



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

Agenda Item: 9

Please see attached paper for information.

Seminar on Dietary Change - The Evidence Base and Future Research Needs

- 1) The proceedings of the above named seminar, held on Thursday 20th January 2005 is now available on the FSA's website.
<http://www.food.gov.uk/science/research/researchinfo/nutritionresearch/foodacceptability/n09programme/n09seminar>

Vitamin A Report; follow up actions

- 2) Following publication of the SACN report on vitamin A the Agency has, in line with the Committee's recommendations, revised advice to consumer of liver and supplements that contain vitamin A. The Agency will also arrange meetings with representatives of the supplements industry to discuss the potential for reformulation and use of advisory statements to alert consumers to possible side effects as a result of consumption of products containing high levels of retinol. In addition, the Agency has raised for a discussion the fortification of feed with vitamin A at European Commission animal nutrition section of the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health, to ask that the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) reassess the maximum permitted levels (MPLs) for vitamin A in feed.
- 3) The Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs (ACAF) discussed the SACN vitamin A recommendation that a reduction in vitamin A supplementation of animal feed as part of a strategy to reduce vitamin A intake by high consumers should be explored further taking into account the welfare of poultry and livestock. ACAF was asked to comment on the implications of lowering the levels of vitamin A supplementation in animal feed.
- 4) ACAF noted that data are limited on the correlation between concentrations of vitamin A in animal products and the level of vitamin A in the diets of animals producing them. What little research there had been had focused on levels of vitamin A supplementation above those permitted for animal feed. Members therefore thought data from studies using levels below the maximum permitted levels would be useful to get a more accurate picture.
- 5) ACAF believed it would be dangerous to ask farmers to accept a reduction in vitamin A supplementation of animal feed when it was unclear what effects this would have on animal health and welfare, and when it was also unclear if it would have the desired effect in reducing vitamin A content of liver. The Chairman concluded that ACAF could offer the Agency no further advice on this matter given the information before them.
- 6) Subsequent to ACAF's discussion officials from the Food Standards Agency's Animal Feed Unit brought the issue to the attention of the European Commission and other Member States. The issue was discussed at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Food Chain and Animal Health – Animal Nutrition Section on 26/27 September 2005. At that meeting the UK said that it favoured a harmonised approach to the matter and drew support from other Member States. The UK highlighted the lack of published data in this area including the link between vitamin A supplementation and its transfer into animal produce.

- 7) The Commission said that it was a complicated issue and thought the best way to proceed was to put the matter to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). The Commission asked Member States to provide any data or information that would assist EFSA in its review.

National Diet and Nutrition Survey

- 8) Agreement in principle to co-fund the NDNS rolling programme has been secured from DH. The tendering process is now beginning with the aim of having a contractor in place by early 2006. Pilot work will be carried out in summer 2006, and, if successful, fieldwork for the core rolling programme, covering the whole UK, might be expected to commence around mid-2007. Results would then begin to become available from 2009. Discussions continue to seek external co-funding for an enhanced programme, including sample boosts for ethnic minority groups. Arrangements are being put in place to formally involve SACN in the development of the rolling programme.

Salt Work

- 9) The Agency is committed to reducing salt intakes and has agreed, in line with SACN recommendations, a long-term aim to achieve the average salt intake to 6g for adults by 2010.
- 10) The Agency launched a major public health campaign on salt in 2004 with a supporting salt website, which can be found at www.salt.gov.uk. The first phase of the campaign ran in autumn 2004 and resulted in significant increases in awareness and promising changes in claimed behaviour.
- 11) The next stage of the salt campaign will be launched week commencing 10 October and advertising will run until 20 November. The two key messages are: you should eat no more than 6g a day; and always check the label. The media campaign will feature a 'talking food' animation and a range of support materials are also being developed for distribution to health professionals and members of the public.
- 12) The campaign is being supported by associated initiatives through non-government organisations: National Federation of Women's Institutes, British Heart Foundation, Blood Pressure Association, Stroke Association, Age Concern, British Dietetic Association and Consensus Action on Salt and Health. Industry stakeholders are also planning parallel activity.
- 13) The Agency and Health Departments are continuing to hold discussions with food manufacturers and retailers, trade associations and caterers about salt reduction and positive progress is continuing. It remains important to receive, from all sectors of the food industry, long-term plans with commitments to stepwise salt reductions commensurate with achieving the 6g population target intake by 2010.

