

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD
INFORMATION PAPER

Update from other Scientific Advisory Committees

Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs (ACAF)

15 June 2012 (Belfast)

The Committee received a presentation on the work being carried out by the Northern Ireland Grain Trade Association (NIGTA) in assuring food safety in Northern Ireland following the publication of the report and recommendations of the Industry Feed Assurance Group. The Committee was interested in the work being taken forward by NIGTA and requested that when further progress had been made an update presentation should be provided.

The Committee also considered a paper on Feed Incident Management provided by officials from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. The presentation outlined the level of preparedness in Northern Ireland for the handling of feed related incidents, including contingency planning, and risk assessment activities. The Committee was encouraged by the arrangements in place.

The Committee was given an oral presentation on the initial findings of the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) audit of Northern Ireland in May 2012 to evaluate the implementation of official controls on feed. The draft report of the audit is due to be received at the end of June 2012, and officials agreed to keep stakeholders informed of the outcome of the audit and progress to implement the FVO audit team's recommendations.

19 September 2012 (Belfast)

The main items of discussion at this meeting included:

- **Antimicrobial Resistance** - the Committee received a presentation from an official of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate on Antimicrobial Resistance. Members noted that this topic was complex and they wished to explore it at a future meeting, where they could discuss the available evidence to support whether antimicrobial resistance was a current issue for animal feed.
- **Feed Safety** - the Committee considered a paper on the work that the British Society for Animal Science (BSAS) is carrying out on the registration of those providing advice to farmers. The Committee commended the work being carried out by the BSAS in this area and is looking forward to receiving a further presentation from the Agricultural Industries Confederation on work they are also carrying out in this area, at a future meeting.

- **Commission Regulation 225/2012** - a Food Standards Agency official gave an oral update on work being carried out to implement Commission Regulation 225/2012. This Regulation introduces additional controls on dioxins in oils and fats for feed use including the mandatory testing of certain products for dioxins and the approval of oils and fats manufacturers. The Committee asked to be kept informed of developments in this area, including receiving a forthcoming consultation package on draft national legislation and accompanying guidance.
- **Forward Work Programme** - the Committee considered its Forward Work Programme for 2012-2013. It prioritised its proposed work areas, including a new item of work entitled 'emphasis on reduction in food waste'. Additionally, following the presentation on antimicrobial resistance, the Committee agreed that this item should be included in its forward work programme.
- The next meeting of ACAF is in London on 16 January 2013. Provisional agenda items for the January 2013 meeting include:
 - balance of Competence Review;
 - review of Official Controls on Feed;
 - food safety – potential gaps – imports; and
 - feed safety – potential gaps.

Committee on Toxicity (COT)

Since the last ACMSF meeting on 29th May, the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT) have held 4 meetings and have discussed the following items:

- SACN Review of vitamin D. Adverse effects of high levels TOX/2012/23. (June meeting). The SACN review of vitamin D: Serum calcium: regulation and analysis TOX/2012/40 was discussed at the December meeting.
- An over-arching statement of chemicals and the development of food allergic disease, of relevance to infant feeding (TOX/2012/20 and TOX/2012/28) as part of the COT input into Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) review of complementary and young child feeding (June meeting). A final statement was published in November 2012 and can be found at: <http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotstatements/cotstatementsyrs/cotstatements2012/650147>
- Review of potential risks from high levels of aluminium in the infant diet TOX/2012/21 (June meeting). The first draft statement on the potential risks from high levels of aluminium in the infant diet TOX/2012/36 was subsequently discussed at their October meeting.
- First draft statement on the interaction of caffeine and alcohol and their combined effects on health and behaviour TOX/2012/22, TOX/2012/29 and TOX/2012/33 (June meeting). It was expected that the final statement would be published in early 2013.

