

## Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food (PRiF)

# Minutes of the meeting of the Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food (PRiF), 19 October 2022

The meeting was held as a hybrid meeting.

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 monitoring programme; this is the 44<sup>th</sup> meeting of the committee.

### **Those present:**

#### **Chair:**

Ms A Davison

#### **Members:**

Dr J Blackman; Mr I Finlayson; Dr G Hart; Mr J Points and Ms D Winstanley

#### **Representatives:**

Mr D Faulkner (Northern Ireland Executive); Ms E Ingram (HSE); Ms H Kyle (HSE); Ms C McCartney-Collard (FSA); Dr S Nawaz (National Reference Laboratory); Mr S Phillips (Defra); Ms K Reid (Scottish Government) and Dr R Scrivens (HSE)

#### **Apologies:**

Ms L Fielding (Welsh Government); Ms K Viezens (Scottish Government)

## **Agenda item 1: Introduction**

1.1 The Chair reminded the meeting of the sensitivity 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 are 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 No conflicts of interest were declared.

## **Agenda item 2: Action points from PRiF meeting of 13 July 2022**

2.1 The secretariat provided an update on actions from the previous meeting and informed the committee that all actions were complete, or progress would be discussed with the relevant agenda item within the meeting.

2.2 Following the detection of a residue of imazalil in a sample of potatoes noted at the July meeting, the Committee advised that HSE liaise with seed potato grower bodies. HSE confirmed that this had taken place and provided all responses to the PRiF prior to the meeting. The Committee suggested HSE to reply to one of the responses they had received to ascertain what systems might be put in place to avoid future occurrences of unauthorised incidences of imazalil in ware potato.

**Action: HSE**

2.3 Following discussion held in the July meeting, HSE stated they had considered the effectiveness of their policy of notifying the Defra Organics team and the brand owners of incidences where a pesticide residue was identified in an organic sample, even if the residue is of a pesticide permitted in organic farming. HSE informed the Committee that following consultation with Defra Organics team, they would no longer notify either Defra Organics or the brand owner in cases where the residue detected is permitted under the Organic Production and Labelling Regulation No 889/2008.

## **Agenda Item 3: Matters Arising and Forward Business Planning**

3.1 HSE reminded the Committee of a number of findings in Quarter 4 2022 of triallate on non-target crops, all were below the Maximum Residue Levels (MRL). Members noted the HSE view that it most likely reflected volatile transfer of residues to nearby crops. This might have occurred during the warm autumn conditions when triallate was applied in 2021.

3.2 HSE has liaised with the authorisation holder and asked for updates on any future findings. If incidences continue, possible mitigations will be addressed in the application for renewal of triallate. The Committee discussed the long growing period of the kale crop, alongside the structure of the plant and how this could contribute to exposure from residues.

3.3 The Secretariat introduced the forward business plan and invited Members to suggest any additions/amendments which would be incorporated before the next meeting. Members welcomed the plan. They noted the rolling annual presentation in July, which is intended to provide topical updates relevant to the work of the Committee.

3.4 Members discussed communications, future in-person and hybrid meetings, and possible locations where these could be held.

## **Agenda Item 4: Monitoring Programme update**

4.1 HSE updated the Committee on the progress of Northern Ireland submission of data to EFSA on the official controls on pesticides residues in food and the National Pesticide Residues Control Plan for the UK in respect to Northern Ireland 2023. They noted the NI representative would also provide an update on this.

4.2 The Committee were informed that a new laboratory had been procured for testing NI samples, and the process of onboarding the laboratory was underway. They will begin testing for a small number of samples in Quarter three and then the samples from Quarter 4 2022. Fewer samples will be tested in 2022 for NI because less sampling occurred in quarter three whilst the procurement exercise was underway. The shortfall will be addressed in 2023.

## **Agenda Item 5: Update from Analytical Sub-Group**

5.1 The Committee was apprised of the research and development work undertaken by the National Reference Laboratory which continued to inform and support the Monitoring Programme work in 2022 and 2023.

5.2 Members noted the previous concerns discussed in the July meeting over potential helium shortages affecting testing were no longer a concern. They also noted the Quarter 3 report will include an ethylene oxide survey for spices and sampling for 1-4 Dimethylnaphthalene (1,4-DMN) in milk and pork surveys.

