

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD**  
**INFORMATION PAPER**

**Update from other Scientific Advisory Committees**

**1. Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs (ACAF)**

ACAF met on 7 March 2012. At this meeting the Committee:

- received a presentation on the work being carried out by the Food Standards Agency on identification of emerging food safety risks. As a result of the presentation, the committee agreed to provide information to the Agency on issues concerning animal feed that the Agency should consider as part of its work in this area;
- also considered a paper on awareness and competence of feed business operators. This is the second of three papers covering potential safety gaps in the feed sector, with the aim of helping to prevent an incident similar to the German dioxin feed contamination (December 2010) occurring in the UK. Members agreed that further consideration of this topic was required, including a presentation from industry organisations (for example, the Agricultural Industries Confederation) on work they are carrying out in this area;
- noted the work being carried out by the Agency and other competent authorities to address the recommendations from the Food and Veterinary Office audit on feed law enforcement in the UK that took place between 15 and 25 November 2011; and
- briefly discussed the conclusions of the sixth session of the ad hoc Intergovernmental Codex Task Force on Animal Feeding held in Berne between 20 and 24 February 2012.

The next ACAF meeting will be held in Belfast at Queen's University on Friday 15 June 2012. Items on the provisional agenda for this meeting include:

- Assuring Food Safety in Northern Ireland – Report and Recommendations of the Industry Feed Assurance Group;
- Handling Feed incidents; and
- Initial Feedback from the Food and Veterinary Office audit.

**Recruitment**

Interviews were held on Monday 16 April 2012 for two vacancies – a farmer and a consumer representative.

## 2. Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP)

The last meeting of ACNFP was held on 26 April.

Assessments were carried out on applications for the authorisation of the following novel ingredients:

- Clostridium butyricum as a probiotic food supplement
- Isomaltooligosaccharides
- Methylcellulose
- Vitamin D enriched yeast product
- Methyltetrahydrofolic acid, glucosamine salt

The Committee discussed whether the approaches currently used for the estimation of exposure to novel food ingredients are sufficient, particularly in cases involving multiple sources of the same ingredient or component. The Committee was also given an update on the despatch of Committee papers and on options for accessing electronic versions of the papers. This included web based networks currently being investigated by other Committees.

The next ACNFP meeting is planned to be held on 4 July 2012.

## 3. **Committee on Toxicity (COT)**

The last COT meeting was held on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Agenda items included:

- **First draft over-arching statement on the chemicals and food allergens of relevance to complementary feeding in 0 – 12 months old infants**  
The Committee was asked to comment on the over-arching statement on chemicals and food allergens of relevance to complementary feeding in 0 – 12 months old infants as part of the COT input into Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) review of complementary and young child feeding.
- **Review of potential risks from high levels of lead in infant nutrition**  
The Committee was asked to comment on the potential risks from high levels of lead in infant nutrition and consider the inclusion of this paper as part of the COT input into Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) review of complementary and young child feeding.
- **Review of potential risks from high levels of vitamin A in infant nutrition**  
The Committee was asked to comment on the potential risks from high levels of vitamin A in infant nutrition and consider the inclusion of this paper as part of the COT input into Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) review of complementary and young child feeding.
- **Default values to be used in risk assessment in the absence of actual measured data**  
The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) recently published guidance on selected default values to be used by the EFSA Scientific Committee, Scientific Panels and Units in the absence of actual measured data. Members were asked

to consider the extent to which the EFSA guidance should be adopted in risk assessments of the COT.

- **Update on toxicogenomics**

Following on from the discussion at the February meeting, this paper provided further information on the aspects of chemical risk assessment to which toxicogenomics tools could contribute.

The draft minutes of the meeting will be available on the web,

<http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotmtgs/cotmeets/>.

The next COT meeting will be on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2012, in Conference rooms 4&5 at Aviation House.

#### **4. General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS)**

The following items were discussed at the last GACS meeting on 14 March 2012.

Chief Scientist's report - strategic science and evidence

- GACS welcomed progress on developing more strategic/innovative evidence work, including the Strategic Challenge call and the workshop on molecular epidemiology.

