

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD
INFORMATION PAPER

Update from other Scientific Advisory Committees

Advisory Committee on Animal Feed (ACAF)

The last ACAF meeting was on held on 15 December 2010. Topics discussed included:-

Copper in Feed

The Committee continued with its discussions on the use of copper in feed for cattle. Members agreed with the need for a Code of Practice which gives advice on supplementing copper in cattle feed and agreed to provide comments on the proposed Code to make it more user friendly. The Committee also suggested that two versions of the Code should be produced, one for the feed industry and the other for farmers.

Codex Task Force on Animal Feeding

The Committee was informed of new work to be undertaken by the Codex Task Force on Animal Feeding. Members were asked to help inform the UK negotiating line when work of the Codex Task Force commences in the second half of 2011. The ACAF Secretary will keep the Committee informed of further developments.

Nicarbazin

Members were informed of the new EU Maximum Residue Limits for nicarbazin products in the tissues of chickens reared for meat. ACAF was informed that following the introduction of these limits the Nicarbazin Project Group had been formally disbanded. This was a joint initiative facilitated by the Food Standards Agency involving the British Poultry Council, the National Farmers Union and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate to identify ways in which the poultry industry could reduce the incidence and levels of nicarbazin residues in British chickens and to raise awareness amongst farmers. Members of the Committee agreed that they would be happy to liaise with the Agency and the Veterinary Residues Committee in providing future advice on coccidiostat residues in feed.

Recruitment

Currently there are no vacancies on ACAF. However, we intend to make appointments and re-appointments for the following posts in 2011:

Appointments

- Feed Manufacturer
- Toxicology
- Animal Nutrition

Re-appointments

- Chairman
- Veterinary Science
- Animal Nutrition
- Feed Materials
- Feed Industry

Next Meeting

The next ACAF meeting is scheduled to take place on 2 March 2011. Provisional agenda items for discussion include:

- sustainability aspects of feed production and use;
- biofuels; and
- 2009 Quinquennial Review: Progress on Recommendations.

Committee on Toxicity (COT)

The COT met on 2 Nov and 14 Dec 2010 and will next be meeting on 1 Feb 2011.

The main topics for discussion at the last two meeting of 2010 were methanol, phthalates and mixed halogenated dioxins and biphenyls in UK food.

In November we also discussed the CoPSAC update and in December the joint SACN/COT statement on timing of introduction of gluten in the infant diet and the dibutylphthalate in rubber clogs.

At the moment the draft agenda for the Feb meeting includes draft statement(s) on methanol, idiopathic environmental intolerance and phthalates. Other discussion topics will be phytoestrogens, draft 2010 annual report, research projects on mixtures of pesticides and similar substances, an update on actions taken subsequent to COT advice and horizon scanning.

Agenda papers and minutes for COT meetings can be found on our website <http://cot.food.gov.uk/>.

General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS)

GACS held its last open meeting on 19 October 2010. The papers and draft minutes of the meeting are available on the GACS website at: <http://gacs.food.gov.uk/>. The Committee discussed the impacts of the Agency's change in remit, the Spending Review and the Public Bodies review on FSA science. The Committee also discussed a draft response prepared by its Sub group to the concerns raised by the Soil Association and Organic Trade Board on the Agency-funded systematic review of nutrient content of organic and non-organic foods.

Priorities for FSA science

- In times of reducing budgets, GACS advised it will be important for the Agency to focus on priorities and risks to health, but that this should include strategic, cross-cutting and longer-term issues as well as immediate priorities.

Change in remit

- The Committee wished to maintain effective links with the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition - responsibility for which has moved to the Department of Health - to ensure collaboration on cross-cutting food safety and nutrition issues.

Public Bodies Review

- The Public Bodies Review had led to a change of status of some Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) that jointly advise the Agency and other Government departments, although no changes were proposed to the Committees for which the Agency is lead or sole sponsor. GACS felt that SACs must retain their openness or independence of operation whatever their status and the Agency will need to continue to monitor this to ensure it happens in practice.
- The CS urged SAC Chairs to raise any concerns they may have about the consequences of the changes with the Agency (Secretariats and CS) in the first instance and if not satisfied to bring their concerns to the attention of Professor Sir John Beddington.

Cross-SAC working

- The Committee also discussed more generally how to ensure the SAC's advising the Agency collaborate effectively on cross-cutting issues, drawing on a model proposed by the Agency's Social Science Research Committee which the Committee considered was good practice.
- The COT Chair provided an update on the Committee's work on ways of improving both the evaluation and communication of uncertainty, in carrying out and reporting risk assessments.
- The ACNFP have volunteered to report back on their work on nanotechnologies at the next meeting in March to pick up any issues in this area that would benefit from cross-SAC working.

Sharing data and funding

- GACS felt that partnership working (for example co-funding research) will be even more important for the Agency to make the most of available resources.

Considering potential benefits and economic pressures, GACS felt the Agency should set out clearly when and how this would be accepted, ensuring scientific quality, openness and independence. GACS agreed an outline proposal from its Working Group, led by Professor Coggon, to produce a short guidance note on principles, issues and possible approaches for partnership working with industry/NGOs. The Working Group has since worked up a more detailed framework document which is now in the process of being finalised by the Committee.

Risk Assessment/Risk Management (RA/RM) Working Group

- GACS discussed a second report from its Working Group on RA/RM. A short pilot study had illustrated some useful points on understanding and practice across the SACs. GACS will pick out key messages from the work to date and previous discussions, to highlight key principles, issues and good practice to report back at the next meeting.

GACS Review Sub-Group on the Agency-funded systematic review of nutrient content of organic and non-organic foods

- GACS response to the concerns raised by the Soil Association and Organic Trade Board on the Agency-funded systematic review of nutrient content of organic and non-organic foods has now been published on the GACS website. GACS did not concur with the majority of the concerns raised by the SA/OTB and considered that the review itself followed good practice. The response and the background papers are available at <http://gacs.food.gov.uk/gacsgroups/wqorganic>. GACS made some recommendations for the Agency and the Agency's response to these is available at <http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2010/nov/gacsorganicreview>

Dates for next meetings

The next GACS meetings are planned for Thursday 3 March and Wednesday 9 November 2011.

**Secretariat
January 2011**