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 surveillance programme; this is the 31st meeting of the committee.

Those present:
Chairman:
Dr P Brantom.

Members:
Ms A Davison; Dr J Blackman; Mr I Finlayson; Dr S Freeman; Mr J Points; Dr G Wedzicha.

Representatives:
Mr A Dixon (Health and Safety Executive); Mr D Faulkner (Northern Irish Government); Mr P Hamey (Health and Safety Executive); Dr D Mortimer (Food Standards Agency); Dr S Nawaz (National Reference Laboratory); Dr M Taylor (Scottish Government); Ms J Wilder (Health and Safety Executive (HSE)).

Agenda item 1: Chairman’s Introduction
1.1 The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that Mr Dixon and Ms Wilder would join the meeting after lunch. The Chairman also introduced new committee member Ian Finlayson, appointed for his experience in residues testing and food safety. Ian described his current roles in independent residues testing and food safety in UK and overseas, as Chair of the LEAF Technical Advisory Committee, and declared past experience as a member of the Pesticides Residues Committee and manager of Sainsburys’ residue testing programme.

Agenda item 2: Declarations of interest
2.1 Ann Davison had become a member of the management committee of the National Council of Women.
2.2 Ian Finlayson declared his position as Chair of the LEAF Technical Advisory Committee.

2.3 Jonathan Blackman was providing support to the British Hop Association.

2.4 The Chairman had recently been raised to Fellowship of the Royal Society of Biology.

**Agenda item 3: Apologies**

3.1 Apologies were received from Defra.

**Agenda item 4: Action points from PRiF meeting of 11 October 2018**

4.1 **Minutes of the last meeting**

4.1.1 The secretariat explained that Ms Davison’s declaration of membership of the management board of the National Council for Women should have appeared in the minutes of the October 2018 meeting but was omitted in error. Rather than amend the published October minutes, her declaration had been re-iterated.

4.1.2 All of the actions related to the Quarter Two report had been completed. The report was agreed by the Committee and published on 6 December 2018 on gov.uk.

4.1.3 The Chairman declared that the minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

4.2 **Fungicide Resistance Action Group (FRAG) guidance document**

4.2.1 The secretariat was aware that FRAG had produced a draft document which was being circulated among its members. HSE was in contact with the FRAG secretariat with a view to sharing an advance copy with PRiF members.

**Action:** Ongoing

4.3 **Follow-up action from last report: Linuron - kale**

4.3.1 The secretariat stated that HSE’s enquiries had found no evidence to show linuron had been applied to the kale, or that it was stored with any other crop that may have been treated at that time (such as potatoes). The level of linuron detected, which is under the LOD, could indicate a background contamination in a crop known to be susceptible to absorbing volatiles from the environment. Since there was no MRL breach, nothing prevented kale being placed on the market and from an enforcement perspective, the case was now closed.
4.3.2 As agreed at the last PRiF meeting, the issue had also been raised with the Grower Liaison Group (GLG) for their expert consideration and comments. GLG members acknowledged that kale’s morphology and the duration of its production phase made it more prone to background contamination. They observed that linuron would never be applied to the crop as it would kill it.

4.3.3 PRiF members discussed whether the background levels detected might derive from use of linuron on adjacent crops, or from potential cross contamination in store or at sampling, although quality control protocols were in place to minimise this risk. A member asked whether a combination of naturally occurring chemicals could lead to false positive. The National Reference Laboratory explained that this was unlikely and would have been considered as part of the Analytical Sub Group’s routine analysis systems and quality control procedures.

4.3.4 The secretariat explained that authorisation for all UK uses of linuron were withdrawn in June 2017 with no use permitted after 3 June 2018. Industry was aware of occasional unexpected residues detections and had indicated their willingness to discuss the issue with HSE.

4.4. Matters Arising: Reduced reporting levels for monitoring of infant food

4.4.1 The secretariat reported that the matter was discussed at the European expert group on 12 October. In conclusion, it was agreed that at this stage it was not appropriate to seek to attempt this approach for all substances on the preliminary list but instead to prioritise a few actives (most likely to be relevant for infant formula testing). This process of identifying a few actives to be trialled at a lower reporting level by the European Reference Laboratory is still under consideration. PRiF members concurred with the proposed approach. Action complete.