- Draft statement on the use of toxicogenomics data in risk assessment TOX/2012/24 and TOX/2012/30 (September meeting). A final statement summarising the Committee's views on this topic was published in October 2012 and can be found at: <http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotstatements/cotstatementsyrs/cotstatements2012/646694>
- A draft systematic review of epidemiological literature on organophosphates and six health outcomes relating to the nervous system TOX/2012/26 (September meeting).
- Risks arising from the diet that are related to the development of atopic and autoimmune disease TOX/2012/27 (September meeting).
- Draft statement on the potential risks from high levels of vitamin A in the infant diet TOX/2012/34 (October meeting) and TOX/2012/41 (December meeting).
- Draft statement on the potential risks from high levels of lead in the infant diet TOX/2012/35 (October meeting) and TOX/2012/42 (December meeting).
- Draft report of the joint ACP/COT working group on bystander risk assessment (BRAWG) TOX/2012/32 (October meeting). The report can be found at: <http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotreports/cotjointreps/brawgreport/>
- Report of the COT subgroup on the Lowermoor water pollution incident TOX/2012/38 (December meeting). This item was discussed in reserved session. Further information on the Lowermoor sub-group can be found at: <http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotwg/lowermoorsub/>
- Review of potential risks from high levels of soy phytoestrogens in infant diet TOX/2012/39 (December meeting). The COT statement on the FSA phytoestrogens research programme can be found at: <http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotstatements/cotstatementsyrs/cotstatements2012/cot201201>

The Committee is in the process of appointing 2 new members, and re-appointing 7 existing members with effect from 1 April 2013.

The Committee will hold their next meeting on 5th February 2013 at Aviation House. Agenda items have yet to be confirmed.

General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS)

The last GACS meeting was on 31 October, and the following items were discussed:

- **Horizon scanning in the SACs** - GACS discussed the outcomes of a pilot of an approach to supporting horizon-scanning in the Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs). GACS agreed that SACs should trial the approach which could be tailored to each SAC. The materials would be updated to reflect GACS comments before circulating to SACs.

- **Report on how FSA had responded to advice and recommendations from the SACs** - GACS welcomed the report and felt that each SAC should receive such updates regularly from its Secretariat, with GACS taking an overview to consider gaps/cross-cutting issues.
- **Report from the SACN Chair on the NDNS** - GACS underlined the fundamental importance of the NDNS data to the FSA and to other SACs, in underpinning exposure assessment and hence risk assessment for food safety, as well as informing work on diet and health in Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- **Report on SACs' current activities and forward plans** - GACS was encouraged to note that these discussions were fostering increasing co-ordination and joint-working across SACs.
- **The first report from the GACS Working Group on Science Communication and Engagement** - the Working Group will develop a draft final report with recommendations for the FSA for discussion at the GACS spring meeting.
- **A report on the Agency's evidence portfolio** - GACS did not identify any significant gaps or imbalances, but suggested additional analyses that would help inform future discussions
- **A report from the Agency's Chief Scientist on science activities and plans:** GACS agreed that the FSA should develop its use of data using modern techniques (data mining, text mining, analysis of web/social media, etc.). It asked the FSA to scope potential ideas and contacts, and a sub-Group of GACS will then work with FSA to develop detailed plans.

The Committee welcomed new expert member Professor Colin Dennis to his first GACS meeting. The new Chair of COM, Dr David Lovell, has also joined GACS as an ex-officio member.

The meeting papers are published on the GACS website and the draft minutes of the meeting can be found at <http://gacs.food.gov.uk/gacsmeets/>

The next GACS meetings are on 21 March and 8 October 2013 (with the annual GACS dinner planned for 20 March).

Social Science Research Committee (SSRC)

At the tenth meeting of the SSRC in October 2012 members discussed:

- Behavioural Economics
- Healthy Eating work in FSA Scotland and FSA Northern Ireland
- Members of Advisory Groups provided updates: Meat Controls; Kitchen Practices Observational Research; Evaluation of the Food Hygiene Ratings Scheme and the Agency's Food and You Survey

The Committee has published its Annual Report for the last financial year, which can be found at: <http://ssrc.food.gov.uk/annualreports/>

The report of the review of the SSRC has been sent to members and they are considering the SSRC response. This is likely to be published in the spring.

The next SSRC meeting will be held on the 18th April 2013.

Secretariat
January 2013