

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food (PRiF)

Minutes of the meeting of the Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food (PRiF) 24 May 2023

The meeting was held as a virtual 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 46th meeting of the committee.

1. Those present:

Chair:

Ms A Davison

Members:

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

Representatives:

Ms H Ainsworth (Defra); Ms H Cooke (HSE); Mr J Cudmore (HSE); Ms L Dearsly (HSE); Mr D Faulkner (Northern Ireland Executive); Ms H Kyle (HSE); Ms C McCartney-Collard (FSA); Dr S Nawaz (National Reference Laboratory); Dr R Scrivens (HSE); Ms K Viezens (Scottish Government)

Apologies:

Mr I Finlayson and Mr G Stark (HSE)

2. 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 or not be involved in any discussions and decision-making, unless invited to do so.

1.2 No conflicts of interest were declared.

3. Agenda item 2: Action points from PRiF Meeting of 25 January 2023

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 The FSA updated the Committee on the action taken concerning a sample of beans with pods containing chlorpyrifos that had been referred to them.

4. Agenda item 3: Matters arising from forward business plan

3.1 The Secretariat introduced the forward business plan and invited Members to suggest any additions or amendments which would be incorporated before the next meeting.

3.2 Members raised adding a presentation on port health inspections as a possible future agenda item, the Secretariat agreed to investigate the possibility.

Action: Secretariat

5. Agenda item 4: 2023 Monitoring Programme update

4.1 HSE updated the committee about the programme, noting the NI Q4 data was not yet available. Following on from the procurement exercise in 2022 HSE are working with a new laboratory, ensuring that data is delivered to specification and in line with the in-house data transfer system. HSE stated the data will be provided to Members once it is available.

Action: HSE

4.2 HSE presented a paper regarding frozen goods labelled as UK produced, noting these may not actually contain UK grown foods but instead imported products which are then packaged in the UK. HSE noted it is useful to understand whether the fruit or vegetables could have been grown in the UK, as this will help determine appropriate follow up activity. Members discussed the paper and provided comments on the supply chains for frozen bramley apples and tomatoes.

6. Agenda item 5: Update from Analytical Sub-Group

5.1 The Committee noted the analytical sub-group was regularly reviewing the technical risk register. The Committee noted this included regularly reviewing the risk mitigation measures implemented.

5.2 Members discussed the inclusion of new laboratories into the analytical sub-group. HSE noted that they were working closely with the new official laboratory and actively considering how best to ensure appropriate assurance measures are in place. As part of

this assurance process all official laboratories are required to confirm that they have met analytical quality control standards and identify any exceptions for further consideration.

7. Agenda item 6: Draft Quarter 4 2022 report

6.1 Before the meeting the members were asked to view a draft version of the Quarter 4 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 samples of avocado containing prochloraz where a detailed risk assessment was required. The risk assessment concluded, on a precautionary basis assuming all the peel was consumed, that an effect on health would be unlikely. Eight percent of the residue would remain if the peel was not consumed

6.2.2 Members discussed the risk assessment wording in relation to peel. HSE agreed to review the wording to clarify that the risk assessment assumes on a precautionary basis that the peel is eaten.

Action: HSE

6.2.3 Members further discussed the value of including additional comments to support understanding of an exceedance, by explaining explain why a product is used. The Committee agreed to refer the suggestion to the communication sub-group.

Action: Communication sub-group

6.3 Beans with Pods: Detection of Carbofuran

6.3.1 The Committee considered a sample of beans with pods containing carbofuran. It was stated, in line with other findings of this pesticide that due to its potential for genotoxicity, any findings of carbofuran are undesirable. HSE concluded that there was a possibility of adverse health effects for those in the 97.5th percentile of consumption. The effects would be expected to be minor, short lived and reversible.

6.3.2 The FSA noted the case had been referred to them and the beans were withdrawn from the market.

6.3.3 Members queried the use of the term “eroded” in relation to the safety factor used and discussed the higher-than-average safety factor used, alongside the origin of the sample. HSE agreed to provide more detailed explanation in the detailed risk assessment and provided further information from the government inspectors who collected the sample, that the country of origin was Italy.

6.4 Grapes: Detection of Ethephon

6.4.1 The Committee considered a sample of grapes containing ethephon. HSE concluded a short-term effect on health was unlikely.

6.5 Potatoes: Detection of Fosthiazate

6.5.1 The Committee considered a sample of potatoes containing fosthiazate. HSE concluded a short-term effect on health was unlikely.

6.5.2 Members noted the harsh growing conditions in 2022 were likely to have contributed to the finding.

6.6 Chilli powder – Detection of Chlorpyrifos and Ethylene oxide

6.6.1 The Committee considered a sample of chilli powder containing chlorpyrifos. It was stated, in line with other findings of this pesticide that due to its potential for genotoxicity, any findings of chlorpyrifos are undesirable. HSE concluded the risk of an adverse effect on health was low.

6.6.2 The committee considered a sample of chilli powder containing ethylene oxide. HSE noted there are no formal toxicological reference values set of ethylene oxide or 2-chloroethanol, therefore an acute exposure risk assessment could not be performed, HSE has liaised with risk assessor in the FSA on the assessment. In line with other findings of this pesticide due to its potential for genotoxicity, any findings of ethylene oxide are undesirable.

