

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

Matters Arising: For information

The following paper details actions from previous meeting/s

12/06/03

SACN/03/13

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SACN/03/13

SACN: MATTERS ARISING ACTION CHECKLIST

ITEM	TASK	ACTION
SACN/03/01	Timetable requested for the production of 'Salt & Health' Report	Completed. Circulated by secretariat
SACN/03/02	Members agreed to the production of an annual Forward Work Plan	Ongoing and will be taken forward at the Horizon Scanning Workshop (18-19 Sept.03)
	Members requested a framework for 'Declaration of Interests'	Completed. Circulated direct to Members
	Members requested information on the background to the request for increased number of open meetings	Completed. Please see attached annex 1
	Members requested the criteria for Members' appraisals	Completed. Please see attached form at annex 2
SACN/03/07	Members to bring emerging scientific issues to the attention of Government and other bodies	Ongoing
	Future Government up-dates should indicate whether initiatives apply to England or the UK as a whole	Ongoing
SACN/03/05	Secretariat to forward dates and location for Horizon Scanning Workshop	Completed. Date has been agreed as 18/19 September at the Møller Centre in Cambridge
SACN/03/05, 06,07	Members requested an up-date of the work of the Health Development Agency (HDA) at future meetings	Completed. HDA now included in the up-dates
Tabled paper SACN/03/08	It was agreed that more information would be given to Members on whether nutritional guidelines were considered when funding 'breakfast club' schemes (FSA Scotland)	Ongoing
	It was agreed that Members would receive more information on Scotland's consideration to fortify alcoholic drinks with thiamine, as this was at odds with EU legislation currently under discussion in Brussels	Ongoing
	Members agreed that further discussion of fortification issues per se would be useful and could perhaps be included on the Horizon Scanning agenda	To be taken forward at the HSW in September
	Members noted that it would be helpful to be provided with a commentary on the various "action plans" and targets established by the FSA and devolved Health Departments	Ongoing
SACN/03/10	Members noted correspondence from the Chair to the FSA re GM foods. Members considered that the response from the FSA focused on safety assessment, which did not include adequate characterisation of nutritional safety, and in this regard was not entirely satisfactory. The FSA agreed to consider this further	Ongoing

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The following formed part of the Review of Scientific Committees carried out by the FSA

(b) The committees' responsibilities –
conduct of committee business

- openness

61. Openness is one of the Food Standards Agency's core values. Therefore, where committees feel there is a reason not to release information, they must therefore explain why they consider that it should not be made generally available. Maintaining a high degree of openness permits interested parties the best opportunity to scrutinise a committee's work and contribute to it.

62. The scientific committees currently advising the Agency generally follow good practice in terms of openness, transparency and consumer involvement, although some are inevitably further down the road and others are "catching up". Most of the committees publish their agendas and committee papers in advance of meetings, usually via their web sites, and follow these up with minutes and reports of meetings. There are, however, some inconsistencies between committees in the range of material – such as meeting papers & minutes – that is made available and particularly in the timing of their release.

63. We recognise that this has been an evolving area, but we recommend that the Agency's committees should make their documents available, including the publication of descriptive agendas and discussion papers (with the exception of confidential information, which should be placed in separate annexes) well in advance of each meeting. Minutes of committee meetings and/or summary reports should be published after each meeting to a pre-determined timetable. When publishing agendas, committees should avoid presenting a simple list of topics; they should ensure that there is sufficient background for the reader to understand why the item is being discussed and what sort of questions are being considered. All these documents should be made available through the committees' web sites, and they should also be available as hard copy documents on request. We would expect all committees to have reached an equivalent standard of openness within one year of publication of this report.

64. Additionally, we recommend that data used as the basis for risk

assessments and other committee opinions should be made freely available, within the constraints of confidentiality (see paragraph 68 below), at as early a stage in the process as possible. We note that the ACNFP has already set up a procedure where applications for approval of novel foods are published for public comment prior to any substantive discussion by the committee. This has worked well and we recommend that other committees should adopt similar arrangements wherever appropriate.

65. Committees should work in as consultative a manner as possible so that alternative opinions and interpretations can be considered.

Whenever time permits, committees should issue a draft opinion for public consultation before offering their final advice. We recommend accordingly.

66. Many of the committees have also organised occasional 'open' meetings where interested parties can attend, observe the committee in operation and, in some cases, make statements or ask questions at the end. These meetings have been held in a variety of formats and the attendees have found them to be very valuable exercises. We recommend that all committees should move as quickly as possible to a position where they conduct as much of their business as possible in open sessions, allowing the audience to interact at the end. These meetings can also be used to help committees with their planning and wider thinking. The Agency should ensure that the necessary resources are made available to support open meetings, and should examine the use of alternative approaches such as web broadcasts.

67. From time to time, a committee may be involved in discussions of confidential issues. More commonly, the actual issue may not be confidential, but part of the data under evaluation may be unsuitable for publication, e.g. for commercial reasons.

68. We recommend that each committee should have clear guidelines to define what material can justifiably be regarded as confidential. These guidelines should be drawn up centrally by the Agency and should be published and made available to those who submit data for consideration by the Agency's committees. The guidelines should include the fact that confidentiality, where justified, may be time limited and that in some cases the right of confidentiality for certain information is currently enshrined in legislation, e.g. veterinary medicines.

69. Committees should critically review any request for information to be kept confidential. In some cases, it may be possible to present the

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information in a way that removes the need for confidentiality e.g. by presenting it anonymously or by aggregating the data. The confidential nature of information will often be time-limited and committees should aim to publish the information when confidentiality has expired.

70. We recommend that

- committees should follow standard practices in making their documents available, by publishing agendas and committee papers in advance of each meeting, and minutes and/or summary reports afterwards
- the data used as the basis for risk assessments and other committee opinions should be made freely available
- applications to committees are published for public comment prior to any substantive discussion by the committee
- whenever possible, draft opinions are published for all interested parties to comment
- all committees should move to a position where they conduct as much of their business as possible in open sessions
- committees should draw up clear guidelines to define what material can justifiably be regarded as confidential

Annex 2

Appraisal Form

PERSONAL DETAILS

<p>Name:</p> <p>Post:</p> <p>Date joined Board:</p> <p>Date current term ends:</p>
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PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

<p>1. Attendance Record</p> <p>a) Excellent b) Good c) Infrequent</p> <p>Comments (also any mitigating factors):</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>2. Contributions at meetings</p> <p>a) Very useful b)Good c) Average</p> <p>Comments (state if written contributions are sent in when member is unable to attend):</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>3. Membership of subgroups, if applicable</p> <p>Please write a brief summary of member's "performance" as part a subgroup(s)</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>4. Teamworking</p> <p>How well did the member work as part of a team to achieve common objectives, listen to others' point of view etc?</p> <p>.....</p>

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5. Other comments and overall performance

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6. Would you recommend board member for re-appointment? Yes/No

If No, please give reasons.

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Name:

Signed:

Date: .../.../.....