

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

**DISCUSSION PAPER**

**AN UPDATE ON VIRUSES IN THE FOOD CHAIN**

1. The ACMSF published their report on foodborne viral infections (FVI) in 1998. This report considered viral foodborne illness, sources, occurrence, detection, contamination and routes of transmission. The report also discussed the prevention and control measures for foodborne viruses which manifest in humans as gastroenteritis or viral hepatitis (ACMSF, 1998).
2. Since the publication of the 1998 ACMSF report on FVI, with the exception of minor risk assessment work carried out on hepatitis E and avian influenza, no formal review has been undertaken on foodborne viruses. Therefore, at the March 2010 ACMSF meeting members agreed that an *Ad Hoc* Group should be set up to revisit the issue of foodborne viruses in light of the significant developments in this area, so that an updated risk profile could be produced based on the findings.
3. Although all foodborne viruses, including new and emerging viral pathogens, were considered in the update, the *Ad Hoc* Group identified that the most important viruses associated with foodborne infection were norovirus, hepatitis A virus and hepatitis E virus. These viruses are the focus of the group's report which concentrates mainly on viral foodborne infection in the UK.
4. The report also gives consideration of two recent comprehensive reviews of viruses in food that have been published by the WHO (2008) and EFSA (2011). The report provides key information which will be used to inform Risk Assessments and Risk Management on foodborne viruses across government.
5. Prof Sarah O'Brien (Chair, *Ad Hoc* Group on Foodborne Viral Infections) will introduce the revised draft report produced by the Group. A draft version of the report was considered by the Committee at the October 2013 meeting.
6. Members are invited to:
  - Comment on the revised draft report
  - Agree to a public consultation on the draft report once finalised.

**Secretariat**  
**January 2014**