

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

**Paper for Information: Government Update on Nutrition
Related Activities**

Agenda Item 8

Please see attached paper for information.

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

Government Update on Nutrition related activities – Food Standards Agency

Existing Nutrition Research Programmes

1. SACN Members who are interested in attending any of the workshops should contact the Secretariat at the Agency.

N02: The role of dietary lipids in the development of cardiovascular disease: Full programme review (2000) completed

2. The aim of the following workshops is to review and evaluate specific areas of the research programmes where projects have recently concluded, and disseminate the findings. As well as presentations from the FSA-funded projects, speakers from non-FSA-funded studies are invited with the idea of putting the work into the wider picture. An international chair is invited for each of the workshops. The proceedings of the workshops are published in the British Journal of Nutrition, outlining where we are and where future work should be targeted. The workshops, therefore, act as an advisory committee and feed into the development of research requirements.
3. Workshop programme:
 - **December 12th 2001:** Is there enough evidence to make dietary recommendations on MUFA intakes? The UK Food Standards Agency convened a group of expert scientists to review current research investigating the optimal dietary intake for n-9 *cis*-monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA). The aim was to review the mechanisms underlying the reported beneficial effects of MUFA on coronary heart disease (CHD) risk, and to establish priorities for future research. The issue of optimal MUFA intake is contingent upon optimal total fat intake; however, there is no consensus of opinion on what the optimal total fat intake should be. Thus, it was recommended that a large multi-centre study should look at the effects on CHD risk of MUFA replacement of saturated fatty acids (SFA) in relation to varying total fat intakes; this study should be of sufficient size to take account of genetic variation, gender, physical activity and stage of life factors; as well as, of sufficient duration to account for adaptation to diets. Recommendations for studies investigating the mechanistic effects of MUFA were also made. Methods of manipulating the food chain to increase MUFA at the expense of SFA were also discussed. The proceedings of this workshop have been submitted to the British Journal of Nutrition and will be published in due course.

- **March 18th 2002:** Are plant sources of n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids as beneficial to health as marine sources? Three FSA-funded projects have recently concluded, which examine this question.
 - **August, 2002:** Do all saturated fatty acids have the same effects on cardiovascular risk factors? One FSA-funded project investigating this will conclude in August 2002.
4. **2003:** What is the optimal ratio of n-6:n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids in the diet? Three FSA-funded projects will conclude in 2003 that address this issue.

N05: Optimal Nutrition:

5. The aim of research under this theme is to conduct appropriate research in areas relating nutrition to public health thereby providing the scientific basis for population and sub-population-level dietary guidelines for optimal health.
6. The overall theme arises from the concept of optimal nutrition being wider than simply the prevention of overt nutritional deficiencies, to include the maintenance of good health and reduction of risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, bone diseases, and altered or declining mental function.
7. Workshop programme:
- **June 2001:** The proceedings of this workshop on iron, copper and zinc has been published in BNF bulletin.
 - **June 26/27th 2002:** Bone Health Workshop to be held in Cardiff City Hall following on from the Bone and Tooth Society meeting. Special invitees from this meeting have been invited to chair sessions in the workshop. All N05 programme contractors with projects concerned with bone health will present findings of their work. Department of Health funded projects in this area and FSA contractors investigating phytoestrogens and bone health have also be invited.

N10: Dietary Surveys and Nutrients in Food (Surveys)

8. The objective of this programme is to provide accurate and up-to-date information on the amounts of food eaten in the UK and its nutritional value. This information is vital to securing a sound evidence base for action to promote a healthy diet.

Dietary Surveys

9. The National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) provides cross-sectional information on the dietary habits and nutritional status of large samples of people representative of the British population.
10. The NDNS programme is split into four separate surveys, conducted at about two-yearly intervals. Each survey has examined a nationally representative sample drawn from four different population age groups: children aged 1½-4½ years, young people aged 4-18 years, people aged 65 years or over and adults aged 19-64 years. The fieldwork for the most recent NDNS of adults aged 19-64 years finished in summer 2001. The report will

be published in a staged format in five volumes. The proposed timetable for publication is set out below.

Report 1	Quantities of food consumed	October 2002
Report 2	Energy and macronutrient intakes; related physical measurements and physical activity data	December 2002
Report 3	Vitamin and mineral intakes, related blood and urinary analytes	April 2003
Report 4	Nutritional status: other blood analytes, blood pressure, physical measurements, physical activity	August 2003
Report 5	Summary report	Autumn 2003

11. Each survey collects detailed, quantitative information on food consumption and nutrient intake using a weighed dietary record, kept by the participant for four or seven days. Other components are physical measurements (e.g. height, weight and blood pressure), a blood sample for analysis of nutritional status indices, a detailed interview to collect information on socio-economic, demographic and lifestyle characteristics, and, for some groups, a urine sample and an assessment of oral health.

12. The key benefits of the NDNS are:

- provision of detailed and robust food consumption data for individuals;
- provision of data on diet, nutritional status and related characteristics in the same individuals to allow analysis of the links between them.

