

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

## Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food (PRiF)

# Minutes of the meeting of the Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food (PRiF), 25 May 2022

The meeting was held virtually.

The Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food provides independent advice to the Health and Safety Executive, Food Standards Agency and UK Ministers on matters relating to the monitoring programme; this is the 42<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the committee.

### **Those present:**

#### **Chair:**

Ms A Davison

#### **Members:**

Dr J Blackman, Mr I Finlayson, Dr G Hart, Mr J Points and Ms D Winstanley.

#### **Representatives:**

Mr D Faulkner (Northern Ireland Executive), Dr S Nawaz (National Reference Laboratory), Mr S Phillips (Defra), Dr R Scrivens (HSE), Mr G Stark (HSE), Ms K Viezens (representing Scottish government) and Mr M Willis (FSA).

**Apologies:** None

### **Agenda item 1: Introduction**

1.1 The Chair reminded the meeting of the sensitivity 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 are 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 No conflict of interest were declared.

### **Agenda item 2: Action points from PRiF meeting of 26 January 2022**

#### **2.1 Minutes of the last meeting**

2.1.1 The Chair confirmed that the minutes of the last meeting were agreed and published on Gov.uk.

#### **2.2 Actions points on samples discussed in Quarter 2**

2.2.1 The secretariat provided an update on actions from the previous meeting and informed the committee that all actions were complete or progress would be discussed with the relevant agenda item within the meeting.

2.2.2 The Committee was informed that the imazalil residues found in a potato from the October 2021 rolling report and reported to enforcement had been removed from the survey. It was a seed potato and should not have been collected, inspection colleagues were informed of this and reminded of proper sampling procedure.

### **Agenda Item 3: Matters Arising**

#### **3.1 Infant food letter DHSC**

3.1.1 HSE informed Members they have had a series of meetings with DHSC, FSA and colleagues in the Devolved Administrations over the topic. A response from DHSC has been received informing the Committee they have taken on board the Committee's concerns and are considering options to address the issue, but this would not be a fast process.

3.1.2 DHSC further asked the PRiF to continue to publish all results to ensure transparency and agreed to provide wording for PRiF publications to provide context and reassurance to the findings. Members discussed the need to ensure the wording would fit the tone of the report, the Secretariat confirmed it would be brought to the PRiF prior to publication.

**Action: HSE**

### **Agenda Item 4: 2023 Monitoring Programme**

4.1 HSE informed the Committee they had produced two papers using the agreed ranking methodology to track the relative value of inclusion by food. These will then be further refined by the monitoring team with advice from the PRiF to ensure it accurately reflects all concerns. The data used in ranking was on a UK wide basis.

4.2 Post exit, GB took forward the EU co-ordinated rolling three-year co-ordinated programme in retained legislation. This is due to expire by the end of 2022 but will continue in Europe. It was agreed with the Devolved Administrations to continue this programme on a GB wide basis to ensure parity with Northern Ireland who are already obliged to take part. It was agreed to establish a sub-committee to discuss the 2023 programme in more detail.

**Action: Committee Members and HSE**

4.3 Members discussed the possibility of better integrating data from industry bodies, and the range of samples taken. There was further discussion of the food service industry and to what extent the programme captures this industry.

### **Agenda Item 5: Analytical Sub-Group update**

5.1 Members were informed the sub-group had met twice since the last Committee meeting. They had discussed the quantity of data needed to be peer reviewed in Q4 as the number of samples collected had been back ended to the end of the year.

5.2 The sub-group had further discussed R&D to ensure sufficient analytical techniques were in place. The National reference laboratory gave an overview on an ethylene oxide project that was complete and an ongoing project for 1,4-DMN. It was noted disruption in the supply chain of helium was of concern to one of the testing laboratories but had been resolved.

5.3 The sub-group raised concerns over unnecessary repeat testing of frozen produce, as several products labelled as UK origin would not have been grown in the UK. This leads to unnecessary repeat testing when residues not approved in the UK are detected. Members were asked to advise on the type of frozen produce likely to be grown in the UK.

5.4 It was agreed HSE would bring a paper to the PRiF for advice on the subject and to carry forward the sub-group update as a rolling agenda item.

**Action: HSE**

## **Agenda Item 6: Draft Quarter 4 2021**

6.1 Before the meeting the members were asked to view a draft version of the Quarter 4 2021 report and associated compliance correspondence received from suppliers. The committee were invited to provide written comments on these ahead of the meeting. HSE in turn provided a response to these comments before the meeting and presented the range of comments received for discussion.

6.2 The committee discussed all areas of the report identified as requiring further consideration including those surveys requiring a risk assessment. Particular attention was given to those findings of pesticides where any detection is considered undesirable due to the uncertainty regarding genotoxicity.

