Minutes of the meeting of the Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food (PRiF), 17 October 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 34th 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

Representatives:

Mr A Dixon (Health and Safety Executive), Mr P Hamey (Health and Safety Executive), Mr D Faulkner (Northern Ireland Executive), Dr S Nawaz (National Reference Laboratory), Dr M Taylor (Scottish Government), Dr D Mortimer (Food Standards Agency)

Agenda item 1: Chairman’s introduction

1.1 The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He thanked those involved for their work for the PRiF Open meeting yesterday. He felt that this was the best one so far, with a positive audience response. The speakers gave another perspective to the meeting and the work of the PRiF.

Agenda item 2: Declarations of interest

2.1 There were no changes to the interests that Committee members had previously declared.

Agenda item 3: Apologies

3.1 No apologies were received.
Agenda item 4: Action points from PRiF meeting of 10 July 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 GOV.uk.

4.2 Unapproved use of spinetoram

4.2.1 The Secretariat informed the committee that a technical paper was presented to the PRiF Analytical Sub-Group (ASG) on 24th July explaining how to avoid false positives. ASG members were satisfied this dealt with the issue appropriately and the paper was then shared with PRiF.

4.3 2018 Annual Report

4.3.1 The Secretariat confirmed that the 2018 Annual Report was published on 14th August.

4.4 Chlorpropham

4.4.1 The Secretariat had sent out various updates about the outcome of the EU review of chlorpropham over the last few weeks. It was discussed in more detail in a later agenda item.

4.5 Update from the PRiF Analytical Sub Group (ASG)

4.5.1 A summary of actions taken by HSE and SASA (the Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture) laboratory following a freezer failure issue, was shared with the committee after the most recent ASG meeting.

4.6 Draft Quarter 1 2019 Report

4.6.1 A Committee member felt that current sampling procedures did not reflect the national market share of supermarkets, in particular three national chains. The Secretariat explained that whilst the sampling process took some account of supermarket market share across the year this was alongside a range of other issues. The survey plan was complex and takes into account a range of issues including consumer risk, key food groups, location, sample date and seasonality. The surveys cannot be fully statistically representative either of brand or retailer due to limited sample size and the other constraints as stated above. The programme is intended to provide a broad base of sampling to look at compliance and to survey key foods for the consumer. The secretariat agreed to liaise with the committee member concerned about this issue. It was agreed that there should be more transparency in this area.

Action: Secretariat
4.6.2 **Spinach:** The Secretariat explained that there was a question over whether a sample labelled as baby leaf, with a residue above the MRL may have met the residues definition for baby crops in MRL legislation. Some suppliers were assuming that the higher MRL for deltamethrin for baby leaf applied. Additionally, the authorisation status for use on immature spinach marketed beyond the baby leaf stage was unclear. The Secretariat would raise this issue at the next Grower Liaison Group (GLG) meeting.

**Action:** Secretariat.

4.6.3 **Publication of the Quarter 1 Report:** The Quarter 1 report was published on 6th September.

4.6.4 **Further actions arising from the Quarter 1 Report:** The Secretariat updated the meeting on progress with further actions arising from the Quarter 1 Report and confirmed that all outstanding actions were completed when the report was published.

**Actions:** Complete

4.7 **Quarter 4 2018**

4.7.1 The Secretariat confirmed that all of the actions relating to the report for Quarter 4 2018 were updated when the Quarter 1 Report 2019 published.

**Actions:** Complete

4.8 **2020 Monitoring Plan**

4.8.1 There had been some discussion about whether it was practical to share sampling work with the Food Standards Agency, who were screening potato crisps for acrylamide. HSE already use inspectors who are visiting processors for their other statutory functions and the Secretariat had checked that Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate (PHSI) already sampled from crisp manufacturers.

**Action:** Complete

4.8.2 The Secretariat confirmed that all the other actions relating to the proposals for the 2020 Monitoring Plan have been taken forward to the commissioning stage and are ongoing.

**Actions:** Ongoing

4.9 **2019 Open Event**

4.9.1 All actions relating to the Open Meeting were undertaken, and the meeting took place on 16 October.

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

5.1 **Multiple residues and risk assessment methods:** HSE reported that EFSA had launched a public consultation on multiple residues and risk assessment methods for cumulative dietary risk in September. HSE explained that the consultation was centred on two case studies, the first considering chronic effects on the thyroid and the other looking at acute effects on the nervous system. These represent the outcome of many years of work identifying chronic and acute effects for all pesticides to establish the cumulative assessment groups and developing methodology for calculating dietary exposures. The case study risk assessments for both chronic and acute assessments were done using two different software systems to cross-validate the methods. Current conclusions are “The overall conclusion for both assessments – taking into account uncertainties– is that consumer risk from dietary cumulative exposure is below the threshold that triggers regulatory action defined by risk managers at the European Commission and in EU Member States.” It is necessary to read the whole report to understand the terms used in this statement.[1]

5.2 Committee members asked how and when this would be rolled out and applied to routine regulatory processes such as authorisations and residue findings. The Secretariat explained that there would be a workshop next week to discuss the findings of the consultation. The finalised advice will inform risk managers who regulate the safe use of pesticides. The Chairman emphasised that future application of the findings was the key issue. HSE explained that the findings would be considered to develop the UK regulatory position on the issue.

