

Government Chemist Programme Expert Group Meeting

Monday 02 December 2024

LGC, Queens Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0LY

Attendees:

<u>PEG</u> Bhavna Parmar Brenda McRory Chelvi Leonard Declan Naughton Diane Turner Gillian McEneff John Collins Jonathon Griffin Kasia Kazimierczak Paul Berryman Simon Branch Sophie Rollinson <u>Observers</u> Michael Adeogun	<u>DSIT</u> Ian Belcher Steph Foster Maria Turner <u>Queen's University Belfast (QUB)</u> <u>LGC</u> Amber Meredith Caroline Pritchard Heidi Goenaga-Infante Ian Axford John Black Julian Braybrook Kirstin Gray Malcolm Burns Paul Hancock Sanjeev Rana Selvarani Elahi Tim Wilkes
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Apologies: Brenda McRory.

1. **Welcome & minutes of the last meeting:**

- 1.1 A PEG member opened with welcoming attendees and PEG members and reminded all those present of the usual housekeeping.
- 1.2 It was noted that David Pickering has now left his role as PEG following retirement. Jessica Merryfield has been proposed to DSIT as his replacement.
- 1.3 Minutes from the previous GC PEG meeting (May 2024) were approved.

2. **Review of completed actions and matters arising from previous meetings:**

- 2.1 **Action 1:** (A PEG member followed up with DSIT on a previous discussion regarding whether there was the potential to jointly work together on some co-funded GC activities and whether frameworks and MOUs were being considered currently. DSIT replied that current efforts were looking at the new procurement rules coming into force in October, and the contract changes as a result, but will be still assessing the MOU's and how best to coordinate those. DSIT and PEG member will discuss offline). **Action Completed.** PEG member contacted DSIT, no further discussions at this stage.

- 2.2 **Action 2:** (A PEG member commented that she will check with policy colleagues on the authorised registered premises policy for honey producers). **Action Completed.** Response from Defra Policy colleagues: *“In September 2023, the European Commission amended Delegated Regulation EU 2022/2292, requiring that honey and other apicultural products intended for human consumption imported into the EU from third countries and that are intended to be placed on the EU market be dispatched from, and obtained or prepared in, establishments that appear on lists drawn up and kept up to date. For consignments of honey and apiculture products intended for human consumption to be allowed through EU Border Control Posts for import into the EU, it is necessary that UK establishments exporting honey and apiculture products to the EU, or moving to Northern Ireland via the red lane, are included on a list held and kept up to date by the Competent Authority. Defra and FSA are facilitating the process of creating the list of registered establishments producing honey and other apiculture products”.*
- 2.3 **Action 3:** (A PEG member highlighted a recent project run by Fera on testing methods for allergens on alternative protein products which concentrated on precision fermentation and insect protein. The PEG member further commented that they will share the review once published). **Action completed.** Publication completed and should be published in mid-December.
- 2.4 **Action 4:** (LGC to circulate attributive and non-attributive minutes of the meeting). **Action completed.**
- 2.5 **Action 5:** (LGC to circulate a Doodle Poll for the Spring 2024 meeting). **Action completed.**

3. DSIT Update

The key points of the presentation can be found in her slides, circulated with these minutes. Comments and questions raised are summarised below:

- 3.1 A PEG member asked what the real terms increase in budget was. DSIT replied that they do now know at this stage and how it will filter down to the rest of the departments. DSIT further commented that there was a real terms increase in Science funding.
- 3.2 A PEG member asked if the PEG would have any input into mapping to the 5 Government Missions. DSIT replied that the Missions team is visiting LGC and so once there is an understanding of what they are trying to achieve, then DSIT would welcome input from PEG members.

4. GC Update

The key points of the presentation can be found in his slides, circulated with these minutes. Comments and questions raised are summarised below:

- 4.1 A GC staff member commented that there had recently been an increase in the number of referee cases, which may be due to promotion of the GC and its role. The GC staff member also highlighted that the GC annual review has yet to be published due to a change in classification and it now being classed as a command paper and requiring an

ISBN number. DSIT have the GC review but the process to publish it is more complicated than originally thought.

- 4.2 A PEG member asked what changes would need to be made to the GC review. DSIT replied that it would only be a change in format to ensure that it is being published in the correct way and not in breach of parliament.
- 4.3 A PEG member asked what the overall size of the Guildford site was. A GC staff member replied that he didn't have figure to hand but commented that it was around 17% bigger than the Teddington site.
- 4.4 A PEG member asked if there would be scope to further develop the Guildford site. A GC staff member replied none in terms of the current framework but some of the upstairs office space could be taken over in the future.
- 4.5 A PEG member asked what is happening to the Teddington site. A GC staff member replied that the site had been sold to the Royal London Asset Management Company but has been leased back to LGC up to March 2026. This will allow for decommissioning of the site.
- 4.6 A PEG member asked if any further capabilities were to be introduced as part of the move. A GC staff member replied that as well as a new microbiology suite there has been investment in new equipment to enhance our capabilities.
- 4.7 A PEG member raised a further question asking how the GC programme would be affected overall by the move. A GC staff member replied that 2 GC staff have indicated that they will not be making the move to Guildford and will be replaced.
- 4.8 A PEG member asked how long it would take before the laboratory at Guildford was up and running. A GC staff member replied that realistically, it would by the end of the summer.
- 4.9 A PEG member asked if UKAS had already been booked in, to which a GC staff member replied that the move coincided with an audit currently scheduled for February, but discussions are now taking place as to which site this will be conducted in.