4.4.2 Members asked how information from the European expert group would be disseminated in future. They heard that both the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and HSE were working to develop appropriate plans, some of which would be explained in more detail at agenda item 11. The secretariat emphasised that any changes would not be immediate.

4.4.3 The committee was reminded how, while HSE was required to test for glyphosate in specific foods as part of the co-ordinated monitoring regulation, the legal residue definition of glyphosate is currently just the parent. The UK national reference laboratory had conducted some research during 2018 into methodologies for metabolites that may form part of the residue definition in the future. The method would be validated during 2019. The secretariat had drafted a paper summarising the position and would circulate this to members.

Action: Secretariat
4.5. **Acetamiprid**

4.5.1 HSE reported that there had been several residues in Chinese cabbage of a pesticide (acetamiprid 0.02mg/kg (MRL=1.5 mg/kg in Chinese leaf and 3 mg/kg in baby leaf) which in the UK is only permitted for use on baby leaf crops. There is an Extension of Authorisation for Minor Use for a pesticide product ‘Gazelle SG’ to be used on “Protected and outdoor leafy brassica crops grown for baby leaf production”. The issue is that certain pesticides have been specifically authorised by HSE for use on baby leaf, but this does not mean automatically that they are also permitted for use on a crop grown to maturity. This is made clear on the label or the EAMU, and users of pesticides are expected to be familiar with the published crop definition.

4.5.2 The grower was of the understanding that such pesticides could also be used on the mature crop. HSE had informed the grower of their error of interpretation and, with the assistance of Grower Liaison Group members, would explore routes for disseminating information about similar PRiF findings of interest. In this case, contacts could include the British Leafy Salad Association, British Growers Association, Agricultural Industries Confederation, and vegetables consultants, although it was acknowledged that smaller growers might not have access to these sources.

**Action** Secretariat

4.6 **Communication: email addresses**

4.6.1 The secretariat noted its intention to look at its protocol for holding stakeholder’s email addresses as part of a general review to comply with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements.

**Action:** Secretariat

4.7 **Any Other Business**

4.7.1 The secretariat was requested to correct the spelling of Jonathan Blackman’s name on the PRiF website. They confirmed this would be arranged, along with correcting links to the 2017 annual report and publishing the Q3 report, before the next meeting.

**Action:** Secretariat

**Agenda item 5: Matters Arising**

5.1 No issues. Updates on chlorate and EU Exit were included as substantive agenda items.
Agenda item 6.

6.1 There was no agenda item 6 as there had been a numbering error on the agenda. The minutes relate to the agenda as provided on the day.

Agenda item 7: Update from the PRiF Analytical Sub Group (ASG)

7.1 The committee was reminded that HSE was required to test for glyphosate in specific foods as part of the co-ordinated monitoring regulation. The legal residue definition of glyphosate is currently just the parent. The UK national reference laboratory had conducted some research during 2018 into methodologies for additional metabolites that may form part of the residue definition in the future. The method would be validated during 2019. The secretariat had drafted a paper summarising the position and would circulate this to members together with the most recent minutes when they are agreed.

Agenda item 8: Current topics update

8.1 Chlorate: progress on setting new MRLs, effect on Quarter 3 2018 report

8.1.1 Further to previous detailed discussions at the PRiF’s 11 October 2018 meeting, members were informed that the Commission was collecting responses to its draft proposal for substantive chlorate MRLs and public feedback was welcome from 21 January to 18 February 2019. The committee agreed that a response should be formulated and, once agreed, submitted by the chairman on behalf of PRiF. The chlorate vote was expected to take place in June, with legislation coming into effect in September. HSE was aware that the proposed levels were insufficient in some areas; The Quarter 3 2018 report would be published in March 2019 and the section on chlorate would be updated to reflect the developments, comments on its content would be welcomed. The UK proposed not to change anything in their approach to reporting chlorate in the interim.

