Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food (PRiF)

Minutes of the meeting of the Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food (PRiF), 10 July 2019

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 33rd meeting of the Committee.

Those present:

Chairman:
Dr P Brantom

Members:
Ms A Davison, Dr J Blackman, Mr I Finlayson, Dr S Freeman

Representatives:
Mr A Dixon (Health and Safety Executive), Mr D Faulkner (Northern Ireland Executive), Dr S Nawaz (National Reference Laboratory), Dr M Taylor (Scottish Government)

Agenda item 1: Chairman’s Introduction

1.1 The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2 The Chairman announced that Dr Glenis Wedzicha had resigned from the PRiF Committee. He thanked her for her hard work on the Committee and Communications Sub Group. A Committee member felt that Dr Wedzicha’s work with the Women’s Institute (WI) and other groups had given her a unique perspective, which she applied to the work of the PRiF. This was endorsed by the meeting attendees, who were grateful for her work, and wished her well for the future.

Agenda item 2: Introductions and declarations of interest

2.1 The Chairman explained that there were no changes to the interests that Committee members had previously declared.
Agenda item 3: Apologies

3.1 Apologies were received from Mr J Points (PRiF Committee), Dr D Mortimer (Food Standards Agency) and Mr D Williams (Defra).

Agenda item 4: Action points from PRiF meeting of 15 May 2019

4.1 Minutes of the last meeting

4.1.1 The Chairman confirmed that the minutes of the last meeting were agreed and had been published on Huddle. Dr Jonathan Blackman had been listed twice as an attendee. This would be corrected, and revised minutes issued.

Action: Secretariat

4.1.2 The Secretariat confirmed that the report for Q4 2018 had been published and all actions identified at the last meeting relating to its content had been completed.

4.2 Communication: email addresses

4.2.1 The Secretariat has included information on data held by HSE on behalf of PRiF in an HSE wide review of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements. The Secretariat will follow up the results of that review when they are received.

Action: Ongoing

4.3 Unapproved use of spinetoram

4.3.1 HSE had been considering a possible case of unapproved use of spinetoram in the UK. The NRL had produced a summary paper of the issues which had concluded that in this sample there was no reportable residue of spinetoram. This summary would be sent to the PRiF members. The PRiF Analytical Sub-Group (ASG) will consider the technical details and any implications for future PRiF samples and update the Committee accordingly.

Action: NRL, Analytical Sub-Group

4.4 2018 Annual Report

4.4.1 The Secretariat explained that the 2018 Annual Report was complete. It was with Defra awaiting a slot for publication.

4.5 Other action points

4.5.1 The Secretariat confirmed that other action points from the previous meeting had either been completed and closed, or would be covered later on today’s agenda.

Actions: Complete
**Agenda item 5: Matters Arising**

5.1 **Chlorpropham:** The Secretariat updated the meeting on the outcome of the EU review of Chlorpropham:

- Chlorpropham (also known as CIPC) has been undergoing a routine review in Europe since 2015. Based on the EFSA review, the future of the approval has been discussed at SCoPAFF (Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed) meetings and the European Union’s Health and Food Safety Directorate-General Appeal Committee for some months without an agreement being reached.

- In the absence of agreement, the European Commission concluded the approval for chlorpropham for use both as a herbicide and as a sprout suppressant cannot be renewed, because EFSA identified a range of concerns, including risks to consumers, based on the data submitted. The applicants for renewal were not able to fill the additional data gaps that EFSA identified within the timetable of the review. (They would have to apply for approval as a new active substance.)

This outcome is now in force in EU law\(^1\), with a deadline of 8 January 2020 for all member states to withdraw authorisations of products containing chlorpropham. The maximum grace period for use, storage and disposal ends on 8 October 2020.

- HSE will be amending UK authorisations for use accordingly.

- HSE and the Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) have been reviewing chlorpropham for some time, examining data supporting the authorisation in the light of PRC and PRiF findings of sporadic high residue levels (over the MRL, with in some cases associated risk to health) which appeared to arise from authorised use in accordance with Good Agricultural Practice (GAP). The ECP have not yet discussed this change in the legal position.

