



Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

29th MEETING

2nd October 2009, Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6NH

Final Minutes

Chairman	Professor Alan Jackson
Members	Professor Peter Aggett Professor Annie Anderson Mrs Christine Gratus Dr Paul Haggarty Professor Tim Key Professor Ian Macdonald Dr David Mela Dr Anita Thomas Dr Stella Walsh Dr Tony Williams
Government Observers and other Attendees	Dr Alison Tedstone (FSA Observer) Mr Mark Bush (FSA) Ms Tracy Boshier (FSA) Dr Anna Whyte (FSAS) Ms Rachel Stratton (FSA)
Secretariat	Dr Elaine Stone (FSA) Dr Sheela Reddy (DH) Mrs Rachel Marklew (DH) Mrs Helen Riley (FSA) Mr Michael Griffin (FSA)

Morning Session

1. The Chair welcomed Members to the 2009 SACN Horizon Scanning meeting. He noted the full agenda for the meeting and that an additional item had been added at agenda item 4 – Health of women of reproductive age.

Agenda item 1 – GACS Horizon Scanning update (SACN/HS/09/01)

2. The Chair provided background on the General Advisory Committee on Science (GACS). Professor Peter Aggett, SACN representative on GACS, introduced a

paper on the outcomes of the recent GACS horizon scanning workshop (June 2009). Professor Aggett said that GACS recognised the importance of considering future scenarios, how to respond to them and exploring ways of working more closely with other Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs). He highlighted that the recent GACS horizon scanning workshop was one step GACS has taken to build on ideas emerging from other SACs.

3. SACN members who were present at the GACS horizon scanning workshop thought it was a very broad discussion that tried unsuccessfully to scan the entire food chain, making it difficult to define clearly the actions needed to address the issues raised.
4. Members considered that the outcome paper did not go far enough and was too short term in approach and that other areas needed to be considered such as land use, biofuels, and new technologies and approaches (e.g. clinical genetics). They also questioned whether the workshop objective to inform the Agency's research agenda had been met.
5. Members suggested that each SAC should 'horizon scan' for their own areas and feed these ideas into GACS's horizon scanning work. It was noted that the process for SACN's horizon scanning activities to feed into the overall GACS's process was unclear at this time.

Agenda item 2 – Scientific review of complementary and young child feeding (SACN/HS/09/02)

6. Dr Tony Williams presented a paper on behalf of the Subgroup on Maternal and Child Nutrition (SMCN) proposing that SACN undertake a review of the scientific evidence underpinning UK infant and young child feeding policy. The principal policy document in use today is the 1994 Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA) report *Weaning and the Weaning Diet*, however, there have been substantial changes in international feeding policy since then (e.g. WHO, 2003).

7. The Committee has recently published two documents relevant to this area: *Infant Feeding Survey 2005: A commentary on practices in the UK* and the *Update on Vitamin D*. Also, new information will be available shortly such as the Department of Health's 2010 quinquennial Infant Feeding Survey and the joint DH/FSA Diet and Nutrition Survey of Infants and Young Children. The Committee was informed of the Agency funded project (TO7051) investigating the effect of timing of introduction of complementary foods on risk of allergy (the EAT study). The results of this study, which is due to report in late 2014, are unlikely to be available in time for the start of this proposed review although they will be considered when they become available.
8. Members considered that a review would need to consider nutritional, developmental and immunological factors relating to complementary feeding. A systematic approach would be required to identify what is known on the issue and the research questions that need to be answered. Overall, Members agreed that there is a need to align policy with available evidence.
9. Dr Williams clarified that the definition of 'young child' is up to 4 years of age. It was noted that current feeding guidance primarily focuses on the period between breastfeeding and the transition to a normal family diet (i.e. 0-2 years of age). The Department of Health noted that there is a lack of current guidance on feeding for young children aged 3 to 5 years, and that this age group should be covered in the proposed review.
10. Members supported the proposal and considered it to be of high priority for the Committee given the increase in evidence since the 1994 COMA report. Also, it was noted that the information is needed by both the Department of Health and the Food Standards Agency (FSA). It was agreed that SMCN would consider the terms of reference and scope for the review, and report back to SACN.

