

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE MICROBIOLOGICAL SAFETY OF FOOD

DISCUSSION PAPER

HORIZON SCANNING

1. The ACMSF's last horizon scanning review was carried out in September 2006. During the discussion the Committee considered paper ACM/802¹ which outlined Members' short-listed priorities for horizon scanning topics including any likely emerging microbiological risks.
2. Members agreed to focus attention on Vulnerable Groups in view of the recent increasing trend of listeriosis in the elderly². The Committee also agreed to consider noroviruses (In March 2010 Members agreed to the setting up a subgroup to review foodborne viral infections, assessing the risk to consumers and highlighting any research and surveillance gaps), agricultural and farm practices and schools at a later date. Between 2007 and 2008 the Committee considered the potential role of the food chain in the transmission of ESBLs as this was a new and emerging issue³.
3. The Secretariat recently consulted Members on the potential topics that were identified at the September 2006 meeting. These are:
 - **Food safety/processing** – impact of fresher products and milder processing conditions; novel processing techniques, bacterial stress responses and food safety; temperature control
 - **Agriculture/food production** – changes in agriculture and food animal production, including growth promoters in poultry; use of terminal decontaminants; prevention of bacterial contamination and colonisation;
 - **Biocides** – review of kitchen and cleaning products containing biocides and whether they promote antibiotic resistance in bacteria relevant to human health;
 - **Norovirus** – including pigs and calves as potential reservoir or noro and sapoviruses and the impact on public health;
 - **Schools** – implications of the new standards for school meals on food safety; loss of culinary skills in relation to the National Curriculum on food technology.

¹ <http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/horizonscanning.pdf>

² <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmeets/acmsf2006/acmsfmeeting280906/acmsfmin280906>

³ <http://acmsf.food.gov.uk/acmsfmeets/acmsf2008/acmsf110308/acmsfmin110308>

4. In addition to these, 3 potential new potential topics have been proposed by Members:
 - VTEC infection
 - Hepatitis E virus
 - *Clostridium difficile*
5. Members' views are invited on the above topics and any other candidates for possible consideration by the ACMSF. Members are also asked to consider the mechanism by which further work in these areas should be carried out.

Secretariat
September 2010