Review of science governance

- GACS endorsed the draft conclusions of the review of science governance, including revisions to the Science Checklist, Good Practice Guidelines for the SACs and supporting procedures and guidance. GACS highlighted some areas that could be brought out more clearly, particularly two-way dialogue between FSA and SACs, and feedback to SACs on how their advice has been used in policy decisions. Following further iteration and input from GACS and internally, final proposals on the review of science governance will go to the Board in July.
- GACS noted in this context the lack of information on the final policy decision resulting from the SACs' extensive work on folate, although FSA's recommendation was clear. The GACS Chair wrote to the FSA Chair drawing this discussion to his attention.

Science and coordination in the SACs

- Professor Peter Aggett, SACN Deputy Chair, outlined SACN's work. This reinforced the need, discussed previously at GACS, for close co-ordination across the food safety and nutrition agenda and between SACN and the other SACs that advise FSA.

Independent reviews of ACNFP and of GACS; GACS work plan and recruitment

- These reviews concluded there was an ongoing need for the each Committee and that their work was of value to FSA and stakeholders.

- GACS endorsed the draft responses from ACNFP and FSA to the review of ACNFP.
- GACS agreed its response to the review of GACS and its recommendations, including measures to increase engagement with the Board. GACS also discussed its forward work plan in light of the review.
- GACS felt it could develop further its work on science communication and agreed to establish a Working Group to scope out what GACS might contribute in this area, and how. It will report back at the next meeting.
- GACS considered its membership and expertise in light of the review and work plan. It felt that replacing the expertise on nutrition left by the departure of Jeya Henry was essential but was not convinced there was a clear net benefit in recruiting an additional member with (food) industry experience (which the review recommended GACS should consider), although this experience could be a desirable quality.

#### Co-ordination with SACN

- Since the change in FSA remit the SACN Chair has attended GACS as 'invited observer'. GACS asked FSA to explore formalising this arrangement by reinstating the SACN Chair as a GACS member *ex officio*.

#### Interdisciplinary working

- There was a presentation by Professor Philip Lowe, Director of the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme (Relu). FSA will consider the experience of Relu in assessing interdisciplinary research.

#### GACS dinner

- The annual GACS dinner was reinstated the evening before this meeting. GACS welcomed this as valuable in maintaining informal engagement between GACS and FSA Chair, Deputy Chair, Chief Executive and Chief Scientist.

#### Forthcoming meeting

The next GACS meeting is on 31 October at which the following are planned:

- report on NDNS (National Diet and Nutrition Survey)
- report on IID2 (Infectious Intestinal Diseases 2)
- report from the Chair of the ACDP (Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens) TSE Risk Assessment subgroup
- report back on discussion of assessment of aggregate exposures from novel foods and ingredients
- discussion of outcomes of a pilot to develop approaches to support horizon scanning in the SACs

## **5. Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN)**

The following documents have been published recently on SACN's website:

- Dietary Reference Values for Energy 2011
- Draft SACN/RCPCH draft statement on BMI thresholds to define overweight and obesity in children

<http://www.sacn.gov.uk/>

The next main meeting of SACN will be on 12 June. Items on the draft agenda include:

- A revised paper on the iodine status of the UK population
- An update from ACNFP
- Draft position statement on Selenium and Health

Working group and subgroup updates

- Maternal and Child Nutrition
- Carbohydrates
- Vitamin D

Other updates from Members

- NDNS Project Board
- Feedback from ACNFP
- Responsibility Deal – Food Network

## **6. Social Science Research Committee (SSRC)**

The SSRC had their Ninth meeting on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2012 in Aviation House, London.

The items discussed were:

- Evaluation of the food hygiene rating scheme/food hygiene information scheme
- The FSA Forward Evidence plan (evidence needs for 2012/13)
- Ethics in Government Social Research
- Regulatory Behaviours (social science evidence to help support enforcement and compliance strategy)
- Advisory Group Updates from members (research to understand behaviours in slaughter houses, Kitchen Practices observational research and the Agency's Food and You survey)