

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), 14 May 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 53rd meeting of the committee.

Those present:

Chair:

Ms A Davison

Members:

Dr J Blackman; Mr I Finlayson; Mr J Points; Ms D Winstanley

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 G Stark (HSE); Dr S Nawaz (National Reference Laboratory) and Dr R Scrivens (HSE)

Apologies:

No apologies

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.

1.3 The committee were informed that two members of HSE involved in the pesticide residues in food monitoring programme would be retiring. On behalf of the committee, the chair thanked Helen Kyle for her wisdom and conscientiousness in leading the Pesticide Residue Team and liaising with the PRiF over many years. The committee wished her a very happy retirement. The chair also thanked Louise Dearsley for her many valuable contributions to the PRiF and on behalf of the Committee wished her well for the future.

2. Agenda item 2: Action points from PRiF Meeting of 29 January 2025

2.1 The secretariat provided an update on actions from the previous meeting and informed the committee that the majority of the actions were complete. An update regarding scope for improvement in the annual assessment process of members will be provided at a future meeting.

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 expressed the possibility of future presentations to the PRiF meeting. The secretariat confirmed it would open to suggestions with the caveat that any presentations must be related to the work of the committee.

3.3 Members asked if there could be more clarity on internal deadlines and timescales added to the forward business plan. The secretariat agreed to look at this further.

Action: Secretariat

3.4 The committee asked if an update could be given on work done by EFSA on the toxicological impact of multiple residues. HSE advised that work was in progress by EFSA on the establishment of further cumulative assessment groups and confirmed it will provide links to the work done by EFSA but does not have direct access to any updates.

Action: HSE

4. Agenda item 4: 2025 Monitoring Programme update

4.1 HSE updated the committee on the status of the 2025 programme and all work is progressing to target.

4.2 HSE updated the committee on difficulties obtaining vegetable protein samples. HSE are collaborating with laboratories to determine if the use of vegetable protein in confectionary is feasible. Members offered to provide assistance sourcing vegetable protein for sampling. HSE noted the offer.

4.3 HSE informed the members that colleagues have recently undertaken very informative visits to the SASA laboratory in Scotland and the DAFM laboratory in Republic of Ireland, also helping to consolidate ongoing working relationships.

4.4 HSE informed the members that although there had been some delays to publications of reports, HSE have been working hard to rectify this and can confirm all publication of reports are now up to date. The Chair thanked them for this achievement.

4.5 HSE confirmed they are working towards a new competitive tender for sample collection which is due to renew at the end of 2025.

5. Agenda item 5: Draft Quarter 4 2024 report

5.1 HSE presented the fourth 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.

5.2 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?
- If there were any other risk issues/suspected unapproved use they would like to discuss.

Great Britain data

5.3 Members discussed:

- Findings of imazilil and thiabendazole below the MRL were reported in grapefruit. HSE confirmed if all the fruit including the peel is consumed and contains residues at the highest level reported a risk to health is unlikely. Members asked if it would be possible to obtain grapefruit samples in packages or boxes to help with traceability. HSE stated that although samples are

occasionally obtained from wholesale it would not be possible to shift the focus of the programme to collect from wholesale and depots.

- Findings of nicotine, ethephon and acetamiprid were reported in Grapes. The finding of nicotine reported in grapes was above the MRL. HSE and FSA confirmed a risk to health is unlikely.
- All ethephon residues reported in grapes were below the MRL. HSE confirmed a risk to health is unlikely. There were residues of acetamiprid in grapes, virtually all at levels within the MRL, and one at the MRL. HSE confirmed a risk to health is not expected for these samples. A further finding of acetamiprid in grapes was above the MRL with a high exceedence. HSE informed FSA of this results, they raised an INFOSAN notice with instruction to withdraw any remaining product from the market.
- HSE reiterated the GB position on the decision by the EU to lower the acute reference dose (ARfD) on acetamiprid as noted in the previous minutes. 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 and still applicable in GB and the MRL does not need to be changed in GB to reflect the change in the EU. HSE confirmed discussions within HSE are continuing on this matter.
- Members asked if the explanation regarding the differences in the ARfD could be more concise and open. HSE agreed to consider and make some changes to the wording in the report to be clear on the ARfDs that had been used in the assessment.
- Members discussed the ARfD and MRL difference in Northern Ireland (NI). HSE confirmed that the Windsor framework would be utilised for any produce sampled in NI that originated from GB.
- A finding of chlorpyrifos was reported in limes above the MRL, HSE confirmed if all the fruit including the peel is consumed a short term risk to health is unlikely.
- In this quarterly report, there are a small number of findings of chlorpyrifos (a beans with pods, a limes, and a potato sample (potato - NI, see below). On a precautionary basis, HSE advise that any findings of chlorpyrifos are undesirable due to concerns regarding the possible genotoxic potential of these residues.
- HSE invited members to comment on MRL exceedances in GB for sweet peppers and aubergine. There were no comments from members, the aubergine was confirmed to be grown in Spain not grown in UK.

