

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) 22 May 2024

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 49<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 Cooke (HSE); Mr J Clarke (ECP); Mr J Clements (FSA); Mr D Faulkner (Northern Ireland Executive); Mr T Green (FSA); Mr T Horgan (FSA); Ms H Kyle (HSE); Dr S Nawaz (National Reference Laboratory); Mr M Potts (HSE); Dr R Scrivens (HSE); Ms K Viezens (Scottish Government) and Mr W Turley (HSE)

#### **Apologies:**

None

### **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 One Member identified a potential conflict of interest. This was deemed to be a non-personal, non-specific conflict and it was agreed they could remain and participate in discussion on the relevant agenda item.

1.3 The chair noted that Dr G Hart would be stepping down from the committee. The chair extended the committee's thanks for her work, valued knowledge and considered interventions and wished her well for the future.

## **Agenda item 2: Action points from PRiF meeting of 24 January 2024**

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.

## **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 The committee members discussed possible presentation topics for the next meeting, including on the follow-up of residues in imported goods. The Secretariat agreed to review the suggestions and consider what could be arranged for the next meeting.

**Action: Secretariat**

3.2 Members noted that a discussion of the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) 2022 Annual Report would be included in the forward business plan for the July meeting.

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

4.1 HSE presented on their ongoing work to prepare for the 2025 monitoring programme, additional evidence sources and intelligence from expertise including PRiF members will be reviewed at a planning sub-group in June. HSE discussed the importance of specifically reviewing those foods which have not been tested for some time.

4.2 Members noted that:

- They would be supportive of greater sampling of meat-free alternatives products and other such non-animal sources of protein.
- It would be valuable to better understand how changing disease pressures might lead to an increased use of pesticides on certain crops.
- They feel the current programme has insufficient mechanisms to sample within food service sector, particularly as many of those in the sector will have direct suppliers that differ from the retail market.
- HSE are aware that there is significant overlap of the supply chain for honey within GB and NI but feel that there is some localised production of honey in NI that warrants NI specific testing.

4.3 The Chair raised authenticity issues in spices, noting that counterfeit products could lead to unexpected residues being detected, particularly in cases where the makeup or origin of the products differs from that labelled. HSE noted that they were aware of these issues and spices had been included for sampling in the 2022 monitoring programme.

4.4 HSE stated that further inclusion of the food service sector would require a longer-term project and would not be possible within the 2025 programme. Members further discussed that there would need to be a clear evidence base to support the justification for further testing.

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

5.1 HSE provided an update on the work of the ASG including ongoing R&D projects. HSE noted that at the last ASG meeting, there had been discussion about per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) pesticides that were being sought in the monitoring programme and were considering this further for the 2025 programme.

5.2 HSE and members discussed the definition of PFAS, noting that the 2021 OECD definition had expanded the number of chemicals that were classified as PFAS. This now captures examples that includes some pesticide structures, such as those containing a single fluorinated carbon. HSE noted that all pesticides, PFAS or otherwise, are tested extensively prior to approval and the toxicity tests are used to derive toxicological reference values, below which exposures are considered safe.

5.3 Members further noted that the UK Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products, and the Environment (COT) have established a sub-group to consider the evidence base and risk assessments of PFAS. Members did note that the COT sub-group is likely to focus on longer chain PFAS and those with limited toxicity data and pesticides are unlikely to significantly feature.

5.4 The National Reference Laboratory gave a short update on the validation work being undertaken for nicotine in grapes (with help from SASA who had provided a method) 2,4-D, MCPA, triclopyr, aminopyralid and clopyralid in animal products and some additional work related to issues when testing for copper and methods to eliminate risks of contamination.

## **Agenda item 6: Draft Quarter 4 2023 report**

6.1 HSE presented the draft version of the Quarter 4 2023 report HSE had identified several areas that would require advice, though members could explore any aspects of the report they considered to be of interest.

6.2 The committee was asked:

- If they were aware of any information that could provide HSE with additional understanding on how any of the residues detected over the MRL may have occurred?

- To provide advice that could help inform HSE's follow-up action for a finding of chlormequat in pears.
- To advise on a samples of potatoes which contained a residue of fosthiazate over the MRL.

