

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

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

Agenda item: 13

Please see attached paper for information.

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

New Research

- A project entitled '*Gastro-intestinal health with special emphasis on reduction of risk of colon cancer and inflammatory bowel disease*' at the Institute for Food Research is in the process of contract completion.

Research Requirements Document 13

- Research Requirements Document 13 has been published with advertising in Nature and New Scientist and can be found at www.food.gov.uk/science/research/comresearch/trrd/.
- Deadline for receipt of proposals is 26 March 2004. Potential contractors will be informed of the outcome of the appraisals in July.
- The requirements in the nutrition area are;

N02 Programme;

- To investigate the effect of whole grain foods on risk of CVD.
- A pilot study to validate methodologies that will improve understanding of the effect of habitual salt intake on cardiovascular health in children.

N05 Programme;

- Using a mixed diet approach, compare the relative effects of folic acid and natural folates on folate status.
- Further develop functional markers for selenium status.
- Investigate the effect of selenium status on immune function.
- Developing functional markers of status – physiological or biochemical factors that relate to target tissue function and are sensitive to changes in intakes or stores of the micronutrient.
- Using human intervention trials to investigate the link between the status of the micronutrient and a health outcome of relevance to public health priorities.

N09 Programme;

- Investigate the contribution of portion size to body weight and the incidence of overweight in the UK. Particular attention could be paid to pre-prepared units like sandwiches, meals for one, larger packs of snacks such as confectionery and crisps, and large meal deals in eateries.
- Determine the effect of snacking nature and influences (for example the frequency, type, quantity and social influences) and the impact of these on habitual energy intake in normal weight and obese subjects, including children.

N10 Programme;

- Provide market share data at an individual branded product level within specific product categories, to inform sampling protocols for nutrient surveillance projects.

N12 Programme;

- Develop, characterise and/or validate reliable diet-related surrogate end points (biomarkers of preclinical carcinogenesis) for colo-rectal cancer.
- Investigate the extent to which surrogate tissues are appropriate with regard to the above.

Update on Salt Activity Following Salt and Health Report

Reformulation of Foods by the Food Industry

- The FSA's 'mini-surveys' have demonstrated that salt levels in many processed foods, particularly those favoured by children, remain unacceptably high. The Agency and Department of Health are continuing discussions with the food industry (as individual companies and through sector associations) about salt reduction strategies for foods contributing most to salt intakes.

Salt Stakeholder Meeting

- A high-level 'salt stakeholders' meeting was held in November 2003, chaired by the Chief Medical Officer with keynote speeches from the FSA Chairman Sir John Krebs and the Parliamentary Secretary (Public Health) Melanie Johnson. Attendees were drawn from all parts of the food chain, as well as health and consumer groups. Industry representatives were asked to forward salt reduction action plans by the end of February 2004.

Education and Information

- The Agency is publicising the salt intake targets through press releases and media coverage, and information and advice on the Agency's web-site. It continues to take every opportunity, in discussions with health groups, consumer organisations, food manufacturers, retailers, caterers and procurement bodies, to emphasise the importance of these targets and encourage action across the whole food chain.

- As part of its Labelling Action Plan, the Agency is working with consumer groups, industry bodies and health organisations to improve label information on salt. The Agency is encouraging food retailers and manufacturers to identify the salt equivalent to sodium levels as this is easier for the consumer to understand.

Monitoring Action

- The Agency will be using its regular diet and nutrition surveys and food survey programmes to:
 - set baselines against which the impact of action to reduce salt levels in food categories and reduced salt intakes can be assessed.
 - highlight to consumers those foods where high levels of salt persist.

Food Promotion to Children Report - See agenda item 12

Low Income Diet and Nutrition Survey

- Mainstage fieldwork of the Low Income Diet and Nutrition Survey commenced in November 2003, and will continue until early 2005. The Agency is closely monitoring progress, particularly with respect to response rates. Formal reviews will be held following receipt of quarterly reports on response, in March, June, and September 2004. The results of the survey are due to be published in summer 2006.

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. Results of the surveys are used to raise consumer awareness of related food and diet issues and help them to make choices to achieve nutrient intake guidelines. The results also inform discussions with the food industry, and other bodies, aimed at encouraging changes in the composition of processed foods.
- Work on the next two surveys in the programme has commenced. The first will look at a range of pizzas, including those from take-away outlets as well as branded and retailer own-brand products. Samples will be analysed for sodium (salt), fat, sugar and a limited range of other nutrients. Results are expected to be published in March 2004. The subsequent survey will look at a range of canned spaghetti and baked beans and will be a label-based survey. This will be published in late Spring 2004.

