



Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

**14<sup>TH</sup> MEETING (Open)**  
**15 June, Conference Rooms 2 and 3, Aviation House**  
**125 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6NH**

**FINAL MINUTES**

<b>Chairman</b>	Professor Alan Jackson
<b>Members</b>	Professor Peter Aggett Professor Sheila Bingham Professor John Cummings Mrs Christine Gratus Professor Tim Key Professor Peter Kopelman Dr Ann Prentice Professor Andrew Rugg-Gunn Dr Anita Thomas Mrs Stella Walsh Dr Anthony Williams Professor Christine Williams
<b>Government Observers</b>	Mrs Rosemary Hignett (FSA) Dr Pilar Rodriguez Inglesias (EFSA)
<b>Secretariat</b>	Dr Sheela Reddy (DH) Dr Alison Tedstone (FSA) Ms Emma Peacock (FSA) Mr Jeff Alder (FSA)

1. The Chair welcomed Members of the Committee to the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) and introduced Dr Pilar Rodriguez Inglesias, an observer from EFSA to the Committee.

**Closed session. Agenda item 1 Folate Report (SACN/05/11)**

2. The Chair of the Subgroup presented the draft report noting that the Subgroup had been requested to:
  - Consider the evidence that had arisen since the COMA report, Folic Acid and the Prevention of Disease (Department of Health, 2000)
  - Advise on any gaps in the evidence base, with particular reference to the issue of folic acid masking vitamin B<sub>12</sub>-deficiency
  - Consider when and how to review the previous COMA risk assessment
3. The Chair noted that the working group had reviewed rates of NTD live births and affected pregnancies in the UK and in countries where fortification had been introduced, and the accumulated data on the relation between folate, and the risk of cardiovascular disease and other conditions. The nutritional status of the UK population in respect of other B vitamins related to folate metabolism, including vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, had also been reviewed.
4. The Chair noted that the mandatory fortification of flour with folic acid would reduce both the number of NTD-affected pregnancies and the prevalence of folate deficiency in the elderly. The Subgroup were, however, not able to determine the consequences of the mandatory fortification of flour with folic acid on the masking of sub acute combined degeneration of the spinal cord arising from vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency in the elderly, given the limitations of available evidence.
5. The Committee Chair thanked the Subgroup and Secretariat for the extensive and useful report. The Chair noted that the issues were complex and that further questions had been raised during the Subgroup's deliberations.
6. Members discussed a number of substantive points in the draft report:

- The evidence that the mandatory fortification of flour with folic acid would reduce the number of NTD-affected pregnancies had strengthened since the COMA risk assessment of 2000.
  - There were difficulties in ascertaining definitively whether mandatory fortification of flour with folic acid might increase risk of sub acute combined degeneration of the spinal cord from vitamin B<sub>12</sub>-deficiency. Evidence on the epidemiology of this condition is needed from countries which have introduced mandatory fortification.
  - The prevalence of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>-deficiency in the elderly, its cause, and its relationship to cognitive function, needs to be addressed.
  - Options for the management of B12 deficiency and masking of B12 deficiency by folate required careful consideration.
  - The issue of riboflavin status in the population was also a concern and the interpretation of the erythrocyte glutathione reductase activation coefficient (EGRAC) values cited in NDNS reports needs consideration.
  - A summary of the report should be included.
7. The Secretariat noted these comments and the consensus view of Members were to be taken into account in the next draft of the report which would be amended and forwarded to the Subgroup for agreement. The Chair noted that the Committee would look at the resulting report by correspondence and that it should be taken forward as soon as possible.

### **Action Secretariat**

### **Chair's Introduction Open meeting**

8. The Chair welcomed Members of the Committee and interested parties to the fourteenth meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN).

9. Apologies were received from Professor Annie Anderson, Dr Naresh Chadha (Northern Ireland) Mrs Maureen Howell (Welsh Assembly) and Dr Lesley Wilkie (Scottish Executive).

10. Members were invited to declare any changes in interests.

**Agenda Item 2 - Minutes of Last Meeting (23 February 2005) (SACN/05/Min01)**

11. Members were invited to comment on the minutes of the previous meeting (23 February 2005 (SACN/05Min01)). The minutes were agreed as a correct record of the 13th meeting of SACN in February 2005, pending correction of two typographical errors.

**Matters Arising Action Check List (SACN/05/12)**

12. The Chair reported progress on matters arising from previous meetings and members were invited to comment.

*SACN/04/06 - Evaluation procedures for 'Healthy Start':*

13. Sheela Reddy informed members that Phase 1 of Healthy Start would be rolled out shortly and evaluation procedures would be embedded in the programme.

*SACN/04/16 Obesity and food choice group*

14. The report '*Delivering Health - Making Healthier Choices Easier*' was made available to members. Members would approach the issue of obesity and food choice at a later stage.