5.2 The Secretariat explained that as usual the MRL for chlorpropham would be reconsidered following this decision. The outcome, including timing, does not automatically follow from the non-approval decision. In this particular case the shelf-life of the crops treated, and the known issue of cross-contamination in storage, were being considered. The Secretariat would keep the Committee updated on developments.

**Action:** Secretariat

5.3 **2019 Eurobarometer in food safety in the EU:** The Secretariat explained that the 2019 Eurobarometer, which had been uploaded on Huddle, contained the results of research about consumer attitudes to food safety, levels of trust and wider information across all EU member States. The Chairman felt that this was a

---

useful indicator of views, HSE said that the 2019 Eurobarometer information would be included in the 2019 Open Event.

Action: HSE/Secretariat

Agenda item 6: Update from the PRiF Analytical Sub Group (ASG)

6.1 The Secretariat said that the next ASG meeting would be in 2 weeks. One of the topics for discussion would be the recent power failure affecting freezers at the Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA) laboratory. An assessment on the issues had been completed and forwarded to the ASG for discussion at the meeting. The Secretariat would circulate the assessment document to the PRiF.

Action: Secretariat

Agenda item 7: Current topics update

7.1 EU Exit

7.1.1 HSE explained that they had been prepared for a no-deal EU exit in time for the end of March 2019. Preparations had since changed in intensity. Further no-deal preparations were being made. Work was continuing on processes, including monitoring, on how it would be planned, and stakeholders reassured.

7.1.2 In response to a question from a member, HSE said that certain provisions specific to active substances that are endocrine disrupters had been omitted from the new legislation in error. Work was now being undertaken to correct this.

7.2 Chlorate

7.2.1 Progress on development of proposed MRLs: HSE attended a SCoPAFF (Residues) meeting in Brussels in June, where chlorate was discussed. The main points were:

- The EU Commission (on the basis of advice from their legal services) has confirmed that the setting of MRLs for chlorate must be addressed by means of a proposal under Regulation 396/2005. They do not consider that it is possible to transfer this to contaminants legislation.

- The Commission believes it has demonstrated some flexibility, proposing higher levels than previously indicated for a number of commodities in the light of consultation responses, and a review of the monitoring data that have been submitted.

- The Commission has proposed the insertion of a footnote within the proposal. The footnote confirms that MRLs set will apply to processed goods. However, this will acknowledge that levels found in processed goods may be higher than the MRLs set for raw goods. In those cases, account may be taken of any contact with products that contain ingredients containing chlorates (e.g. processing aids and/or
drinking water employed in compliance with the respective legal requirements for these products). Those additional chlorate inputs may then be discounted when deciding whether the processed good is compliant. The burden of proof in establishing these additional inputs will lie with the food and feed business operator.

- The Commission has stated its intention to put a finalised proposal to vote at the September 2019 SCoPAFF (Residues) meeting. It is expected that the revised proposal will be seen ahead of that meeting. UK has not determined a voting position at this point.

7.2.2 The Secretariat said that, regardless of the outcome of the September 2019 SCoPAFF (Residues) meeting, the work of the PRiF on this matter would not change. The Chairman observed that the balance of the use of products, and safety in food supply needs attention and must be resolved, although this was not a matter solely for the PRiF to investigate. HSE confirmed that they had commissioned some research about the use of biocides with their science division and would update on progress.

Agenda item 8: Draft Quarter 1 2019 Report

8.1 A Committee member pointed out that the quarter 1 sampling did not appear to reflect current market share, in particular the share of three national chains. The Secretariat explained that samples were taken over the whole year but would check on the distribution of where samples were obtained from.

Action: Secretariat

8.2 Apples

8.2.1 No residues above the MRLs were detected in the samples. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health. Combined risk assessments were used.

8.3 Beans with pods

8.3.1 Samples of green and speciality beans with pods were taken from wholesale and supermarket outlets. Six samples contained residues above the MRLs, 4 were speciality beans, and 2 were fine beans. No risk issues were identified. 11 samples were listed in the report and the Secretariat would correct this to 6.

Action: Secretariat

8.3.3 The Chairman said that speciality beans tended to have a higher rate of non-compliance and he was concerned that the presentation of results did not clearly show that difference between speciality and green beans. He asked if it would be helpful to present them separately. The Secretariat would consider separating these in the 2020 monitoring programme.