5. GC2326 Programme Review

The key points of the presentation can be found in the slides circulated with these minutes. Questions and comments are summarised below:

- 5.1 A PEG member asked if the CBD work presented was specific to food or if it also covered cosmetics. A GC staff member replied that the project is currently focussing on food and animal feed.
- 5.2 A PEG member asked if there were plans to run another CBD ring-trial. A GC staff member replied that there is the intention to run another trial, but this will probably fall under the next GC Programme.
- 5.3 A PEG member also asked if the GC was aware of any changes to the recommendations from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) council on setting thresholds for the use of some cannabinoids. A GC staff member replied that the GC was not aware

of any changes. SE further commented that the GC is trying to re-engage with the Home Office.

- 5.4 A PEG member praised the comprehensive and impressive work of the GC Programme particularly given the small budget. He also commented that the GC budget should be extended considering its global importance of the work carried out.

6. Update on GC referee cases

The key points of the presentation covering the referee cases received can be found in the slides circulated with these minutes. Questions and comments are summarised below.

- 6.1 A PEG member commented on the formaldehyde case that the PA report didn't quite match the guidance, which only states that only the third stimulant should be reported upon. Another PEG member replied that there wasn't the requirement to report anything other than the migration level but observed that it is always helpful to provide the data, as a comparator. The PEG member also commented that the current formaldehyde method was quite long winded and asked if any alternative methods had been considered, such as an HPLC method with derivatisation.
- 6.2 A PEG member commented that if the GC develops a method to detect Konjak then could they share this method with the Official Laboratories. A GC staff member replied that if a method is identified that would prove useful to the Official laboratories, then would be disseminated.
- 6.3 A PEG member asked if the bubble tea product being analysed under the current Referee Case is still on the market. A GC staff member replied that the product is still on the market.

7. CB2: Analysis of alternative proteins – Life cycle analysis

Questions and comments from the presentation are summarised below:

- 7.1 A PEG member asked if the diets were corrected so that the protein quality score for the alternative proteins was the same as soy. QUB responded that the diet had been corrected using a synthetic amino acid balance so as not to give an imbalanced protein.
- 7.2 A PEG member thanked QUB for their presentation and looked forward to hearing the outcome of the final stages of the project.

8. CB2: Analysis of alternative proteins – Aquaculture

The key points of the presentation can be found in the slides circulated with these minutes. Questions and comments are summarised below.

- 8.1 A PEG member raised the issue of chemicals used to coat the bottom of boats to stop things growing and subsequently leeching out. A GC staff member replied that this could potentially be looked at in the future.
- 8.2 A PEG member commented that cultured meats should appear in future formulation as they present a huge metrological challenge and opportunity for standardisation. A GC staff member replied that the GC will revisit cultured meats at some point.

9. FSA Mustard request update case

The key points of the presentation can be found in the slides circulated with these minutes. Questions and comments are summarised below.

- 9.1 A PEG member asked whether Charlock could be likely to cause allergic reaction. A GC staff member replied that there was significant uncertainty around the taxonomic classification of Charlock, suggesting that it may be a true member of the mustard family, but the genetic identity observed between true mustard and Charlock is almost 100%.
- 9.2 A PEG member commented that this work made for an ideal test case for looking at polymorphic materials.

10. Food Authenticity Network Update

The key points of the presentation can be found in the slides circulated with these minutes. Questions and comments are summarised below.

- 10.1 A PEG member asked if there were any plans to mark 10 years of the Food Authenticity Network. A GC staff member replied that nothing is planned as yet.
- 10.2 A PEG member gave his congratulations on a huge amount of work and how good it was to see how the Food Authenticity Network has grown. A GC staff member commented that continued funding of the network remains a challenge.
- 10.3 A PEG member asked when the biggest change in terms of food authenticity being recognised was. A GC staff member replied that awareness is better but also that the Melamine in milk incident in China and the UK horsemeat scandal highlighted how serious food fraud could be.
- 10.4 A PEG member asked if the increase in food fraud instances was due to increased testing/awareness or a genuine increase. A GC staff member replied that increased sampling would be beneficial but more access to data is needed to look at any trends.
- 10.5 A PEG member commented that it would be good to know the current cost of food fraud. A GC staff member replied that the FSA has worked with the University of Portsmouth and has come up with a figure of up to £2 billion for the UK. The GC staff member further commented that company culture is also very important.
- 10.6 A PEG member asked if there as anything similar to the Food Authenticity Network for the perfume industry. A GC staff member replied that there are industry groups, but they are not regulatory.

11. Feedback and questions

- 11.1 A PEG member thanked all the presenters for their presentations and asked for comments and questions from PEG members.
- 11.2 A PEG member commented that everything he had seen today had been really refreshing, and there was nothing of particular concern.
- 11.3 A PEG member noted the fabulous work of the GC and there were really exciting prospects for the future. They particularly appreciated learning about the Food Authenticity

Network and commented that the public need to learn more about food authenticity. The PEG member also commented that the GC Programme requires more funding.

- 11.4 A PEG member agreed that there was a lot of exciting work going on under the GC Programme.
- 11.5 A PEG member concluded the meeting by saying he was as impressed as ever with progress made on the GC programme.
- 11.6 LGC to circulate attributive and non-attributive minutes of the meeting (**ACTION 1**).
- 11.7 LGC to circulate a poll for the Spring 2025 meeting (**ACTION 2**).