

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) 17 July 2024

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 50th meeting of the committee.

Those present:

Chair:

Mrs A Davison

Members:

Dr J Blackman; Mr I Finlayson and Mr J Points

Representatives:

Ms H Ainsworth (Defra); Ms H Cooke (HSE); Mr D Faulkner (Northern Ireland Executive); Mr T Green (FSA); Ms H Kyle (HSE); Dr S Nawaz (National Reference Laboratory); Ms K Viezens (Scottish Government); Mr W Turley (HSE) and Ms E Ingram (HSE)

Apologies:

Ms D Winstanley, Dr R Scrivens

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 No conflicts of interests were declared.

2. Agenda item 2: Action points from PRiF meeting of 22 May 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.

2.2 Members noted that Defra would be providing further information in response to the Committee's query on the department's role in international development work as part of their regular update.

2.3 Members agreed to close the outstanding action point concerning their correspondence with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) on how to report findings of chlorate residues in infant food and formula production that may arise from the use of water and disinfectant. The secretariat noted that DHSC are carrying forward this work and they will instead update the committee on any future developments as they occur.

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 The secretariat confirmed there was nothing arising from forward business plan.

4. Agenda item 4: Monitoring programme update

4.1 HSE updated the committee on the work to prepare for the 2025 monitoring programme. HSE noted they had met with the PRiF future planning subgroup in June to discuss the ranking tool and issues of interest that will influence the programme going forward. HSE confirmed that the commissioning process for the 2025 monitoring programme will start towards the end of the summer.

4.2 The committee asked if the proposed testing of tomatoes would include fresh and processed samples, which HSE confirmed that it would.

4.3 The committee asked provisionally if the full range of the proposed sampling programme is expected to fall within the budget. HSE confirmed that they considered it would be achievable.

4.4 The committee asked if the fruit and vegetable sampling is seasonal. HSE confirmed that fruit and vegetables will be sampled all year round, except in the cases of highly seasonal products, and will incorporate fresh, canned and processed fruit and vegetables where appropriate.

5. Agenda item 5: Draft quarter 1 2024 report

5.1 HSE presented the draft version of the Quarter 1 2024 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.

5.2 Overall, the findings in the report are similar to previous quarters. There were 8 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. HSE confirmed it had not received any supplier responses so far.

5.3 HSE confirmed they had raised with FSA the country of origin for a sample of chilli peppers having noted Rwanda and Oman were not commonly seen as a source of supply.

5.4 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?
- If there were any other risk issues/suspected unapproved use they would like to discuss.

5.5 Members discussed:

- If the country of origin for a sample of grapes could be checked. HSE noted they had requested the packaging which reconfirmed the country of origin but will further check the sample.

Action: HSE

- The presentation of a root vegetable sample which contained two residues above the MRL, suggesting the wording is reviewed for clarity. HSE agreed to further review the wording with the possibility of adding a footnote.
- The categorisation of samples by their country of origin (EU/UK/Non-EU) in the tables. HSE confirmed that this was a result of how the underlying database was built and could not easily be changed, but they would consider adding an explanation.

Action: HSE

- HSE noted questions raised by members over the country of origin of some samples prior to the meeting. HSE confirmed they had sought further assurance for the country of origin for these samples and could now confirm that the unlabelled melon sample originated from Brazil rather than Spain while the sample of peppers was correctly labelled.
- Adding a further note in the chair's comments, highlighting that members were pleased that none of the samples contained residues understood to be genotoxic.
- The publication of the data, HSE confirmed that the relevant data and committee minutes are published simultaneously. Due to ongoing work to ensure the quarterly reports meet accessibility requirements and the election period, the publication of

quarterly reports has been delayed, HSE expect outstanding reports to be published shortly.

- Technical queries on how particular risk assessments factor in possible interconversion of metabolites during testing. The official laboratory representative noted their testing methodology would not allow for interconversion. It was further noted if interconversion did occur it would be to the higher risk metabolite and therefore would represent a worst-case scenario.

6. Agenda item 6: Rolling reporting update

6.1 The committee noted that the results of the April and May rolling reporting had been published.

6.2 HSE confirmed the rolling reporting for June will be circulated to members shortly.

7. Agenda item 7: PRiF annual report 2023

7.1 The secretariat noted and agreed to a number of minor corrections.

7.2 The committee welcome that the report is in a more accessible format. The committee asked if the charts in the report could be visually presented. The Secretariat confirmed that they would review how best to present the information.

Action: Secretariat

7.3 Members discussed the 'Lambda-cyhalothrin and Cypermethrin in oranges' and agreed to provide the secretariat with updated wording to further explain the case study.

8. Agenda item 8: Defra update

8.1 Defra informed the committee that a new ministerial team had been appointed with Stephen Reed OBE MP as the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

8.2 The committee noted and thanked Defra for providing an update on the government's work on integrated pest management and phyto-sanitary capacity building in developing countries and how that relates to the work of the committee and HSE.

9. Agenda item 9: European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) 2022 annual report

9.1 The committee discussed the EFSA 2022 annual report and how they present their data compared to the UK. Members provided a number of topics for further discussion. HSE agreed to consider them and refer back to the committee or communication sub-group as relevant. HSE further noted that some suggestions may need to be considered in the context of a wider work programme over the medium and long-term.

Action: HSE

9.2 The committee asked if further information on how HSE uses international surveillance programmes such as the EFSA report in creating their own ranking tools could be added to the Competent Authority Annual Report. HSE will consider this.

10. Agenda item 10: Horizon scanning

10.1 The committee noted Defra's 'UK Food Security Report' that monitors relevant trends and information relating to food security, including climate change and pesticide issues. The secretariat agreed to circulate the report for members' information.

Action: Secretariat

10.2 The committee discussed the monitoring of non-traditional plant protection products, which may not have MRLs set as part of the authorisation process. HSE noted this would be considered in the initial risk assessment for such products.

11. Agenda item 11: Any other business

11.1 The chair noted that she will be presenting to the Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) on the work of the PRiF and invited members to raise anything they feel may be relevant alongside possible areas of joint working. Members suggested the Chair raise the monitoring of non-traditional plant protection products as a possible area of joint working.

11.2 The chair asked if it would be possible to co-opt specific specialisms for future meetings. The secretariat confirmed that would be permitted under the terms of reference if there was a need for specific expertise not currently present on the committee.

11.3 The committee highlighted that they would value further information on the food consumption data, how this data is collected and what new trends are being observed. HSE agreed to arrange a suitable presentation on the topic.

Action: HSE

12. Agenda item 12: Date of next meeting

12.1 16 October 2024