

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), 29 January 2025

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 52nd meeting of the committee.

Those present:

Chair:

Ms A Davison

Members:

Dr J Blackman; Mr I Finlayson, and Mr J Points

Representatives:

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

Apologies:

Ms D Winstanley

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 interest were declared.

2. Agenda item 2: Action points from PRiF Meeting 16 October 2025

2.1 The secretariat provided an update on actions from the previous meeting and informed the committee that the majority of actions were complete. An update of the only ongoing action will be provided at a future meeting.

2.2 Members noted that HSE would review the wording around fosetyl's complex residue definition when sufficient resourcing was available.

2.3 The chair asked if the links in the reports would still link to historical data. HSE confirmed there is a version control embedded in the reports which will link to historic data.

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.

3.3 Members discussed a potential open meeting, the secretariat noted that due to the limited resourcing available there would need to be a clear focus and need to justify any open meeting.

4. Agenda item 4: Monitoring Programme update

4.1 HSE updated the committee on the status of the 2025 programme.

4.2 HSE confirmed, following the withdrawal of the previous supplier a new laboratory sampling fruit and vegetables and plant-based products has been contracted for testing in Northern Ireland. The Department for Agriculture and Marine (DAFM) in the Republic of Ireland have secured the new contract and are currently working on Q4 2024.

4.3 The committee thanked HSE for their work in securing a new laboratory for Northern Ireland samples and dealing with what has been complex and problematic issue.

4.4 Members questioned whether 6 benzyladenine was in the analytical framework of substances tested for, HSE confirmed it was.

5. Agenda item 5: Northern Ireland Q2 – Q4 2023 report

5.1 HSE presented the data for Northern Ireland samples collected between April – December 2023. Due to technical issues with the laboratory, there were significant delays in receiving the Northern Ireland monitoring programme data. HSE have since confirmed all this data has now been evaluated.

5.2 Overall, the findings in the report are similar to previous quarters. For several surveys, the results are separated into two reports because the analytical scope was different, as only a smaller subset of samples were tested for single residue analysis in addition to multi residue analysis.

5.3 The committee was asked:

- As the results have been presented in a slightly different manner to reflect the different analytical suites and technical difficulties, HSE asked members to confirm whether they feel it is appropriate to include the results of the additional samples in this way.
- If there were any other risk issues/suspected unapproved use they would like to discuss.

5.4 Members discussed:

- A finding of imazalil and thiabendazole in oranges. HSE confirmed if all the fruit including the peel is consumed a risk to health is not expected.
- Members queried how post-harvest treatment information from the label of the sample collected are used, HSE confirmed they review it when relevant but the label may not always contain all the relevant information for the programme.
- Members asked if it would be appropriate if the reasons for the delay were added to the chairs comments in the report. HSE confirmed this would be possible.
- HSE also noted due to the delay all notifications to suppliers with an exceeded MRL have been delayed. HSE confirmed a letter has been sent to all suppliers explaining the delay.
- Members discussed several samples within the NI and GB reports that had acetamiprid residues that are below the MRLs. They noted that dietary intake would exceed the most recent EU acute reference dose (ARfD) but not the 2018 EU ARfD which is currently in use within GB. HSE noted that they have liaised with the FSA on the EU decision to lower the ARfD and on consideration of the risk assessments and justification presented do not feel an additional uncertainty factor is required. HSE therefore consider the 2018 value to be robust.

6. Agenda item 6: Draft Quarter 3 2024 report

6.1 HSE presented the third quarterly report of 2024. As in previous reports, the surveys are all split by GB and NI. Overall, the findings in the report are similar to previous quarters.

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? Specifically, any information regarding copper found in eggs.
- If there were any other risk issues/suspected unapproved use they would like to discuss.