8.1.2 Members identified potential consumer concerns over the proposals to reduce disinfectant uses in food processing. HSE and FSA emphasised that they continued to work closely to represent UK’s position and that Government would not compromise microbiological safety or allow unsafe food into the market. The Chairman noted that consumer safety was the PRiF’s primary concern and that a risk assessment was undertaken on every residue found. In the absence of further Government policy advice, the committee’s responsibility was to balance the risks to the consumer by considering whether an exceedance of the MRL was a risk to food safety or not. Acknowledging the need for further discussion, the Chairman requested that chlorate be revisited at a future PRiF meeting.

Actions: Secretariat to update the note on chlorate in the PRiF report; Secretariat to include chlorate on the agenda for a future PRiF meeting.
8.1.3 Members discussed the difficulties surrounding the inclusion of chlorate MRLs in Regulation 396/2005 particularly as any changes to the levels that may occur in drinking water (a major possible source of residue) would need to be phased in over a much longer period of time, as part of the UK water industry’s next five-year capital programme. Discussions identified issues with enforcement policy, and low availability of alternative biocides. With respect to enforcement, the use of different processing factors for fresh and frozen food were described, and it was noted that while legislation made provision for loss of water during processing it did not cover the addition of more residue that may occur with the addition of water. HSE stated that the balance of determining that food was safe microbiologically and have appropriate disinfectants to support that requirement was to be discussed at the next day’s Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food (ACMSF) meeting, the minutes of which the secretariat agreed to circulate, along with a short summary of relevant discussions.

Action: Secretariat

8.2 Impact of MRLs on Biocides Use

8.2.1 Members received an outline of aims for the next day’s meeting with the ACMSF, a scientific advisory committee that provides the FSA with independent expert advice on matters relating to the microbiological safety of food. Discussions were expected to assess the concerns originally raised by sections of the food industry on the implications of changes to the MRLs for QACs, chlorate and biocidal active substances. PRiF members expressed a view that, in general, larger industry businesses were on top of the proposed changes, while smaller wholesalers might stop using disinfectants and would need targeted guidance and clear instruction to help them maintain safe practices and share information with suppliers. The Chairman asked the secretariat to monitor progress and ensure that the agenda item was revisited at a future meeting.

Action: Secretariat to include this item on the next meeting agenda.

Agenda item 9: Draft Quarter 3 2018 Report

9.1 Comments on Summary pages

9.1.1 On page 6, the number of residues (74) above the legal MRL was higher than normal, reflecting the commodities tested in Quarter 3. Comments in the summary of results should clearly link to Section 4.

9.1.2 A footnote was required in page 9 for BAC and DDAC, to note that ‘MRL exceedance allowing for uncertainty’ were not being treated as such, and signposting to Section 4.
9.2  Apples

9.2.1  No residues above the MRLs were detected, but dithiocarbamates residues were recorded at levels where more information was required. The risk assessment for dithiocarbamates uses the worst-case assumption that ziram had been applied. PRiF members observed that ziram is not used on UK apples and, while the risk assessment was sensible, if the sample were from UK the residue could be mancozeb which is approved for use on apples in the UK. The National Reference Laboratory confirmed that the high-level residues were from apples imported from outside the EU. Responses from the suppliers were discussed leading to a discussion on the traceability requirements for small businesses. The secretariat observed that small businesses generally dealt with just a few suppliers and it was likely that traceability to the grower would be possible if a situation warranted it. A member asked for details relating to the two samples (purportedly from UK in September) to be checked, as this was unlikely.

Action: Secretariat

9.3  Aubergine

9.3.1  No residues above the MRLs were detected. Wholesale samples were included in this survey.

9.4  Bananas

9.4.1  No residues above the MRLs were detected. Samples were tested whole including peel. No issues were raised.

9.5  Beans with pods

9.5.1  There were 7 samples with residues over the MRLs, all imported from outside the EU. One sample had 10 breaches. HSE’s risk assessments concluded that none were considered to have an effect on health.

9.5.2  One sample contained a residue of monocrotophos. HSE explained that uncertainty about the genotoxic effect meant that the finding was unwelcome; however, the risks were likely to be low.