Action: Secretariat
8.3.4 A Committee member pointed out that where many different residues of organophosphate (OPs) were detected in samples, this may mean that the individual sample was made up of beans from multiple sources, rather than multiple uses of OPs on a single crop.

Action: Secretariat

8.4 Cabbage

8.4.1 One sample contained a residue above the MRL. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health; no combined risk assessments were undertaken.

8.5 Chilli peppers

8.5.1 One sample contained a residue above the MRL. Combined risk assessments were undertaken, and none of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

8.5.2 That sample contained ten residues in total. It was likely that the sample was made up from multiple sources, bearing in mind that a sample of chilli peppers must weigh at least 1 kg.

8.6 Cooked meat

8.6.1 Various samples were purchased, including those from delicatessen counters as well as -pre-packed meats. Ten samples contained residues above the MRL. Combined risk assessments were undertaken, and none of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

8.6.2 Residues of BAC and DDAC were found in some samples. The Secretariat would clarify the BAC and DDAC residues section.

Action: Secretariat

8.6.3 Residues of chlorate were found in some of the samples. The Secretariat pointed out that these were likely to be from the disinfectants used on surfaces and equipment during cooked meat processing and packing, and not from exposure of the animals. The Secretariat would clarify which disinfectant screen was used in analysing the samples.

Action: Secretariat

8.7 Fish (sea)

8.7.1 Five samples contained residues above the MRL. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health. One sample contained a residue of DDE. The Secretariat explained this was a sample of Turkish sea bass and would add this to the report.

Action: Secretariat
8.8 **Grapes**

8.8.1 No residues above the MRLs were detected in the samples. Combined risk assessments were undertaken. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

8.8.2 One sample contained 14 residues, thought to be from multiple sources.

8.8.3 It was noted that the summary table contained 33 samples, when it should be 34. The Secretariat would check and correct this.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.9 **Lemons**

8.9.1 One sample contained a residue of prochloraz below the MRL. A detailed risk assessment was undertaken. This concluded that any effect on health was unlikely if the peel was consumed, and there would be no effect on health if the peel was discarded.

8.10 **Lettuce**

8.10.1 Eleven samples contained residues above the MRLs. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

8.11 **Milk**

8.11.1 None of the 71 samples collected contained any residues of pesticides. The Secretariat explained that various milks were tested, including whole, skimmed and organic. Shoppers bought samples at their usual shops, in accordance with shopping habits.

8.11.2 The Secretariat would check that various retail outlets and types of milk were included in the sampling.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.12 **Okra**

8.12.1 Four samples contained residues above the MRLs. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health, including those from combined risk assessments. Samples tested included fresh and frozen okra.

8.12.2 The Secretariat explained that HSE found residues of flonicamid above the MRL relatively frequently. Food Business Operators had expressed frustration that their own tests conducted either in the UK or in producing countries did not identify these findings. The issue seems to be that HSE laboratories test for the full EU residue definition for plant products of “Flonicamid (sum of flonicamid, TFNA and TFNG expressed as flonicamid)”, and usually detected the metabolites TFNA and/or TFNG rather than parent flonicamid. However, other laboratories may be testing only for the parent flonicamid. The Committee noted that flonicamid is the residue definition set for plant products by Codex Alimentarius.
8.12.3 The Secretariat would clarify that testing for flonicamid included looking for the full legal residue definition, and add this to the report.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.12.4 The Secretariat would also liaise with FSA to draw this clarification to the attention of those enforcing border controls, including Regulation (EU) 669/2009.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.13 **Peaches and nectarines**

8.13.1 No residues above the MRLs were detected in the samples. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

8.14 **Peppers**

8.14.1 Fresh peppers were sampled, collected by the Animal and Plant Health Agency’s Horticultural Marketing Inspectors (HMI) or market researchers. No residues above the MRLs were detected in the samples. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

8.15 **Pork**

8.15.1 No pesticide residues were detected in the samples.

8.16 **Potatoes**

8.16.1 No residues above the MRLs were detected in the samples. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health, including those from combined risk assessments.

