The UK Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP)

Full Minutes of the meeting of the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) held 9 March 2021

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures that were in place, the meeting was held via Microsoft Teams.

Those present:

Chairman:

Mr R Davis

Members:

Prof R Blackshaw; Mr M Dempsey; Dr J Garratt; Mr M Glynn; Dr M Hare; Dr C Harris; Prof T Hutchinson; Prof T Lock; Dr R Mann; Dr C Morris; Dr M Rose; Prof A Smith and Prof D Spurgeon

Assessors:

Dr S Jess (representing the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland); Ms G Reay (representing Scottish Government); Mr D Williams (Defra) and Mr M Williams (Welsh Government)

Advisors:

Mr S Bailey (Natural England); Dr S Brescia (HSE); Mr A Burn (Natural England); Ms E Butcher (Public Health England); Mr A Dixon (HSE); Dr J Hingston (HSE); Ms S Hugo (Defra); Mr B Maycock (FSA); Ms C Meacher (Defra); Dr J Newman (Environment Agency; Dr C Snaith (HSE); Mr G Stark (HSE) and Ms M Wade (HSE)

Others:

Ms F Beacon (HSE); Mr B Bircher (HSE); Mr J Chambers (HSE); Mr S Coles (HSE, observer); Mr T Fisher (HSE); Mr J Godwin (Defra); Ms S Goodchild (HSE, observer), Mr M Hawkins (HSE); Ms S Mattock (HSE); Ms C Mitcham (HSE, observer); Mr B Neill (HSE); Mr D O'Neill (Defra); Ms M Reed (HSE); Ms A Richardson (HSE, observer); Ms O Russell (HSE, observer); Mr A Wilder (HSE, observer); Mr T Wilson (HSE, observer); Ms C Whitfield (HSE, observer) and Dr B Woolacott (HSE);

Apologies:

Prof W Cushley; Ms H Chambers; Prof M Whelan

Agenda Item 1: Introduction

1.1 The Chair reminded the meeting of the confidentiality of the papers and their discussions. If Members believed that they had a commercial or financial interest in any of the items being discussed, they were required to declare their interest to the Chair and Secretariat prior to the meeting. They may then either be invited to absent themselves from the discussions; not participate and/or not be involved in any discussions and decision-making, unless invited to do so.

1.2 Two Members identified a potential conflict of interest where they were aware their employers had previously been involved with an active substance that would be discussed within the meeting. As they had not been involved in this work, it was decided this was a non-personal, specific conflict and they could remain and participate in discussion on the relevant agenda item.

1.3 Representatives from Natural England declared a direct conflict of interest in the application being discussed at agenda item 5; it was decided they would need to leave the meeting for the discussion of this item.

Agenda Item 2: Full Minutes of the previous meeting [ECP 1 (42/2021)]

2.1 The draft Full Minutes of the January 2021 meeting were agreed subject to minor amendments.

Agenda Item 3: Matters arising and Forward Business Plan [ECP 2 (42/2021)]

3.1 The Secretariat provided an update on matters arising from previous meetings and invited Members to suggest any additions/amendments to the forward business plan which would be incorporated before the next meeting.

3.2 Members noted that some recent public statements on the decision to grant the emergency authorisation of ‘Cruiser SB’ on sugar beet did not fully reflect the advice provided by the Committee and that action should be taken to ensure there was an understanding of ECPs position.

Action: Secretariat

3.3 HSE informed the Committee that when the UK left the EU, all EU law was retained in UK law with the same regulatory references (e.g. 1107/2009). Therefore, when referring to such legislation in UK law for future papers, the references will be similar to those used previously.

Agenda item 4: Emergency Authorisation: 'Insyst' on sugar beet (ECP 3 – 3-4 (42/2021)]

4.1 The Government has received an application for an emergency authorisation under Article 53 of Regulation 1107/2009 for the use of 'Insyst' (contains acetamiprid) as an insecticide on sugar beet to control virus yellows complex transmitted by the virus vector peach-potato aphid (*Myzus persicae*). The product will have an intended use period of 1 April to 31 July – the applicant is seeking an authorisation for two foliar sprays.