9.5.3  A member highlighted variances between the number of residues found in the ‘Residues measured above the MRL’ section and the details in the ‘Summary of samples with residues over the MRL’ at the front of the report; this also applied to several other food categories. The secretariat acknowledged the observation and confirmed they would revisit the appropriate sections throughout the report without delay. PRiF members were assured that the risk assessments were unaffected because they were taken from the source data.

Action: Secretariat
9.5.4 Members noted that the difference in residue profile between beans and speciality beans classifications appeared closely aligned with the type of retailer from which the samples were sourced. The secretariat explained that speciality beans were sourced from wholesale to ensure that sufficient quantity of sample was available as they were niche products. They considered the number of detections on beans imported from Malaysia and possible reasons for these and suggested that a programme to improve farmers’ awareness was required.

9.6 Beef

9.6.1 Residues were found in 4 samples. Two samples contained residues of QACs above the MRL; one BAC and one DDAC. While these findings were indicative of use for hygiene purposes on butchery equipment and surfaces, because the supplier had not responded to HSE’s letter, no firm conclusion could be drawn.

9.7 Berries and small fruits

9.7.1 Four samples contained residues above the MRLs. Three samples of fresh blueberries imported from Ukraine contained phosphonic acid, which fall under the MRL for fosetyl aluminium and phosphonic acid. One sample of fresh blueberries from USA contained folpet. Members discussed potential sources of the fosetyl exceedances including the potential for phosphonic acid to arise from non-pesticide sources, but in the absence of evidence no further comment was made.

9.7.2 A member observed that results for samples of fresh and frozen blueberries were reported separately in the report and suggested that the two classifications should be cross-referenced. The secretariat agreed to insert cross-references in the Q3 report and consider how to address the issue in future reports.

**Action: Secretariat**

9.8 Bread

9.8.1 UK was the country of origin of almost all samples. None of the samples contained a pesticide residue above the MRL. No comments were made.

9.9 Broccoli

9.9.1 None of the samples contained a residue above the MRL. All samples were of fresh broccoli and no tests for chlorate were conducted.

9.10 Cheese (soft)

9.10.1 Ten samples contained a residue of chlorate above the default MRL. Samples were from a range of different countries of origin: France, UK, Italy and Greece.
Responses from several companies indicated that they were aware of the issue and were following up HSE’s notifications with suppliers.

9.10.2 The secretariat pointed out that the company responses had been written before the EU consultation on chlorate opened and that difficulties with residues in dairy foods were expected in the future; a separate section would be inserted to cover chlorate issues and be signposted from appropriate sampling categories. An error in sentence construction on page 35 would also be corrected.

Action: Secretariat

9.11 Chinese cabbage

9.11.1 Various types of Chinese cabbage were tested. None of the residues found were expected to have an effect on health. One UK sample of Chinese Leaf contained a residue of thiamethoxam above the MRL. The secretariat explained that thiamethoxam had been used as a seed treatment, the rate having been adjusted down by the grower in response to previous results close to the MRL. The company’s response indicated they were a responsible and proactive supplier. Members noted that authorisation for use of thiamethoxam (except for a few specified protected uses) expired in December 2018. The committee examined the company’s response and were satisfied the result derived from a legal use.

9.12 Eggs

9.12.1 None of the 24 samples of eggs tested contained a pesticide residue above the MRL. The secretariat stated that tests for fipronil were included and all samples were of UK origin.

9.13 Fish (white)

9.13.1 Four of 24 samples contained residues of BAC which would have been over the MRL in other foods. However, no residues have currently been set for fish and none of the residues found would be expected to have an effect on health. The secretariat stated that the findings of BAC were unsurprising, given the routine use of knives and washing of surfaces in fish processing practices. No safety issues were identified.

9.13.2 A member pointed out that the first line of the ‘BAC (sum) and DDAC’ section on page 42 required editing for clarity.

Action: Secretariat

9.14 Frozen fruits and smoothie mixes

9.14.1 The secretariat explained that this category replaced the frozen vegetable survey and the samples were tested for disinfectants only. Thirteen breaches were
found; twelve samples contained residues of chlorate above the MRL and one sample contained residues above the MRLs of both BAC and chlorate. It was further noted that the origin of the fruit was not necessarily indicated on the samples’ packaging.

