

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

Paper for discussion: Folic acid and Prevention of Disease

Agenda item: 8

Please see attached paper for discussion.

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

Background

1. In their report *Folic Acid and the Prevention of Disease* published in 2000, the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food and Nutrition Policy (COMA) concluded that increasing folic acid intake would reduce the risk of Neural Tube Defects (NTDs). The FSA and the Department of Health accepted this conclusion.
2. The FSA and DH have proceeded to consider fortification of flour with folic acid as a strategy to increase the folic acid intake of the population as part of a public consultation on the COMA report and at stakeholder meetings in March 2002.
3. In May 2002 the FSA Board considered the issue and subsequently provided its advice to Health Ministers in July 2002 who are responsible for making a decision.

Issue

4. SACN at its horizon-scanning meeting, in late 2003, requested an update on any new evidence relating to folic acid and disease prevention through fortification of flour with folic acid.
5. The Committee are invited to nominate members to consider if sufficient new evidence has emerged since the COMA report on *Folic Acid and the Prevention of Disease* to warrant a full consideration on folic acid and health and to make recommendations on the timing of any such risk assessment.
6. It is suggested that the Committee consider evidence under the following headings:
 - Folate status of women of child bearing age living in the UK
 - Uptake of folic acid supplements in the UK
 - Fortification and emerging evidence from other countries relating to Neural Tube Defects and B₁₂ deficiency
 - Bioavailability of different sources of folic acid
 - The relationship between folic acid and other diseases
 - cardiovascular disease
 - neurodegenerative diseases
 - cancers