Health Select Committee on Obesity

- The Agency gave evidence to the Health Select Committee on Obesity in February. The transcript can be found at;
www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm/cmhealth.htm

Department of Health and the Agency await the Committee response later in the year.

N09 Food Acceptability and Choice Programme: Developments

- The CD-ROM Dish it Up! the major output from the project ‘Development and evaluation of an interactive, multi-media CD-ROM for the promotion of nutrition education in secondary school children’ was distributed free by the Agency in a freely copiable form to all secondary schools in the UK between October 2002 and March 2003. The Agency has commissioned National Foundation for Educational Research to carry out further evaluation starting in January 2004 now that the CD has been out in most schools for a year. A report is expected at the end of August 2004.
- International contacts (such as WHO) have also requested copies of the CD. It recently received a commendation by the British Interactive Media Association in the Training and Home Learning category. A poster about Dish it Up! was presented at an EU Forum on Eating at School in Strasbourg where a number of copies of the CD-ROM were requested by international delegates.

Workshops

- A seminar entitled ‘Peer-led Approach to Dietary Change’ will be held on 22 January 2004. The purpose of this seminar is to raise awareness of the 3 research projects in this area funded under N09 Food Acceptability and Choice and N14 Food Choice Inequalities among interested parties/potential users of results. It will also provide researchers with an arena for discussion of progress/perspectives of how the results might be used. A full report of this seminar will be available on the Agency’s website in due course.

Working in Education

- Getting to Grips with Grub: Food-related knowledge and practical skills (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 convened a cross-Government group, which includes DfES, DH, Health Development Agency (HDA), Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), Design And Technology Association (DATA), National Healthy Schools Standard (NHSS), Children & Young People’s Unit, and Planet Science to collaborate on this initiative. A set of food related competencies was identified by the group under the headings:
 - Diet and Health
 - Consumer awareness
 - Food preparation and handling skills
 - Food hygiene and safety

- A report of research with young people from the target age group is available on the Agency web-site at:
www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/competencyevaluation.pdf
- The Agency jointly with Department for Education and Skills publicly consulted on the identified competencies to seek views on how to address gaps and take forward the competencies in a sustainable way at a local level. The consultation paper Getting to Grips with Grub was issued in July and the consultation ended on 21 October. The Agency has also sought the views of young people through the National Children's Bureau. The results will be collated, summarised and published on the Agency's website. The Getting to Grips with Grub consultation document is on the Agency's website at:
www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/grubgrips.pdf.
- The core competencies have been taken forward with teachers at a joint FSA/DATA workshop held at the Agency on 4 November 2003. The proceedings, being written by BNF, will be published on the FSA and DATA web sites.

Joint FSA/OFSTED Inspection of Best Practice in Whole School Approaches to Food and Nutrition

- The Agency and DfES are jointly funding the above in primary schools and early year settings in England. OFSTED inspectors are being accompanied by nutritionists. Visits took place over the autumn term 2003 and are continuing during January 2004. A report is expected in late spring/early summer 2004. Results will be disseminated to school Governors, head teachers, caterers, other Government Departments, and others with an interest in school nutrition.

Drinks Vending in Schools

- The Agency has commissioned the Health Education Trust to develop, pilot and evaluate economically viable healthier drinks vending in secondary schools. Testing of healthier drinks vending machines is taking place in 12 schools in 4 areas. Final draft report has been received and is currently under peer review. If successful the work will establish guidelines for healthier 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 a greater uptake of healthier drinks during the school day.

Out-of-Hours Learning Cookery Clubs (Cook It)

- ContinYou (formerly Education Extra, a charity that promotes out-of-school-hours learning) has been commissioned to pilot and evaluate this activity with lower secondary school aged children. Cookery clubs ('Food citizenship') will include associated skills such as budgeting, meal planning, shopping, reading labels and preparing the food in a hygienic manner as well as practical cookery. If successful, the results will help provide guidance to what works that can be adopted more widely. The project started 1 October 2003 and finishes mid-

January 2005. ContinYou will prepare a 'How to' guide based on the results, which will be disseminated on ContinYou and FSA web sites.

School Governors

- School Governors Newsletter
- An article of potential interest to school governors on new SACN salt recommendations for children has been published by DfES on the GovernorNet web site. It also appeared in abbreviated form in the governors' newsletter in September. DfES has also publicised the core competencies consultation on the GovernorNet web site and in the newsletter. Other subjects of possible interest to governors – for example school lunches, vending, Dish it Up! still to be agreed with DfES.