5.3 The National Reference Laboratory presented to the PRiF the report they had provided to the European Pesticide Residue Workshop on the analysis of ethylene oxide. Members noted the usefulness of the data included and raised the possibility of making it publicly available.

## **Agenda item 6: Draft Quarter 2 2022 Report**

6.1 Before the meeting the members were asked to view a draft version of the Quarter 2 2022 report and associated compliance correspondence received from the suppliers. The committee discussed all areas of the report identified as requiring further consideration, including those surveys requiring a risk assessment. Particular attention was given to those findings of pesticides where any detection is considered undesirable due to uncertainty regarding genotoxicity.

### **6.2 Avocado: Detection of prochloraz**

6.2.1 The Committee considered a sample of avocado containing prochloraz where a detailed risk assessment was required. Members requested that the summary wording was amended to make it clearer that an effect on health would not be expected if the peel was not consumed.

6.2.2 Members discussed the split of sampling between Great Britain (GB) and Northern Ireland (NI). All priority foods are sampled in both locations. Fewer samples are taken in NI, so it is not possible to test every food without having very small surveys. So some lower priority (imported) foods may only be sampled in Great Britain. If problems were seen in Great Britain, then Northern Ireland would be sampled. HSE agreed that a general comment was needed in the report and that the ranking tool should try to reflect this issue for future planning.

**Action: HSE**

### **6.3 Grapes: Detection of chlorpyrifos**

6.3.1 The Committee considered a sample of grapes containing chlorpyrifos. It was reiterated in line with other findings of this pesticide that, due to its potential for genotoxicity, any findings of chlorpyrifos are undesirable. Members discussed the use of the word 'undesirable' the need to ensure it is sufficiently defined within the report and used consistently throughout. HSE confirmed that the report contains wording that explains why on a precautionary basis potential genotoxicity is considered undesirable, but will check the clarity of the explanation.

#### **6.4 Sundried tomato: Detection of chlorpyrifos**

6.4.1 The Committee considered a sample of sundried tomatoes containing chlorpyrifos. HSE confirmed they were able to use new consumption data available from Food Safety Agency (FSA), rather than apply a rehydration factor when concluding the risk assessment, which has helped refine the risk assessment.

6.4.2 HSE informed the committee that a processing factor had been applied to the tomato MRL to take into account the dehydration process. Members asked that where a processing factor has been applied, this is made clear in the report. HSE noted that additional information had been added to Section 4 of the report which explained the processing factors that had been used, but would ensure that links to this section were included where appropriate in the report.

**Action: HSE**

#### **6.5 Tomato: Detection of cypermethrin**

6.5.1 The Committee considered a sample of tomatoes containing cypermethrin. The risk assessment was carried out on the assumption that the residue was of alpha-cypermethrin rather than cypermethrin, on the basis of the analytical profile of the residues.

6.5.2 Members queried how HSE distinguished between cypermethrin and alpha-cypermethrin. HSE stated the Analytical Sub-Group discuss each finding on a case-by-case basis considering the raw analytical data and information on pesticides used on the crops in question, but where they are unable to reach a conclusion, they would use the worst-case scenario based on the precautionary principle.

6.5.3 Members discussed the breakdown of responsibilities between HSE and FSA in risk management and communicating with suppliers. FSA agreed to present on the topic at the next PRiF meeting.

**Action: FSA**

#### **6.6 Residues over the MRL.**

6.6.1 The Committee considered a low level finding of prosulfocarb in a sample of apples. HSE noted it was likely a result of volatilisation and not indicative of misuse.

6.6.2 The Committee discussed including wording around the production of pearl barley and explanations of the processing factor as part of the Quarter 2 report.

6.6.3 Members noted the use of Fosetyl (sum) in the report rather than Fosetyl-al (sum), HSE agreed to update the wording so it was consistent with agreed standards.

## **6.7 Other issues**

6.7.1 HSE discussed the finding of 1-4 DMN in a sample of organic potatoes. HSE enforcement has found no evidence of misuse, and this is supported by pesticide application records from the supplier. HSE are aware of the EFSA 2014 opinion that levels higher than that detected can occur naturally in tubers up to 0.06 mg/kg.

6.7.2 The Committee noted problems in securing adequate samples of fresh peaches, nectarines, cherries and apricots and the possibility of sampling dried products.

6.7.3 Members queried whether future milk surveys should be exclusively full fat milk, as it is the base product for skimmed and semi skimmed. HSE will consider this for the planning of 2024 programme.