- 14) An Agency-commissioned review of the effects of salt reduction on the microbiological safety of food was discussed at the June ACMSF meeting. The ACMSF considerations have resulted in further work being identified as follows: preparation of guidance on salt reduction for small businesses; a further review of the impact of the salt/fat/sugar reductions on the microbiological safety of food; and the commissioning of laboratory work to refine the current microbiological modelling packages.
- 15) A full public consultation on targets for those product categories that contribute to salt intakes was published on 1st August. A stakeholder group made up of a number of representatives from industry and one consumer representative as well as FSA and DH officials, held meetings in April and June to contribute to the development of this work. In addition to comments on the proposed categories and targets, the consultation also sought comments on proposals to introduce a five-year framework for self-reporting of progress by organisations. Following the consultation, the final targets should be released in November.
- 16) Fieldwork for a survey of salt intake, assessed by 24-hour urinary sodium analysis, is due to begin in October / November. Twenty-four hour urine samples will be collected from around 500 adults aged 19-64 who have previously taken part in the Health Survey for England. Results are expected in mid-2006 and will provide an interim assessment of progress towards the 6g/day target.

Reducing sugar and fat in foods

- 17) The Agency Strategic Plan has a target to work with health departments to reduce saturated fat from 13.4% to 11% of food energy by 2010 (for everyone from age 5 upwards). In addition, the Strategic Plan states that by 2006 we will develop (with health departments) targets for achieving a balance between energy in and energy out. The Choosing Health White Paper includes a commitment to reduce fat and sugar levels in processed foods.
- 18) A small stakeholder group made up of a number of representatives from industry and one consumer representative as well as FSA and DH officials, met in June to discuss proposals for action. It was decided at this meeting to set up specific stakeholder groups for key product categories. As a result the following sector-specific stakeholder meetings are being held in September to discuss the potential for reductions and reformulation in these product types: breakfast cereals; meat and meat products; convenience foods (including soups, sauces, ready meals); dairy products and fat spreads; snack products and drinks. It was also suggested that the catering sector should be considered separately, so a larger catering stakeholder group will meet early in October to discuss reformulation issues.

School meals

- 19) The Agency published a consultation package for target nutrient specifications for manufactured foods used in school meals on 26 July 2005. A summary of the responses received will be published as soon as possible after the close of consultation. These will help caterers meet the school meal standards, developed

by the School Meals Review Panel, which were launched for consultation, by DfES, on 3 October.

- 20) The Agency recently published the reports of three pilot interventions in schools that were carried out to determine the extent to which nutritional standards can be modified to more easily enable healthy choices at secondary school meals.
- 21) Findings from the pilots were fed into the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) led School Meals Review Panel and indicate that it is possible to achieve small changes in nutrient intakes through procurement and preparation practices, such as changing food products to those with a lower fat content and using more vegetables in dishes. The studies highlight the need for target nutrient specifications for processed foods used in schools as these will help caterers identify which foods can help them develop healthier menus.
- 22) People 1st, the Sector Skills Council for Hospitality and Leisure (commissioned by DfES and the Agency) have developed a qualification in basic nutrition and healthy catering practice for school caterers. The training package will be available in the Autumn 2005. Work is now underway to develop additional units, which will provide caterers with the necessary practical skills. These units will include menu planning (which will need to link to the school meal standards), budgeting and practical cooking skills.
- 23) Fieldwork for the joint DfES and Food Standards Agency survey of primary school meals is complete. This survey will assess compliance with the current statutory nutritional standards for school lunches, and assess food choices and consumption by primary school pupils. The survey will also provide information about catering practices and food provision at lunchtime. The report of the survey is expected to be published by the end of 2005.

Signposting

- 24) The Government's *Choosing Health* White Paper and the Agency's Action Plan on Food Promotions and Children's Health include commitments to develop a signposting system that consumers can use at a glance to assess the fat, salt and sugar content of foods and therefore help them make healthier choices.
- 25) The Agency has carried out focus group research to help identify potential signposting formats that appeal to consumers. The first phase of work was published in November 2004 and the findings of further focus group work to develop a suitable Guideline Daily Amount (GDA) based signposting concept, together with a consultation on the nature of the quantitative research being proposed to test the effectiveness of various signposting options, was published in March.
- 26) In June 2005 the performance of four signposting formats (single traffic lights, multiple traffic lights and two GDA based formats one with colour and one without) were tested with 2676 consumers to assess which format would be most helpful to consumers in enabling them to assess the nutrient content of the food

quickly and easily, as well as preferences between the signposting concepts, and the reasons for those preferences. A “no signposting” option was included to act as a benchmark against which to assess the performance of the different signposting options. The fieldwork has been completed and a consultation package seeking views on proposals for an Agency backed scheme will be published later this year.. The Agency intends to publish finalised guidance on an Agency backed signposting scheme in the first half of 2006, to allow a phased roll-out to begin later in 2006.