6.3 Members discussed:

- A finding of chlorpropham in a sample of potatoes, they noted that HSE have requested more information from the supplier to ascertain why the residue occurred.
- That residues above the MRL were found in a sample of fresh green beans. HSE confirmed they had received an extensive report from the grower who suggested the exceedance may be due to spray drift. HSE confirmed there was no evidence in the growers spray records that thiophanate methyl had been used.
- HSE reported a small increase in fozthiazate detected in potatoes. HSE confirmed it had received a detailed response from the supplier. Members suggested this could be due to lack of irrigation and early crop death leading to the fozthiazate residue not breaking down at the expected rate.
- Residues were detected in a sample of mushrooms, members raised the possibility of contamination from the growing material. HSE confirmed they will investigate this possible exposure source. Members asked why the finding of the residue is not being classed as non-compliant. HSE confirmed the residue was not over the MRL and not classed as a risk.
- HSE reported it had received a detailed response from a mushroom grower regarding changes to watering systems for mushrooms to minimise overwatering following a finding of metriquinone.
- HSE reported a finding of phosatyle in infant food. HSE confirmed this could be part of an ongoing issue of a pesticide arising from other sources and has been in contact with the supplier to gather more information. HSE also confirmed it is liaising with other government departments to follow up this finding.
- Members discussed a possible residue exceedance in garlic bread and if it had been determined whether this was detected in the bread or the garlic. HSE responded a re-test has been requested by the supplier and they will inform the committee when a response is received.
- HSE and Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland (DAERA) gave an update to the finding of copper in eggs. DAERA explained they had been in contact with Veterinary Medicines Directorate to determine if the residue could be in the animal feed and will update the committee in due course. Members discussed EFSA regulations regarding animal products, whereby only the feed is tested and although copper is commonly used in feed products it cannot be assumed this is the source. HSE confirmed these residues are being explored more widely in relation to the possible source, HSE will update the committee when they have further information.

- The committee asked if HSE found growers and suppliers to be responding more quickly and more thoroughly to exceedances found. HSE stated that suppliers tended to provide very detailed responses.

7. Agenda item 7: Rolling reporting update

7.1 The committee noted that the results of the October rolling reporting had been published. The results for samples collected in November and December will be published shortly.

7.2 HSE confirmed that nicotine has been found in one sample and are in consultation with FSA to ascertain if a follow-up is needed.

8. Agenda item 8: Ways of Working Document review

8.1 The secretariat asked members to review the current Ways of Working document and suggest any amendments that are felt to be relevant.

8.2 The secretariat informed the committee that the Ways of Working document is a useful tool that illustrates the work of the PRiF and is intended to be an evolving document, describing working practices and as such can be updated as the need arises. The Ways of Working document is currently reviewed annually, the secretariat advised this is now not a requirement and will only need to be reviewed if the need arises.

8.3 The committee suggested a number of minor wording changes to the document. It was agreed to refer these to consideration via email after the meeting.

Action: Members and secretariat

8.4 The committee noted that horizon scanning has been included a regular agenda item since the document was written and suggested this be included. The secretariat agreed to update the document to include it.

Action: Secretariat

8.5 The committee inquired about the future recruitment needs of the committee. The secretariat confirmed as the review of the committee is still ongoing, recruitment is currently frozen. Any urgent issues regarding recruitment will be dealt with as the need arises.

8.6 Members noted there was scope for improvement in the annual assessment process, the secretariat agreed to liaise with the chair to work on potential improvements.

Action: Secretariat and chair

9. Agenda item 9: HSE's work updating the UK consumer risk assessment models

9.1 The chair welcomed a HSE specialist from the residues team to present on the work for an ongoing project to update the UK consumer risk assessment models.

9.2 Members discussed the presentation, asking if this would be an ongoing project and if it would be possible to further explore consumer group sub-sets of the full consumption data. Currently HSE are considering options for possible consumer groups in more depth, but breaking down into much smaller sub-sets might not be viable. HSE confirmed the intention is when the model is up and running that this would be an ongoing project and the model would be updated as new survey data becomes available.

10. Agenda item 10: Update from Defra

10.1 Defra updated the committee on ongoing developments, noting that Emma Hardy MP, Minister for Water and Flooding and the minister responsible for pesticides had recently published her decision not to grant an authorisation for the emergency use of the product 'Cruiser SB'.

10.2 Defra further confirmed work on the National Action Plan for pesticides (NAP) is ongoing and the intention remains to publish it in 2025. They additionally noted that work on the active substance review programme, work is continuing, exploring appropriate regulatory reforms.

11. Agenda item 11: Horizon Scanning

11.1 Members noted that any points of interest had been raised during the meeting already and no further horizon scanning items were discussed.

12. Agenda item 12: Any other business

12.1 Two Pesticide Usage Survey reports attached for information from 2023.

- [Edible Protected Crops](#) – published on 12 November 2024
- [Outdoor vegetable crops](#) – published on 5 November 2024

12.2 The chair confirmed her intention to attend the annual meeting of scientific committee chairs held by Defra's Chief Scientific Advisor. She requested if members had any specific questions beyond highlighting public trust in Scientific Advisory Committees to please send them to her.

13. Agenda item 13: Date of next meeting

- 14 May 2025