

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD

### INFORMATION PAPER

#### Centre for Environmental Risk and Futures (CERF) at Cranfield University

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is a partner in the new Defra-led partnership sponsoring a Centre for Environmental Risk and Futures (CERF) at Cranfield University. The Centre will provide more robust horizon scanning and futures work across the food and environment areas, through a joined-up approach. Anticipated benefits to FSA include access to expertise we do not have at the FSA, the sharing of costs and developing a common understanding of cross-cutting issues by working in partnership with other Government departments.

The Centre is funded for an initial period of 3 years from April 2011 to 31 March 2014. Total funding over the 3 years is £1.8M, with FSA contributing £150k. Other partners include Defra, Marine Management Organisation, Scottish Government (covers SEPA and CAMERAS), Environment Agency, Natural England, Welsh Government and Department of Energy and Climate Change, with further interest from several other funders.

The Centre will provide four work streams that will:

1. Develop a programme of regular environmental and food horizon scanning to identify and disseminate emerging issues on the short, medium and long term horizons. This will draw on a large number of agreed external sources as well as information from the HS carried out in the FSA and the other partners
2. Develop and integrate risk analysis methods and techniques to assess and prioritise the importance/likelihood and impact of emerging issues identified in [1] above. This will help ensure a more rigorous and evidence-based assessment and prioritisation of issues and allow 'FSA' issues to be considered in a wider context;
3. Develop a programme of larger scale futures (foresight) studies (e.g. scenario building) to investigate a range of plausible futures and their implications for high priority issues; (2-3 per year, to be agreed jointly by partners). This will allow FSA issues to be considered in a wider analysis of cross-cutting or shared issues and help develop common understanding with partner organisations.
4. Build wider capacity to assess future risks and opportunities, through a range of up-skilling training courses and knowledge exchange activities and materials. This will support development of FSA skills in this area and to embed futures/risk approaches in policy development and planning; recognising it is impractical to develop and support fully-fledged futures experts in-house.

There is also a share in a separate resource of 120 days per annum of 'ad hoc' time from futures experts at the Centre to work on smaller/more focused or specific pieces of work – this would work out about 10-15d/annum per partner, and would support expert facilitation for workshops, input to scenario development and analysis on more specific/FSA-centred topics as well as the more cross-cutting work relevant to us and other partners.

Governance is exercised by all partners, at three levels. A Working Group takes on the main programme management and governance, including identifying and prioritising

specific projects. The Working Group is supported by Project Boards for specific pieces of work, and it reports to a High-level Stakeholder Group, which provides overall strategic direction, and ownership.

The Centre produces a monthly horizon scanning newsletter which covers new insights and emerging issues from a range of topic areas relevant to Defra and its customers. Insights include anything from shifts in consumer attitudes and developments in food and farming, to trends in technology, energy and resources. The monthly newsletters will be provided for information at future ACMSF meetings. Further information and past issues can be found at the following web address <http://horizonscanning.defra.gov.uk/> The most recent (September and October newsletter editions) are attached (see ACM/1059a and ACM/1059b).

**Secretariat**  
**January 2012**