

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

**Update from other Scientific Advisory Committees**

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

The ACAF met on 8 May 2013.

Members were provided with an account of discussions held by the ACMSF at its meeting on 31 January 2013 on antimicrobial resistance. A member of ACAF would be co-opted onto an ACMSF subgroup that would consider the subject in more detail.

An official from the Food Standards Agency gave an update presentation on the implementation of the five work streams that have been developed following the outcome of the review of official feed controls which aims to deliver improvements to the current system. Members were encouraged that progress had been made to implement the work streams by April 2014. One of the work streams includes revision of the draft Code of Practice on Feed Law and Members agreed to provide the Secretariat with their comments on the proposed draft of the document. The Committee agreed that work to improve the delivery of official feed controls was an important area and therefore wished to receive regular updates on the work of the implementation team;

The FSA Assessor asked the Committee to consider a paper that summarised its review of potential gaps in feed chain controls. Members agreed that the paper covered all of the Committee's views and findings and thanked the FSA assessor for its production. It was agreed that this topic will be periodically reviewed.

A representative of the Pet Food Manufacturers Association and two industry representatives provided a presentation to ACAF Members on pet food issues including the re-authorisation of feed additives. The Committee sympathised with the issues raised and agreed to provide assistance where it can do so.

**Date of next meeting**

The next ACAF meeting is scheduled to take place in Aviation House on 9 October 2013. Provisional agenda items for this meeting are:

- Consumer Engagement;
- Feed Law Enforcement Review Implementation Programme; and
- Update on Official Controls 882/2004.

## Appointments

Subject to the Food Standards Agency Chair and Agriculture Ministers' agreement, three new Members (lay person, enforcement and novel biotechnology) will attend their first meeting on 9 October 2013.

## Committee on Toxicity (COT)

COT has met three times since the ACMSF's last meeting, on 5 February, 26 March and 14 May.

Items discussed included:

- Horizon Scanning
- EFSA public consultation on draft Scientific Opinion on the re-evaluation of aspartame (E951) as a food additive
- SACN review of vitamin D
- Review of potential risks of  $\alpha$ -,  $\beta$ - and  $\gamma$ -hexachlorocyclohexanes in the infant diet
- Reports of hypervitaminosis A in infants
- Draft statement on the potential risks from high levels of soy phytoestrogens and soy products in the infant diet
- Draft statements on the potential risks from high levels of aluminium and lead in the infant diet
- The development of new screening levels for contaminants in soil
- Draft statement on endosulfan isomers, pentachlorobenzene and chlordecone in relation to infant diet
- GACS Working Group on data exploitation

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

## General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS)

GACS held an open meeting on 21 March 2013. Agenda items included:

### **Report from the FSA Chief Scientist on science activities and plans**

GACS were positive about the FSA's handling of the horse meat incident, and were pleased that the framework for sharing data (developed by GACS) had been useful in helping FSA agree its approach to sharing industry test data. The Committee noted that transparency on evidence (including testing, methods, interpretation and communication) was important and challenging in incidents and it agreed to establish a Working Group on the Use of Science in Emergencies.

### **Presentation on the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP) by Professor George Griffin, ACDP Chair**

The presentation included a report on the ACDP subgroup on TSE Risk Assessment, which took on provision of independent expert advice in this area for

FSA when SEAC was disbanded in 2010. The Committee supported the work to review guidance on frameworks for control of biological agents (COSSH and SAPO), which were relevant to some elements of FSA's research and of the work of the SACs, and were interested in whether the waste material from use of eggs in vaccine production had been considered for use in animal feed.

### **Science in the Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) – update on activities in the SACs**

GACS was encouraged to see that this standing discussion item was fostering increasing co-ordination and joint working across SACs, and noted further opportunities for co-operation. The SSRC Chair reported progress in developing work on social sciences within the global food security programme.

### **Reviews of the SACs**

GACS noted the review of the SSRC and endorsed the draft responses to the review from SSRC and from FSA. For the future programme of reviews GACS felt these should be streamlined, focussing on outcomes and exceptions, and proportionate to the relatively low risk and cost represented by the SACs.

### **Working Group on Science Communication and Engagement final report**

GACS endorsed the WGs' report which did not identify any significant gaps or concerns in FSA's approach; identified aspects of good practice; and made ten recommendations for improvement or where good practice could be applied more consistently. The FSA communications team will report on FSA communications and engagement activities at the SSRC September 2013 meeting.

### **FSA evidence portfolio – annual discussion at strategic level**

GACS did not identify any significant gaps in the portfolio, and welcomed the plans to develop strategic evidence, including the challenge call for high-risk/high-reward ideas and the FSA's work to develop applications of next generation sequencing in food safety. GACS noted the pressures on admin resource to manage research and exploit the evidence generated and will monitor this through future discussions.

### **Working Group on exploitation of data**

The WG gave a first report on its work to explore the potential for FSA to exploit new data tools and data sources to support its work.

The next GACS meeting is on 8 October 2013.

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

In April at the SSRC most recent meeting the committee discussed:

- The review of the committee and the General Advisory Committee on Science view of this
- The SSRC forward work plan
- The Agency's Forward Evidence Plan (FEP);
- The implications of the FEP in relation to the horizon scanning carried out at the last meeting

- The work of the Social and Business Surveys Review Working Group with consideration of the approach
- Merit of social science experts on individual scientific advisory committees compared with a social science research committee
- Review of membership and use of the Register of Specialists

The SSRC identified the following areas as a priority for future Agency social science research:

- (i) looking at systemic issues (such as how food scares, fraud and criminality in relation to food safety are all related to the food system);
- (ii) risk communication (how to quantify risk and a need for a meta-review of best practice in relation to this);
- (iii) vulnerable groups (including how food safety is related to issues of heterogeneity and demography);
- (iv) the relationship between knowledge and behaviour and the relationship between expert and lay knowledge around food safety issues;
- (v) sociology of organisations: how changes in policy and the practice of reform, such as de-regulation can have real world effects.

Furthermore, the impact of food safety research on nutrition and food labelling was highlighted, and it was agreed that these are not discrete areas.

Members of the SSRC also continued to advise the Agency on key pieces of social science.

This included:

- wave 2 of the Food and You survey
- an observational study in domestic
- the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme/Information Scheme evaluation

Further detail of these projects is provided below.

### **1. Food and You Survey:**

This is the FSA's flagship survey which measures public attitudes, knowledge and behaviour toward food issues. A final report was published at the end of March 2013. (link [http://foodbase.org.uk/results.php?f\\_report\\_id=805](http://foodbase.org.uk/results.php?f_report_id=805))

### **2. Domestic Kitchen practices:**

This study explored kitchen practices in 20 case study households via a mixed method approach, including observation and depth interviewing. A pilot study was carried out in Spring 2012 and the main stage fieldwork is now complete. The study also includes a small feasibility study to assess the possible application of activity recognition devices and how they may help in understanding kitchen practices. The research is due to report imminently.

### **3. Evaluation of Food Hygiene Rating Scheme/Food Hygiene Information Scheme:**

The evaluation will comprise of a full impact and process evaluation. The aim is to assess the impacts of the FHRS and FHIS on consumers, businesses, food hygiene compliance and public health and assess how and why impacts are occurring. This project is scheduled to conclude in the summer of 2014.

**Secretariat  
June 2013**