

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) 18 October 2023

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 48<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:**

Ms H Ainsworth (Defra); Ms H Barker (Fera); Ms H Cooke (HSE); Ms C McCartney-Collard (FSA); Mr D Faulkner (Northern Ireland Executive); Ms L Fielding (Welsh Government); Dr R Scrivens (HSE); Mr W Turley (HSE) and Mr M Willis (FSA)

#### **Apologies:**

Mr G Stark (HSE); Ms H Kyle (HSE); Dr S Nawaz (National Reference Laboratory) and Ms K Viezens (Scottish Government).

## **1. 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 The Chair informed members and the committee of the sad death of our Scottish Government colleague Kirsty Reid. The Chair expressed how she will be sadly missed and how her contribution to the monitoring programme for over 20 years was deeply appreciated. The Chair invited those present to take a moment of remembrance.

## **2. Agenda item 2: Action points from PRiF meeting of 19 July 2023**

2.1 The secretariat provided an update on actions from the previous meeting and informed the committee that the majority of actions were complete. A small number were still ongoing, and an update would be provided at a future meeting.

2.2 Members suggested colour coding the action points which the Secretariat agreed to adopt going forward.

**Action: Secretariat**

2.3 The FSA agreed to look into a delivering a presentation and a brief overview of port health inspection at the May 2024 meeting when planning for the 2025 programme would be discussed.

**Action: FSA**

2.4 In response to a Member's query on how the UK present measurement uncertainty HSE agreed to share with the Committee detailed information on measurement uncertainty they had produced in response to a query.

**Action: HSE**

## **3. Agenda item 3: Matters arising and forward business plan**

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

3.2 Members discussed the value in reviewing the European Food Safety Authority report on pesticide residues in food. Members felt there may be value in understanding how the EU present their results. The Secretariat confirmed that the report is reviewed by HSE and factored into the planning of future programmes.

3.3 Members welcomed the secretariat starting work on a Ways of Working document for the Committee and the plan to bring a draft of the document to the January meeting. A follow-up meeting is scheduled for February to have a wider discussion on meetings, quarterly reports, and maximising the effectiveness of the committee.

## **4. Agenda item 4: Monitoring Programme update**

4.1 HSE informed the committee that the GB monitoring program for 2023 was on track and NI was a quarter behind.

4.2 HSE are working with the French laboratory to explore the differences in approach between this and the existing laboratories. The French laboratory is an official laboratory that undertakes rapid port testing, as such they work to facilitate a fast turnaround of results for same-day sampling. The existing GB based laboratories work to a longer timescale and the monitoring programme has adopted a way of working that enables more

comprehensive analytical quality assurance measures that are possible over a longer time scale when more samples are being analysed in each survey. HSE agreed to discuss the issue in depth with a sub-group of the Committee.

**Action: HSE and Members**

4.3 In response to a Member query, HSE commented that fewer residues were found in some Q1 NI surveys. This reflected a difference in the number of single residue analytical methods used in the NI surveys due to a difference in the interpretation of the requirements. To address this HSE have put in place steps for Q2 and Q3 to test the required number of samples for the EU programme. HSE will ensure this is clearly explained in the published surveys.

4.4 HSE have cross-checked the GB Q1 findings against the NI Q1 findings and most differences are linked to these differences in interpretation of specifications. Furthermore, NI sampling is entirely taken at retail while GB samples come from a wider range of sources.

## **5. Agenda item 5: Update from the Analytical Sub Group (ASG)**

5.1 HSE discussed the significant figures results are presented to. Currently in GB, results are presented to one significant figure, while the EU AQC requires two significant figures. HSE is exploring moving to 2 significant figures for GB results and will discuss the implications with a sub-group of the Committee.

**Action: HSE**

5.2 Members commented that they would like a more detailed annual update on any changes in analytical methods. HSE will consider how this can be done.