Nutrient Profiling

27) See earlier Agenda item.

Recasting of the current European Legislation on Infant Formula and Follow-on Formula

28) The Commission has convened working group meetings to review the European Directive laying down rules regarding the composition, labelling and promotion of infant formula and follow on formula, with a view to submitting an amended text to the relevant Standing Committee by 2006. Negotiations at working group level are being taken forward on behalf of the UK by the Food Standards Agency.

Research

N14 Programme – Food Choice Inequalities

- 29) Building on priorities for future research emerging from the Agency’s ‘Psychosocial review seminar’ held in January 2005, two new research requirements for N14 were issued in March 2005:
- 30) Multicomponent nutrition interventions in communities have been shown to have positive effects on nutritional behaviour and physical activity; reinforcing sustainable changes, providing support and building momentum for community change in behaviour. *Healthy Living Challenge N14R0003* would look to investigate the effectiveness of engaging communities to support each other to make changes in their diet and engage in physical activity through a community challenge.
- 31) Building on previous work on lunchbox surveys / guidance the Agency is looking to actively involve parents / families in improving the nutrient content of lunchboxes. *School lunch box intervention project N14R0004* looks to develop a combined surveillance study to investigate the impact and effectiveness of a range of tools to help parents and children prepare healthier lunchboxes.
- 32) Appraisal panels were held for both research requirements in July 2005 and discussions with potential contractors are underway. Further information will be provided in future updates once these projects are confirmed and commissioned.

Update FSA Wales

Nutrition Strategy Conferences

- 1) Parallel conferences were convened in May and June in Llandudno and Cardiff respectively. These provided an opportunity to update over 300 stakeholders on progress made by FSA Wales and the Assembly in implementing the 'Food and Well Being' action plan and facilitated reflection on delivery of the action plan at the local level. They also celebrated and disseminated good practice through presentation of the AFAL Awards for Food Action Locally. The theme for the conferences, 'Eating for Health' was fundamental to informing the need for and development of this strategy and was at the heart of the series of presentations and workshops aimed at sharing experience and ideas on the practicalities of translating policy into action.

Healthy Nosh for Less Dosh

- 2) Following the success of this bilingual resource launched in May 2005 and aimed at giving young people the insight and incentive to help them choose, buy and cook healthy food, cost-effectively, an English-only version has been printed in response to the number of requests from other parts of the UK. It has also been reproduced in booklet format targeted at students heading for college or university in the autumn.

Eating well for older people

- 3) As part of its continuing involvement in the Welsh Assembly Government 'Keep Well This Winter' (KWTW) campaign, FSA Wales has just produced a four page bilingual leaflet 'Stock up your Store Cupboard for Winter'. This lists basic store cupboard and freezer items that can be especially important when bad weather or illness prevent older people getting out of the house or going shopping. Copies of the leaflet have been inserted into 30,000 packs containing information from the KWTW partnership organisations for distribution through events and initiatives engaging older people across Wales.

AFAL Awards for Food Action Locally

- 4) This award scheme launched in December 2003 recognises individual or team contributions to local nutrition initiatives that have made a positive impact on the diet or eating habits of residents in the communities they serve. The Awards for 2006 are being launched at the end of October 2005 with entries through completion of a nomination form invited by 31st December 2005. The entries will be reviewed by an independent selection panel, and finalists notified by the end of February 2006.

School meals research - exploring factors behind pupil's choices

- 5) Although school meals standards are being met by the majority of schools in Wales, pupils are still failing to make healthy choices. Following on from FSA Wales school meals research in 2003, we are co-funding, together with the

Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), research on school meals in maintained primary and secondary schools across Wales looking into pupil's food choice and the factors influencing their choice. Methods used will include observation, questionnaires, focus group work, triad interviews with pupils, and interviews with head teacher, school meals provider/school cook. The results of this research will be available in February 2006

Primary Care Practitioner Training

- 6) There is a commitment in Food and Well Being, the Nutrition strategy for Wales, to provide information and training to key players, with a specific action to improve the nutrition content of education and training for health and related professionals. FSA Wales and WAG have commissioned the development of a module (consisting of 2 pre-course workbooks and 2 days training) which can be delivered on a multi-disciplinary and continuing professional development basis. The module focuses on healthy eating, obesity and helping people change, and diabetes and CHD. We are currently in the process of commissioning a pilot of the module, with the aim of this work being taken forward by the end of the year.

Get Cooking

- 7) The 'Get Cooking' toolkit designed to teach young people between the ages of 14 and 25 basic cooking skills in a community setting, is now available in English to download from the FSA Wales website, and in hard copy. A Welsh language version will be available shortly.