4.2 The Committee were invited to:

- Provide their opinion on whether the case for need is met, in the circumstance where the sugar beet seed is not treated with 'Cruiser SB'.
- Advise on the nature and relative degree of environmental risk, compared with acceptable standards.
- Highlight any concerns and provide advice regarding how, if granted, the risks could be further mitigated.
- Consider whether the proposed stewardship proposals are appropriate for limiting and controlling the use.

4.3 The Committee *noted* that:

- the application was received in 2020 and the case for need was based upon the high aphid pressure seen that year
- the applicants had opined in their earlier application for 'Cruiser SB' seed treatment that foliar sprays (including 'Insyst') showed variable efficacy for aphid control and had failed to deliver adequate protection from virus transmission in the sugar beet crop
- the potential alate aphid population had been suppressed by the winter weather, and industry modelling predicted that virus occurrence in the crop would be below the threshold to justify seed treatment with 'Cruiser SB'
- it was predicted that the aphid flight period would be later than that in 2020 and occur in the second half of May, reducing the period of higher crop susceptibility to aphid feeding and virus transmission from 12 weeks to an estimated two weeks; a fully authorised product is available to cover this period
- no data were provided that would enable the risk from late season aphid migration to be assessed or the likely scale of the problem in a low aphid year
- industry estimated that 6% of growers would use untreated seed (when treated was available) which the Committee viewed as an agronomic choice to not use an available authorised product (Cruiser SB)
- new data, compared with the 2020 application, were provided under the stewardship scheme from 35 monitoring sites which showed:
    - <0.5% of aphids from yellow traps were carrying virus

- 82.5% of sampled leaves in July had virus suggesting that transmission within the crop rather than migration is the key issue

- The effective control period evidenced from the data was around one week whilst the spray interval conformed to the label; there was strong evidence of calendar spray programs rather than IPM in around 50% of these sites

- No insecticide consistently delivered effective control (in line with the claim in the 'Cruiser SB' application) and there is no evidence that 'Insyst' exerted any suppression of aphid numbers.

- Irrespective of whether insecticides are used, populations declined from late May onwards through natural processes and there was little evidence of any benefits in terms of reducing aphid numbers from late (May) aphicide treatments.

- Spray treatments were applied at 21 out of the 35 sites when aphid populations were above the spray threshold but declining naturally which runs counter to best practice in IPM

- 'Insyst' was only used as the last application and the reported seasonal decline in aphid numbers may have influenced the apparent lack of efficacy.

- 20% of all applications were made when populations were below the agreed stewardship threshold**,** 51% of applications were timely in relation to the threshold, and 29% later than they should have been

- 18% of all applications were for an unknown product listed simply as an 'aphicide'.

- the evidence from the 35 monitored sites does not support the contention that stewardship requirements for foliar spray programmes have been met and there was also other evidence showing occasional breaches of the conditions of use

- comparative efficacy data presented in the application address effects on aphid numbers whereas the requirement is to reduce virus transmission rather than kill aphids *per se*

- there are still no reliable data that there is no effect on earthworms; the inadequacy of the field study that is relied upon in the evaluation was raised by ECP in 2020 and remains an issue

- there has been some progress in breeding resistant varieties but commercialisation is some way off

4.4 The Committee *agreed* with HSE's evaluation that:

- the predicted exposure to operators, workers and bystanders/residents is within acceptable limits.

- the limited information available provided reassurance that no MRL exceedances or health effects for consumers were expected from the proposed GAP (2 x 50 a.s./ha) using two applications
- there is an acceptable risk of dietary exposure to residues from products of animal origin should sugar beet tops be fed to livestock
- the consumer risk assessment indicates there is a significant safety margin based on the information that is available
- the proposed restrictions should ensure that groundwater concentrations for acetamiprid and the metabolite IM-1-5 would be within acceptable levels
- an acceptable risk to mammals, bees, soil micro-organisms and non-target plants has been demonstrated without the need for any risk mitigation
- an acceptable risk to aquatic life from spray drift has been identified, providing that a 12 m buffer zone with three-star drift reduction technology (DRT) is applied
- risk mitigation through the use of buffer zones is required to protect off-field non-target invertebrates (though ECP is concerned that data do not exist to define the extent of the requirement)
- risks to soil macro-invertebrates would be partially, though not fully, mitigated by restricting use of the product to a single application.
- the identified risks to birds could not be mitigated