**Action: HSE**

## **6. Agenda item 6: Draft GB Quarter 2 2023 report**

6.1 Before the meeting the members were asked to view a draft version of the Quarter 2 2023 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 Dried beans**

6.2.1 The Committee considered a sample of dried beans containing a combination of pesticides, including six organophosphate and carbamate residues, including chlorpyrifos, carbaryl, dimethoate, dichlorvos, thiodicarb and methomyl. A detailed risk assessment was undertaken for chlorpyrifos, dichlorvos, and dimethoate as well as a combined risk

assessment for all of these six residues due to similarity in their toxicological properties. HSE concluded there were two aspects of risk, short term and genotoxic. Based on the low intakes, HSE concluded that a short-term effect on health is unlikely.

6.2.2 The Committee considered that HSE has noted genotoxicity concerns for dimethoate, dichlorvos and chlorpyrifos. HSE concluded that any risk of adverse health effects are low, though on a precautionary basis any findings of these three residues are undesirable due to the uncertainty regarding genotoxicity.

6.2.4 Members discussed how best to present the overview of the risk assessments for this sample. They advised HSE to consider how HSE presents the risk assessment for the sample of blackeye bean, considering both the individual compounds of chlorpyrifos, dimethoate, and dichlorvos and in combinations, chlorpyrifos, carbaryl, dimethoate, dichlorvos, thiodicarb and methomyl.

**Action: HSE**

6.2.5 HSE reaffirmed that when considering the effect of the combination of these pesticides a short term impact on health is unlikely. Members queried if the sample should be referred to an Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) toxicologist for further advice. HSE noted they have a robust procedure in place and had discussed the case with the FSA. HSE has concluded that dichlorvos is genotoxic based on the advice provided by UK Committees (Committee on Mutagenicity and Committee on Carcinogenicity) following the evaluation of this substance.

6.2.6 Members asked if additional samples of blackeye beans could be taken in other quarters. HSE confirmed that the samples for Quarter 3 have already been taken but would review if it was possible and appropriate to adjust later sampling.

**Action: HSE**

### **6.3 Lemons**

6.3.1 The Committee considered a sample of lemons containing imazalil. HSE concluded that if all the peel is consumed, an effect on health is unlikely. If the peel is not consumed, an effect on health is not expected.

6.3.2 Members discussed the finding, noting possible use cases for the product such as post-harvest fungicide. Members noted that fresh fruit and vegetables marketing standards require post-harvest treatment to be labelled. HSE noted that the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) own the legislation for marketing standards but HSE would consider if it was appropriate to add a link to the relevant guidance in the quarterly report.

**Action: HSE**

## **6.4 Oranges**

6.4.1 The committee considered a sample of oranges containing acetamiprid. HSE concluded, if all the peel is eaten, an effect on health is unlikely. If the peel is not consumed, an effect on health is not expected.

6.4.2 The committee considered a sample of oranges containing chlorpyrifos. HSE concluded there were two aspects of risk, short-term and genotoxic. Regarding the short-term assessment, if all peel is consumed these residues are unlikely to cause any adverse short-term effect, and if the peel is not consumed, an effect on health is not expected. Regarding genotoxic risk, HSE concluded that risk of adverse health effects are low. On a precautionary basis any findings of chlorpyrifos are undesirable due to the uncertainty regarding genotoxicity.

6.4.3 The committee considered a sample of oranges containing lambda-cyhalothrin. HSE concluded, if all the peel is eaten, an effect on health is unlikely, if the peel is not consumed, an effect on health is not expected.

6.4.4 The committee considered a sample of oranges containing cypermethrin (alpha-cypermethrin). HSE concluded, if all the peel is eaten, an effect on health is unlikely, if the peel is not consumed, an effect on health is not expected.

6.4.5 The committee considered a sample of oranges containing imazalil. HSE concluded, if all the peel is eaten, an effect on health is unlikely, if the peel is not consumed, an effect on health is not expected.