9.14.2 The committee requested that a footnote was added to explain that tests were specifically conducted for disinfectants. A member highlighted variance between the number of residues found in the ‘Residues measured above the MRL’ section and the details in the ‘Summary of samples with residues over the MRL’ at the front of the report. The secretariat confirmed they would revisit the appropriate sections throughout the report without delay. PRiF members were assured that the risk assessments were unaffected because they were taken from the source data.

**Action:** Secretariat

9.15 **Game**

9.15.1 Residues of QACs (BAC and DDAC) above the MRL were found in 5 samples of various game. Two of these samples contained residues of both BAC and DDAC. The secretariat stated that a response from one company explained how the residue was likely to be from butchery equipment and they were following the issues up with their suppliers and recommending food safe products. The committee observed that contamination could have occurred at any stage of the food processing chain and was difficult to control unless sampling occurred at multiple stages in the process.

9.15.2 The secretariat noted that DDT was occasionally encountered in venison samples but confirmed it had not been found in this round of tests. There were no other comments.

9.16 **Ginger**

9.16.1 Of twelve samples collected and tested, 6 contained residues above the MRL. All samples were imported from China, the predominant source of ginger. The secretariat suggested that a number of RASFFs may have prompted ginger’s selection for the sampling programme. No safety risks were identified.

**Action:** Secretariat

9.17 **Grapefruit**

9.17.1 No residues above the MRLs were detected in any of the samples surveyed, although some samples contained residues of chlorpyrifos and imazalil that required detailed risk assessments. The secretariat explained that, there being no registration data to address certain scenarios, EFSA had chosen to reduce
the LOD of imazalil. The committee considered the potential effects of this decision and observed that citrus growers would need to react accordingly.

9.17.2 The secretariat confirmed that HSE always applied the MRL in force at the time of testing. HSE’s risk assessments indicated no expected risks to health for chlorpyrifos and an unlikely risk for imazalil. Imazalil was found in 4 samples and the risk assessment advised that an effect on human health would be unlikely if fruit was eaten with all its peel, once the peel was removed the risk was negligible.

9.18 Grapes

9.18.1 Thirty-six samples were collected by Horticultural Marketing Inspectors. One sample from Chile contained a residue of captan over the LOD MRL. Eleven samples contained residues of ethephon sufficient to require more detailed risk assessment, which concluded that risk to health was unlikely. The National Reference Laboratory representative asked if any changes were proposed, given that the MRL for ethephon was 1 mg/kg and the risk assessment was triggered at 0.9 mg/kg, and the secretariat confirmed that nothing was expected as the MRL had relatively recently been set at this level and the subsequent more detailed assessment had identified that risks to health were unlikely.

9.19 Infant food (cereal based)

9.19.1 One sample from 37 tested contained a pesticide residue, of chlormequat, above the MRL. The secretariat reminded the committee that baby food MRLs were set at 0.01 mg/kg for everything, unless an individual level was set lower. The exceedance was found in an organic baby oats product made in Switzerland. The committee examined the company’s response and welcomed their good response, including the instigation of a positive release procedure. HSE’s risk assessment indicated that the residue was not expected to have an effect on health. No other issues were identified.

9.20 Lentils

9.20.1 Of 48 samples tested, 3 samples contained a pesticide residue above the MRL, two of procymidone and one of glyphosate. The secretariat stated that lentils were traded as dried goods; while sources for some samples were stated as UK, the country of origin would be different as the lentils would have been imported from elsewhere and packed in the UK. HSE’s risk assessments found that none of the residues, either separately or in combination, were expected to have an effect on health. In the light of UK’s recent topical interest in vegan diets, the committee welcomed these results. No further comments were made.
9.21 **Melon**

9.21.1 One sample from Spain contained a residue of chlorate over the MRL. The secretariat confirmed that the samples were of whole melon rather than prepared fruit. Standard text on chlorate use would be included in the report and, while the samples were sourced from UK supermarkets, it was acknowledged that the stated country of origin did not necessarily indicate where the melon was grown. The committee heard that the source of contamination was likely to be water-related, possibly from irrigation or washing. No concerns were raised.