- HSE invited members to comment on any other issues. Members requested a note to be added to an organic sample containing spinosad to explain that spinosad is allowed for use in organic samples. HSE agreed look at further.
- Members discussed a number of possible minor wording changes. HSE agreed to some modifications and happy to receive any further comments.
- Members queried the seemingly high proportion of organic samples tested. HSE stated there is monitoring and protocol in place to ensure there is not oversampling of particular produce.
- HSE advised that they had taken account of the 2023 Committee on Toxicity statement on the assessment of oral nicotine products. The risk assessment presented used a toxicological reference value, an acute reference dose, based a human clinical study.
- The PRiF considered the inadvertent residues of tri-allate that have been found in Q4 GB Broccoli samples arising from volatile transfer of residues when nearby cereal crops have been treated. Members discussed an update on correspondence that HSE, as the regulator, has taken forward with the authorisation holder for the products in the UK. This included some additional monitoring data that the authorisation holder has provided on this phenomenon in some leafy crops, including herbs. Recently, ahead of the renewal assessment of the substance, HSE has evaluated new genotoxicity data and concluded that residues of tri-allate no longer need to be regarded as potentially genotoxic, and a reassuring update on this has been presented in the (Q4) report. Whilst these findings in non-target crops are not anticipated to have any impact on health, HSE will continue to keep a watch on the situation.

Northern Ireland data

5.4 HSE presented the Northern Ireland data. Overall, the findings in the report are similar to previous quarters. Members discussed:

- Findings of imazilil and thiabendazole below the MRL were reported in grapefruit. HSE confirmed if all the fruit including the peel is consumed and contains residues at the highest level reported a risk to health is unlikely.
- A finding of chlpyrifos was reported in potatoes with a residue over the MRL. HSE stated this was an unusual and undesirable finding. HSE liaised with Northern Ireland FSA and a RASFF was issued, requesting any remaining stock to be withdrawn. The country of origin was Republic of Ireland.
- A finding of chlorpropham was reported in potatoes under the MRL. HSE stated the MRL is set with the expectations that residues will occur from time to time from historic use. Members asked if a comment to this effect could be added

as it helps to serve as a reminder to the industry to maintain cleaning efforts in stores.

Action: HSE

- Nicotine was detected in a sample of aubergine above the MRL. Members asked if any risk had been identified. HSE confirmed a risk to health is not expected.
- Members queried the absence of chlormequat detected in samples of bread. HSE confirmed the method used by the laboratory to detect chlormequat was robust.
- Findings of copper residues were reported in eggs, with 3 residues over the MRL. Effects on health are not expected. HSE stated this has been followed up with retailers and NI authorities, with the likely cause to be copper added to animal feed. 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. DAERA advised it has been agreed to increase the monitoring of copper in feed levels.
- Members discussed a number of possible wording changes. HSE agreed to some modifications and happy to receive any further comments.

6. Agenda item 6: Rolling reporting update

6.1 The committee noted that the results of the January and February rolling reporting had been published. The results for March 2025 rolling reporting are due to be published shortly. The April rolling reporting will be available to members shortly.

7. Agenda item 7: 2026 Monitoring programme

7.1 HSE presented a paper on the initial proposals for surveys to be included in the 2026 programme. Unlike previous years, HSE will not be holding a sub-group to discuss the final proposals and invited the committee to participate in a discussion regarding the proposals.

7.2 HSE discussed with the committee their rationale for the method in which the ranking tool is used for deciding priorities of foods to be sampled in the 2026 programme, possibly incorporating foods that have not been in the programme recently, foods that complement other foods and special interest foods. HSE confirmed the version of the ranking table sent to the committee prior to this meeting has been updated and the updated table will be forwarded to them after this meeting.

7.3 HSE advised the committee of the need to have a longer lead in time to ensure the laboratories have time to prepare methods and standards for the 2026 programme.

7.4 HSE confirmed that after discussions with Fera, potatoes, beans and grapes would be included in the rolling reporting for 2026, with the possibility of adding one further item. Members asked if a citrus product could be added. HSE noted this and will consider it, although currently citrus products are not exceeding the MRL so therefore not a priority.

