Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food (PRiF)

Terms of Reference

July 2011

Specific

The Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food will work closely with the Chemicals Regulation Directorate and the Food Standards Agency, to:

• provide independent advice to the Health and Safety Executive and the Food Standards Agency (FSA), and UK Ministers¹, on
  o the planning of surveillance programmes for pesticide residues in the UK food supply;
  o the evaluation of the results; and
  o procedures for sampling, sample processing and new methods of analysis.

• make its findings and recommendations available to Government, consumers and the food and farming industries in a way which aims to be comprehensive, understandable and timely.

• report to Defra’s Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA); Chairs of expert committees will meet annually with the CSA and provide an annual summary of the work of the committee to Defra’s Annual Report of the Science Advisory Council (SAC);

• support the CSA as appropriate during emergencies; and

• operate in line with the Government’s Principles for Scientific Advice and the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees.

General

Defra’s access to independent, authoritative, impartial and timely science and technical advice, and the experts who provide it, is vital to support our policies, priorities and responsibilities. Details are available on Defra’s website.

The lead Defra Minister for the Pesticide Residues in Food Expert Committee will:

• Set terms of reference for the Committee;

¹ The Ministers referred to are: The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Ministers of the Scottish Government, Welsh ministers and the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development in Northern Ireland
• Agree strategic work plans, receive reports and advice; and
• Receive periodic reviews of the Committee’s functions and value for money;
• Consult the Devolved Administrations and other Departments as appropriate about the Committee and its work.

The Expert Committee has the ultimate right to escalate matters to UK Ministers.

As an Expert Committee of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Pesticide Residues in Food Committee will:

1. Provide advice to, and work collaboratively with, officials and key office holders such as the Defra Chief Scientific Adviser, the Chief Veterinary Officer or the Chief Economist, other delivery partners (e.g. Network bodies, other departments and Government agencies, the devolved administrations, other public bodies, EU and international technical and expert groups). Contribute to developing the evidence base, analysing and interpreting evidence and providing judgements on quality and relevance.

2. Working strategically, help to: identify future issues of concern; provide advice and interpretation on state and impacts; connect to related agendas both in other Government Departments (OGD) and elsewhere in business and civic society.

3. Input to policy development and evaluation by Defra and OGD, in areas covered by its remit, by helping, where relevant, to: assess the impacts of different policy options; undertake risk assessment; assess new regulations and deregulation; develop voluntary initiatives.

4. Assisting with technical support for Defra e.g. EU technical groups, Defra/devolved administration research projects, advising on scope for specific projects and research.

5. Contribute to best practice advice and formal guidance e.g. for industry, business, civil society, voluntary organisations, local communities etc. as appropriate within their remit.

6. Help Defra and its delivery partners in responding to emergency situations by providing expert advice and opinion as necessary.

In the course of its work the Committee may publish reports and advice. Publication will normally be through Defra channels. The Committee will also be expected to contribute to departmental reports, publications or guidance.

Expert Committee Members are independent appointments made through open competition, in line with OCPA guidelines on best practice for making public appointments. Members are expected to act in accord with the seven ‘Nolan’ principles of public life.