5.3 **PRiF recruitment:** The Secretariat explained that the PRiF had sought new committee members at the same time as the Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) but had not received many applications. Proposals to renew the process were being considered by Defra. For the Chair and members whose terms were at an end, it is possible HSE may asked them to attend future meetings if no new recruits are in place. They would be given sufficient notice if this proved necessary. The Secretariat would write to the chair and affected members, to clarify their position.

**Action: Secretariat**

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

6.1 The Secretariat explained that reports relating to ASG key issues had been circulated to the committee previously.

Agenda item 7: Current topics update

7.1 EU Exit

7.1.1 HSE said that ahead of the planned EU exit of 31 October the Government had decided officials would not attend any further EU meetings, except in exceptional circumstances. The main UK Statutory Instruments (SIs) enabling HSE’s work on pesticides had been passed by the UK parliament, with one outstanding SI currently under consideration. As new EU legislation is adopted this law will be continuously updated so that that on the date of exiting the EU the UK and EU law on pesticides will be identical.

7.1.2 In response to a question from a member about how a UK MRL would be identified after EU Exit, HSE said that HSE already has an MRLs database which reflects the UK’s legal position. The database has been refreshed in advance of EU exit and this newer version had been available since last week. All EU MRLs would be converted to a UK MRL in the event of a no deal EU exit. Thereafter the UK will be responsible for setting their own MRLs.

7.2 Chlorate

7.2.1 The Secretariat gave an update on progress on the development of proposed MRLs for chlorate. The proposals were not voted on in Brussels at the September SCoPAFF (Residues) meeting and will be considered at the next meeting. HSE had commissioned a literature review about the use of chlorate in the food industry.

7.2.2 The Secretariat would keep the Committee updated on progress with developments on the proposed MRLs for chlorate.

Action: Secretariat

Agenda item 8: Draft Quarter 2 2019 Report

8.1 The Secretariat said that the Quarter 2 2019 Report would be published in December.

8.2 Before discussing the draft Quarter 2 2019 Report, the Secretariat reported on correspondence from the Quarter 1 Report, involving samples of cooked chicken from Brazil with residues of BAC above the MRL.

8.3 The chicken was cooked in Brazil and packed in large amounts in plastic before export. QUAC biocides are used in the plant in line with normal practice. On
arrival in the UK the packs are sanitised and then rinsed, to remove microbiological contamination from the surface of the packs before they are opened, to minimise exposure of the chicken inside when the packs are opened. The UK company has concluded that although not expected to be an issue the rinsing was in practice not enough to reduce residues below the MRL. They were looking into adapting procedures to include an alternative biocide to meet this need. As this is an interesting case, the Secretariat will ask if the companies involved will allow HSE and/or the ACMSF to use the information supplied as a case study.

Action: Secretariat

8.4 The Secretariat explained that there was a small change to the Chairman’s Summary of Results for all samples in the draft Quarter 2 2019 Report.

8.5 Apples

8.5.1 No residues above the MRLs were detected, no risk issues were identified, and combined risk assessments were used. One sample was listed as coming from the Ukraine, and the Secretariat would double check that this was the correct country of origin.

Action: Secretariat

8.6.2 Testing for glyphosate was now an EU requirement for fruits and vegetable samples in the co-ordinated programme: this was the first set of results for apples that included glyphosate results. One sample contained a residue. HSE said that this was possibly translocated residues from weed removal from the orchard floor near the apple trees. Glyphosate is not directly applied to fruit trees.

8.7 Barley

8.7.1 No residues above the MRLs were detected in the samples. The Secretariat confirmed that glyphosate residues were expected in cereal products as they had been found before.

8.8 Beans with pods

8.8.1 Two samples contained residues above the MRL. No risk issues were identified in any of the residues detected.

8.9 Butter

8.9.1 No residues above the MRLs were detected in the samples, and there were no risk issues. Chlorate was not tested for in this survey, and the Secretariat would clarify this in the report.

