

# Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

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**Paper for Information:      Government Updates on Nutrition Related  
Activities: FSA**

**Agenda Item 8**

**Please see attached paper for information**

## RESEARCH

### **Research Requirements Document 10: Response**

Details of the proposals received as a result of Research Requirements Document 10 issued January 2003 are set out below, contractors will be informed as to the outcome of their application by 25 July.

**To characterise the dose-response relationship between dietary intake of specific plant foods and vascular function.**

Seven proposals received, the appraisal panel will take place on 9 July.

**To characterise the relationship between dietary lipid intake and metabolic syndrome and CVD risk. This will involve the replacement of dietary saturated fatty acids with monounsaturated fatty acids in relation to varying the total lipid intake. The effect of carbohydrate composition should also be assessed concomitantly.**

Three proposals received. Due to the low number of proposals , a panel is not envisaged.

**To improve understanding of the effects of habitual salt intake on cardiovascular health in both adults and children.**

Five proposals received, the panel will be held on 16 June.

**To improve understanding of the dietary patterns of 'high salt' consumers, using existing data sets. Data from the NDNS Adult Survey 2002 can be made available for this purpose.**

Seven proposals received, the panel will be held on 1 July.

## **N05 Optimal Nutrition**

Early Nutrition, later consequences.

**To use existing samples or data sets to determine the effects of dietary intake and/or dietary patterns in early childhood on subsequent health and well-being, including bone, cognitive health or cardiovascular health**

Nine proposals received, the panel will be held on 14 July.

**To use secondary analysis to determine the possible effects of different levels of folate exposure in foetal life or in childhood on subsequent health would also be welcome.**

Three proposals received, the panel will be held on 14 July.

Bioavailability

**To determine the bioavailability of plant foods components from within the food matrix, and investigate interactions between the various components, and/or how these vary in different population groups defined by age, ethnicity, gender and/or genetic factors. Priority will be given to applications that address issues of relevance to existing dietary patterns in these groups.**

Seven proposals received, the panel will be held on 23 June.

Cognitive Health;

**To determine the role of foods and/or nutrients in cognitive development or protection from cognitive decline and impairment using functional markers of status (e.g psychomotor development, educational/cognitive function in school children, work capacity and quality of life for adults).**

Seven proposals received, the panel will be held on 4 July.

### **Dietary Surveys and Nutrients in Food**

Extract and collate information on portion sizes from the National Diet and Nutrition Surveys of adults aged 19-64 years and people aged 65 years and over and other relevant sources, including manufacturers' data, with a view to inclusion in a revised Food Standards Agency publication on portion sizes for adults.

Two proposals received, a panel is not envisaged at this time.

### **Workshops**

Mono unsaturated fatty acid and linolenic acid workshops reports published in the British Journal of Nutrition are not available electronically. References are as follows:  
P.Sanderson et al *UK Food Standards Agency  $\alpha$ -linolenic acid workshop report* British Journal of Nutrition (2002), **88**, 573 – 579

P.Sanderson et al *UK Food Standards Agency cis-monounsaturated fatty acid workshop report* British Journal of Nutrition (2002), **88**, 99 - 104

Upcoming workshops at the Agency offices are Functional Markers of Selenium Status; 11 June, and Iron Bioavailability; 11 October. A workshop on Haemochromatosis is planned for November or December.

### **Final Reports in the Public Domain**

The following are the titles of reports completed and available from the Agency library covering the 2002/2003 year.

N02005: Optimal intake of MUFAs in the UK diet and the mechanism of their effect on human lipoprotein structure and metabolism

N02007: Effect of diet on chain elongation and desaturation of alpha-linolenic acid in man

N02008: Importance of a-linolenic acid as a source of long-chain n-3 PUFA & its influence on risk factors of cardiovascular disease

N02011: Dietary omega-6 to omega-3 PUFA ration in UK Asians: relevance to cardiovascular risk & modification by dietary means. A press release is attached for information.

N02013: Evaluate the effects of dietary exchange of individual saturated fatty acids on homeostasis & vascular function

N04033: Critical appraisal of research conducted in the "Antioxidants in Food" Programme to assist in policy making and prioritising research needs.

