

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 24 September 2008, 3 December 2008, 4 March 2009 and 5 June 2009 in open session. The following issues were discussed.

Codes of Practice for the Control of Salmonella in Feedingstuffs

At its 24 September 2008 meeting, the Defra Assessor gave a presentation on the Codes of Practice for the Control of Salmonella in Feedingstuffs. These are non-statutory Codes which were subject to a twelve week period of consultation. The Codes revise and update existing Codes which were published in 1989 by the then Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Further discussions on the Code took place at meetings on 3 December 2008, 4 March 2009 and 5 June 2009. At the last of these, the Committee endorsed a pre-publication copy of the Code of Practice.

EC Regulation on the Marketing and Use of Feed

At its 24 September 2008 meeting, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Assessor provided the Committee with an update on the negotiations on the draft EC Regulation on the Marketing and Use of Feed, which will consolidate and replace five existing EC Directives. Further updates on developments on the negotiations were provided at the meetings on 3 December 2008 and 4 March 2009. The Regulation was adopted by the Council on 22 June 2009, and will come into effect in autumn 2010. The Agency has drawn up a note for stakeholders describing the main provisions of the Regulation.

Herbal Additives

An official from the FSA's Animal Feed Unit introduced a paper on herbal additives and asked the Committee to consider recent work by the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) on their feed additive use. Members agreed to await the views of the European Food Safety Authority's Panel on additives and products or substances used in animal feed (FEEDAP) Panel before revisiting this item.

BSE – related feed controls

At its 3 December 2008 meeting, the veterinary advisor to Defra's Food & Farming Group gave the Committee a presentation on BSE-Related Feed

Controls. Members were reminded of the background to the controls and developments since the controls were put in place.

General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS) horizon scanning workshop

The Committee received an update on arrangements for the horizon scanning workshop on future food production for healthier eating at its 5 June 2009 meeting. A report of the workshop that took place on 24 June 2009 will be published on the Agency's website.

Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) Audit

The Committee was advised on 4 March 2009 that as a part of its annual inspection programme, the European Commission's Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) intended to carry out a two week audit mission to the UK from 16 June 2009 to evaluate compliance with EC feed legislation and assess the UK's control systems. A further update on the preparations for the mission was provided at ACAF's meeting on 5 June 2009.

Reducing levels of nicarbazin in British chicken

The Committee's advice was sought on ways to publicise and distribute an e-leaflet for the poultry industry on recommendations to reduce levels of nicarbazin (a feed additive used to control coccidiosis) in British chicken. Current nicarbazin levels in chickens are not considered a significant food safety risk but consumers expect levels to be kept to a minimum. Members were able to recommend various organisations and trade journals to help publicise and distribute the e-leaflet.

Presentations

The Committee received the following presentations:

On 24 September 2008, Simon Renn of the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) Secretariat gave a presentation on the work and remit of the FAWC, an independent advisory body established by the Government in 1979. Its purpose is to review the welfare of farm animals and to advise Ministers of any legislative or other changes that may be necessary.

On 3 December 2008 meeting, Professor Colin Blakemore, the Chairman of the General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS) gave a presentation on the work of this Committee which was established in December 2007. The Committee's work includes horizon scanning, science governance, developing good practice and informing science priorities.

Recruitment and membership

The Committee currently has a vacancy for a microbiologist. Adverts for the vacancy will be placed on the ACAF website from 15 September 2009.

Edwin Snow (animal feed industry) attended his first meeting of ACAF on 24 September 2008, he replaced Nigel Shepperson. At the same meeting it was announced that Dr Bruce Cottrill had been appointed Deputy Chairman of the Committee.

Next meeting

The next ACAF meeting is scheduled for the 23 September 2009.

Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP)

A recruitment exercise for two posts (a Chair and an expert in molecular biology preferably with a research background in plant genetics) is currently in progress. The closing date for applications was 31 August 2009.

The Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT)

The COT is currently considering risks of dietary exposure to methylglyoxal.

The most recent meeting of COT was on 22 September. The agenda and papers for this meeting can be found on the COT webpages at <http://cot.food.gov.uk/cotmtgs/cotmeets/cot2009/cotmeet22sept2009/cotagenpapers22sept2007>

At the next meeting on 27 October the Committee will consider a paper on Idiopathic Environmental Intolerance (Multiple Chemical Sensitivity) which refers to susceptibility to infection.