6.4.6 The committee considered a sample of oranges containing thiabendazole. HSE concluded if all the peel is eaten the likelihood of an effect on healthy is low. Any effects would be expected to be minor, short lived and reversible. If the peel is not consumed, an effect on health is not expected.

6.4.7 Members noted these were worst case scenarios and effects on health were not expected if peel wasn't consumed. They recommended HSE update the wording to reflect this and provide links to the existing information in the report on worst case scenarios.

**Action: HSE**

## **7. Agenda item 7: Draft NI Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 2023 report**

### **7.1 Northern Ireland Quarter 2 Animal Products**

7.1.1 HSE noted no residues were detected that required a detailed risk assessment or were over the Maximum Residue Level. A sample of salmon containing DDT was noted. HSE consider the residue to be from historical use.

7.1.2 Members discussed the possible source of the residue, suggesting that HSE refer to the labeling on the sample to see if it indicated whether the fish was wild caught or farmed.

**Action: HSE**

## **7.2 Northern Ireland Quarter 1 Plant Products**

7.2.1 The committee noted samples of thiabendazole in oranges, and imazalil in both oranges and soft citrus. Both were at levels that would require a risk assessment, but below those detected in GB results, so no separate risk assessment was conducted.

7.2.2 HSE reaffirmed that they will be including wording within the report to reflect the difference in single residue testing methods noted under 4.2.

7.2.3 Members queried the plan to bring the NI quarterly reports back onto the same timetable as the GB quarterly reports. HSE noted this was an ongoing project and they hope to have both programs aligned by Q4.

## **8. Agenda item 8: Rolling reporting update**

8.1 The Committee noted the results of the June and July rolling reporting. HSE confirmed the rolling reports for September will be circulated to members shortly.

## **9. Agenda item 9: Update from Other Government Departments**

### **9.1 Defra**

9.1.1 Defra noted the intention remains to publish the National Action Plan on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides shortly. Defra are further working with HSE and other departments to support an EU audit of residues in products of animal origin. This mainly concerns residues of veterinary medicine, but contaminants and pesticides are also included.

9.1.2 Defra noted they are closely tracking developments in the EU concerning the renewal of the approval for use of glyphosate. Members noted the active substance remains approved in GB until December 2025.

9.1.3 Members queried the status of the GB Active Substance Renewals Programme. HSE agreed to contact members of the Active Substance team to update the Committee at the next meeting.

**Action: HSE**

### **9.2 Food Standards Agency**

9.2.1 The FSA noted they were supporting work on the EU Audit. While the audit is primarily focused on residues from veterinary medicine products, it does include pesticide residues.

### **9.3 Northern Irish Government**

9.3.1 The department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) noted they had no specific update to present. They continue to work closely with HSE on ensuring a robust testing programme is in place for Northern Ireland.

## **10. Agenda item 10: Committees Update**

10.1 The 2022 Annual Report of the Expert Committee on Pesticides was presented to the Committee for information. Members noted a reciprocal agreement was in place for the ECP to see the PRiF annual report.

## **11. Agenda item 11: Any other business**

11.1 The Secretariat shared an overview of a briefing document that HSE shared with the Fresh Produce Consortium (FPC) meeting. The briefing provided an update on HSE Pesticide Enforcement Officer farm visits. The Secretariat agreed to circulate the briefing note to members following the meeting.

**Action: Secretariat**

11.2 Members discussed the value of working more closely with the FPC. They noted there was a possibility members may be able to raise the work of the PRiF at the next FPC meeting, with an aim to promote engagement with wholesalers and wider industry figures.

11.3 Members noted recent media articles discussing the potential impact of chemical residues in food on gut biomes. They felt this was an area of interest for the regulatory system and the Committee, should further information become available.

11.4 The Chair noted that she would shortly be attending an annual meeting of the chairs of Defra scientific advisory committees that would be led by the Defra Chief Scientific Advisor. She invited members to provide any topics of interest for her to raise.

## **12. Agenda item 12: Date of next meeting**

12.1 The next meeting will be held as a virtual meeting on 24 January 2024.