9.22 **Milk**

9.22.1 No residues above the MRL were detected in any of the samples surveyed.

9.23 **Mushrooms (cultivated)**

9.23.1 No residues above the MRL were detected in any of the samples surveyed.

9.24 **Okra**

9.24.1 Five samples, imported from India and Jordan, contained pesticide residues over the MRL. The secretariat noted that, while there was a relatively high incidence of residues above the MRL, HSE’s risk assessments found no expected effects on health, however it was expected that supermarkets would generally seek assurances. The committee welcomed indication of the Jordanian Embassy’s interest and plans to follow up, educate and communicate with Jordanian farmers.

9.25 **Pears**

9.25.1 No residues above the MRL were detected in any of the samples surveyed. The secretariat observed that these results reflected a trend of improvement over the years.

9.26 **Peppers**

9.26.1 One sample, imported from Poland, contained a pesticide residue of ethephon above the MRL. The secretariat noted that the finding was not uncommon and confirmed that HSE’s risk assessments found no risk issues with it.

9.27 **Pineapple**

9.27.1 No residues above the MRLs were detected in any of the samples surveyed, and no other issues were identified. The secretariat clarified that the samples included both canned and fresh pineapple and emphasised that, because some pineapples from other countries were prepared in UK, the stated source was not
necessarily the country of origin. The committee requested the secretariat to add a separate section for prepared pineapple in the brand name annex.

**Action:** Secretariat

9.28 **Potatoes**

9.28.1 From this quarterly survey, one sample of 18 samples tested contained a pesticide residue of MCPA above the MRL. The secretariat stated that the sample with the exceedance was imported from Germany.

9.29 **Soft citrus**

9.29.1 No samples contained residues over the MRL. The secretariat stated that several samples contained residues of imazalil and thiabendazole where the effect on health needed to be considered in more detail. Five samples contained imazalil and HSE’s risk assessment concluded that an effect on health was unlikely if the whole fruit including all peel was eaten, whereas if the fruit was peeled first, no effect would be expected. A risk assessment for thiabendazole along the same lines found similar results, and no expected effect on health if the peel was discarded.

9.29.2 The secretariat reported two company responses relating to propiconazole findings. One company identified a machine in the packaging process as the likely contamination source; following action to clean the machinery residue levels were falling. The product is no longer used. The second response acknowledged an application of propiconazole in the previous season, but claimed their own testing showed residues below the MRL, and compliance with official controls in Spain.

9.30 **Vine leaves**

9.30.1 The secretariat explained that vine leaves were selected for the survey following identification by import controls as a high risk commodity. Two types of vine leaves were sampled: whole vine leaves in brine and dried powdered leaves for infusions. A high incidence of residues over the MRL was found and one sample required a more detailed risk assessment. Based on toxicological data, HSE’s risk assessment for chlorpyrifos concluded there was no risk to health; and a combined risk assessment with chlorpyrifos methyl found the risks were not increased.

9.30.2 A PRiF member highlighted that the residues detected were in line with pesticides use on wine grapes; for food production the company should have been sourcing leaves from unsprayed vineyards, or those producing vine leaves specifically for food. The committee heard that FSA had encountered similar issues with stuffed vine leaves, and observed how a gap in legislation could lead
to further generic issues around the consumption of non-fruit parts of plants, such as rose petals. Reporting that one company had described their paper-based quality control (QC) procedures and asked for recommendations for additional specific actions, the secretariat confirmed that HSE would feed back the results to the supplier, along with appropriate warnings, since the item was still on sale and was already on a border control list. HSE will share these results with the FSA. The FSA send out information via an early warning system when there are repeated issues.

9.30.3 The committee agreed that a sentence should be added to the report to emphasise that vine leaves as a food commodity are subject to their own separate set of MRLs, distinct from those for vine and table grapes.

