

The UK Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP)

Full Minutes of the meeting of the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) held 23 November 2021

The meeting was held via Microsoft Teams.

Those present:

Chairman:

Prof W Cushley

Members:

Prof R Blackshaw; Ms H Chambers; Mr J Clarke; Mr R Davis; Mr M Dempsey; Prof M Eddleston; Mr M Glynn; Dr M Hare; Dr C Harris; Prof T Hutchinson; Dr R Mann; Dr C Morris; Dr M Rose; Prof A Smith; Prof D Spurgeon; Mr P Stephenson; Prof M Whelan and Prof M Wright

Assessors:

Dr S Jess (representing the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland) and Ms G Reay (representing Scottish Government).

Advisors:

Mr M Clook (HSE); Mr A Dixon (HSE); Mr D Flynn (HSE); Ms S Hugo (Defra); Ms S Mattock (HSE); Mr B Maycock (FSA); Ms C Meacher (Defra); Dr H Nakeeb (PHE); Mr J Newman (EA); Ms A Porter (Defra); Dr C Snaith (HSE); Mr G Stark (HSE, Item 7 only) and Ms M Wade (HSE)

Others:

Mr P Adamson (HSE); Ms J Berrie (HSE); Mr B Bircher (HSE); Mr M Chandler (Defra); Mr J Dale (HSE); Ms L Debenham (HSE); Ms C Eatock (HSE); Mr T Fisher (HSE); Ms S Goodchild (HSE); Mr J Godwin (Defra); Mr M Hawkins (HSE); Mr H Graves (HSE); Ms S Mason (HSE) and Ms R Mabbett (HSE)

Apologies:

Dr J Garratt; Prof T Lock; Mr M Williams (Welsh Government); and Mr A Burn (NE)

Agenda Item 1: Introduction

1.1 The Chair reminded the meeting of the confidentiality of the papers and their discussions. If Members believed that they had a commercial or financial interest in any of the items being discussed, they were required to declare their interest to the Chair and Secretariat prior to the meeting. They may then either be invited to absent themselves from the discussions, not participate and/or not be involved in any discussions and decision-making, unless invited to do so.

1.2 A Member declared a new general conflict of interest, stating they had changed employers. Two members identified potential conflict of interests, these were deemed to be non-personal specific conflicts and it was agreed they could remain and participate in the discussion on the relevant agenda items.

1.3 A representative from HSE declared a specific conflict of interest with agenda item 4 and chose to withdraw from the meeting for the discussion of this item.

1.4 The Chair welcomed Mr J Clarke and Mr P Stephenson who have joined the Committee as experts in agronomy and Prof M Wright who has joined as an expert in toxicology.

1.5 The Chair noted that Mr R Davis, Dr M Hare, Prof T Hutchinson, Dr C Morris and Prof A Smith were participating in their final ECP meeting, having completed their terms of office. He thanked all the Members for the excellent and insightful contributions they had made to the Committee's work during their time as Members.

Agenda Item 2: Full Minutes of the previous meeting [ECP 1 (47/2021)]

2.1 The draft Full Minutes of the September 2021 meeting were agreed, subject to minor amendments.

Agenda Item 3: Matters Arising and Forward Business Plan [ECP 2 (47/2021)]

3.1 The Secretariat provided an update on matters arising from previous meetings and invited Members to suggest any additions/amendments to the forward business plan which would be incorporated before the next meeting.

3.2 Members inquired about some recurring pieces of work and requested updates on the buffer zones review and literature development concerning the impact of plant protection products on pollinators that were missing from the forward business plan; the Secretariat agreed to look into this and update as appropriate.

Action: Secretariat

Agenda Item 4: Active Substance – Iron [ECP 3 (47/2021)]

4.1 HSE introduced the item, noting it was the first active to be considered by the Committee under the new UK regulatory arrangements for the provision of independent scientific advice relating to the approval of active substances. HSE had identified a number of potential areas that would require advice, and Committee Members could explore any aspects of the risk assessment and underlying guidance they considered to be of interest.

4.2 The Committee had a preliminary discussion on the issues identified by HSE and began to formulate their advice. During the discussion Members expressed a view that some of the questions posed by HSE were peer review in nature, rather than questions seeking specific independent scientific advice. The Committee addressed all the questions asked of it but noted it was not a peer review body.

