

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) 28 January 2026

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 56th meeting of the committee.

Those present:

Chair:

Ms A Davison

Members:

Dr J Blackman; Mr I Finlayson; Mr J Points

Representatives:

Ms H Cooke (HSE); Mr M Kearney (Northern Ireland Executive); Ms H Ainsworth (Defra); Ms K Viezens (Scottish Government); Mr G Stark (HSE); Dr S Nawaz (National Reference Laboratory); Dr R Scrivens (HSE); Ms E Fox (HSE); Mr C Jones (FSA) and Ms C McCartney-Collard (FSA)

Apologies :

Ms D Winstanley;

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 be invited to absent themselves from the discussions and decision-making, unless invited to do so.

1.2 No conflicts of interest were declared.

1.3 The chair welcomed the Chair of Expert Committee on Pesticides, to the PRiF meeting.

Agenda item 2: Action points from PRiF Meeting of 15 October 2025

2.1 The secretariat provided an update of actions from the previous meeting.

2.2 HSE will be reviewing the supplier letters including chlorate, ahead of writing to suppliers for samples collected in the 2026 programme, the draft of which will be provided to the communication sub group.

2.3 Due to HSE resource the action on cumulative risk assessment has not progressed. HSE will endeavour to try and review the risk assessment wording ahead of the May 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 chair requested the secretariat invite the Defra Chief Scientific Adviser to the final PRiF meeting in May 2026.

Action: Secretariat

3.3 The Secretariat requested to be informed of any updates to the style guide ahead of the communications sub group meeting.

Action: All

3.4 The secretariat stated that HSE would present at the May meeting the initial proposal for 2027 Monitoring programme in which they would invite comments from the members.

Agenda item 4: Monitoring Programme update

4.1 HSE updated the committee on the status of the 2026 programme, all work is progressing to target.

4.2 HSE informed the committee the monitoring programme for 2025 has been completed and HSE are on target for the final report.

4.3 HSE stated Quarter 4 data is due at the end of January 2026. The Competent Authority report will be drafted when the final data for Q4 has been confirmed.

4.4 HSE confirmed Mintel have been awarded the sample collection contract for 2026.

4.5 HSE confirmed the Competent Authority report for 2024 was published on 20 November 2025 and the Quarter 2 2025 report is due to be published on 6 February 2026

4.6 Members discussed the balance and number of samples obtained within each survey and if this was skewed to a minor component of the diet i.e. figs and spices as opposed to strawberries. HSE stated sampling was a planned part of the programme and partly due when produce was last sampled in the programme and the availability of laboratories to perform the requisite suite of testing needed. A committee member also reminded the members that figs were included as a produce to be sampled as the country of origin was a possible risk factor.

4.7 The chair requested committee members are invited to discuss what produce are sampled each year. The secretariat agreed, committee members will be invited to contribute to the 2027 monitoring programme plan at the May meeting.

4.8 The National Reference Laboratory representative confirmed that the number of samples required for spices to achieve a comprehensive and thorough testing aimed to be at least 30 samples from broad reaching suppliers to encompass any variations in the samples.

Agenda item 5: Draft Quarter 3 2025 report

5.1 HSE presented Quarter 3 quarterly report of 2025. As in previous quarters, the report is split into GB and NI. The majority of discussion was around GB results due to no NI specific issues to raise. Overall, the findings in the report are similar to previous results.

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:

- A finding of ethylene oxide in a sample of pearl barley above the MRL. HSE stated the risk assessments approach was similar to those presented in Q1 2023 for rice and Q4 2022 for spices. The long term exposure assessment

concluded it is unlikely to be of concern and any risk of adverse effects on health is low. HSE confirmed the sample was sent to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) for consideration, which the committee welcomed.

- Picoxystrobin and chlorpyrifos were found in samples of cumin. The committee agreed with HSE advice that any findings of chlorpyrifos and picoxystrobin are undesirable due to concerns regarding the possible genotoxic potential of these residues. HSE confirmed picoxystrobin is no longer approved and as there are no formal toxicological reference values, HSE has proposed an indicative short term reference value, the highest dietary intakes were below this value and a short term effect on health is not expected. HSE confirmed the samples were sent to the Foods Standards Agency (FSA) for consideration, which the committee welcomed. The concluding action is that two sample numbers of cumin have been withdrawn from stock. Further findings of ethylene oxide and carbofuran below the MRL were also detected in cumin.
- HSE stated chlorpyrifos was found in three turmeric samples. The committee agreed with HSE advice that any findings of chlorpyrifos are undesirable due to concerns regarding the possible genotoxic potential of these residues. HSE stated due to the low level of intake a short term risk to health is not expected. Further findings of ethylene oxide and carbofuran below the MRL were also detected in turmeric.
- Discussion followed regarding intake of turmeric and members noted that turmeric supplements were not included in the sampling and asked whether the consumption estimates take account of health trends. HSE confirmed that medicinal supplements fall under the guidance of the Medical and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), whereas food/nutritional supplements fall under the remit of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). The chair suggested a letter from the committee be sent to the appropriate agency to inform them of the committee's concerns around ensuring supplements like turmeric are tested for pesticide residues.