Action: Secretariat

9.31 Follow-up from previous reports

Quarter 3 2017

9.31.1 Kale. The secretariat reported that HSE’s enquiries into five samples of kale from the UK that contained residues of linuron had concluded that the findings derived from unapproved use. All five samples were from the same grower company. Investigation by HSE’s enforcement colleagues had established no evidence to justify further action. This matter had been discussed in more detail earlier in the meeting.

9.31.2 Raspberries. HSE’s investigations into a sample of raspberries from the UK that contained a residue of chlorpyrifos found no evidence of other contamination or spray drift.

Quarter 4 2017

9.31.3 Cauliflower. HSE’s investigations into a sample of cauliflower from the UK that contained triallate residues had tracked the sample back to the farm but found no evidence for illegal use and no obvious source of contamination. The enquiry was now closed.

9.31.4 Cucumber. The secretariat reported that HSE was continuing its investigations into a sample of cucumber from the UK that contained propamocarb. An update would be provided when enquiries were complete.

Action: Secretariat

Quarter 1 2018

9.31.5 Lettuce. The secretariat reported that HSE’s investigations into a sample of lettuce from the UK containing inorganic bromide found no evidence of illegal
use. The lettuce had been grown hydroponically in organic soil and the grower’s own tests showed no sign of residues. The soil was tracked back to its source but there was no explanation for the residue finding, albeit some evidence that the residue could have been from naturally occurring background levels. The secretariat noted that HSE proposed to close the investigation as ‘unknown’. Having considered the update, the committee decided that the residue level was very low and the investigation should be closed. It would be useful to re-test this source in the future.

**Action:** Secretariat

**Quarter 2 2018**

9.31.6 Speciality vegetables - celeriac. The secretariat reported that HSE’s investigations into a sample of celeriac containing residues of chlorpropham had tracked the celeriac back to rented land and two sets of treatment records had been examined. No evidence was found to link the residue with grower use or spray drift from neighbours. Ongoing investigations were looking at the storage location to rule out any potato stores link and a further update would be provided in the next report.

**Action:** Secretariat

9.31.7 Chinese cabbage. The secretariat related that investigations into one sample of pak choi with residues of acetamiprid found that the grower had applied pesticide under an EAMU authorising use on protected and outdoor leafy brassicas for baby leaf production only but had allowed the plant to grow to the adult stage. The PRiF asked the secretariat to consider how to clarify the different authorisations for use on baby and adult produce, particularly among smaller growers who might not use an agronomist or be in an assured produce scheme, perhaps by targeted communication through the British Leaf Salad Growers Association. Other investigations into a choi sum sample with exceedance of acetamiprid and a pak choi sample with an exceedance of fluopyram were ongoing and would be updated in a future report.

**Action:** Secretariat

9.31.8 Mushrooms (speciality). HSE’s investigations into samples of oyster mushrooms, shiitake mushrooms and a sample of portobello mushrooms, all from the UK and which contained residues of chlormequat had revealed that residues derived from the straw on which the mushrooms were grown. While the grower was aware that residues above the MRL could arise from this cultivation medium and had carried out their own testing, they had not been aware that the MRL had been reduced. The secretariat explained that the investigation was now complete.
Agenda item 10: Rolling reporting update

10.1 The secretariat explained that the rolling reporting update was unavailable but being prepared by HSE. The committee would be notified when it was available.

Action: Secretariat

Agenda item 11: EU Exit update

11.1 Jayne Wilder explained that HSE and Defra had started considering its approaches two years previously. She provided the committee with an update on EU exit, including the latest details of HSE and Defra’s planning for plant protection products (PPPs) in the events of ‘deal’ and ‘no-deal’ scenarios. Should a deal be made, an implementation period would apply with an expected period of 18 – 20 months, in which time nothing would change with respect to the PRiF’s interests. The EU PPP Regulations would apply to UK and all new EU decisions would apply to UK. The chief difference would be that UK would no longer be a lead evaluator for active substances or MRLs.

