

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

**Paper for Information: Folic acid and the prevention of disease
– An Update**

Agenda Item 11

Please see attached paper for information. Please also see attached annexes.

1. Conclusions (chapter 10) and recommendations (annex 1) from the COMA Report on Folic acid. See Department of Health, Folic Acid and the Prevention of Disease. Report on Health and Social Subjects No 50. London: HMSO 2000.
2. Food Standards Agency Board Paper: Paper FSA 02/05/02 'Folic Acid and the Prevention of Disease'. See FSA website.

Members are asked to comment

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

Folic acid and the prevention of disease

Update for SACN meeting 20 June 2002

1. The COMA report on Folic Acid and the prevention of Disease was published in 2000. COMA concluded that on scientific, medical and public health grounds that universal fortification of flour at 240µg/100g in food products as consumed would have a significant effect in preventing NTD-affected conceptions and births without resulting in unacceptably high intakes in any group of the population. A copy of the conclusions (Chapter 10) and recommendations (Annex 1) from the COMA report are attached.
2. Following publication of the COMA report, the Department of Health together with the Food Standards Agency undertook consultation on the issues raised. The responses to the consultation were analysed by the Department of Health and published in July 2001 on the Department of Health website (www.doh.gov.uk).
3. The Food Standards Agency, together with the 4 UK Health Departments, hosted a Stakeholders Meeting on Folic Acid and the Prevention of Disease on 18 March 2002. This meeting was addressed by Professor Alan Jackson (as Chair of SACN), Andrew Russell (ASBAH), Professor Sir John Grimley Evans (Oxford University), Alex Waugh (NABIM) and Sue Davies (Consumers Association). A report of the meeting was placed on the Agency website in March 2002 (www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/folicacidmeetingreport.pdf).
4. The Food Standards Agency Board considered the COMA Report and reviewed other available evidence in relation to folic acid and the prevention of disease at an open meeting on 9 May 2002. The Board paper, which supported this discussion, is attached.
5. The Board concluded that the impact on older people needs to be considered further including the detection and diagnosis of vitamin B12 deficiency. The minutes of this meeting will shortly be placed on the Agency website, www.food.gov.uk.
6. In light of the Board discussion, the Agency is formulating its advice to ministers of the 4 UK Health Departments. A copy of the advice will be provided to SACN members when this becomes available.