N05003: Bioavailability, pool size and turnover of vitamin C using stable isotopically-labelled vitamin.

N05010: Biochemical and molecular markers of functional selenium status in man

N05016: Is folic acid considerably more effective than folates in raising folate status?

N05017: Test of predictive model for bioavailability Fe (Zn & Cu) from mixed meals using simple in vivo human test for low doses of Fe

N05026: Nutritional/genetic factors influencing perimenopausal bone loss.

N05033: Evaluation of riboflavin status as modulator of homocysteine response to folate in relation to MTHFR genotype and endothelial function

N12001 and N12005: Detection of CpG Island Methylation in Faecal DNA

## **FOOD CHOICE INEQUALITIES**

We are currently commissioning two research projects that aim to develop holistic, culturally appropriate and sustainable approaches to overcome barriers and to promote healthier food choices to girls and young women from populations at risk of low birth weight babies.

**N09 - Food acceptability and choice**

A written review of the programme's progress since the previous major review in 1999 will soon be published on the Agency's Website.

**Peer education projects**

The programme has commissioned two projects to evaluate the efficacy of a peer education approach to encouraging healthy eating practices for disadvantaged groups. A London-based project is exploring this in relation to infant feeding practices in low-income mothers. The other, a Newcastle-based project, is working with older people from deprived social backgrounds. Projects started in early 2002. Final reports are expected in 2005.

**Written review of the psycho-social basis of food choice**

The British Nutrition Foundation have been commissioned to write a review of the evidence on the psycho-social basis of food choice, identifying factors which can be used to influence positive food choices, examples of where positive changes have been achieved and gaps in the evidence base. The project started in January 2003 and is due to complete in April 2004.

**Upcoming projects**

An N09 requirement is to develop, pilot and evaluate different methods for promoting healthier choices in local shops and supermarkets. Negotiations are in progress for a project involving village shops.

**Workshops / Seminars**

The proceedings of the seminar on overcoming barriers to dietary change which was held on 21 January are now available on the Agency's Website.

**EXPERT GROUP ON VITAMINS AND MINERALS**

The Food Standards Agency Board at their May meeting received the EVM report. At the same time it was published on the Agency website and made available for purchase from the Agency's distribution centre.

The FSA Board discussed the implications of the report of EVM for Agency policy on food supplements, including:

- Issuing consumer advice on the possible risks associated with use of some high dose supplements.
- Discussing with industry action to enhance product labelling
- Seeking advice from SACN on dietary advice concerning vitamin A
- Consulting the Committee on Mutagenicity on chromium picolinate. Until that advice is available the FSA should advise consumers on a precautionary basis to avoid chromium picolinate. Other sources of chromium were available.
  
- A copy of the report has been sent to the Scientific Committee on Food (SCF) to inform their deliberations on maximum levels of vitamins and minerals sold as food supplements in line with the EU Directive on food supplements.

## **CATERING FOR HEALTH – EVALUATION AND PROMOTION**

In March 2001 the Food Standards Agency and the Department of Health jointly launched Catering for Health, a guide for teaching healthier catering practices. The primary audiences for this document are lecturers and assessors of NVQ catering courses.

An evaluation of Catering for Health was carried out by Nutrition Works! to determine the awareness, usage and views of NVQ chef lecturers. Catering for Health was promoted to catering training awarding bodies, catering and catering supplies companies, professional and trade associations by John Dyson, an independent consultant. Reports have been submitted and a summary of findings resulting from evaluation and promotion of the guidance to healthier catering practice will soon be published on the Agency's Website.

## **WORKING IN EDUCATION**

Food Core Competencies of 14 – 16 year olds

If young people are to eat more healthily they need to understand what constitutes a healthy diet and have the practical skills to put this knowledge into practice. The Agency has convened a cross-Government group, which includes DfES, DH, Health Development Agency (HDA), Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), Design And Technology Association (DATA), Children & Young People's Unit, and Planet Science to collaborate on this initiative. The aim is to compare the skills and abilities of 14-16 year olds against a range of food related core competencies.