### **6.3 Banana: Detections of chlorpyrifos and thiabendazole**

6.3.1 Discussion was held regarding residues of chlorpyrifos at 0.05 mg/kg exceeding the LOD MRL found in a survey of bananas. HSE explained that, as reflected in previous risk assessments, detections of chlorpyrifos are undesirable due to the uncertainty regarding genotoxicity. HSE highlighted that to conclude a risk it would require a consumption levels in the 97.5<sup>th</sup> percentile and a large proportion of peel being consumed by the most critical consumers. HSE reiterated that their assessments in such cases, which include results for both peeled and unpeeled fruit, were particularly precautionary and conservative in approach and their conclusion that any risks of adverse health effects are low in the sample results observed in this report.

6.3.2 Discussion was held regarding residues of thiabendazole found in surveys of bananas. HSE states there was an effect on health was not expected if the peel was discarded, and considered unlikely in the situation discussed previously. The residues were not considered above MRL, as the level is set assuming peeling.

### **6.4 Beans with pods: Detections of chlorpyrifos and dimethoate and omethoate**

6.4.1 Residue findings in beans with pods were considered. It was noted any detections of chlorpyrifos are undesirable due to the uncertainty regarding genotoxicity, but no short-term risk was expected.

6.4.2 HSE clarified its precautionary approach to findings of dimethoate and its metabolite omethoate and cited the EFSA conclusion (2018) its consideration of the potential for genotoxicity for dimethoate and omethoate. However, based on similar risk assessments

carried out for okra in Q3 2019 in line with HSE and FSA toxicologist consideration HSE concluded that the dimethoate and omethoate residues in this report meant HSE consider it unlikely for a short-term risk, and a low risk for genotoxicity.

## **6.5 Grapefruit: Detections of imazalil and thiabendazole**

6.5.1 Discussion was held regarding residues of imazalil and thiabendazole in samples of grapefruit. HSE stated that, as reflected in previous risk assessments, an effect on health was not expected if peeled and it was concluded to be unlikely if unpeeled.

6.5.2 It was agreed to amend the wording on samples taken in NI to better reflect the risk assessment as in the GB samples.

## **6.6 Spring greens and kale: Detections of alpha-cypermethrin and triallate**

6.6.1 Discussion was held regarding a residue of cypermethrin at 0.04 mg/kg in a sample of kale. The residue was assumed to be of alpha cypermethrin, HSE stated that their risk assessment concluded any risk was unlikely.

6.6.2 Members further discussed how alpha-cypermethrin and the isomer cypermethrin can be distinguished when reviewing the laboratories chromatograms. It was noted in this sample there was one main peak, which is considered a strong indicator of alpha-cypermethrin use. HSE confirmed for future findings of cypermethrin, the chromatograms would be considered at the Analytical Sub-Group.

6.6.3 Residues of triallate below MRL were detected in thirteen samples were considered. It was noted any detections of triallate are undesirable due to the uncertainty regarding genotoxicity, but the adverse effect risk was concluded as low.

6.6.4 HSE informed the Committee that the finding have been referred to enforcement who are actively investigating the use as it is unapproved for use on spring greens and kale. Enforcement have contacted the growers and the authorisation holder of triallate.

## **6.7 Infant Food: Chlorate**

6.7.1 Members noted the risk assessment was similar to that discussed at the January meeting, but HSE had taken the further precautionary step of considering a scenario where the product is eaten all meals during the day not just for breakfast. As noted earlier wording from DHSC will be added to the report once received and approved.

6.7.2 Members queried the incidence in rusks. It was noted all originated from one source so recurring and consistent residues would be expected if the same water supply was used in production.

## **6.8 Olive oil: Detection of chlorpyrifos and dimethoate**

6.8.1 Discussion was held regarding residues of cypermethrin at 0.01 mg/kg below the MRL of 0.25 mg/kg detected in a survey of olive oil and dimethoate at 0.007 mg/kg below the MRL of 0.01 mg/kg. It was noted any detections of chlorpyrifos are undesirable due to the low risk regarding genotoxicity, but no short-term risk was expected.

6.8.2 Members queried how the low risk level had been identified and HSE explained that studies to determine genotoxicity are often undertaken at doses orders of magnitude higher than those seen in survey results. As such it is difficult to conclude specifically, and to extrapolate the laboratory findings to the context of the monitoring programmes, but HSE conclusions are based on the advice of their toxicologists with support from the FSA.

## **6.9 Bread**

6.9.1 Members queried findings of diphenylamine in bread, 16 residues were detected in 2021, compared to no findings in 2020. HSE confirmed this was due to the laboratory reducing their reporting level from 0.02 to 0.01 mg/kg in 2021, if the higher reporting level none of the findings would have been reported.