7.5 Discussions continued at length between HSE and the committee regarding various foods that would possibly qualify to be included in the 2026 programme. HSE informed the committee that FSA also complete testing of foods at port and did not feel that anything would be gained by duplicating the testing already carried out by the FSA.

7.6 Fera asked HSE if speciality fruit would be a commodity that could be sampled further. HSE noted they would be happy to consider speciality fruit as a rolling reporting item.

7.7 Members asked if there would be benefit in a single point in time survey i.e. Christmas specific foods when the risk could be heightened. Following on from discussions HSE and members concluded risk is heightened at the beginning and end of seasons and is something that is already incorporated in the programme.

7.8 Members asked if there was scope within the programme to incorporate a R&D literature survey. CRD will update the committee under agenda item 11.

8. Agenda item 8: Draft 2024 PRiF Annual Report

8.1 The secretariat presented the first draft of the 2024 PRiF Annual Report. Members are asked to discuss the report and provide any comments to the Secretariat by 30 May 2025.

Action: Committee Members

9. Agenda item 9: Overview of Conflicts of Interest

9.1 The secretariat fulfilled their obligation to provide a regular reminder to the members of the committee where possible conflicts of interest may arise. The Secretariat provided an overview of the conflicts of interest process, clarifying what members should declare for both annual and individual meeting declarations, referring to Regulation 396 article 28, 29 and 30.

9.2 The secretariat noted by the nature of the committee some of the members are close to some food supplier industries, this is not a bar to membership and HSE are

able to derive benefits the members bring to the committee. Members are asked to manage the risk conflict or a perceived risk by following the guidelines set out and make appropriate declarations of interest annually and meeting specific declarations, if there are any conflicts. The chair and secretariat are happy to discuss any ambiguities.

9.3 A number of members asked the secretariat if they could review their declarations individually. The secretariat agreed it would work with members interested in reviewing the declarations of interest.

Action: Secretariat

9.4 The committee welcomed the review of conflicts of interest.

10. Agenda item 10: Communications sub-group: Update style guide

10.1 The Communications sub-group discussed minor changes to the style guide. Members are asked to agree the changes to the style guide.

10.2 The committee requested a couple of minor changes. The secretariat requested any comments to be received by 30 May 2025.

Action: Committee Members

11. Agenda item 11: HSE, CRD R&D Update

11.1 HSE provided an update on the ongoing pesticide R&D programme which is funded by Defra.

11.2 HSE explained the difficulties it has faced in previous years to commence projects. Onboarding new projects has been slowed down significantly due to changes in the procurement process. To combat this, HSE are introducing an R & D framework which is due to commence in 2025. The intention is when projects are submitted to HSE by specialist teams and then evaluated and prioritised they can be allocated directly to suppliers within the framework, speeding up the process significantly. HSE confirmed it currently has 4 ongoing projects.

11.3 HSE confirmed in an average year they receive requests for around 40 projects with a budget available to fund 6 or 7. All request for new projects would have to go through the evaluation and priority scoring system. Members asked if there was scope to deliver an R&D literature survey for the monitoring programme if something was identified. HSE confirmed there would not be budget within the monitoring programme to fund a project, HSE would need to submit a project bid which would be included in the priority scoring system along with all other bids.

12. Agenda item 12: Update from Defra

12.1 Defra confirmed the main development to report was the publication of the National Action Plan (NAP). The NAP is fully supported by all 4 governments and Defra confirmed the NAP supports a move to more sustainable pest management programme.

13. Agenda item 13: Horizon Scanning

13.1 Members discussed any potential effects the new trade agreements with India and the USA would have on food safety. Defra commented that currently there is no information to share and not expecting any change imminently.

13.2 HSE confirmed EFSA are working on an ambitious programme of continued work on hazard characterisation and allocation of pesticides to cumulative assessment groups.

13.3 Members asked about bioaccumulation of pesticides and the potential long term effects. HSE stated that the regulatory toxicity studies that are routinely required for pesticides include long term dosing studies and any toxicity due to repeat exposures is reflected in the setting of the ADI, the acceptable daily intake, the toxicological reference value suitable for addressing long term health impacts.

14. Agenda item 14: Any other business

14.1 HSE introduced the Coordinated Great Britain Control Plan 2026-2028 to members for their information. The plan has been approved by the four governments for publication.

14.2 HSE provided the 2023 Competent Authority Annual Report for information, the report has now been finalised and approved. HSE will now forward for publication.

15. Agenda item 15: Date of next meeting

- 16 July 2025