Action: Secretariat
8.10  **Cabbage**

8.10.1 This survey is of head cabbage. 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.

8.10.2 A residue of fluazifop-p (sum) above the MRL was found in 1 sample. An investigation was underway, as the supplier's laboratory tests had not found this residue. The secretariat will check the certificates of analysis to determine if the correct residue definition was sought, before determining if this sample needs re-testing.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.10.3 The Secretariat will discuss this further with the ASG and forward the certificates of analysis to Fera.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.11  **Cheese (processed)**

8.11.1 Various processed cheeses were sampled, including cream cheese and spreads. Three samples contained residues above the MRL. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health. Three samples contained residues of chlorate. The Secretariat explained that these were not viewed as breaches, as in previous samples.

8.11.2 A typographic error was identified on page 23, where an asterisk needed to be added to the LOD definitions. The Secretariat would add this.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.12  **Fish (sea)**

8.12.1 Three samples contained residues. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health. One sample of hake contained a residue of DDT, which was in the form of DDE, indicating historical use.

8.13  **Grapes**

8.13.1 A broad range of grapes were sampled, from wholesale outlets to various markets. One sample from Chile contained a residue of captan above the MRL. This was an imported sample, so no re-testing was required. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

8.14  **Honey**

8.14.1 None of the samples contained residues above the MRLs. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.
8.14.2 The Secretariat would change the introductory sentence by moving ‘We do not think that the residues detected’ to the end of the second sentence ending in ‘insect infestations’ and add ‘Therefore we do not think that the residue can be detected’.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.14.3 They would also add a footnote to explain that the tests were “Carried out to pesticide residues testing standards”.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.15 Lemons

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

8.15.2 The Secretariat would check that none of the imazalil residues exceeded the Acute Reference Dose (ARfD).

**Action:** Secretariat

8.16 Milk

8.16.1 One sample contained a residue of BAC above the MRLs, which was expected to have come from disinfectant processes used in the dairy, and not the cow’s milk. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

8.17 Oats

8.17.1 Retail samples were collected. The samples were processed. No residues above the MRLs were detected in the samples. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

8.17.2 Residues of chlorpropham and chlormequat were found in the samples.

8.18 Okra

8.18.1 Seven of the samples contained residues above the MRLs. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health, and no risk issues were identified.

8.18.2 One sample from India contained a residue of flonicamid, and the Secretariat would add a phrase about this to the report.

**Action:** Secretariat
8.19 Pasta

8.19.1 No samples contained residues above the MRLs. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

8.19.2 The Secretariat would add more information about the MRLs used being based on the processing factors for wheat flour.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.19.3 The Secretariat would delete the follow up actions from this section of the report as it was not required.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.20 Peaches and nectarines

8.20.1 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.

8.20.2 The Secretariat explained that the overall value is corrected for stone weight. This is in line with the Regulation 396/2005 which specifies how MRLs apply where it does not apply directly to the whole food as traded. This means for example that one kilo of peaches is collected. The stones are removed; the residues are analysed in the flesh and the amount reported on the basis of the total sample weight, including the stones.

8.21 Peppers

8.21.1 Fresh peppers were sampled, from wholesale and retail outlets. No residues above the MRLs were detected in the samples. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

8.21.2 The Secretariat explained that peppers were tested on a 3-year cycle and would not be tested in 2020.

8.22 Plums

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

8.23 Potatoes

8.23.1 One sample contained a residue of flonicamid of 0.3mg/kg, above the MRL, that required a detailed risk assessment. It was considered that an effect on health was unlikely. A RASFF was issued, as the residue was 180% of the ARfD. A detailed response was received from the supplier, from which it seemed possible that the residue arose from use in accordance with the GAP. HSE will determine whether regulatory action is necessary. A member commented that they thought
the authorisation for use had already been withdrawn by the holder and HSE agreed to check on that also.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.23.4 One sample contained a residue of chlorpropham at 8.1mg/kg. A detailed risk assessment was carried out, and it was considered that an effect on health was unlikely. No RASFF was issued. The Secretariat would make it clear in the risk assessment paragraph that this was from a sample taken at a crisp processing factory.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.23.5 A Committee member wondered whether skin, rather than potato peel, was the correct term to use. HSE confirmed that peel was the term used in all previous discussions on this matter.

8.24 **Pre-prepared salad leaves**

8.24.1 Thirty-six of the samples tested contained a residue of chlorate measured above the MRL. In line with previous discussions these were not viewed as a breach of legislation. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.24.2 The MRLs for lettuce has been reported in the results. The Secretariat would make it clear that this has been used for information only by adding a footnote to the ODS table.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.25 **Shellfish**

8.25.1 A wide range of shellfish was sampled. No residues above the MRLs were detected in the samples. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

8.25.2 The Secretariat would delete the risk assessment paragraph on page 56.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.26 **Spinach**

8.26.1 Thirteen samples contained a pesticide residue above the MRL. One organic sample contained a residue of boscalid. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

8.26.2 Chlorate was found in 13 of the samples tested. A detailed response from the supplier was discussed. A Committee Member suggested adding a positive
comment about this response. The Secretariat would thank the supplier for such a detailed response and ask if details of this sample could be viewed as a case study and shared with the ACMSF.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.27 **Strawberries**

8.27.1 Samples from retail and wholesale outlets were collected. No residues above the MRLs were detected in the samples. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

8.28 **Tomatoes**

8.28.1 Samples were collected from retail outlets. No residues above the MRLs were detected in the samples. None of the residues detected would be expected to have an effect on health.