8.16.2 The Secretariat explained that 1 sample contained a residue of DDAC under the MRL. It was not approved for use on potatoes in the UK, but no enforcement action had been taken, as it was thought to have come from the water the potatoes were washed in, or equipment using during packing. The Secretariat would revise this section of the report to reflect this.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.16.3 The Secretariat would remove the last sentence in this section of the report.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.17 **Rice**

8.17.1 Samples of basmati, brown and white rice were collected. Three samples contained a residue above the MRL. None of the other residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health, including those from combined risk assessments.
8.17.2 The Secretariat explained that the MRL for tricyclazole dropped to $0.01^2$ mg/kg in December 2017. Given the shelf-life of rice, in particular the prolonged storage for curing Basmati rice, it was possible that samples in breach of that MRL were imported before the MRL changed.

8.17.3 The European Commission’s Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety had undertaken an audit of Indian rice, including industry compliance and shipment checks. The Secretariat would circulate a reference to the Committee.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.17.4 The Secretariat said they written to the rice brand owner about exceedances in basmati rice. No reply had been received, so they would follow-up.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.18 **Shellfish**

8.18.1 Crabs, mussels and prawns were sampled. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.18.2 The Secretariat would clarify in the summary table that no MRLs applied to these samples, therefore no residues above the MRLS were detected.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.19 **Spinach**

8.19.1 One sample contained a residue above the MRL. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health. The sample with a residue above the MRL was labelled as baby leaf but may not have met the definition for baby leaf crops in residues legislation. This may have caused some confusion about which MRL had been applied. The Secretariat would clarify this in future reports.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.20 **Strawberry**

8.20.1 Fresh and frozen strawberries were sampled. Two samples contained residues above the MRLs. None of the residues detected, including those from combined risk assessments, would be expected to have an effect on health.

2 * Maximum Residue Levels set at the LOD (LOD MRL): these MRLs are set at a default level, i.e. at the limit of determination (LOD) as specified in EC Regulation 396/2005
8.21 **Tomatoes**

8.21.1 A selection of tomatoes was sampled, grown in glasshouses and outdoors. No residues above the MRLs were detected in the samples. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

8.22 **Follow-up from previous reports**

8.22.1 The Secretariat issued a table of samples where follow up action had been completed. The following required clarification, or were outstanding:

**Quarter 3 2017**

8.22.2 Some samples of raspberries contained chlorpyrifos which was not authorised for that use. HSE had looked into this finding with the grower and supplier. Chlorpyrifos had not been used on or near the raspberries, and the grower’s own residue tests did not find it. The residue is low, and there is no evidence of unauthorised use. No further information is likely to be found, so the case is deemed closed.

**Quarter 4 2017**

8.22.3 Details of a sample of cucumber containing a residue of propamocarb were passed to HSE. No further information is likely to arise after this length of time, so the case is being closed.

**Quarter 2 2018**

8.22.4 Details of 2 samples of celeriac from the UK containing a residue of chlorpropham were passed to HSE. Their enquiries are not yet complete, so an update will appear in a future report.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.22.5 Details of a sample of choi sum from the UK containing a residue of acetamiprid were passed to HSE. They confirmed that there is an extension of authorisation for minor use for baby leaf crops of this type. HSE indicated that there appears to be a misinterpretation of the approval, with some growers using baby leaf authorisations for conventional crops. They have informed the Grower Liaison Group (who work with HSE to help deliver the UK National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use Directive), who are looking at ways of communicating this issue with smaller growers. The Secretariat would clarify the use of acetamiprid and reissue this section of the report.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.22.6 The Secretariat would correct a typographical error in the extension of authorisation for minor use for baby leaf crops details on page 8.

**Action:** Secretariat
8.22.7 Details of a pak choi sample from the UK containing fluopyram were passed to HSE. Their investigations concluded that there was no evidence of illegal application, but the grower believes that residues may have been from spray drift from an adjacent crop. The grower has indicated they have plans to implement measures to prevent a reoccurrence of this. A letter will be issued to remind them of their responsibilities. HSE actions are complete.

Quarter 4 2018

8.22.8 Details of 2 samples of broccoli from the UK containing tri-allate were passed to HSE. Consideration of 1 sample is complete, whilst the other is ongoing. An update will appear in a future report.