*SACN/04/18 Update on advice concerning vitamin D and NICE*

15. Sheela Reddy noted that NICE was unable to revisit their advice on Vitamin D but noted that the Chief Medical Officer is currently considering reinstating the current COMA advice on Vitamin D through his communications to practitioners.

### **Action Secretariat**

#### *SACN/05/04 Nutrition profiling*

16. It was noted that the nutrition profiling group which included SACN representation had met on two occasions since the workshop in February and that the issue would be brought back to the Committee this year.

#### *SACN/05/07 Types of fruit and vegetables in the school fruit and vegetable scheme*

17. Sheela Reddy informed the members that the scheme provided bananas, apples, pears, strawberries and carrots. Mini-cucumbers and sugar snap peas had been piloted and had proven popular. Cherry tomatoes were withdrawn from the pilot due to concerns about choking.

18. Members queried if dried fruit and juice were an option, to which the Secretariat reported that they were considered for inclusion in the scheme but were not taken forward.

#### *SACN/05/07 Obesity training programme*

19. Sheela Reddy noted that there were 2 policy streams in '*Delivering Choosing Health - Making Healthier Choices Easier*' which related to obesity, the treatment of obesity and the training needs of existing personnel. More details would be provided at the next meeting.

### **Action Secretariat**

20. The Secretariat outlined the future meetings of SACN sub-groups and working groups.

**Agenda Item 3, The nutritional health of the population (SACN05/13)**

21. The Secretariat summarised the background of the paper and members were made aware of the areas updated since the last version.

22. The Chairman thanked the Secretariat for the work that had gone into producing the report.

23. The Committee discussed the report and requested a number of additional points to be included, principally:

- An introduction summarising the main points.
- General statements to give a context to the issues of concern for the population at large.
- A description of dietary habits at the beginning and end of the report noting what further work is required to improve the health of the population.
- More emphasis on the poor diets and nutritional status of young men.
- More emphasis on the positive dietary changes that have been seen at population level, including decreasing saturated fat intakes and the good overall dietary pattern observed amongst 50-64 year olds.
- Emphasis on socio-economic differences and areas of the UK that are more at risk.
- The crucial importance of NDNS in providing the source material to make policy.
- Inclusion of data on meat consumption.
- Additional analysis of the relationship between blood lipids and dietary data.

**Action: Secretariat**

24. Professor Kopelman left the meeting.

**Agenda Item 4, National diet and nutrition survey (NDNS) adults 19-64 years further analysis (SACN/05/14)**

25. The Secretariat introduced the paper. Members were asked to consider the secondary analysis of micronutrient intake and status data from the NDNS adults survey 2000/2001 presented in the paper, and in particular to draw conclusions and consider recommendations in the context of the Agency strategic plan target on the health implications of low micronutrient intakes in population groups.

26. The Chairman thanked the Secretariat for the detailed analysis in the paper.

27. Members discussed the report and requested the following broad changes:

- Addition of an executive summary.
- Clarify reasoning for highlighting specific analyses.

28. The Committee agreed to finalise Agenda item 3 and 4 by correspondence.

**Action Secretariat**

**Agenda Item 5 –Vitamin A report (SACN/05/15)**

29. The Secretariat informed Members that the latest draft had taken account of comments from interested parties and had been agreed by the Vitamin A Subgroup. The Secretariat reported that the majority of responses were in general agreement with the conclusions of the report. Most of the comments received were not substantive and some related to risk management issues for the Agency to take forward.

30. The Chair thanked the Subgroup and the Secretariat for their work and noted the value of receiving the views of interested parties.

31. Pending some minor changes the Committee agreed the report for publication.

32. The Secretariat noted that the report would be published in the autumn and that the Agency would consider risk management issues raised by the report and dietary advice regarding vitamin A.

### **Action Secretariat**

Anita Thomas left the meeting.

### **Agenda Item 6 – Selenium (SACN/05/16)**

33. The Secretariat presented the paper noting that a number of SACN members were asked to consider the issue and provide advice on the need and the timing for a full risk assessment.

34. Members noted that extensive background work had taken place in preparing the paper and areas covered included sources of selenium in the diet, UK intakes and selenium status markers.

35. The Secretariat informed members that the Agency is carrying out research in relation to functional markers of selenium, that could impact upon any conclusion drawn by the Committee. Members noted that this work was due for completion in 3 to 4 years.

36. Members noted that:

- Average intakes of selenium in the UK population had fallen.

- There is no agreed biochemical marker of selenium deficiency though plasma selenium concentration gives some indication.