6.6.3 Members discussed the risk assessment and suggested adding further explanation on the origin of spices and the use of sub-lots. HSE agreed to review the wording used in previous samples of spices.

Action: HSE

6.7 Residues over the MRL

6.7.1 The Committee considered a number of residues found in international samples of beans with pods. HSE confirmed no supplier response had been received.

6.7.2 The Committee considered a finding of fosthiazate in potatoes. HSE confirmed no supplier response had been received.

6.7.3 The Committee considered a finding of chlorate in spinach. HSE confirmed no supplier response had been received.

6.7.4 The Committee considered two findings of prochloraz and one of ethion in spices. HSE noted the supplier had provided evidence of an alternative processing factor in use

by the European Spice Association. HSE has since accepted the processing factor and no longer consider these to be exceedances.

6.8 Other issues

6.8.1 The Committee considered findings of chlomequat in organic porridge oats. The supplier has provided details of the controls they have in place, and their work with organic bodies prevent future occurrences.

6.8.2 The Committee noted findings of DDT and DDAC in fish, these were indicative of historical use and in line with previous years.

6.8.3 The Committee noted HSE had applied processing factors for barley, bread spices and oats.

6.8.4 The Committee discussed the use of the word 'processed' in relation to barley, noting the process referred to the cleaning of the product and removal of the husk. HSE agreed to review the sentence.

Actions: HSE

6.8.5 The Committee noted the origin of the samples of frozen cherries. HSE agreed to review the report to make it clearer which samples were frozen, and which were fresh.

Actions: HSE

6.8.6 The Committee noted gluten free bread is often made from non-cereal crops, which results in a different suite of residues. It was agreed to note this in the PRiF comments to provide context.

Actions: HSE

8. Agenda item 7: Rolling report update

7.1 The Committee noted the results of the January to April rolling reporting. HSE presented proposed wording on the risk assessment (ODS file front sheet) for rolling report when considering assessments of dimethoate or omethoate.

7.2 HSE explained they had agreed wording with the FSA for the risk assessments of dimethoate or omethoate.

9. Agenda item 8: 2024 Monitoring Programme proposals

8.1 HSE noted they would be asking for volunteers to attend a sub-group on the 2024 monitoring programme proposals and presented the first draft of the forward plan based of the results of the Ranking Tool. The Ranking Tool highlights foods based of a number of

criteria including, if testing is mandatory, if a food or drink has not been tested recently or if recent non-compliant results or risk assessments suggest further testing is needed.

Action: HSE

8.2 This will include consideration of testing products of animal origin (POAO) to comply with European Union requirements for third party countries exporting goods to the EU. HSE are implementing a number of changes to support this requirement as interim measures pending further consideration from Defra. HSE stated that further information will be presented at the sub-group.

10. Agenda item 9: Communication update

9.1 Stakeholder engagement map

9.1.1 The Committee noted the communication sub-group had worked on mapping stakeholders to ensure good coverage when considering engagement.

9.2 Style guide

9.2.1 HSE reported there was a need to implement a number of changes to the quarterly reports in 2024, to ensure they were in line with government accessibility requirements. These will be presented to the communication sub-group for information.

9.2.2 The Committee noted the communication sub-group had approved minor changes to the style guide.

11. Agenda item 10: PRiF 2022 Annual Report

10.1 The Committee reviewed the draft PRiF annual report, noting that due to delays in the Q4 data for NI the full data was not available but would be included in the final report.

10.2 Members noted there was a disparity in how the UK and EFSA present information in relationship to measurement uncertainty. HSE agreed to review how they explain measurement uncertainty.

Action: HSE

10.3 Members agreed to provide further comments to the secretariat within two weeks.

Action: Members

12. Agenda item 11: Defra update

11.1 Defra updated the committee on the current status of the National Action Plan confirming it had not yet been finalised, noting integrated pest management remained an

important part of Defra's policy objectives. Defra further noted they were supporting the implementation of the Windsor Framework provisions for a 'green lane' for GB agri-food products produced to GB standards (including MRLs) intended for the NI retail market only.

11.2 Members queried the delay in publication of the National Action Plan, noting the lack of clarity on policy direction was disruptive for the industry. Defra noted there had been a number of ministerial changes and agreed to feedback the Committee's comments to the relevant teams.

13. Agenda item 12: GB MRL Presentation

12.1 HSE presented on the GB MRL system, noting the history of the EU based regime and the development of the GB regime since 1 January 2021. They highlighted the role of HSE as the competent authority on behalf of Defra, the Scottish and Welsh Governments and how the system operates in practice.

12.2 The Committee expressed their thanks for the presentation and queried the process for Codex MRLs to be adopted, HSE replied this would only occur if the GB MRL was lower and a risk assessment had been completed.

14. Agenda item 13: Any Other Business

13.1 Members noted the Committee was currently seeking to recruit two members with expertise in the communication of risk relating to human exposure assessments and products of animal origin respectively.

15. Agenda item 14: Date of next meeting

14.1 The next meeting will be held as a hybrid meeting on 19 July 2023.