### 6.3 Members discussed:

- Overall, the findings in the report are similar to previous quarters. There were 12 samples with residues over the MRL. HSE has written to the brand owner or supplier of all these samples and will seek advice from members on the responses that have been received.
- There were two samples, which had a country of origin of the UK, that contained a residue which does not have a product authorized for use on that crop. Details of these samples have been referred for investigation.
- That the finding of chlormequat may be as a result of how the trees were treated as saplings or possibly that the tree was bought from outside the UK. HSE confirmed investigations were ongoing.
- How HSE uses processing factors from established databases initially but will also consider where there are other more relevant and up to date factors. Members discussed in detail the example for maleic hydrazide which has a range of different processing factor values available for crisps. HSE applied the latest processing factors from the 2016 EFSA Conclusion for maleic hydrazide. This was done on a precautionary basis, which indicated that the most conservative processing factors should be used when there are irreconcilable differences.
- That HSE's correspondence with the authorisation holder for fosthiazate indicated that the product was used within label conditions. Members commented the exceedance of the MRL could have been due to extreme weather conditions in 2022 which impacted the growing season. HSE noted that in such cases low levels of positive residues can arise even when the harvest interval has been respected. Committee members also suggested closer engagement with manufacturers who may have data that could be shared.
- Members discussed the sampling of specific products such as orange juice and goat's milk. HSE agreed to review how to bring in a more diverse range of samples.

6.4 HSE provided an update on their liaison with the authorisation holder regarding the MRL exceedances of fosthiazate seen in this report and a previous potato sample. HSE noted that whilst MRL exceedances have been relatively infrequent since the authorisation holder withdrew the use of the in-furrow application method, residue findings above the MRL continue to be of acute risk concern. PRiF members referred to the stewardship programme that the company has in place, and noted that HSE is in continued dialogue with the authorisation holder.

## **Agenda item 7: Rolling reporting update**

7.1 The committee noted that the results of the January, February and March rolling reporting had been published.

7.2 HSE confirmed the rolling reporting for April will be circulated to members shortly.

## **Agenda item 8: HSE workshop follow up**

8.1 HSE presented an update following the workshop on the evidence needs of the residue monitoring programme held in February. HSE stated the aim of the workshop was to explore the advice needs of the monitoring programme and the best ways to procure this advice whilst delivering good value for money.

8.2 HSE stated that they are still considering the evidence gathered and will be engaging in further discussions with the other sponsoring departments. HSE repeated their thanks to the chair and members engaging positively with workshop and their valuable input. They reaffirmed that they would keep the committee up to date with any developments.

8.3 The chair commented that she feels the current system of meetings aligned to the quarterly report was important in providing public confidence in the results. The chair noted she had raised how committees can best work to provide public assurance as an agenda item to discuss at the annual meeting of Defra scientific committee chairs.

## **Agenda item 9: The Expert Committee on Pesticides**

9.1 The chair welcomed Mr J Clarke, the chair of the Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP), who gave a presentation on the role and remit of the ECP and an overview of their current work.

9.2 The ECP chair discussed that there is a diversity of expertise on the ECP committee with members drawn from a range of specialist areas. Mr Clarke noted that the ECP is an advisory committee, who provide support and advise to the government but do not make decisions.

9.3 The committee thanked the ECP chair for his time and his informative presentation.

## **Agenda item 10: FSA Presentation**

10.1 The FSA presented on how the FSA's work links into that of HSE, giving an overview of the work they carry out for Port Health border controls, including working with local authorities and border control to provide guidance on national monitoring, early warning systems and surveillance.

10.2 Members found the report very helpful. They asked how the FSA use historical data to better understand trends and pre-emptively identify potential breaches. The FSA discussed the range of sources such as RASFF and the Australian Imported Food Inspection Scheme alongside domestic sources of information they use as part of their early warning system.

### **Agenda item 11: Communications Sub Group update**

11.1 Members noted that the sub-group had worked on the annual report. It also met and agreed minor changes to the style guide, the changes will be put in place for Q1 2024 report.

### **Agenda item 12: PRiF Ways of Working document**

12.1 The Secretariat presented an updated Ways of Working document following on from discussion at the January meeting.

12.2 Members agreed to provide further comments to the Secretariat and for a review of the document to be included as an annual item on the forward business plan.

### **Agenda item 13.: Defra Update**

13.1 Defra confirmed the National Action Plan is expected to be published shortly, they noted that publication had been delayed to due political changes in the devolved governments.

13.2 Defra noted that, following the update presented at the January meeting, the chair had been invited to represent the PRiF at a workshop on the active substance renewal programme alongside other stakeholders. The chair noted that she had discussed a number of topics including how best to prioritise active substance renewals, how best to manage the approval of low-risk substances and how residues from bio-pesticides could be effectively monitored.

### **Agenda item 14: Horizon Scanning**

14.1 Members were asked to consider specific horizon scanning subjects to be discussed as an agenda item at future meetings.

14.2 Members mentioned their interest on the impact of climate change on crops and how this may influence pesticide usage.

### **Agenda item 15: Any other business**

15.1 Members noted that HSE have issued a new database that captures [GB Toxicological Reference Values](#) (TRVs). This database prioritises capturing newly adopted

GB TRVs and cataloguing existing GB TRVs. HSE stated that while some international values are included, the database may not have captured all TRVs evaluated internationally.

### **Agenda item 16: Date of next meeting**

16.1 The next meeting will be held on the 17 July 2024.