National Governors Council (NGC)

- Working jointly with the Agency, NGC have produced and are currently disseminating a 'consultation pack'. The 'consultation' is being set in a context that builds upon the article in the September edition of the DfES School Governors Newsletter and the Governors website on salt targets for children and young people as well as the Agency's lunchbox survey and suggestions.
- A range of issues has been identified to school governors as a checklist to stimulate discussion with Governing Bodies. NGC will collate feedback from individual Governors through written questionnaires as well as through focus groups. This will enable the Agency to gather important information about how school Governing Bodies are reacting to the work the Agency is undertaking and the practical impact of this in schools.
- Further collaborations with NGC are being discussed in order to maintain the profile of food and nutrition in the maintenance of young people's health with this important stakeholder group.

Food: The Local Vision

- A cross-departmental strategy involving the Agency, Local Authority Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS) and Local Government Association (LGA), to improve community health and well being by working to address nutrition and health inequalities at a local level.
- Current activity, the bulk of which is undertaken by LACORS colleagues, involves the identification of a range of case studies and collecting guidance on developing and running successful projects, and showing how they meet the objectives of local strategies across all policy areas.
- The dedicated Food Vision web site [due for launch 29 January 2004] will host guidance and information on a wide range of local food initiatives with links and information to policy criteria that each scheme satisfies.

Food: The Local Vision: UK Wide Review Projects

- The Agency commissioned two UK wide projects to review relevant local initiatives relating to: (i) children/young people (ii) and those that take place in a leisure service setting. The aim was to identify relevant local initiatives relating to food, diet and health. In particular, those aimed at/involving people from the most vulnerable groups.
- 10 initiatives were short-listed (in consultation with LACORS colleagues), under each project, to represent a broad range of local activity, targeting appropriate population groups in a range of community settings. The outputs, due February 2004, of these projects will include descriptive case studies of selected initiatives and will feed into the overarching Food Vision work.

Nutrition Forum

- The Nutrition Forum held a meeting on 4 November 2003 to discuss the National Diet and Nutrition Survey for Adults: Vol. 2 & 3 and the Food and Health Action Plan. A copy of the minutes of this meeting will be placed on the Agency's and Department of Health's website in due course.
- The next meeting of the Nutrition Forum will be held on 3 March 2004.

FSA Update - Scotland

Nutrient Specifications for Manufactured Products Used in School Meals

- The Food Standards Agency Scotland (FSAS) was part of the Scottish Executive's Panel on School Meals which was established by Scottish Ministers in November 2001 to provide costed recommendations and a fully developed implementation strategy to establish standards for the nutritional content of school meals.
- The final report of this Expert Panel, Hungry for Success, was published in November 2002. As part of these new Scottish guidelines FSAS were asked by the Expert Panel to prepare nutrient specifications for manufactured products. FSAS have drafted specifications for the maximum total fat, saturated fat, sodium and sugar to be permitted in manufactured products in school meals. FSAS is now in the final stages of consulting with Scottish Local Authorities, their suppliers and businesses which manufacture products supplied to Scottish schools, to assess any implications before finalising the specifications.
- The first set of specifications is due to be published in February 2004 and the remainder by mid March 2004. The Agency in Scotland will be involved in the implementation of Hungry for Success and the targets put in place.

Working Group on Monitoring Progress Towards the Scottish Dietary Targets

- The renewed impetus on diet and health in Scotland has focussed on the need to monitor progress towards an improved diet and, in particular, the Scottish Diet Action Plan targets in more detail than has been available in the past. In partnership with the Scottish Executive Health Department, FSAS have established a Working Group to assess the requirements for nutritional surveillance in Scotland and monitor progress towards the Scottish Diet Action Plan and other diet related targets. The Group is chaired by Dr. Drew Walker, Tayside Health Board, and is comprised of experts from a variety of backgrounds. The Group has met five times since June 2003 and it is anticipated that a final report detailing a number of options available for nutritional surveillance in Scotland will be produced by March 2004.