Research Works, a market research company, has been commissioned to carry out qualitative fieldwork with focus groups and friendship pairs of young people from the target age group. A report expected in June 2003 and will be made available on the Agency Website. The steering group is considering how to take this work forward.

#### Drinks vending in schools

The Agency has commissioned the Health Education Trust to develop, pilot and evaluate economically viable healthy drinks vending in secondary schools. Testing of healthy drinks vending machines is taking place in 12 schools in 4 areas. A report is expected in October 2003. If successful the work will establish guidelines for healthy drinks vending, which will be disseminated with support from the National Dairy Council. This project will also identify a model for rolling out the guidance into other schools and areas promoting in a greater uptake of healthier drinks during the school day.

#### UK School lunch box survey

This is a UK wide cross sectional survey in primary schools to determine the range of food items and the nutritional content of school packed lunches. This will enable the Agency to provide evidence-based messages and advice, on this issue, via the Agency's web-site and other media outputs.

## **SURVEYS**

**National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) adults aged 19-64 years**

The second and third reports on the NDNS adults are due for publication in June 2003. The second report covers energy and macronutrient intakes, and the third report covers micronutrient intakes and levels of urinary analytes. Results will include comparisons with current UK dietary reference values and, where possible, with data from the last national survey of this age group in 1986/87<sup>1</sup>.

The fourth report, covering anthropometry, blood pressure, blood analysis and physical activity is due for publication in the Autumn.

**Low Income Diet and Nutrition Survey (LIDNS)**

Following examination of the results of the feasibility study, and an initial consultation with external experts, a decision was made at the end of January to postpone commencement of the mainstage of LIDNS. This was to enable further consideration of the following:

- the implications of the expected low response rate and whether the response rate could be improved; and/or whether the data collected could be subject to statistical techniques that would address non-response bias and increase confidence in the results obtained;
- if not, whether there are other ways of collecting data on the low-income population that would provide a more robust evidence base on which to base policy.

A seminar was held in March, attended by experts in the fields of dietary surveys, statistics and epidemiology, to further discuss these issues. Overall, caution was expressed about the extent to which response rates could realistically be raised and the impact of non-response bias understood. It was felt, however, that if a package of remedial measures to address response rate levels and non-response bias (which the

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory J, Foster K, Tyler H and Wiseman M (1990), The Dietary and Nutritional Survey of British Adults, London: HMSO.

meeting had identified) could be introduced the data gathered would be robust enough to satisfy the Agency's needs.

Agreement for the survey to proceed to mainstage was given in the middle of April. The costs and timings for the survey are currently being re-negotiated with the contractor. It is anticipated that the mainstage of the survey will commence late in 2003. Results are expected in 2006.

### **School Meals Research Project**

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Food Standards Agency have commissioned research to assess whether food provided at school lunches in maintained secondary schools in England complies with statutory nutritional standards (introduced in April 2001) and associated guidance. The survey will also assess the food against the Caroline Walker Trust's nutritional guidelines for school meals<sup>2</sup> and gather information on the influences on food choice that can be modified by schools e.g. access to other sources of food, dining room environment, presentation of food and pricing structures. The data collected will be used to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the standards and associated guidance in order to inform future policy.

Work will start in June 2003 and fieldwork will take place in the Autumn term. The report of this work should be available in spring 2004.

### **Programme of Mini Surveys**

The objective of the programme of mini surveys is to provide up-to-date and reliable information on the levels of sodium (salt), fat, sugar and a limited range of other nutrients, in processed foods. This includes those foods that are major contributors to salt, fat and sugar in the diets of both adults and children. The data obtained will be used to raise awareness of this as a health issue and, where possible, to aid

negotiations with the food industry, which aim to achieve changes in the composition of processed foods. This, in turn, will help consumers be better able to consume a healthy diet.