4.5 The Committee *disagreed* with HSE's evaluation that:

- a suitable case for need, as required under the legislation, has been established
- a case could be made to allow use on crops grown with untreated seed if treated seed were available
- the current stewardship proposals are sufficient to meet the requirement of use being limited and controlled
- the risk to earthworms has been shown to be acceptable

4.6 The Committee *advised* that:

- evidence of the scale of crop at risk is necessary to determine a case for need
- a robust stewardship scheme should also record the monitored aphid counts that trigger a decision to apply a foliar spray
- the data the Committee has seen indicate that later foliar applications (late-May onwards) appear ineffective in reducing aphid numbers and so evidence of an impact on virus transmission should be sought if their use is to be supported

- industry should take account of the yield loss caused by the delay in crop sowing whilst awaiting the outcome of the predictive model that determines whether treated seed is needed when comparing new resistant varieties to those currently available

4.7 The Committee does not support this emergency application because no case for need has been established and there is evidence that the stewardship programme is failing to minimise pesticide use in line with Government policy on sustainable pesticide use.

Agenda item 5: Emergency Authorisation: 'Asulox' for control of bracken [ECP 4 – 4-2 (42/2021)]

5.1 The Government has received a further application for an emergency authorisation for the use of 'Asulox' (contains asulam) for use as a herbicide for the control of the bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). This is the ninth time an emergency authorisation has been sought for this use. This application seeks authorisation for ground and aerial application use and is identical to that considered previously by the Committee. HSE confirmed that they were not aware of any new information to alter their previous view on whether/how the product should be used.

5.2 Members were asked to advise whether ECP is aware of any new information that may impact their previous advice, or do they have any comments or views for HSE to consider ahead of the continued imposition of the restrictions determined in 2020.

5.3 The Committee *noted* that:

- This was the ninth consecutive emergency application for this product and use under Article 53 of Regulation 1107/2009.
- The applicants had continued the multi-year field trials but had not supplied any new data from them; the available evidence shows that amidosulfuron efficacy is similar to that of asulam.
- There were no data submitted to substantiate the contention that certain plants of conservation interest were susceptible to damage from amidosulfuron treatment and thus no case to justify substitution of an authorised product with Asulox.
- There were no data to verify adherence to the statutory one month livestock withholding period following application.
- There remains a dearth of information that the previous eight years of derogations had delivered satisfactory control of bracken.

5.4 The Committee *agreed* with HSE's evaluation that:

- There is a need to control bracken and that there is no other active ingredient authorised for aerial application.

- Consumer health is sufficiently protected through the statutory requirement to prevent animal grazing on treated areas within one month of application, and that a data requirement to determine a permitted Maximum Residue Level remains outstanding.
- Acceptable risks for operator, worker and bystander/resident exposures had been demonstrated.
- The acute risk to birds and mammals, acute and long-term risks to bees, non-target arthropods, soil organisms and processes are all acceptable from the proposed use.
- There is an unacceptable and high reproductive/long-term risk to birds and mammals from the proposed use of 'Asulox' to control bracken. It is not possible to mitigate against these risks.
- A 5m habitat protection zone is required to protect aquatic life from vehicle mounted applications, whilst a 90m habitat protection zone with low drift nozzles is required to protect aquatic life from aerial applications.
- There is a high risk to non-target terrestrial plants that can be mitigated using 3* Drift Reduction Technology.

5.5 The Committee *disagreed* with HSE's recommendation that ground-based uses of Asulox be supported, rather than use the authorised product, because of the absence of supporting data.

5.6 The Committee *advised* that:

- The regulations under which this application is made were not intended for indefinite use and a sustainable resolution is now urgently needed.
- There was no submitted evidence to substantiate the claim that land-based uses of the authorised amidosulfuron treatment for bracken control were any more, or less, deleterious to non-target species than asulam and therefore no justification to allow land-based uses of asulam.
- HSE should require evidence of adherence to the proposed grazing restriction within the agreed stewardship protocol.
- The lack of evidence that the repeated annual use of asulam results in bracken control in the field weakens the case for need and data demonstrating this should be included in any future applications.

