

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD

INFORMATION PAPER

Update from other Scientific Advisory Committees

Advisory committee on Animal Feedingstuffs (ACAF)

Recruitment

Interviews for a new microbiologist took place on 19 January 2010. Ministerial approval for the appointment is currently being sought.

Meeting of 3 March

The Committee received a presentation on 'Animals, their feeds and the environment: the inescapable consequence of food production'. This issue will be retained in its forward work plan.

The work of the Foodchain & Biomass Renewables Association (Fabra) was discussed and the Committee agreed to update its position paper on biofuels, published in April 2008, with assistance from Fabra.

There was discussion on the Quinquennial Review held in the latter part of 2009 and the recommendations resulting from the report of the review. The outcome and recommendations were also discussed by the GACS at its meeting on 4 March. The ACAF Chair agreed to update members on these discussions at the Committee's next meeting in June 2010.

Next meeting

The next ACAF meeting is scheduled to take place at the Hilton Hotel, York on Friday, 4 June 2010. The Committee will discuss a paper being prepared by the secretariat working with the Agency's Animal Feed Branch on good working practices aimed at minimising the presence of packaging material in feed materials, produced from recycled human food.

Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP)

The ACNFP is holding an Open Workshop on 21 April in Aviation House. The agenda will include presentations on the work of the committee, an update on the new Novel Foods Regulation and discussions on:

- Adding novel biologically active substances in food and food supplements.
- Public attitudes to innovation
- How novel foods can help promote sustainability of the food supply.

Committee on Toxicity

Recruitment

Dr David Bell resigned at the end of December to take up a post in Europe. New Members have been appointed from 1 April: Professor Brian Houston and Dr John Thompson and two new consumer Members: Derek Bodey and Robert Smith. In late spring/early summer applications will be invited for new members who are experts in dietary exposure assessment, environmental exposure and statisticians specialising in epidemiology and/or modelling approaches.

Meeting on 23 March

The main agenda item is Detection of Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning biotoxins. The Committee will consider the recent work commissioned by the FSA and completed by Cefas to replace the mouse bioassay in the UK monitoring programme for the marine biotoxins responsible for causing Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning.

General Advisory committee on Science (GACS)

Recent work

The GACS held its 5th meeting on 4 March. Issues discussed and actions as follows:

- **Horizon-scanning** - GACS discussed a presentation from Dr Suzy Walton, Chair of the Horizon Scanning and Futures Sib Group of Defra's Science Advisory Council, on its work to challenge Defra on its needs and approach to horizon-scanning and futures. GACS noted that future food scenarios developed by Defra are likely to be relevant to the Agency and recommended the Agency liaise with Defra to keep track of this work and its outcomes, and on wider HS work. The Secretariat will also seek to arrange a presentation at the next GACS meeting from the team leading the Foresight project on Global Food and Farming Futures. Horizon-scanning was also a common theme in the discussion on cross-cutting issues arising in the forward work plans of the Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) (see below). The Secretariat and CST will work with the SAC Secretariats Working Group to ensure cross-cutting issues from HS in the SACs are picked up and discussed collectively, and fed back to GACS for consideration of any needs for joint approaches.
- **Cross-cutting science issues from the Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs)** - David Coggon (COT Chair) reported back on a COT workshop on improving the way in which uncertainty is evaluated and communicated in risk assessments. GACS agreed this issue is relevant across the SACs, and noted they use different terminology in discussing it. The COT Chair will report back at the next meeting on the application of the ideas from the workshop to specific cases; GACS Members will feed ideas and examples into this work. GACS will consider the potential for common terminology and approaches in light of this work.
- **Distinction between risk assessment and risk management (RA/RM)** - GACS discussed a first report from its Working Group on RA/RM. It agreed the WG's terms of reference, and the WG's proposal to complete and report back to the next meeting on a pilot study. This will explore the variety of understanding and

practice across the SACs, on the distinction between RA and RM, and how expert input feeds into the different stages of evidence-based decision making. (Note, the ACMSF Chair chairs this GACS Working Group.)

- **Assessing the performance of SACs** - GACS discussed the outcome of the quinquennial review of the ACAF (Advisory Committee of Animal Feedingstuffs), and the proposed responses from the ACAF and from the Agency.
- **Making use of data from industry and other sources** - GACS noted the potential benefits of making more use of data from industry, NGOs and other sources outside the published literature, and also potential issues around assurance of quality and completeness, and risk to the Agency's independence, particularly from those it regulates. A sub-group will scope this issue and how it might be taken forward, looking first at how this could work for new work initiated jointly, then at how the same principles might be met for existing data.

Future work:

Issues for future meetings include:

- Report back from RA/RM Working Group
- Report back from Sub-Group on making use of Data from other sources
- Cross-cutting science - to include a report from the SSRC Chair on the Agency's Food Issues Survey
- Horizon-scanning

Social Science Research Committee

The Social Science Research Committee (SSRC) met in October. The focus of the meeting was updates on the substantive work streams including:

- Food Issues Survey;
- Strategic Partnership with the Economic and Social Research Committee (ESRC) – information about the first project to be commissioned (Food Practices and Employed Families with Younger Children) was presented.
- The committee provided a steer on literature sources to be included in the Evidence Review on Regulation of Cultures and Behaviours.

At the next meeting (April 2010) the committee will consider the most appropriate analysis of the Food Issues Survey data and discuss the recommendations from the Evidence Review on Regulation of Cultures and Behaviours.

The forward work programme will see the committee: continue to have involvement with development of the Food Issues Survey; provide advice about any social science research that may be recommended as part of the Cultures and Behaviours work; and provide advice on social science research that may be needed to inform other aspects of the Agency's work, including those sought by other Scientific Advisory Committees.

Secretariat
March 2010