

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD

### Information Paper

#### Update from other Scientific Advisory Committees

##### Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs (ACAF)

ACAF met on 14 December 2011. At this meeting the following items were discussed:

- The Committee was given an oral presentation on the initial findings of the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) audit of the United Kingdom in November 2011 to evaluate the implementation of official controls on feed. In due course the Committee will be asked to provide advice on how the Agency can address relevant recommendations made by the FVO audit team.
- The Committee also considered a paper on the identification of feed business establishments. This was the first of three papers covering potential safety gaps in the feed sector, with the aim of reducing the risk of an incident similar to the German dioxin feed contamination (December 2010) occurring in the UK. Members provided information on the types of establishments which may not be registered by enforcement authorities, and made recommendations on how these could be identified.
- The Committee received a presentation on organic feed issues, including proposed changes to legislation. Members noted that a vote in Brussels on the new legislation is expected in early February 2012. The Committee agreed that this was an important but complex issue and asked to be kept informed of developments on this subject.
- Members also received a presentation on the contamination of the food chain by brominated flame retardants (BFRs). This covered the potential long term impact of these chemicals and work being done by the Agency and international organisations. The Committee recommended that feed should be covered in further work undertaken by the Agency.
- Finally, the Committee considered its forward work programme for 2011-2012. The Committee agreed that four new work items should be included: feed safety – potential gaps; recommendations from the Food and Veterinary Office audit of UK feed law enforcement; microbiological issues; and handling of feed incidents.

The next ACAF meeting will be held on 7 March 2012 in Aviation House London.

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

The Committee on Toxicity met on 1 November 2011. The main items discussed were:

- a draft statement on FSA-funded research and other progress on mixtures of pesticides and similar substances (paper TOX/2011/28)
- a proposal from the Danish Environmental Protection Agency to restrict further the use of phthalates in Europe (paper TOX/2011/29).
- EFSA opinion on Statistical Significance and Biological Relevance (paper TOX/2011/30). Dr David Lovell, a member of the EFSA Scientific Committee, and Chair of the working group that drafted this scientific opinion was invited to give a presentation to COT on his (personal) perspectives on the opinion and the relevance for committees conducting risk assessments.

Draft minutes of the meeting can be found on the COT website at <http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotmtgs/cotmeets/>.

The next meeting of COT will be on 7 February 2012. The following items are on the agenda:

- Horizon scanning
- Use of toxicogenomics data in risk assessment
- COT input into Scientific Advisory Committee review of complementary and young child feeding
- Draft statement on the FSA-funded T05 research programme on phytoestrogens
- Draft COT 2011 Annual Report

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

GACS held its 8<sup>th</sup> meeting on 9 November 2011. At this meeting the following items were discussed:

- GACS advised on steps to develop the FSA's Register of Specialists to broaden membership and use it as a broader discussion community.
- GACS' comments had been sought prior to the meeting on the FSA principles for release of underpinning data and these had been favourable. The FSA will publish the principles shortly.
- The Chief Scientist commented on a number of issues in his report and these included the recent *E.coli* outbreaks in Germany and France and the workshop that the FSA is planning with the Health Protection Agency, the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council and ACMSF. He also covered the Second Study of Infectious Intestinal Disease, the House of Lords Science and

Technology Select Committee inquiry on Behaviour Change, the Scottish Government Review and the FSA's recent Strategic Challenge tender.

- Within the standing item in which science in the SACs is discussed, Professor Sarah O'Brien gave a presentation on the ACMSF's work and the challenges and cross-cutting issues in microbiological safety of food. She commented on the possibility of establishing a joint working group in the future to facilitate joint working with other SACs. The COT's and SSRC's work on communication of uncertainty was also discussed.
- GACS discussed the outcomes of the reviews of COT and ACMSF which had concluded that there is an ongoing need for these committees and that their work and that of their Secretariats was of a good standard. FSA will consider GACS comments on streamlining reviews when planning the next round of reviews of SACs.
- As a result of a discussion of a report of the Strategic Evidence Working Group, FSA will develop and implement the ideas in the paper from the Working Group.
- The responses received in the consultation on the framework for sharing data and funding with industry/NGOs and the proposed response to these were presented and the proposed response was agreed with some amendments to the framework.
- Derrick Jones, Head of Analysis and Research Division in the FSA presented his paper that outlined the approach to the evaluation of policy and research in the FSA. GACS asked to be kept informed about the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme evaluation.
- The GACS Secretary outlined plans for a review of science governance and invited comments. FSA will reflect GACS' comments in carrying out the review and will report back at the next meeting.
- A presentation was made by Dr John McCauley of the National Institute of Medical Research on the WHO Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System and parallels with tracking and managing food safety risks were discussed.
- At the next GACS meeting on 14 March 2012 there will be a presentation on the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition's work and the National Diet and Nutrition Study will be discussed.

## **SSRC**

The SSRC held its eighth meeting on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2011. The items discussed were:

- The new SSRC Work Plan

- SSRC Horizon Scanning
- Presenting uncertainty in risk assessment

Members of the Committee are represented on a number of advisory groups, established to provide strategic advice and peer review on key social science projects being undertaken by the FSA. Members updated the Committee on project progress and their contributions since March 2011.

#### Evaluation of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme /Food Hygiene Information scheme

The evaluation of the scheme is now underway. The advisory group oversaw the commissioning stages and will comment on key aspects of the project going forward.

#### Future Meat Controls

The advisory group have advised on appropriate methodologies and assisted in framing the research specification. The research was tendered during November 2011.

#### Regulatory Cultures and Behaviours

A package of work to better understand regulatory behaviours is being undertaken by the FSA. The advisory group have considered the work to date and the implications of this to the FSA and discussed options for further work in the area that will aid the Agency in delivering effective enforcement.

#### Kitchen Practices

This study seeks to explore kitchen practices and impact on food safety, the research will be observational and so will look at what people really do in their homes and explore reasons behind particular practice. The advisory group oversaw the commissioning stages and will comment on key aspects of the project going forward.

**Secretariat**  
**January 2012**