5.7 The Committee is content to support an emergency authorisation under Article 53 of Regulation 1107/2009 for the aerial application of Asulox to control bracken subject to the above advice and the conditions proposed by HSE. The Committee does not support the proposed land-based uses.

Agenda item 6: Emergency Authorisation: 'Acelepryn' on Amenity grassland [ECP 5 – 5-3 (42/2021)]

6.1 The Government has received two applications for emergency authorisation under Article 53 of Regulation 1107/2009 for the use of 'Acelepryn' (200 g/l chlorantraniliprole) intended for control of chafer grubs and leatherjackets on established amenity grassland

(limited to airfields, golf courses greens, tees and fairways, and horse racing courses and gallops) and selected international sporting venues.

6.2 The Committee was requested to advise whether it is aware of any new information that may impact on their consideration of this application, or whether the ECP advice of 2020 is unchanged.

6.3 The Committee *noted* that:

- This was the fourth consecutive emergency application for this product under Article 53 of Regulation 1107/2009.
- The estimated treated area will be 1,000 ha with an application period of April to July for control of chafer grubs and August to October for control of leatherjackets.
- Acceptable risks to aquatic invertebrates, sediment-dwelling organisms via drainflow and soil macro-organisms have not been demonstrated.
- Although the applicants intended to determine when and where to apply the insecticide by monitoring adults of both leatherjackets and chafer grubs these data were not recorded on the stewardship form.
- Despite the Committee providing feedback on previous applications, errors persist in the statements of the biology of the pest species. In particular, the mating and oviposition behaviours of *Tipula paludosa* result in most eggs being laid near (within a few metres) the female pupation site.
- The dynamics of *Tipula paludosa* populations are such that if a damage site has been successfully identified and treated, numbers will take at least two years to recover to damaging levels following recolonisation.
- The evaluation of alternative control measures has not changed since the first application for this product and is out of date. There are a number of biopesticides, for both leatherjacket and chafer grub control, on the market.
- The argument presented by HSE that the classification of golf courses as amenity turf precluded a dietary risk assessment arising from sheep grazing on some courses was unacceptable to ECP because it gave more weight to internal guidelines than human health.
- A theoretical dietary risk assessment could be carried out to indicate the possible risk arising from this sheep grazing. In the absence of this, there was a need to apply the precautionary principle.
- The historical use of Acelepryn across all amenity areas was substantially less than the maximum volume requested by the applicants.
- There was no evidence presented to indicate that potential international event sites were any more at risk than the rest of the industries and so no case for

treating them differently. The ECP also noted that the listed event locations were the same as the 2020 application and may no longer be current.

- Risks to human safety that are implicit in the cases for use on airfields, racecourses and gallops do not apply to golf courses where the argument for authorisation is financial. The Committee has yet to see any quantified evidence of actual losses arising from these pests.
- The preferred exit strategy for the applicant remains a full authorisation but issues preventing progress since 2019 remain unresolved.
- The proposed area restrictions for golf courses were unclear.
- No evidence was presented to support the applicant's argument that control of these pests would result in improved mental health.

6.4 The Committee *agreed* (subject to the provisos in the footnotes) with HSE's evaluation that:

- Non-dietary risks to human health did not require the adoption of mitigation measures (such as the wearing of Personal Protective Equipment).
- It was necessary to mitigate risks associated with use on golf courses by imposing a condition of use that the product could only be used on greens, tees and fairways, and the maximum fairway area permitted to be treated on any course is 10% of the total area.[1]
- It was necessary to mitigate wider environmental risks by imposing a number of measures. These included: a 5m aquatic buffer zone; an untreated habitat protection zone of 5m to non-crop land[2] to protect non-target insects/arthropods; and requirements to avoid applications when bees are foraging and when flowering weeds are present to manage the risk to bees.
- The assessment did not identify unacceptable risks with extending the period of sale.

6.5 The Committee *disagreed* with HSE that the stewardship programme provided evidence that use is limited and controlled.