Action: SMCN

Agenda Item 3 – Impact of nutrition on cognitive development and performance in children (SACN/HS/09/03)

11. Dr David Mela introduced a paper highlighting the increasing number of scientific publications and opinions relating to the potential influence of nutrition in children's cognition and behaviour.
12. Members considered this to be a complex but important public health issue, and noted that there is a variety of evidence already available on this topic. The scope of a review would potentially be very wide – for example, children and/or adults, many nutrients/substances, affect of timing of food intake etc.
13. It was discussed that the expertise for this subject may lie outside this Committee and that the Committee on Toxicology (CoT) has completed work similar to this (for example, on adverse reactions to food and food ingredients). Members suggested that if SACN were to go ahead with work on this issue that it should be discussed with CoT.
14. Suggestions were made on the way in which SACN should act. As the evidence on this issue is disparate it was considered that the minimum the Committee should do is to review the available evidence to determine which evidence is good and which is poor, and to identify any gaps in the evidence.
15. Members supported the idea of a critique of the methodologies used in cognitive development, performance and behaviour research, given the difficulties with measures, outcomes, confounders and reverse causality in this type of research. This critique could be developed into a SACN position paper on the appropriate methodologies to use when undertaking research in this area.
16. The Committee agreed that this was an important issue and should be added to the SACN work programme. Although no definite action was agreed at the meeting, the Committee's minimum goal will be to bring some clarity to this area. The secretariat agreed to discuss a way forward for this work, as time allows.

Action: Secretariat

Agenda item 4 – Health of women of reproductive age (SACN/HS/09/08)

17. The Chair explained that the agenda had changed slightly to accommodate a new paper on the health of women of reproductive age, which had evolved from the SACN main meeting discussion on the early nutrition report. The Chair tabled the paper and thanked Professor Annie Anderson for writing the paper.
18. Professor Anderson introduced the paper outlining that nutrient status of women of reproductive age (13-50 years) is likely to impact on short and long term health and will influence the onset of chronic diet related diseases later in life. Evidence, including the recently published report *Nutritional Well-being of the British Population (SACN, 2008)*, highlights concerns regarding the nutritional status of UK teenage and young women showing they have poor nutrient intake and high consumption of energy dense foods, as supported by data reporting increasing rates of obesity. Professor Anderson proposed a review of the evidence relating diet and nutritional status during reproductive years and the burden of chronic diet related disease in later life.
19. Members agreed that this was an important issue that warranted further discussion. Members identified a number of potential diet/nutrition and health relationships that could be investigated, such as the impact of lactation on health as well as the impact of not breastfeeding, obesity and reproduction (i.e. health during pregnancy, post partum and in adult life), impact of being underweight on health (e.g. in relation to bone health and fertility), and maternal nutrition and disease in later life. It was noted that deprivation is a key issue for many women with poor nutritional status, and that obesity is a problem in all socio-economic groups.
20. The Committee agreed that this issue should be discussed in further detail at a future meeting. It was suggested that SMCN scope the issue and identify what work is currently being done in this area, though it was noted that the current priority for this group is the early nutrition report and the proposed review of complementary feeding.

Action: SMCN

Agenda item 5 – Increasing artificiality and manipulation of the human diet (SACN/HS/09/04)

21. Dr Paul Haggarty introduced a paper on the increasing artificiality and manipulation of the human diet; an issue that applies to novel foods but also has a wider relevance to nutrition. He explained that advances in food technologies and the availability of novel ingredients have greatly increased the potential for manipulation of the human diet. As a result, the human diet is changing and this has the potential to have profound effects on nutrient intakes of the UK population.
22. Members recognised the issue and its importance, and noted that it is becoming a more significant issue with developments in food technology. It was suggested that a more appropriate title for this topic would be '*nutritional implications of new food technologies and processes*'.
23. Members considered that this is an issue for the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP) to progress, as it relates to the regulatory procedure for assessing applications for novel foods. It was noted that the current regulatory procedure uses a toxicological approach and does not appropriately consider potential nutritional implications of the novel ingredient. Members noted that the regulatory approach should address nutritional questions such as: what will be displaced in the diet and what is the impact on the overall diet. It was noted that the joint SACN/ACNFP subgroup group ANANF is currently preparing a report on the Approaches to the Nutritional Assessment of Novel Foods (ANANF). Members were keen for this subgroup to meet again to finalise this report and to progress this issue further.
24. Members noted that the increasing exposure of children to novel ingredients is of particular concern, as children have the greatest potential intakes compared to body weight. However, there is currently insufficient evidence in children on this issue.

25. There was discussion on the need for broad monitoring of intakes of novel ingredients. Mr Mark Bush, Branch Head of the Diet and Nutrition Surveys Branch, explained the FSA's current composition database work and their new programme to capture more accurate data. It was noted that industry notification about new products has not worked effectively in the past.
26. Members agreed that the issue also needs to be discussed at the European level. Members agreed that the FSA and GACS should discuss this issue in the context of Europe and engage with the European Food Safety Authority.