Action: Chair/Secretariat

- HSE further noted in relation to food supplements, the current consumer exposure data does not include data from health supplements only the dietary intake from food. HSE stated there is an ongoing project to update the consumption data in the models used. It has been proposed to not include turmeric as supplements due to the small amount of data available. HSE will feed the committee's views to the project board overseeing this work.

Action: HSE

- A finding of 2-phenylphenol was found in tomatoes. PRiF considered these results in detail and noted that the finding of 2-phenylphenol in tomatoes was unusual and asked for a note to be added to the report.

Action: HSE

- HSE stated the investigation by the interventions team is still ongoing for unauthorised uses found in samples of lettuce, spinach, strawberries, cabbage and plums, an update will be provided once the investigation is complete.
- The committee further discussed sample collection and noted the ratio of samples in certain surveys such as fruit juice which include less of leading brands. HSE stated that shoppers are limited by the availability of the brands and has flagged this with the retail sample collection company to include brand named items where possible. Members further discussed plant based proteins and the possibility of confusing plant based burgers with beef burgers. HSE confirmed this was checked and the samples were confirmed as plant based. HSE stated samples of plant based proteins are being tested and confirmed samples of plant based chocolate will be sampled next quarter.
- The Committee discussed the Organic Regulation and asked HSE to confirm the permitted residue levels under the current regulation. HSE will follow up and update the Committee.

Action: HSE

Agenda item 6: Rolling reporting update

6.1 The committee noted that the results of the October 2025 rolling reporting have been published. The results for November/December 2025 rolling reporting are due to be published shortly.

Agenda item 7: Transition to new arrangements

7.1 Public attitudes to science

7.1.1 The chair gave a short presentation on communications and public attitudes to science. The chair mentioned fast and slow thinking, the impact of social media and the importance of the information source. For example, academic scientists, independent of government and industry, are well trusted and referred attendees to the British Academy March 2024 Report on public trust in science for policymaking. [Science-Trust-and-Policy-report.pdf](#)

7.1.2 HSE thanked the chair for the presentation and reassured the chair that government and the chief scientific adviser are conscious of and continuously improving on understanding of attitudes to science in the public spectrum.

7.1.3 HSE confirmed that it operates in line with guidance outlined by GOV.UK and that all reporting and communications are structured to be transparent, clear and easily interpreted. HSE assured members that all reporting is held account to these standards.

7.2 Overview of government advice arrangements

7.2.1 Due to the time constraints in the meeting, the chair asked if HSE was happy to take comments as the members had previously been forwarded the paper of the Overview of Government Advice Arrangements.

7.2.2 Members commented that it would be helpful to understand how HSE plans to capture the broader picture and strategic issues going forward. They noted that a lack of supply chain insight could be a significant loss and regular oversight diminished.

7.2.3 Members asked if the closure of the PRiF could be an opportunity to update communication of pesticide residues and the monitoring programme with the possibility of providing monthly bulletins.

7.2.4 The chair advised HSE that she had already been talking to national consumer organisations to ascertain if they would take an interest in pesticide residues in the future. Members expressed uncertainty that the Expert Committee on Pesticides (ECP) has the capacity to provide the independent advice needed of the monitoring programme on top of their current workload.

7.2.5 HSE thanked the members for their comments. HSE stated PRiF has been very helpful in the past giving advice and sharing their knowledge, signposting suppliers, giving insight to working with industry and different bodies allowing government to be in a better position going forward.

7.2.6 HSE stated it is important to emphasise the report is looked at in depth to a much greater extent than previously. Defra and the Devolved Governments have a more involved role within the programme which is a different position from when the PRiF was instigated. HSE confirmed the absence of PRiF is not going to result in a change to the Monitoring Programme in the immediate future.

7.2.7 The Chair of the ECP assured PRiF that the ECP Committee includes a wide range of multidisciplinary experts capable of scrutinising information and reports from the monitoring programme. The ECP Chair also advised that the ECP currently receives a number of reports, which are rigorously challenged by committee members. In addition, the ECP will continue to develop its existing systems, scheduling additional

meetings to accommodate new work and increasing specialist membership if deemed necessary.

7.2.8 HSE asked any further comments to be directed to the secretariat.

Action: Members

7.2.9 The chair requested a separate meeting with FSA to discuss the role of Scientific Advisory Committees (SAC)

Action: FSA

Agenda item 8: Update from Defra

8.1 Defra updated the Committee on the commitment to negotiate the Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary Agreement (SPS).

8.2 Defra stated other strands of work in the National Action Plan (NAP) are also underway, implementing further commitment to Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

Agenda item 9: Horizon Scanning

9.1 Members requested horizon scanning remain as an agenda item for the next meeting, with the intention of discussing novel food authorisations.

Agenda item 10: Any other business

10.1 Members noted it had been reported that Republic of Ireland are undertaking a national survey of TFA (trifluoroacetic acid) in bread and other European countries were also coming under pressure to do this. Members asked if UK were to undertake a similar survey, where the responsibility would lie. HSE confirmed that this would fall under the remit of the FSA. However, while there is growing international interest in monitoring TFA, reliable testing methods are still limited, and there are currently no internationally recognised protocols for how to test for TFA. Therefore, at the present time, it is challenging to accurately distinguish between naturally occurring TFA and TFA resulting from human activity, which reduces the effectiveness of any potential testing.

Agenda item 11: Date of next meeting

11.1 13 May 2026