8.28.2 The Risk Assessments paragraph would be amended as it included a statement to indicate that there were no residues which was incorrect.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.29 **Wine**

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

8.29.2 The Secretariat would update the draft to clarify that the MRLs applied were for wine grapes.

**Action:** Secretariat

8.30 **Follow-up from previous reports**

8.30.1 The Secretariat confirmed that the only outstanding issue was for two samples of celeriac from Quarter 2, containing chlorpropham. The Secretariat explained that all the actions relating to Quarter 4 2018 were completed and updated when Quarter 1 2019 published and should be deleted as outstanding from this section.

**Actions:** Complete

**Agenda item 9: Rolling Reporting update**

9.1 The recent rolling reporting reports had been uploaded on Huddle. The Secretariat pointed out that an issue with dimethoate and omethoate had arisen. Information for 2 samples (one bean and one okra) containing dimethoate and omethoate had been sent to the FSA for RASFF consideration. The pesticide dimethoate has been subject to a European review and it was identified that
there was potential for genotoxicity, this resulted in the establishment of a precautionary hypothetical toxicological value. Because omethoate is a breakdown product of dimethoate HSE concerns relate to findings of both pesticides.

9.2 Using this hypothetical level, HSE have considered the risk and advised the FSA of the outcome. Dimethoate MRLs are due to be reviewed in the EU under Article 12 of Regulation 396/2005. In the UK HSE are already taking action to withdraw the use of dimethoate for remaining uses. Authorisations are withdrawn from 24 October for sale and supply, and from 24 January 2020 for storage, disposal and use, effectively preventing use in 2020.

**Action:** HSE

**Agenda item 10: 2020 Monitoring Plan**

10.1 The Secretariat said that the list of commodities to be sampled in 2020 had been sent to the laboratories for consideration. They were optimistic that the proposed list for 2020 sampling could be achieved within budget restrictions. All the other actions relating to proposals for the 2020 Monitoring Plan have been taken forward to the commissioning stage and are ongoing.

**Actions:** Ongoing

**Agenda item 11: Communication update**

11.1 **2019 Open meeting wash-up**

11.1.2 The Secretariat asked for feedback on the Open Event, on the previous day. Generally, it was felt that it had been a good format with interesting topics. The breakout groups were engaged, and the presence of students from a local agricultural college added a different perspective. It gave a positive view of the farming industry.

11.1.3 A Committee member suggested that alternate year’s open meetings could be rotated between a broad view of the PRiF’s work and more detailed discussion of residue issues, incorporating the PRiF’s and the public’s views.

11.1.4 The Secretariat said that the breakout group’s feedback had been typed up, and a survey from Survey Monkey, asking for feedback, would be issued to all attendees.

**Action:** Secretariat

11.1.5 The Chairman said that feedback from the event was an essential tool for the Communication Sub Group, when considering future events.

11.1.6 There was discussion about who should be invited to open meetings. The Secretariat explained that a mailing list of attendees was kept, which was representative of the food, drink and agricultural industries. Information on open
events was available at the end of the PRiF reports, for those interested in attending.

11.1.7 The Chairman emphasised that other ways to expand awareness of the work of the PRiF should be considered. These included using social media such as Facebook and Twitter and publishing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ’s) on the PRiF’s work on various websites. The Secretariat agreed to collate comments on communication and send the outcome to the Communication Subgroup.

Action: Secretariat

11.1.9 A Committee member asked for the PRiF website to be updated, as some members biographies were out of date, some had left but were still listed, and it was difficult to find the 2018 Annual Report on the site. The Secretariat explained that some lower priority issues has been left during a staff vacancy, but it was hoped to catch up with these now that another member of staff had been drafted into the team.

11.1.10 The Secretariat said they were grateful for member’s inputs, as this would be the last open meeting for some of them. The inputs into the recent open meeting had been very helpful in recruiting speakers for the day.

Agenda item 12: Any other business

12.1 HSE pointed out that the Chairman’s term would be expiring at the end of the year. They thanked him for his work for the PRiF, which had seen its work evolve. The Chairman voiced his appreciation to the PRiF and said his work had been a journey of working as team, where much progress had been made to evolve a common objective. He thanked everyone around the table for helping him achieve this. The Secretariat thanked him for his work on the PRiF.

12.2 The Chairman then closed the meeting.

The next meeting of the Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food (PRiF) will be held in York on 29 January 2020.