13. Data from the NDNS are used to monitor the food consumption, nutrient intake and nutritional status of the British population to inform development of nutrition policy and healthy eating advice, and for food chemical exposure assessment. The Agency is commissioning a review of its dietary survey programme to determine the most appropriate methods of collecting information to meet its requirements.

Low Income Diet and Nutrition Survey (LIDNS)

14. The Agency is commissioning a dietary survey of low income/materially deprived consumers in the UK in order to obtain robust data on food consumption, nutrient intakes, nutritional status and barriers to healthy eating in this group. The contract has now been awarded to a consortium led by the National Centre for Social Research and including University College London, King's College London, Institute of Food Research, Royal Victoria Infirmary and the Rowett Research Institute. The development of protocols, fieldwork documents and questionnaires to be used in the feasibility study is underway and an application for ethical clearance submitted. The feasibility study is due to take place in May/June. Main stage fieldwork is due to commence in January 2003 and the results should be available from the study in 2005.

N09: Food Acceptability and Choice: Full programme review 1999 completed.

15. The food acceptability and choice programme was established in 1991 as part of the MAFF Food Quality and Nutrition research and development portfolio. The focus of the

programme has been to achieve reductions in percentage of energy derived by the UK population from fat and saturates (from 25% to 11% respectively), to increase the intake of fruit and vegetables and reduce obesity. A review of the work in 1999 indicated that there was still a need for the research and development being undertaken as part of this programme. Some of these areas have been specifically addressed by the development of new programmes.

16. Workshop programme:

- **November 2001:** Encouraging consumption of fruit and vegetables by young people: seminar on learning from current research projects
- **Programme Review:** March 2002

Expert Group on Vitamins and Minerals

17. An important source of expert advice, the Agency is supporting work of the group determining upper safe levels for vitamins and mineral intakes sold as supplements. This will feed into the parallel Scientific Committee on Food Working Group. The outcome of this work will also contribute to the UK line in negotiating the EU Food Supplements Directive.

Fortification of flour with folic acid.

18. The Food Standards Agency, together with Health Departments, has been considering the COMA recommendations on fortification of flour with folic acid as a route to reducing the incidence of neural tube defect-related births. Further work has been undertaken since a consultation on the recommendations took place earlier in the year. This work specifically in relation to technical issues of fortification and the masking of vitamin B12 deficiency in the older population is now complete. Recommendations on this issue are being prepared for the Food Standards Agency Board and Health Ministers.

Schools

19. Considerable Government activity is targeted at children in schools. The Agency role is principally to provide advice and research support to initiatives led by education and health departments. The Agency is supportive of a whole school, holistic approach that develops an integrated, sustainable way forward. To achieve our aims as they relate to activity in this area, work is undertaken through interventions (R&D activity), promotion/dissemination of learning (e.g. reports, workshops, seminars, etc.) and through direct contributions at steering, advisory and other meetings.

Dissemination of tools and good practice

20. Catering for Health and seminars on eating well for looked after children are examples of the manner in which the Agency is promoting healthy food choice for the general population and vulnerable groups.
21. Catering for health is a practical guide for chef lecturers and caterers to foster healthy eating practices in catering establishments. The guide was developed by the British

Nutrition Foundation with funding from FSA and DH. FSA are currently discussing with catering awarding bodies how the guide can be incorporated into courses to forward this aim.

22. Following the production of guidelines on eating well for looked after children and young people which was developed by the Caroline Walker Trust (with funding from FSA, DH and BHF), the FSA is promoting the guidelines to key social service personnel via regional training events. The events are aimed to stimulate incorporation of the guidelines into training programmes for those who care for children and young people and will be taking place in the New Year.

Activities: Wales

23. The Food Standards Agency Wales, in conjunction with the National Assembly for Wales and other key players in the public health field, are developing a nutrition strategy and action plan to improve nutrition across the whole population of Wales. Work undertaken by the steering group, tasked with overseeing this development, identified the need to target certain groups for priority action. These are infants, children and young people; low income and vulnerable consumers; women of childbearing age; and middle aged men.
24. Following the completion of a number of workshops, to look at these groups in more detail, the steering group are due to meet in early March to finalise their recommendations for action and meet with retailers and food producers before presenting the priorities and actions chapter of the draft strategy to stakeholders at a conference in Cardiff on 17 April 2002.

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Government Update on Nutrition related activities – The National Assembly for Wales

The Community Food Initiative

1. In January, the Assembly Minister for Health and Social Services, Jane Hutt, announced grants of up to £5,000 each for twenty innovative projects across Wales under the Assembly's Community Food Initiative. The initiative aims to address the barriers to healthy eating among disadvantaged and vulnerable groups by increasing access to healthy food, improving basic skills and addressing issues of cost, preference, accessibility and availability. This year, grants have been awarded to a range of different projects including breakfast clubs and fruit tuck shops for children, community cafes, food growing schemes and teaching cooking skills.

The Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Schemes

2. The Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Schemes now has around three hundred participating schools. Schools in the scheme identify their own health priorities and many have chosen to focus on nutrition by introducing initiatives such as fruit tuck shops, breakfast clubs and School Nutrition Action Groups. To support this work, the Assembly has produced a practical guide to setting up fruit tuck shops for primary schools.
3. An additional £66,000 was made available through the scheme at the end of last year to support fruit tuck shops in schools. In addition, the Assembly has an interactive web-site for young people which includes healthy eating information:
<<http://www.healthschool.org.uk>>

Other healthy eating activities in schools

4. Fruit tuck shops have also been evaluated in a number of schools in Wales and a short summary booklet of the results has been disseminated.
5. Led by the Assembly's Education Department, minimum nutritional standards for school meals came into effect on 1 September 2001. The standards are based on the 'Balance of Good Health' model and set minimum requirements for the types and quantities of foods that must be available to pupils each day.
6. The Partnership Agreement commitment on free school milk for Key Stage 1 pupils (5-7 year olds) from 1 January 2001 was delivered through the School Milk (Wales) Regulations 2001 which came into force on 1 February. Milk is available free of charge for all pupils through a top-up of the EU subsidy scheme.

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Government Update on Nutrition related activities – The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (NI)

Introduction

1. Nutrition is one of the priority areas identified in the Northern Ireland Executive's public health programme "Investing for Health" which will be published shortly. As part of this programme, DHSSPS will review the 1996 Northern Ireland Food and Nutrition Strategy by April 2003.

National Fruit Scheme

2. A pilot free fruit project will be introduced in 100 schools from September 2002, funded from Northern Ireland Executive Programme Funds. The project will target the most disadvantaged areas.

Guidelines for under fives in child care

3. The Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland collaborated with a range of professionals and organisations to prepare nutritional guidelines to support the work of the Early Years Teams with under fives in childcare. The guidelines contain essential information on nutritional requirements for this age group and guidance on menu planning, sample menus, meal ideas and snack suggestions. They are currently being disseminated through a series of local training workshops.

Food in Schools

4. New nutritional standards for school meals, prepared by the Department of Education's School Meals Branch in consultation with the Health Promotion Agency, were issued for consultation in December last year. The consultation period has now ended and the Agency will produce a training needs assessment for school meals staff in order to meet the new standards.

Infant Feeding Initiative

5. An Implementation Group oversees the implementation of the DHSSPS Breastfeeding Strategy. A Breastfeeding Co-ordinator took up post on 4 February to promote the strategy and assist with its implementation. Preliminary results from the Infant Feeding Survey in 2000 show that there was a significant increase in breastfeeding at birth in Northern Ireland here from 45% in 1995 to 54% in 2000.

Physical Activity

6. A Physical Activity toolkit for primary care was launched last month. A North/South conference on physical activity is planned for the end of this year and a review of the overall strategy will begin later in the year with a view to completion by April 2003.

All Ireland Food and Nutrition Forum

7. An all Ireland inter-sectoral Food and Nutrition Forum is being established. A preliminary meeting was held in December 2001 between the Food Safety Promotion Board (FSPB), Food Safety Authority Ireland, the Department of Health & Children from the South of Ireland, and the Health Promotion Agency, FSA NI and the Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety from Northern Ireland. A broad objective of the Forum is to bring together key stakeholders in the field of nutrition on a regular basis to facilitate the exchange of views and provide a more focused and effective dissemination of information on nutrition to the public. Consideration is also being given to the development of an all Ireland Food and Nutrition Strategy.

All Ireland Healthy Eating Circle

8. Discussions have begun on the potential for developing an all-Ireland Healthy Eating Circle. This could take some time to develop because of the different structures in dietetic and environmental health services North and South. The scheme would encourage caterers to provide customers with healthier food choices, a no-smoking dining area and high standards of hygiene.

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Government Update on Nutrition related activities – The Scottish Executive Health Department

1. Ministers for Social Justice, Education and Health and Community Care have recently announced an initiative to resource a £250,000 Breakfast Service Challenge Fund to expand services targeting vulnerable children. First step is a Breakfast Service Review to recommend future framework for services and Challenge Fund targets, building on current local activity.
2. SEHD, HEBS, FSA Scotland, Scottish Community Diet Project and Scottish Healthy Choices Award Scheme to work in partnership with Royal Environmental Health Institute for Scotland (REHIS) to develop and deliver a 'Food and Health' vocational training course which is aimed at providing basic food and health training to individuals working directly and indirectly with food in a range of settings
3. SEHD has awarded 3 years grant funding, totalling £75,000, to Edinburgh Cyrenians to establish FareShare projects throughout Scotland. These improve access to a healthier, more varied diet as well as promoting food education, health and well-being as vital parts of effective care and resettlement. This organisation works with people who are or have experienced homelessness.
4. Scottish Executive initiative on school meals is progressing and a website is now available to follow progress and to input comments. The website address is www.sh31inta\education\schoolmeals. A full consultation on the draft school meals proposals will take place later in the year (from around May).