37. Members noted that the data presented raised questions but that clearer insights into the data and further research were required. Detailed analysis would be required, and new studies that are ongoing were seen as potentially providing good information to make a more informed risk assessment than one carried forward at the present time. The Committee in addition requested data on variability of intake and viewed the NDNS as a possible source of such information. More extensive information on the nature of selenium exposure and selenium status, as well as outcomes in relation to selenium and health and disease would also be required.

38. The Committee agreed in the light of the current available evidence not to take forward full risk assessment until further data become available.

39. The Secretariat agreed to amend the paper with Members' comments noting the requirements needed to make an informed risk assessment.

### **Action Secretariat**

### **Agenda Item 7 – Government Update on Nutrition Related Activities (SACN/05/17-21)**

#### **FSA (SACN/05/17)**

40. Rosemary Hignett for FSA highlighted three areas in the paper. Members attention was drawn in particular to the nutrient profiling work upon which the Committee would be asked to comment before the Board meeting in October.

41. Members queried the financial commitment from Health Departments to the NDNS programme. Rosemary Hignett explained that there had been no further progress in this regard.

42. The Committee offered technical help in any process in relation to the school meal panel. Rosemary Hignett informed members that the draft standards were due to go to consultation in September and the Committee could look at these at the October meeting.

### **Action Secretariat**

43. Members requested progress on the methodology changes to the NDNS that have been proposed. Rosemary Hignett reported that consultation would take place as soon as possible.

44. Members requested detail on the process involved with the European legislation on infant formula and follow on formula. Members noted that a draft document had been received and if SACN would like a greater role in the development of the legislation then the issue could be discussed.

### **DH (SACN/05/18)**

45. Sheela Reddy highlighted the tabled document '*Delivering Choosing Health - making Healthy Choices Easier*' and drew members' attention to a number of areas in the report.

46. Members requested clarification on the guidance on infant feeding. Sheela Reddy reported that the guidance on preparation and storage of formula have been updated from the point of view of infection control.

### **Devolved Health Departments (SACN/05/19)**

## **Wales**

47. Members noted the report.

## **Northern Ireland**

48. Members noted the report.

## **Scottish Executive**

49. Members noted the report.

## **EFSA (SACN/05/20)**

50. Pilar Rodriguez Inglesias (EFSA) introduced the work of EFSA, noting the mandate of EFSA is limited to providing scientific advice to the community in relation to community legislation.

51. Members asked about the current status of the health claims proposal. Dr Rodriguez Inglesias noted that this was in a codecision procedure and that the existing proposal included an assessment of claims but that changes could occur before the document is finalised.

52. The Chair noted that to increase efficiency, there was a need for the harmonisation of national committees with EFSA committees.

53. It was noted that relevant links to the EFSA website would be provided to Members.

## **Action Secretariat**

## **Centre for Public Health Excellence (SACN/05/21)**

54. Members were made aware that a representative would be present at the next meeting in October.

### **Any Other Business**

55. Members were reminded that the next meeting would take place on 19 October 2005 at the FSA.

56. The Chair thanked Members for their attendance.

### **Q and A Session**

Members of the public were invited to put questions to the Chair.

**Andrew Russel, ASBAH** welcomed the report on folate and queried the timeline regarding the publication of this report.

The Chair clarified that the report was currently in draft form and would be finalised over the summer.

**Gaynor Bussel, FDF** requested clarification on the following points;

- In relation to SACN 05/13, the definition of fruit and vegetables, some items with certain levels of salt and sugar would not come under the 5 a day logo definition.
- The definition of fibre used in the NDNS.
- Bread, cereals and cheeses etc. would produce high scores with a nutrient profiling traffic light system and that people should not be put off eating these items.

Sheela Reddy clarified that the NDNS does not take into account the 5 a day logo criteria. It was noted that the definition for fibre in the NDNS was NSP and not AOAC. Alison

Tedstone explained that NDNS methodologies were to be considered in relation to the options on methodological changes to the NDNS that are underway. The Chair reported that SACN does not have a paper on nutrient profiling to consider the question of traffic lights and choices etc.

**Professor Godfrey Oakley, Mindspring** queried the meaning of “folate deficiency” and reported that the previous draft folate report on the SACN website was incomplete. Professor Oakley also alluded to information on the incidence of vitamin B12 deficiency.

The Chair noted that background information on the situation in the US was of interest. The Chair clarified the SACN work programme is assessing the consideration of the definition of folate deficiency and that the Committee did not want to anticipate the report conclusions. However, the Chair reported that the definition of deficiency had not affected the conclusions of the report. The Chair explained that it was clear that something should be done in relation to NTDs, however SACN are also aware that consideration of all those affected by issues surrounding fortification should be considered.

The Chair noted that the earlier report was in draft form and thanked the interested party for reinforcing the issues that were of concern relating to Vitamin B12.