6.6 The Committee *advised* that:

- Recording monitoring counts should be a requirement of the stewardship scheme.
- Adverse environmental risks arising from the use of Acelepryn can be further mitigated by prohibiting application for leatherjacket control to the same area in

[1] That the maximum area of any golf course comprising any combination of greens, tees and fairways, that can be treated is 10%

[2] ECP interprets this phrasing to mean a 5m untreated habitat protection zone to any adjacent or unmanaged (e.g. rough) areas.

successive years. It also follows from this that users need to keep a record of treated locations.

- ECP expects to see a critical evaluation of alternative control methods in any future application for this product and use.
- Livestock should not be permitted to graze any amenity area treated with Acelepryn.
- The maximum permitted volume to be available on the market should more closely align with historic demand.
- The applicant provided no justification to support extending use to the listed international events beyond that available to other businesses.

6.7 The Committee is content to support the two emergency authorisations under Article 53 of Regulation 1107/2009 subject to the above advice. ECP also asks HSE to ensure that any further such applications for this product and uses are accompanied by a revised, and evidence-based case, and that the issue of the exit strategy is addressed.

Agenda item 7: Pesticide Usage Survey Review [ECP 6 – 6-1 (42/2021)]

7.1 HSE presented a paper to the Committee on a review of the Pesticide Usage Survey (PUS) programme. Views from a number of organisations involved in processing the review to the current stage have identified a number of potential changes that could be made in the short-term and longer-term to improve the programme.

7.2 Members noted:

- That improving the granularity and timeliness of the results could assist activities such as environmental monitoring and research into the impacts of pesticide usage.
- Whilst it is mandatory for pesticide users to maintain application records, it is not mandatory for them to participate in the survey. The Committee considered that some potential participants do not engage with the survey because they do not identify any benefits to themselves (e.g. amenity users).
- The current format of some of the questions can be ambiguous, this needs to be looked at as part of the review.
- Members commented that it was important to ensure that commercial confidence was not stopping important and useful information being used as part of the reporting. HSE informed members that data gathered as part of the PUS cannot be reported in a way that could identify any individual farm/holding due to data protection issues.
- That to remain relevant the PUS would need to develop data formats that were directly accessible to current and potential users, and facilitated interfacing with other databases.

- An alternative approach to gathering data on pesticide use had been outlined in the ECP submission under the National Action Plan consultation.

Agenda item 8: New Technologies Strategy: Update [ECP 7 – 7-1 (42/2021)]

8.1 HSE presented a paper on the development of a strategic approach to consider if/how the pesticides regulatory regime should interact with new technological developments in order to not impede/encourage the uptake of approaches that can improve pesticide application practice. The work to develop this approach is still at a relatively early stage, initially looking at: mechanical and robotic technologies; remote sensing; chemical and biological and real time data.

8.2 Members noted:

- New technology encompasses a very broad range and there would be a challenge for Government to keep abreast of all relevant developments. It was not apparent that views had yet been sought from national and international universities or research institutes which would help develop understanding of developments here some of which are close to wider commercialisation.

- It was important to identify potential unintended consequences of the legislation and remove any regulatory barriers that may prevent known and unknown new technologies to be used if innovation is to be facilitated.

Agenda item 9: Groundwater Assessment of Plant Protection Products [ECP 8 (42/2021)]

9.1 HSE informed the Committee of two recent pesticide product applications where applicants have proposed the use of the Threshold of Toxicological Concern (TCC) CCIII value for two groundwater metabolites at step 5 (refined risk assessment) of the relevant assessment. The applicant is proposing this approach as they have no other suitable data, without undertaking animal testing with *in vivo* vertebrate studies, to derive metabolite-specific acceptable daily intakes (ADIs). It was reported that the relevant guidance has not been updated to take account of technical and scientific progress in the decision-making process. It was also noted that whilst this guidance had not been applied to groundwater assessments when the UK was participating in the harmonised EU regime, it does not preclude the approach. Nevertheless, the TTC approach, in its current form (EFSA, 2019) has become a widely accepted regulatory tool.

9.2 HSE asked for Members advice on whether the balance of arguments provided in the paper were sufficient to support the use of the TTC CCIII in step 5 of the groundwater relevance assessment of these two products and if the approach is applicable, more generally, to similar scenarios.