Agenda Item 5: Active Substance – Cinmethylin [ECP 4 (47/2021)]

5.1 HSE introduced the item, noting it was the second time the active substance was being considered by the Committee, having previously been considered at their meeting in November 2020. The full risk assessment of endocrine disruptor properties for cinmethylin had not been available for consideration in November 2020. HSE have now completed this assessment and identified areas that required independent scientific advice.

5.2 The Committee had a preliminary discussion on the issues identified by HSE and began to formulate their advice.

Agenda Item 6: Overview of Regulation No 1107/2009

6.1 HSE presented an overview of Regulation No 1107/2009 intended to inform the Committee of ongoing regulatory developments following the establishment of an independent GB regulatory regime.

6.2 Members noted:

- The existing active substance approvals, product authorisations and Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs) continue to be valid. Going forward, GB will take independent regulatory decisions on these issues following retained regulatory and technical standards.
- A GB active substance review programme was under development in consultation with Defra and the GB Devolved Administrations. The NI regime will continue to operate under EU rules as per the Northern Ireland Protocol.

- Government would support work to develop a more streamlined regulatory process for innovation in the field. Members noted the Innovate Licensing and Access Pathway as an example.
- The Chemicals Regulation Division of HSE has seen significant growth in capacity over the current financial year to meet the demands of an independent regulatory regime.

Agenda Item 7: Defra’s Chemical Evidence Strategy and CRD’s approach to pesticides R&D [ECP 6 – 6-1 (47/2021)]

7.1 Defra presented to Members on their Chemical Evidence Strategy, followed by HSE who informed Members of their work in commissioning research and development activities concerning plant protection products.

7.2 Members noted:

- The need to support the development of expertise to ensure there is capacity to meet the regulatory requirements.
- They would support the use of technology that would allow for monitoring the usage of pesticides. It was noted that digital platforms used to map fields and soil quality could be adapted for this purpose.
- They encourage developments that ensure the speed of regulatory innovation can meet the pace of change in the market.
- The Committee would be interested in advising on and engaging with both Defra in their Chemical Evidence Strategy and HSE in the research and development work.

Agenda Item 8: Human Health Monitoring Data Review [ECP 7 – 7-1 (47/2021) and ECP 8 – 8-3 (47/2021)]

8.1 HSE introduced papers relating to the findings in the National Poisons Information Service (NPIS) pesticide exposure monitoring report 2020-2021 and Human Health Enquiry and Incident Survey (HHEIS) for 2019-2020.

8.2 Members noted:

- The reports were broadly in line with previous years; it was felt the decrease in reported exposure from previous years might reflect the difficulty of data collection due to lockdown measures.
- The use of professional grade products by amateurs alongside the continued storage and use of unauthorised chemicals were of concern. Members felt pesticide amnesties similar to the programmes undertaken in Wales would help reduce the supply of unauthorised substances.

- The HHEIS captures incidents reported to authorisation holders, and NPIS referrals made by healthcare professionals. It was felt there was a strong case to integrate the data from HHEIS into the NPIS report. HSE agreed to work with NPIS to develop a mechanism to facilitate this.

Action: HSE

Agenda item 9: Date of next meeting

9.1 14th of December 2021 – To be held virtually

Agenda item 10: Any other business

10.1 Update of Independent Scientific Advice Review

10.1.1 Defra informed Members that the external call for views will now run to the 9th December, offering six weeks in total to respond. The external call for views approached those who responded to the Draft National Action Plan (NAP) and the timeframe had been extended to accommodate this.

10.2 Joint HSAC/ECP Copper paper

10.2.1 It was noted that following comments made by Members after the September meeting, a finalised version of the report had been agreed. Members were informed HSAC plan to publish this version shortly.

10.3 Chair's report

10.3.1 The Chair acknowledged concerns raised by Members over briefing papers. Members stated briefing papers and documentation need to be accurate, appropriately indexed and to meet agreed standards for content and stylistic presentation. It was agreed to raise the topic at the next Business Management Group.

10.3.2 The Chair noted his thanks to Members, Secretariat, HSE, Advisers and Assessors for their work in 2021.

**Ethan Clabby
ECP Secretariat
December 2021**