11.2 The PRiF learned that in the event of no deal on 29 March 2019, HSE and Defra’s contingency plans would establish a working PPP regime with minimal changes. All technical requirements would remain the same and the EU Withdrawal Act 2018 would effectively retain legislation similar to the EU regime, while repatriating all decision making to UK. All EU MRLs in place would become UK MRLs. Future applications for products, actives and MRLs would be carried out under the national regime in UK and, under a streamlined national process, it might be possible to reduce the processing time for new substances to get onto the UK market. However, should UK MRLs be set ahead of EU MRLs there could be a potential impact on trade; the overriding aim was to ensure a smooth transition at point of exit and maintain protection to allow business to continue to operate. HSE and Defra saw no change to the PRiF’s role and would continue to keep the committee updated on developments; any questions were welcomed via either the general EU Exit mailbox or the PRiF secretariat.

11.3 Further discussions centred on the resources to service the new arrangements and the role of the Expert Committee on Pesticides going forward. The committee noted that government departments and devolved administrations had already released many guidance documents on the GOV.UK website and more were expected closer to the deadline.

Agenda Item 12: 2019 Monitoring plan: update

12.1 The secretariat reported that there was no update available for this item.
Agenda item 13: Communication update

13.1 Feedback from the 2018 Open Event

13.1.1 A member stated that the feedback scoring system worked well, encouraging unequivocal responses. Others highlighted free text responses on the value of the day: notably that there was no presentation from a farmer or pesticides user; or perspective on the benefits of pesticide use; and a concern that the language used was too simplistic to properly explain the science involved. The Chairman added that while science rarely provided black and white answers, clarity of language and expression was important. The future use of Slido was queried, given that many attendees had not engaged with this new technology to ask questions, however the secretariat pointed out that it had generated a lot more questions than at past meetings.

13.2 2019 Open Event

13.2.1 Given the positive feedback from 2018 event attendees on ideas and topics for future events, the committee agreed that a 2019 Open Event should go ahead. Members suggested various dates and locations, while the secretariat clarified that certain administrative specifications and considerations would need to be satisfied. Discussion concluded with general agreement for a 2019 open event in late summer or early autumn at an accessible location to be determined. The Chairman asked all members to develop and put forward suggestions by the end of February.

Action: All

13.2.2 Members agreed that the Communications sub-group would take responsibility to progress proposals for the 2019 open event, dealing by email to identify a new communications sub-group member, proposed event speakers and an event location before May 2019, so that a suitable venue could be booked as soon as possible. The Chairman requested the secretariat to arrange a communications sub-group meeting in March, before Easter.

Actions: Communications sub-group, Secretariat

Agenda item 14: Any other business

14.1 Endocrine disrupting chemicals

14.1.1 A committee member pointed out that the regulatory approaches to managing endocrine disrupting pesticides were still being developed. [Post meeting note: EFSA and the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) published joint guidance on how to identify substances with endocrine disrupting properties in pesticides and biocides in November 2018 link]. HSE confirmed that to satisfy EFSA (and
ECHA) requirements endocrine toxicity evaluations were being included with all active substance toxicology assessments being submitted to EFSA (and ECHA). The consequences of these were now starting to proceed through the regulatory process to the Commission and eventual decision making.

14.1.2 A member also suggested the effects of pesticides on the flora and fauna of the gut might also be an issue worth consideration. The Chairman observed that while the effects of pesticides, biocides and disinfectants on gut flora remained unaddressed, probiotic manufacturers had sophisticated systems for analysing potential effects which could be an approach worth exploring in future. Research into the association of changes in gut flora with chronic disease suggested potential to deal with chronic toxicity via gut flora. The FSA member noted the methodology was interesting but not a priority for FSA investigation, since nutritional issues were the responsibility of the Department of Health in England (although they remained under FSS in Scotland). It was observed this is a developing area of science and does not form part of chemical registration requirements.

14.2 Travel claims for PRiF members

14.2.1 Members were requested to notify the secretariat if recent travel claims had not been paid. A batch of claims had been lost in the system but were now retrieved and reinstated. All members were also requested to keep an eye on their next claims.

Action: All

14.2.2 The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions to discussions and closed the meeting.

The next meeting of the Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food (PRiF) will be held in York on 15 May 2019.