Action: Secretariat

Agenda item 6 – Sustainable Healthy Diet (SACN/09/05)

27. Professor Annie Anderson introduced a paper on a healthy and sustainable diet and provided the Committee with several documents relating to the work of Defra, FSA, WHO and other organisations that are working on the issue. She explained that aspects of diet and nutrition must now be linked with sustainability, especially as an estimated 20% of carbon emissions are related to foods. She recommended that SACN consider environmental impacts when making food/diet recommendations.
28. There was a discussion about the carbon footprint associated with current dietary guidance given by SACN and government department compared to current intakes. Professor Anderson stated that data shows that if Scottish dietary targets were followed the carbon footprint would be reduced by an estimated 29%. This highlighted the need for SACN to ensure that population dietary guidance is supported by best available evidence.
29. It was noted that the Sustainable Development Commission is currently examining the area.
30. The Committee recognised the importance and complexity of the issue of sustainability, though noted that it is not directly related to its work. It agreed that there needs to be a cross-Government appreciation of the importance of nutrition

and health in the context of sustainability. For SACN, it was agreed that health remains its priority over environmental sustainability.

31. Members suggested that an observer from Defra should once again be invited to attend SACN meetings. However, the Committee would need to be clear about the role of this observer and the nature of the engagement.

Action: Secretariat

32. Members agreed that SACN should communicate its position on nutrition and health in the context of a healthy and sustainable diet, and the need for nutrition to be considered by Government as part of its discussion on sustainability.

Agenda item 7 – Milk and growth factors (SACN/HS/09/06)

33. Professor Tim Key introduced a paper on the possible effects of milk on insulin-like growth factor-1 (IGF-1), and explained that some epidemiological evidence suggests that IGF-1 may increase the risk of some cancers. He noted that the Committee on Carcinogenicity (CoC) has previously considered this issue in part, but suggested that a nutritional effect may be responsible for the observed association between milk intake and IGF-1 and that this should be further investigated.

34. Members considered that this paper raised research questions rather than the opportunity to undertake a risk assessment of the available evidence. Also, it was noted that it would be difficult to interpret evidence in this area as there are a number of components of milk that may be having an effect (e.g. different proteins), IGF-1 is regulated at the tissue rather than blood level, and the definition of 'high' milk consumption varies between studies.

35. Members recognised this issue as potentially important, though of low priority for SACN. It was suggested that SACN could share this Agenda paper (SACN/HS/09/06) with CoC, for its consideration, with an offer for SACN to provide nutritional advice into CoCs process.

Action: Secretariat

Agenda item 8 – SACN relationship/interaction with EFSA (SACN/HS/09/07)

36. Dr David Mela introduced a paper on the relationship/interaction between SACN and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), where EFSA undertakes risk assessments to inform food policy for the European Commission.
37. Members expressed concerns with the EFSA risk assessment process, such as, the review process currently used by EFSA, the potential for overlap between SACN and EFSA work, the legal status of EFSA opinions in the UK particularly if SACN's review of the evidence is in conflict, and the predictability of EFSA's work so that SACN's work can help inform EFSA's risk assessments.
38. The Chair noted that some Members have served on EFSA committees and that an EFSA update is a standing item on the SACN agenda. Dr Alison Tedstone explained the relationship between the FSA and EFSA, and offered to present a paper on this relationship at a future SACN meeting.
39. Members accepted Dr Tedstone's offer to present a paper on the relationship between the FSA and EFSA at a future meeting. It was agreed that SACN's concerns about the EFSA process and approach should be recorded, and that the Secretariat should encourage EFSA to provide updates on its work for consideration at main SACN meetings (standing item).

Action: Secretariat

Summary

40. The Chair summarised the day's discussion on horizon scanning issues. He noted that SACN already has a heavy workload, with work on folic acid, energy requirements, iron and early nutrition to be complete in 2010, with ongoing work on carbohydrates, selenium, and ANANF and upcoming work on vitamin D.
41. Members agreed that the issues of 'sustainable healthy diet' and 'complementary and young child feeding' to be of greatest priority for the Committee. The

'increasing artificiality and manipulation of the human diet' will be progressed through the joint ACNFP/SACN subgroup ANANF. Members agreed to advance the issues of 'health of women of reproductive age' and 'the impact on nutrition on cognitive development and performance in children' when time and resources allowed. As the issue of 'milk and growth factors' is more closely aligned with the work of CoC, this issues will be passed to them with an offer of nutrition advice from SACN. Developing a closer working relationship with the EFSA is an ongoing matter for the Committee.

AOB

42. None

Next meeting

43. The next horizon scanning meeting will be held in approximately two years time. Progress on the horizon scanning issues will be discussed in October 2010 in light of the current SACN work programme.

Meeting closed