**Action: HSE**

## **Agenda Item 7: Rolling Reporting Update**

7.1 The Committee noted the rolling quarter 3 results. The full results will be brought to the Committee in January. The Committee agreed to provide any comments to the Secretariat.

## **Agenda Item 8: PRiF Annual Report 2021**

8.1 The Committee reviewed the draft PRiF annual report, noting the report had previously been brought to the Communication sub-group. Members discussed the review of the Terms of Reference and Code of Practice, and to what extent this could be reflected in the annual report.

8.2 The Committee discussed the role of the PRiF and the Analytical sub-group, and how they can best interact. HSE noted that an update of the ASG is provided at each PRiF meeting to keep members informed of the issues that are discussed. They will also ensure that any research and development projects, like the ones discussed at agenda item 5, are brought to the Committee for information.

8.3 Members discussed how best to align an open meeting with the publication of the report.

8.4 Members discussed whether the wording included in previous annual reports around DDT might be better suited to the PRiF Annual Report rather than the HSE report.

## **Agenda Item 9: Government Department Update**

### **9.1 Northern Irish Government**

9.1.1 The Committee was informed of NI's submission to EFSA on the results of pesticide residues in food submitted by the UK in respect of Northern Ireland for 1 January 2021 to

31 December 2021. HSE submitted the data on their behalf, and EFSA have confirmed that they have accepted the 2021 monitoring data.

9.1.2 The National Pesticide Residues Control plan for the UK in respect to Northern Ireland for 2023 has been submitted to EFSA on 6 September 2022. The procurement process for an official NI testing laboratory is now complete. HSE has identified a supplier and signed contracts. DAERA have formally designated the laboratory as an Official Laboratory.

## **9.2 Defra**

9.2.1 Defra updated the Committee on the progress of the regulatory reform work, noting proposals had been developed with input from Devolved Administration colleagues and submitted to Ministers. Any changes would likely be introduced via the new National Action Plan.

9.2.2 They noted the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) 2022 Bill had been introduced to Parliament, with the intention of allowing departments to more easily amend or remove retained EU legislation. The Bill introduces a new sunset clause for EU law of 31 December 2023, with an option to extend to June 2026 if additional time is required to develop proposals. The review of existing retained legislation will be an area of focus for Defra.

9.2.3 Defra informed the Committee they were currently reviewing an updated draft Terms of Reference for the PRiF prepared by the Secretariat.

## **9.3 Scottish Government**

9.3.1 The Scottish Government is working closely with other administrations in the development of the National Action Plan and with the Scottish Government pesticide stakeholder group to understand how it may affect stakeholders.

## **Agenda Item 10: Risk Assessment Process presentation**

10.1 HSE specialists presented on the risk assessment process undertaken as part of the review of the data of the monitoring programme. They discussed this in context of dietary intake, acute and chronic assessments alongside considerations of potential genotoxicity.

10.2 HSE further discussed the benefits and limitations of the current approach, the strong precautionary principles and demonstrated how they used the model to assess samples taken from the Quarter 2 2022 report.

## **Agenda Item 11: Chronic Risk Assessment paper**

11.1 HSE presented on the report of a joint working group comprised of risk assessors from HSE, the Food Safety Agency (FSA) and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. The paper reviews current approaches to chronic risk assessments, the tiers at which the assessments can be undertaken, the underlying uncertainties and potential future research to reduce uncertainties in chronic risk assessments.

11.2 Members noted the report had also been shared with the Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) and the Committee on Toxicology (COT), and that the report discusses how HSE prepares the risk assessments for the PRiF.

11.3 Members were grateful for the update and agreed to provide comments by 2 November.

**Action: PRiF**

## **Agenda Item 12: Any Other Business**

12.1 The Chair provided an update on the Defra Expert Committee Chairs meeting. She noted the focus on promoting collaborative working across the network and joined up working on cross cutting issues. Issues around publications, measuring success and the importance of diversity and inclusion were also raised.

12.2 Members also discussed the need to ensure sampling reflects consumer shopping habits, noting Aldi had overtaken Morrisons to become the fourth-largest UK supermarket. It was generally felt this was being achieved with the current sampling.

## **Agenda Item 13: Date of next meeting**

13.1 The next meeting will be held remotely on 25 January 2023.