FSA Update - Wales

Food and Well Being – Launch and Implementation

- “Food and Well Being “ a nutrition strategy for Wales, was developed by Food Standards Agency Wales in conjunction with the Welsh Assembly Government at the request of the Minister for Health and Social Services, in response to concern over levels of diet-related chronic disease in Wales. A Steering Group was established to consider the status of diet and health in Wales and the barriers to healthy eating and how these might be overcome. A programme of action was produced following extensive consultation with stakeholders, which culminated in the launch of ‘Food and Well Being’ in February 2003 by the Minister for Health and Social Services, Jane Hutt AM.
- Two multi-disciplinary workshops were held following the launch of 'Food and Well Being' aimed at providing impetus, direction and focus for driving forward the main strategy actions by sharing experience and identifying good practice. Both events were well attended, attracting a wide range of key players engaged in improving health through diet in Wales including representatives from the health professions, Local Authorities, the voluntary, education and retail sectors. The presentations and discussions, which covered both operational and strategic perspectives, confirmed that the onus for carrying forward the strategy is a joint one and that its success is dependent on stakeholders working in partnership towards a common goal. The events provided excellent opportunities for networking between key players. There is a commitment to repeat these workshops in future.
- Early progress has been made with regard to the implementation of a number of the action points contained within the strategy. Of particular note are:

i) Implementation and Monitoring Working Group

FSA Wales has established a multi-disciplinary Working Group to advise on the information requirements to facilitate evaluation of the strategy impact on diet and health, and to use this information to inform the future direction of the strategy. The group has now met on two occasions. Given the strategy targets extend to 2010, it is expected the group will continue to meet on a frequent basis for a similar period of time.

ii) Local Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategies

A task and finish group was convened in July 2002 to develop guidance to assist Local Authorities and Local Health Boards in drawing up nutrition and food equality aspects of their new statutory local Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategies. The guidance comprises a generic core statement, an aide memoire to assist in conducting the requisite needs assessment, and a checklist of issues for consideration around which the local partnerships can develop their own strategic direction to meet their particular local situation. This guidance and checklist has now been issued to Local Authorities and Local Health Boards in Wales.

iii) A review of Nutrition Training for Health Professionals

A further key action for FSA Wales was the commissioning of a review of the existing availability and scope of nutrition education and training for health and related professionals in Wales. The Wales Centre for Health undertook this piece of work on behalf of FSA Wales. Their recently received draft report makes a number of recommendations for enhancing the nutrition content of public health nutrition courses, improving access to appropriate nutrition resources, and the establishing of a national centre for nutrition education.

Other Activities

Nutrition and Hygiene Course

- A combined nutrition and food hygiene course developed mainly for pupils aged 13-14 years and intended for delivery post key-stage 3 SATs was piloted in a number of secondary schools in Wales in July 2003. Feedback from teachers and participating pupils is currently awaited.

Catering for Health

- FSA Wales recently awarded a contract to evaluate the use made of this guide by chef lecturers in further education and higher education colleges. The final report has now been received and has been shared with FSA HQ and Scottish colleagues.

Food Dudes

- The final report of the 'Food Dudes' pilot study has just been received. In this study - involving six primary schools in North and South Wales - it has been demonstrated that the intervention programme has a continuing effect. In follow up visits made at 6 and 16 months after the intervention was completed there continued to be more fruit and vegetables consumed (compared to baseline) in a number of instances. The extent of the improvement in quantity of fruit and vegetables consumed has been shown to be greatest in those who ate least of the items at baseline, and that in these groups, the improvement, whilst falling back, was still significant at the 16 month follow up.

Get Cooking

- The 'Get Cooking' pilot evaluation demonstrated that the course was well received both by the trainers' the young people who participated. In terms of increasing knowledge of healthy eating and food hygiene and changing behaviours, the evaluation concluded that it provided a useful tool as part of a range of interventions promoting healthy eating among young people.
- Following consideration of the report it is now proposed to undertake an enhanced pilot project in 4 areas of Wales. The pilot will be overseen by a Working group

comprising FSA Wales and a range of potential partners such as the NFWI, Sure Start and the Wales Youth Agency.

School Meals

- The findings of FSA Wales second 'wave' of school meals research on school meal provision and choice was published recently. The report confirmed that whilst caterers are complying with the requirements of the 2001 nutritional standards for school meals pupils are continuing to select less healthy choices. Both at primary and secondary levels the report shows there has been little if any improvement in fruit and vegetable consumption in spite of these items being more readily available, whilst chips continue to be chosen by over half of all secondary school students (and close to a third of primary school pupils) at each meal time; in many instances the meal comprised chips only.
- The findings have been shared with relevant Welsh Assembly Government Ministers, and the Health Minister reported these findings to the November meeting of Assembly's Sub Committee on Children and Young People.

Eating Well This Winter

- Once again FSA Wales is participating in the National Assembly's Keep Well This Winter campaign targeted at the over 65s. This year a further round of grants totalling £10,000 have been awarded to local community groups to enable them to organise a range of healthy eating activities targeted at the elderly. In addition FSA Wales has produced a booklet containing helpful tips and advice on healthy eating for this population group.