9.3 Members noted:

- The TTC approach is a long-standing and already widely used approach (for example in food risk assessments) and has been reviewed extensively by EFSA. It allows the risk assessment to be carried out in a quantitative way

- The approach allows the risk assessment to take place without additional animal testing.

- This approach proposed was inherently conservative and would only be undertaken once all previous steps (1-4) had been passed. These steps would identify issues such as potential genotoxicity, etc.

9.4 ECP advised that it agreed with the use of the TTC CCIII value for the two groundwater metabolites in this case. The Committee further advised that the decision on whether this approach should be applied more widely was a policy decision for Government to make.

Agenda item 10: HSE Updates

10.1 Official Controls: update on review

10.1.1 The Official Controls Regulation (EU) 2017/625 brought together legislation on official controls and other official activities performed to ensure the application of: food and feed law; rules on animal health and welfare; and plant health and plant protection products. The Regulation applied from December 2019 (except for provisions on pesticide residues monitoring which change in December 2022) and is part of the suite of retained EU legislation applicable following the UKs departure from the EU (the Official Controls (Plant Protection Products) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/552)).

10.1.2 Defra is leading a project with devolved administrations in Wales and Scotland and HSE on implementing the requirements. The first stage is a requirement for certain operators to register by a legislative deadline later this year and work is ongoing to implement this. HSE, as one of the responsible enforcement bodies, has also recruited specific pesticide enforcement officers to enforce the controls in line with the approach being agreed by Departments and HSE's Enforcement Management Model and Enforcement Policy Statement.

10.2 Outcome of habitat protection/buffer zone and UK-specific restrictions reviews

10.2.1 HSE reported that the UK pesticides regulatory system currently approaches aquatic risk mitigation through a combination of use of drift reducing technological controls and use of buffer zones. Over time new aspects have been added to the arrangements and different schemes developed, largely to help facilitate product availability - but these have resulted in the arrangements becoming increasingly complex for advisors and users. HSE sought views from key external stakeholders to identify options for rationalising the arrangements. The exercise identified a preference for a single scheme that could adapt to take account of technological developments. HSE has continued to work on a project to develop a 'toolbox' approach for mitigation measures that will take account of nozzle rating, buffer size and application rate in the first instance. This work is also considering the implications/limitations of current drift curve data and whether further information is

required here to support development of the proposed toolbox. Input from nominated ECP members will be sought in considering these developments.

10.2.2 A separate piece of work has been considering whether non-target arthropod buffer zones should be increased in size. It was noted that concerns had been raised that an intended consequence of the adoption of the new form of mitigation might be the removal of existing grassland field margins. HSE has had advice from Natural England on this issue and will be taking a paper to the Pesticides Delivery Board for consideration.

Agenda item 11: Update from other government departments

11.1 Defra

11.1.1 Defra will be undertaking a project to review the way independent scientific advice (ISA) is procured to ensure that the process is sustainable and will ensure Government has access to advice in the long term. Defra will work with HSE and the Devolved Administrations to establish what is needed from ISA, what options are available and how it can be implemented. The scope of the ECP will be considered, what is required of the Committee and its capability and capacity. Defra will ensure that the Committee are kept informed of progress and confirmed that Members' will be consulted for their views and advice.

11.2 Scottish Government

11.2.1 The Scottish Government drew the Committee's attention to two reports: firstly: from the Scottish Plant Health Centre of Expertise on the potential impacts arising from pesticide withdrawals to Scotland's plant health; and secondly, on the economic Impact of pesticide withdrawals to Scotland. This work was funded by the Scottish Government. https://www.planthealthcentre.scot/publications

11.2.2 To coincide with the first of these reports, the Scottish Government are setting up a Pesticide Stakeholder Group. The group is intended to provide a forum for Scottish Government Ministers, officials, industry representatives and other interested stakeholders to discuss matters related to plant protection products.

11.2.3 In late December, Mr Ben Macpherson took over as the Scottish Government Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment. His portfolio includes the regulation and use of pesticides. Mr Macpherson opened the recent Amenity Forum Scottish updating event. The Minister highlighted the need to maintain and develop amenity spaces but to do this in a safe and sustainable way. He highlighted that pesticides should be used as part of an integrated approach to pest, weed and disease management.

