutrition Sub-group draft report on The Influence of Maternal, Fetal and Child Nutrition on the Development of Disease in Later Life
- Nutrient profiling
- The Committee's Forward look and horizon scanning
- The Government update on nutrition related activities (FSA, DH, devolved Health Departments, Health Development Agency, Health Scotland, EFSA, Defra, and the Centre for Public Health Excellence)
- A paper entitled "The nutritional health of the population" using data from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS)
- The NDNS adults 19-64 further analysis paper
- Proposals for the formal involvement of the Committee in the tendering and methodological development of the NDNS Rolling Programme
- Vitamin A report
- A paper on selenium covering sources of selenium in the diet, UK intakes and selenium status markers
- Committee openness and FOI Act

Full minutes, agendas and papers relating to SACN are available at <http://www.sacn.gov.uk/>

4. ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH

4.1 The Committee met on 22 February, 26 July and 25 October 2005.

4.2 The following items were discussed:

- the ACR's annual report and its provisional work programme for 2005.
- the Agency's draft Science Strategy 2005-2010 produced under the guidance of the ACR Science Strategy Sub-Group. Following a public consultation on the draft the Committee discussed the high-level issues arising from the responses to the consultation. A discussion paper on the outcome of the consultation, the Agency's response and a final draft of the Science Strategy is scheduled for discussion at the Agency's open Board meeting in February 2006.
- how to address recommendation 50 of the Agency's Review of Scientific Committees. This recommended that the ACR should monitor whether committee research recommendations are being suitably implemented by the Agency.
- Plans for the 4th annual open meeting on research and alternative methods of disseminating the Agency's research. The open meeting had been successful in presenting the outcomes of research, and how it had been used, to a range of stakeholders. However, it was considered that further thought needed to be given to wider dissemination of research and to looking ahead over the next 5 years to identify what research was needed into food safety and quality issues. The open meeting has been postponed until a discussion group has considered the objectives for the meeting.
- Draft business cases on *LO1 Consumer Choice and Standards* which covered general food labelling issues excluding nutrition labelling and health claims; and *GO3 Safety assessment of novel and GM foods*.
- A draft report on a feasibility study on applying analytical support tools to research prioritisation in the Agency. Members noted that the study had focused at programme level with the aim of aggregating information at this level to derive assessment at theme level. It remained important to consider prioritisation at theme level, which would compare wider areas of Agency activity, that are more different from each other than programmes within a theme. Discussions on this are ongoing.

4.3 The Committee received updates on

- the EC's Framework Programmes and collaborative research
- research reviews and workshops planned for the remainder of the financial year
- progress on research management initiatives

Agency response to ACR recommendations on research themes:

- 4.4 The recommendation for a new theme for research with a primary focus on inherently cross-cutting issues was adopted. A single new theme on "choice" would cover work on issues with a primary focus in the choice area.

4.5 A recommendation for a single theme on disease transmitted by food, which had suggested themes on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies and Foodborne Illness should be merged, was not adopted. These two themes will be kept separate.

4.6 It was agreed to keep new themes open to regular review and to modify as necessary to accommodate developments in specific areas and new or emerging issues. Alternative names for some themes were rejected and it was decided to retain the terms used in the Strategic Plan as this helps underline the link between the research and the Plan.

Full minutes, agendas and papers relating to ACR are available at <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/ouradvisors/ACR/meetings/>

5 SPONGIFROM ENCEPHALOPATHY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC)

5.1 SEAC met on 4 occasions in 2005 when it discussed the following matters.

Meeting of 3 March 2005

5.2 The Committee discussed a profile of the vCJD epidemic and agreed that further epidemiological analysis and modelling work was required to comprehensively reassess the nature and future profile of the epidemic. The Epidemiology Subgroup was asked to conduct an assessment, taking into account new research and the possibility of human to human infection, to identify critical factors that could influence the nature of the epidemic and to consider the likelihood of a self-sustaining epidemic and key interventions which might prevent this.

5.3 The Committee identified key areas for Professor William Hill to include in his report on possible causes of BSE cases born after the 1996 UK reinforced animal feed ban (known as BARB cases). These included assessment of data on BSE cases in other countries, possible genetic relationships between BARB cases and possible environmental causes such as the mineral content of grazing pastures or the presence of toxic alkaloids in feed.

5.4 The Committee gave its view on the finding of possible BSE in a UK goat which died in 1990.

5.5 The Committee considered a paper by Heikenwalder *et al* (published 2005 in *Science*) that reported that in mouse models, chronic inflammation altered the tissue distribution of scrapie prions and infectivity.

Meeting of 21 April 2005

5.6 The Committee on Microbiological Safety of Blood, Tissue and Organs asked SEAC for advice on whether a scientific distinction could be drawn

between potential tissue/organ donors that have received blood transfusions either a few days before donation or in the more distant past, in terms of the relative load of vCJD agent that might be present in bone, tissues or organs.

- 5.7 The *Ad Hoc* Epidemiology Subgroup reported on the design of a case control study to identify possible causes of BARB cases. SEAC considered it important to use more sophisticated molecular approaches to characterise BARB cases and to gather as much information as possible on cases as they arise.
- 5.8 Defra asked SEAC to consider a release assessment to estimate TSE-related infectivity levels associated with the use of rendered category 3 animal by-products in fertiliser for non-pasture land.
- 5.9 FSA asked SEAC to review an assessment of the possible UK exposure to BSE associated with vertebral column from cattle aged under 12 or under 30 months.

Meeting of 30 June 2005

- 5.10 FSA asked SEAC to consider the findings of research to develop diagnostic tests to detect BSE infection-associated abnormal prion protein (PRP^{BSE}) in cows' milk and to screen milk from cattle experimentally infected with BSE for the presence of PRP^{BSE}. SEAC received a report from the FSA/SEAC Milk Working Group which oversaw the research.
- 5.11 During previous discussions of UK BSE surveillance SEAC noted that there had been a decline in the number of suspect BSE cases, identified on the basis of clinical signs, that were subsequently confirmed when BSE diagnostic tests were applied. As the cause of disease in the unconfirmed cases is unclear, SEAC considered that procedures to identify differential diagnosis of any altered form of BSE would be important. Defra presented its approach to differential diagnosis of BSE to the committee.
- 5.12 There was further discussion of BARB cases. Around 100 of these BSE cases have been reported in the UK. Their cause is unknown. Professor William Hill (University of Edinburgh) gave an overview of his report which had been commissioned by Defra.
- 5.13 The Epidemiology Subgroup had discussed assessment of current infection prevalence, the influence of genotype and age on infection prevalence and the interaction of potential routes of secondary transmission.
- 5.14 The Committee received a report on atypical cases of scrapie.

Meeting of 22 September 2005

- 5.15 Defra and the FSA had asked SEAC to consider the European Commission TSE Roadmap which described broad, strategic goals in relation to EU TSE policy, control and surveillance measures. SEAC welcomed the roadmap and made a number of recommendations.
- 5.16 The Committee considered a paper by Colchester and Colchester published in *The Lancet* presenting a hypothesis that BSE arose from cattle feed contaminated with human remains derived from people infected with CJD.
- 5.17 The Committee was shown a DVD used to train veterinary surgeons in the clinical diagnosis of BSE.
- 5.18 The Committee considered preliminary findings from a current study set up to investigate whether BSE could spread naturally and persist within a sheep flock.
- 5.19 SEAC was updated on current research at VLA, in particular collaborative work with Japanese researchers to examine the distribution of abnormal prion protein in the peripheral nervous system of cattle with BSE.

Full minutes, agendas and papers relating to SEAC are available at <http://www.seac.gov.uk/>