Action: Secretariat

8.22.9 Details of a sample of lettuce from the UK containing spinetoram were passed to HSE. Their Investigation has been completed, and an update will appear in a future report.

Action: Secretariat

8.22.10 Details of a sample of celeriac from the UK containing linuron were passed to HSE. No enforcement action will be taken, and an update will appear in a future report.

Action: Secretariat

Agenda item 9: Rolling Reporting update

9.1 The Chairman explained that there were no issues arising from the Rolling Reporting.

Agenda item 10: 2020 Monitoring Plan

10.1 The Secretariat had circulated the plan for the 2020 monitoring, as discussed with the PRiF Planning Sub-group on 5 July. The proposed foods for sampling were listed as high scores in red, those scoring highly but should probably not be tested in 2020 in green, those with a lower ranking score to which extra consideration should be given to testing in 2020 in amber.

10.2 The Secretariat asked if beans with pods should be sampled regularly. They were included in the Rolling Reporting, and all beans in this category were not always sampled. It was agreed that beans with pods would only be surveyed when they were causing problems.

Action: Secretariat

10.3 The FSA were screening potato crisps for acrylamide, and the NRL pointed out that testing the same samples for chlorpropham could be informative as well as efficient. It was agreed that crisps were not a high priority. The Secretariat would
check that Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate (PHSI) could visit crisp manufacturers.

Action: Secretariat

10.4 The Secretariat would consider sampling orange juice. The NRL pointed out that oranges were grown specifically for fresh or juicing, so the residue profile is different from that for whole oranges.

Action: Secretariat

10.5 The Secretariat suggested moving fresh herbs to high priority. They had not been tested since 2014. The survey should include a selection of popular leafy herbs such as coriander, parsley, basil and mint, and include samples sold growing in pots.

Action: Secretariat

10.6 Cheese would be included in the sampling.

Action: Secretariat

10.7 Lamb had been identified as high priority. This was an error and would be corrected, Lamb was no longer on the EU priority list.

Action: Secretariat

10.8 The Secretariat would revise the list, to take account of the above comments and suggestions, and issue it as a working list.

Action: Secretariat

Agenda item 11: Communication update

11.1 2019 Open Event

11.1.2 The Secretariat said that the National Railway Museum (NRM) had been booked for the Open Meeting in York, on Wednesday 16 October. The topic will be the Future of Farming. The venue is in a convenient location, with free parking and Wi-Fi.

11.1.3 The Communications Sub-Group had produced a draft programme and circulated it to the meeting. Break out groups could be held to discuss relevant issues, and Slido used to manage question and answer sessions.

11.1.4 The draft agenda was discussed, and it was agreed that the talks and events would take place in the following order:

- Morning:
  - PRiF Chair: Welcome - Overview of the work of the PRiF
o Talk by LEAF: details to be confirmed
o Defra speaker: EU exit & pesticide MRLs: an update
o Break out groups to discuss PRiF’s frequently asked questions and suggest new ones

- Afternoon:
  o HSE: Overall 2018 results, 2018 and recent issues arising from the results, Monitoring plans for 2020
  o Innogen Carter-Hall from Provenance partners: Innovative farming in the U.K. and Kenya
  o Georgie Bray: RSPB farm manager: sustainable farming for the future
  o Question and Answer session

11.1.5 The Secretariat would issue confirmation of, and a formal invitation to the event, to the speakers.

**Action:** Secretariat

11.1.6 The Secretariat would create an Eventbrite page for booking for the event, and update information on it regularly in the run-up to the event. Each update had attracted additional bookings last year.

**Action:** Secretariat

**Agenda item 12: Any other business**

12.1 A Committee member wanted it noted in the minutes that their expenses had not been paid since January and would not be attending the next meeting unless they were paid. The Secretariat apologised and said that this was caused by a payroll problem and would resolve it.

**Action:** Secretariat

12.2 The Secretariat explained that ministerial approval had been given to start recruitment for the new PRiF Committee. This was a joint recruitment exercise with the Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP). It was planned that the new Committee would be in place by the start of 2020. The Secretariat would keep the Committee informed of developments.

**Action:** Secretariat

12.3 The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and for their contributions, then closed the meeting.

The next meeting of the Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food (PRiF) will be held in York on 17 October 2019.