11.3 Welsh Government

11.3.1 The Welsh Government have been focussing on the implementation of the Officials Control Regulations, working with the other administrations. Attention is now turning to

assessing responses to the recent consultation on developing the National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides.

11.3.2 The Welsh Government has also funded Welsh Water to run a free and confidential pesticide disposal scheme across Wales as part of the PestSmart project. The scheme was targeted at farmers, land managers, growers, game keepers and foresters. By the end of 2020, 566 collections had been made by an appointed independent registered waste contractor recovering 17,600kg of pesticides. It was noted that 48% of the chemicals recovered did not hold approved/authorised status;100% of participants would recommend the scheme; and a third round of the scheme will be opened in April 2021.

11.4 Northern Irish (NI) Government

11.4.1 It was reported that Northern Ireland Ministers had decided that ‘Reglone’ (contains diquat) should be made available for emergency use in Northern Ireland. 900 litres were supplied and no product was returned for disposal. The crop area treated under the Emergency Authorisation was stated as less than1200 hectares.

11.4.2 A decision on whether to restrict the use of metaldehyde in Northern Ireland for use in greenhouses only has yet to be made by the DAERA Minister.

11.4.3 The Water Catchment Partnership weed wiping project continued despite COVID-19 restrictions, under an agreed risk assessment. MCPA levels in water catchments through 2020 to October have improved, (with the exception of the Derg raw water inlet).

11.4.4 The Minister has received a number of correspondence cases related to the decision to grant the emergency authorisation for, ‘Cruiser SB’ (contains thiamethoxam) for English sugar beet farmers voicing concern for pollinators.

11.4.5 NI carrot producers are concerned at the loss of the product ‘Vydate’ (contains oxamyl) The product is still authorised for use in the Republic of Ireland (with the EU yet to conclude its risk assessment and reach a regulatory decision) and NI carrot growers consider that they are at a competitive disadvantage. They also claim that the risk assessment did not take account that NI growers use a significantly lower rate of product (about a ¼ of the rate allowed under the authorisation) which has proved effective and would have less impact on the environment.

11.5 Natural England

11.5.1 Natural England is working with Defra on integrated pest management (IPM) options for environmental land management schemes. They are also represented on the steering group for NFU-led project, working with farmers to establish how to make IPM options attractive to growers.

11.5.2 The UK Centre of Ecology and Hydrology have recently completed a report for Natural England on proposals for terrestrial monitoring of pesticides. This will be published.

11.5.3 The H4 project, to develop indicators of exposure and adverse effects of chemicals on wildlife in the environment, (presented to the ECP in July 2020), will produce its next report in the spring. The project will continue to develop indicators for chemicals, including pesticides, during 2021.

11.6 Food Standards Agency

11.6.1 FSA provided an update on the joint subgroup of the Committees on Toxicity (COT) and Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COC), on Synthesising and Integrating Epidemiological and Toxicological Evidence (SETE). The draft report was now available and was to be considered by the COT at its meeting on 23 March 2021. The FSA will provide a link to the final report when available.

Agenda item 12: Date of next meeting

12.1 27 April 2021 – full business meeting – to be held virtually.

Agenda item 13: Any other business

13.1 Pesticide Usage Survey Reports for 2019: Outdoor vegetable crops; and edible protected crops

13.1.1 The Committee noted the publication of detailed Pesticides Usage Survey Reports (Outdoor vegetable crops and edible protected crops). Members offered comments regarding the clarity of presentation of some information.

13.2 Updated lessons learned paper [ECP 9 (42/2021)]

13.2.1 The Secretariat introduced an update to a working document originally seen by Members in June 2020 that outlined lessons learned during the project to develop an interim process for government to obtain independent scientific advice following EU Exit. This paper detailed further lessons learned following the amendments made to the process towards the end of 2020.

13.3 Chair's Report

13.3.1 The Chair noted the Committee's thanks to Dr B Woolacott from HSE who will be retiring soon. Dr Woolacott has been involved with the work of the ACP and ECP for many years.

Action: Secretariat

Rachel Merrick
ECP Secretariat
April 2021