Each survey will focus on a single theme e.g. a single type of product or a shopping basket type of survey. For example, the first survey in the programme has looked at a range of sausages, and subsequent surveys are expected to look at ready meals, burgers and pizzas, soups, and pickles and table sauces. The results will be published on the Agency's web-site. The results of the sausages survey are due to be published in summer 2003. The programme will run for three years initially, with up to three surveys of this kind being commissioned every year.

### **FSA NI (via DHSSPS)**

#### **"Fresh Fruit in Schools" initiative**

Two recent evaluation surveys have reported positive outcomes: -

- the initiative has been seen to complement existing healthy eating schemes;
- more children throughout the school setting are being encouraged to increase their fruit intake and there is evidence that older siblings are bringing fruit to school for break-times;

and

- there is evidence that the initiative has had a wider impact on school life - less litter, greater social interaction and recycling of fruit skins.

Schools have been pleased with the initiative to date and would like it to continue.

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<sup>2</sup> Caroline Walker Trust (1992). Nutritional Guidelines for School Meals. Report of an Expert Working Group. London: Caroline Walker Trust.

## **FSA SCOTLAND**

### **Nutrient Specifications for Manufactured Products Used in School Meals in Scotland**

1. Following the drafting of specifications for over 100 different manufactured products used in school meals, Food Standards Agency Scotland is now consulting with manufacturers. So far we have consulted the bread, chips / other potato products, baked bean, canned spaghetti and tinned fruit / vegetable industries. Over the next few months we will be consulting with the remaining industries including the largest group, manufacturers of meat products. Due to a slow response from the industry sector it has taken longer than anticipated for this stage of the process and it is likely to be at least the autumn before the specifications are ready to be published.

### **Evaluation of 'Catering for Health' in Scotland**

2. The Scottish version of 'Catering for Health' has now been available for a year and we have recently commissioned *Nutrition Works!* to carry out the evaluation. The team began work on the project the week beginning May 5<sup>th</sup> and the evaluation will be similar to that in England. Telephone and 'depth' interviews with catering lecturers at further education and higher education establishments throughout Scotland will be carried out in May and June and the final report will be ready by the end of the summer.

### **Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Monitoring Progress towards the Scottish Dietary Targets**

3. The renewed impetus on diet and health in Scotland has focussed the need to better monitor progress towards an improved diet and, in particular, the Scottish Diet Action Plan targets. In partnership with the Scottish Executive Health Department, we have established an ad hoc Advisory Group on Monitoring the Scottish Dietary Targets. The group will be chaired by Dr. Drew Walker, Tayside Health Board and is comprised of experts from a variety of backgrounds. It will meet approximately six times (the first meeting takes place in June 2003) and will produce a final report in early 2004.

**Food Standards Agency Scotland Diet and Nutrition Strategy**

4. A consultation draft of our diet and nutrition strategy was presented to the Scottish Food Advisory Committee (SFAC) on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2003 for discussion. It will be put to wider public consultation over the summer of 2003.

**Food Access Conference**

5. In partnership with the Scottish Executive Health Department and Social Justice Department, Communities Scotland the Scottish Diet and Nutrition Forum partners, Food Standards Agency Scotland is organising a conference on fairer access to a healthy diet in Scotland. "No Fare!" will take place at Herriot Watt University in Edinburgh on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2003. The aim of the conference is to bring together everyone interested in improving food access to share their experience and:
  - Identify practical and realistic steps that can be taken to address the barriers to accessing a healthy balanced diet
  - Inform policy and drive action at community, local and national levels.

**FSA WALES****'Food and Well Being ' the national nutrition strategy for Wales**

Launched by Jane Hutt, the Welsh Assembly Government Health and Social Services Minister on Thursday 13th February at the National Botanic Gardens in Carmarthenshire.

- Prioritises groups most likely to suffer diet and health inequality- low income and vulnerable consumers including the elderly and ethnic minority groups; infants, children and young people; middle-aged men; and women of childbearing age. Advocates a combination of information and training, local and national initiatives and policies.

- Action plan sets out actions to be led by FSA Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government, and those to be led by other key players. These target needs of priority groups and recognise need for improved physical and economic access to food and support for community food initiatives.
  