There are currently vacancies for 3 new expert members and 2 new lay members. Applications are invited from anyone with experience in toxicological risk assessment. The following areas of specific expertise would be advantageous

- Epidemiology
- Nutrition
- Clinical pharmacology/pharmacokinetics

General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS)

The GACS published its first Annual Report in July, covering the period from the Committee's establishment in December 2007 to March 2009. The report was presented to the Agency Board at its open meeting on 14 July at which the GACS Chair, Professor Colin Blakemore, gave an overview of the work of the GACS and its future plans (papers and presentations for the Board meeting at:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/aboutus/ourboard/boardmeetings/boardmeetings2009/090714/boardagenda090714>)

Since then, GACS has held its 4th, open meeting on 8 September. Discussions included:

- Report from the Agency Chief Scientist: An update from Andrew Wadge on his work and plans for Agency Science, with questions and discussion by GACS.
- Response to the Science Review of the Agency: Discussion of the Agency's action plan to implement the Agency's response to the Science Review of the Agency.
- Developing the Agency's Science & Evidence Strategy: GACS discussed progress and a first draft of the Agency's next Science & Evidence Strategy for 2010-15, and recommended a few revisions before the draft is published for a follow-up consultation.
- Outcomes from GACS horizon-scanning workshop: GACS discussed actions to follow up the ideas and issues identified in the workshop on 24 June 2009.
- Distinction between risk assessment and risk management: GACS discussed a work plan to look at the clarity of the distinction and how it is observed in practice. A small working group will consider this further and develop a clear scope for the work. (ACMSF Chair Sarah O'Brien volunteered for this Working Group.)
- Issues arising from the SACs. This is a standing item - GACS discussed the issues arising in each SAC that might have wider interest for or require input from other SACs. GACS agreed this item was a useful aid to effective co-ordination but that SAC Chairs and Secretariats needed to be actively engaged in regular communication and co-ordination with other SACs as an integral part of their work.

The GACS Secretariat and Chief Scientist Team are developing plans for the first Annual Conference for members of Scientific Advisory Committees. Further details will be provided in due course, via Committee Secretariats.

Social Science Research Committee

The key activities of the Social Science Research Committee over the past months are as follows:

- The Strategic Partnership with the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) that has been part of the work programme of the SSRC has continued to develop. The call that was published earlier this year (exploring and explaining dietary decisions in the 21st century) has resulted in the commissioning of a project investigating food practices and employed families with younger children. This work will be led by researchers at the Institute of Education, University of London.

- The relationship with the ESRC has been further developed by the Agency becoming involved with the Understanding Society longitudinal survey. This is a household panel survey of 40,000 households (including those recruited to the previous British Household Panel Survey in 1991) with annual data collection that is led by the ESRC and carried out by the University of Essex, in collaboration with other organisations. We are also working towards establishing a formal concordat between the FSA and ESRC.
- Work on reviewing the Agency's Consumer Attitudes Survey carried out by the SSRC has led to the commissioning of a new survey looking at public attitudes and behaviour. Members of the SSRC were instrumental in identifying the most appropriate methodology for the new survey and following a comprehensive procurement process the contract to carry out the research has been awarded to TNS BMRB in collaboration with the University of Westminster and the Policy Studies Institute. Following development work over the coming months fieldwork is scheduled to start in the Spring with the results of the first survey reported at the end of 2010.
- A working group of the SSRC has been preparing a paper outlining the existing social science evidence in relation to the prevalence of Listeria in the over 60s. The paper (which will be available on the ACMSF website and the SSRC website) will be discussed at the ACMSF meeting at the end of September.
- At its next meeting on 20 October 2009, the SSRC will be discussing food safety and the behaviour of food business operators and enforcement officers. It is likely that the committee will undertake some work in this area going forward - this may be with other SAC's (e.g. ACMSF).
- SSRC endorsed the Strategy for Social Science in the Agency at its first meeting (food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/committee/ssrcstrat.pdf). Members of the committee have been involved in developing an implementation plan and this will pick up the recommendations made by GO-Science that are pertinent to social science in the Agency.
- The SSRC has been involved in developing the Register of Specialists for Social Science. The register contains the details of individuals with either a social science background or experience of using social science in policymaking. Individuals on the register have agreed to provide the Agency with advice within their area of expertise when this is requested. Periodically, the SSRC are invited to identify others with whom collaboration or access to expertise would be beneficial and the Register is updated accordingly.
- The SSRC published its first annual report in May 2009

**Secretariat
September 2009**