## **6.10 Berries and small fruits**

6.10.1 Discussion was held regarding residues of cyantraniliprole identified in some blackberry samples. It was noted there was an emergency authorisation in England and Scotland for use on blackberries in 2021. For samples with residues where the supplier provided HSE evidence that the product had been applied in line with the emergency authorisation, a temporary MRL was applied. This explains why there are different MRLs in the BNA. HSE noted that two samples of blackberries from Wales also contained a residue of cyantraniliprole, the emergency authorisation was not approved for use in Wales, therefore these samples have been passed to HSE Enforcement to investigate.

## **6.11 Eggs**

6.11.1 Members queried the timing of samples, with regard to the restrictions around free-range birds resulting from avian flu. They were informed the egg was sampled prior to restrictions and it was possible exposure could arise from consumption prior to the restrictions.

## **6.12 Potatoes**

6.12.1 Members noted a detection of 1,4-DMN at 0.03 mg/kg, in a UK sample of potatoes, 1,4-DMN is not currently approved for use on potatoes in UK. HSE Enforcement's investigation suggested from the residue could possibly be from contamination from wooden crates that had held earlier crops treated with 1,4 DMN under an emergency authorisation in 2021.

## **6.13 HSE assessment of risk**

6.13.1 Members queried the use of the term 'cocktail effect', to which HSE clarified they consciously use the term as media reports often use this term in conjunction with pesticides. The term is further explained with the relevant context of 'the possible implications to health of more than one pesticide found in samples' within the risk assessment.

6.13.2 It was further noted this could cover synergistic or additive effects, and while synergy is more complex to evaluate the regulatory assessment can cover it depending on the nature of the toxicity and the interactions.

## **6.14 Suspected Unauthorised use summary**

6.14.1 HSE informed the Committee they regularly update the list as issues are resolved, and those residues referred to enforcement that are then identified as not misuse are removed prior to publication.

## **Agenda Item 7: Rolling reporting update**

7.1 A sample of ware potato collected in the rolling reporting was noted to have a residue of imazalil. HSE confirmed that the details would be passed to HSE enforcement

team for further information, Members advised at the levels found it was unlikely to be a contamination issue.

### **Agenda Item 8: Communication update:**

8.1 Following examination at the communication sub-group a leaflet to accompany the HSE compliance letter was brought for consideration to the Committee. Members discussed the possibility of adding wording around the legal requirement to keep spray records.

8.2 It was further suggested to provide information around international accreditation standards such as ISO17025 to help identify accredited laboratories. It was felt there was a need to balance this information with the tone and intended audience of the letters that would require further consideration

Action: HSE

8.3 Members agreed to carry forward the updated style guide, pending minor alterations.

Action: HSE

8.4 HSE presented a paper outlining the view rate and downloads from the PRiF website, noting many interested parties receive it indirectly from stakeholder groups and trade bodies that distribute it more widely to their members.

8.5 Members noted while stakeholders show good awareness of the programme, they would be interested in better measuring the circulation of the document and improving awareness. Members agreed to draft a list of key stakeholders for consideration.

**Action: Committee Members**

8.6 The Committee further noted the progress in planning a webinar and discussed the technical and logistical requirements of holding one.

### **Agenda Item 9: Annual Report**

9.1 HSE informed the Committee of how EU exit had changed the legal obligations of HSE as it adopted the competent authority role. It is now required to publish the results of the monitoring programme as HSE rather than PRiF.

9.2 The Committee is also required under their Terms of Reference to publish a separate annual report laying out the administration and finance of the Committee. The decision was taken to split the reports to fulfil both obligations, though this will result in a delay in publication.

9.3 Members emphasised the importance of ensuring timely publication of the reports and volunteered to help draft parts of the report. It was agreed the Secretariat would liaise with Members to organise this. The Chair's foreword will also be rewritten to address this change.

**Action: Committee Members and Secretariat**

## **Agenda Item 10: Defra Update**

10.1 Defra informed the Committee about their work in relation to the situation in Ukraine and the resulting disruption to supply chains, Defra is working closely with HSE and FSA on this topic. It was further noted the Ukrainian supply of grains was more often used for animal feed than human consumption in the UK.

10.2 They further updated the Committee on the regulatory reform work discussed in January, while the project had been delayed work was continuing and Defra would look to engage the Committee further in due course.

## **Agenda Item 11: HSE Enforcement presentation**

11.1 The HSE enforcement team was invited to present to Committee following queries of how they act on information referred to them.

11.2 The enforcement team laid out how HSE's 'firm but fair' policy worked in practice, the range of options available to them and how HSE co-operates with other relevant authorities for enforcement action.

## **Agenda Item 12: Any Other Business**

12.1 The Committee expressed their condolences to the family and friends of Caroline Drummond noting her previous work with the PRiF and across the industry.

## **Agenda Item 13: Date of next Meeting**

13.1 The next PRiF meeting will be held on 13 July 2022.