- Examples of actions to be undertaken by FSA Wales singly or in partnership:
  - develop a public education campaign to promote healthy eating to the public;
  - develop a nutrition network and database of projects;
  - improve nutrition content of education and training courses for pertinent professionals.
  
- Work by FSA in relation to 'Food and Well Being' already underway:
  - Research on impact of school meals legislation- this has shown general compliance with regulations by caterers but that choices made by pupils remain largely unchanged compared with pre-legislation.
  - A 'Get Cooking' scheme to encourage cooking confidence and enjoyment of healthy food by young people aged 14-18 has been developed and piloted- the 6 week course is currently being evaluated.
  - A CD-ROM screensaver and game to encourage fruit and veg consumption by teenagers aged 11-14 is being developed and will be trialled at various events around Wales being visited by the FSA Wales trailer over the summer months.
  
- Two well attended strategy implementation fora in North and South Wales (1st and 22nd May) organised to provide an opportunity for key players to share experiences and examples of good practice with a view to encouraging and supporting them in implementing main strategy actions to be led by 'other key players'.

The first of these demonstrated need for a multi-agency approach to improving diet and provided an excellent opportunity for networking between various agencies involved in carrying forward the strategy. Many had also been involved in the development phase of the strategy and were gratified to see it coming to fruition.

12/06/03

SACN/03/18

# P R E S S   R E L E A S E

**R662 - 28**

**Press Officer:** Karen Talbot

## **NEW FSA RESEARCH SHOWS ASIANS COULD SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE RISK OF HEART DISEASE BY EATING MORE OILY FISH**

New research released by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) today shows that the Sikh population, and potentially other Asian groups, could significantly reduce their risk of heart disease by increasing their consumption of oily fish. UK Indian Asians currently face around twice the risk of heart disease compared to the UK average.

The study, undertaken by the University of Reading, assessed the types and amounts of fat in the diet of a group of Sikh men and women. It found that they consumed less of the fatty acids mainly found in fish oil, and more of those found in vegetable oils as compared with a control group of UK white men and women. After a moderate intake of fish oil (4g per day for 12 weeks), the body levels of beneficial fish oil fatty acids in the Sikh group increased to levels similar to the control group. Results also showed that supplementation reduced the risk of heart disease by changing blood fat levels.

Dr Peter Sanderson, Nutrition Scientist at the Food Standards Agency, said:

" This new research clearly shows that Sikh men and women in the UK, who are at significantly higher than average risk of heart disease, have a low intake of fish. They therefore do not get the protective health benefits of fatty acids found in fish, especially oily fish. Eating at least two portions of fish a week, one of which should be oily fish such as salmon or mackerel, could significantly help reduce the risk of heart disease in Asian communities."

In the UK, admission to hospital with heart attack in the Asian population is around double the average, and early death from heart disease is 51% higher for Asian men and 46% higher for Asian women in comparison with the UK average. Diabetes is also four times more likely in the Asian population, and

diabetes is associated with abnormal blood lipid (fat) levels that are known to be linked to an increased risk of heart disease.

### **Notes for editors**

Three studies were undertaken by Dr Julie Lovegrove at Reading University to investigate the effect that different types of fat in the diet have on heart disease risk factors in UK Indian Asians. A group of Sikh men and women were studied, as representative of Indian Asians in the UK. There was also a UK white control group.

Study 1: To determine whether a group of Sikh men and women had lower dietary intakes and body levels of fish oil fatty acids and a higher dietary intake and body levels of vegetable oil fatty acids compared with similar European white men and women.

Study 2: To measure the effects on blood fat levels (and other factors that are linked with increased heart disease) of giving Sikh and European white men and women a moderate amount of fish oil each day for 12 weeks.

Study 3: To determine whether different amounts of dietary vegetable oil fatty acids affect the body levels of fish oil fatty acids, and blood fat levels in Sikh men.

Pregnant women are advised not to eat some oily fish such as shark, marlin, and swordfish, and limit their consumption of tuna to no more than three cans (140grams/can) per week because of the risk of mercury contamination.

[ENDS]

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