



Paper for information: Further information on Matters Arising items

Agenda item: 1

Please see attached paper which covers information requested at the October 2007 SACN meeting.

- Curry report:
 - Curry Report Press Release
 - Update on the implementation of the Curry Report
- Self-reporting framework
- Dietary methodology in NDNS rolling programme

Curry report update (Matters Arising item SACN/07/27)**Action:**

Members requested further information on the Curry report and an update on what has occurred since it was published.

Response:**Policy commission on the Future of Farming and Food – Press Release**

FARMING AND FOOD: A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE – Independent Farming and Food Commission deliver its views

1. The food and farming industry has a future – and a profitable future – with a key role in the national economy, the nation’s health, and the countryside. But sweeping change is needed to bring that vision to life.
2. That is the message of the Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food, which publishes its report to the Prime Minister today. The Commission was charged by Government to look at “how we can create a sustainable, competitive and diverse farming and food sector”.
3. Commission chairman Sir Donald Curry said:

“2001 was a terrible year for farming, but the disaster of Foot and Mouth was just the latest blow to hit the industry. Radical measures are needed to cut through this deeper malaise. Tinkering at the edges will not turn the industry around.”
4. The report’s central theme is reconnection:
 - Reconnecting farmers with their market and the rest of the food chain
 - Reconnecting the food chain with a healthy and attractive countryside
 - Reconnecting consumers with what they eat and where it has come from
5. The report makes over 100 recommendations for shaping change in the farming and food sector. Key measures called for include:
6. Early, radical reform of the Common Agricultural Policy: the current system is serving no-one - dividing farmers from their market, suppressing innovation, and destroying economic and environmental value
7. Retargeting of public funds towards environmental and rural development goals instead of subsidising production: rewarding farmers who deliver an attractive, healthy countryside, and making the environment a selling point not a sore point for the industry
8. Measures to strengthen the food supply chain and promote collaboration among farmers - reducing inefficiencies, improving competitiveness and securing a fairer return for the primary producer
9. A new drive on research and technology transfer to match the best in other countries -

including a new national network of demonstration farms

10. Honest, straightforward food labelling to empower consumers and help them make their consciences count at the checkout
11. A comprehensive nutrition strategy to encourage a more healthy diet for all
12. A new national champion for 'local' food, to assist this exciting new market expand
13. Simpler, easy to use free advice services for farmers to help them assess their options in the light of the changes ahead.

"Government and the industry have now got to get behind these recommendations, and carry them through into action" said Sir Donald. "An implementation programme will be crucial."

NOTES FOR EDITORS

14. The Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food was established in August, and given 5 months to complete its remit to:

"advise the Government on how we can create a sustainable, competitive and diverse farming and food sector which contributes to a thriving and sustainable rural economy, advances environmental, economic, health and animal welfare goals, and is consistent with the Government's aims for Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform, enlargement of the EU and increased trade liberalisation".

15. Its remit covered England. The Commission's report will be handed over at a press conference with Margaret Beckett at 10 am today.

16. The Commission's membership was:

Sir Donald Curry CBE – farmer (Northumberland) and former Chairman of the Meat and Livestock Commission

Helen Browning OBE – organic farmer (Wiltshire), Chair of the Soil Association

Sir Peter Davis – Group Chief Executive, Sainsbury's plc and Chairman of Business in the Community

Iain Ferguson – Senior Vice-President, Unilever plc

Deirdre Hutton CBE – Chair, National Consumer Council

DeAnne Julius CBE – Economist, former member of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee

Fiona Reynolds CBE – Director-General, National Trust

Mark Tinsley – farmer and grower (Lincolnshire)

David Varney – Chairman, mmO2

Graham Wynne – Chief Executive, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

17. The report is available from the Commission's website: <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/farming>

18. The report calls for measures costing around £500 million over the next 3 years to help bring about a change of direction in farming and food.

19. Its conclusions are the fruit of a wide ranging consultation across the farming and food industry and with its key stakeholders. A call for written evidence received over 1300 responses. The Commission also carried out six regional visits and a raft of national public meetings with interest groups.

Update on the implementation of the Curry report

20. In 2001 Sir Don Curry was asked by the Government to chair a Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food. The trauma of the foot and mouth crisis of 2001 following BSE and other food scares had become a catalyst to review farming and food policy.
21. The report produced identified a need to reconnect with the public about farming, food and the countryside, but also with the whole of the food chain. The Policy Commission identified a need to work together more to improve efficiency and get closer to the market. They suggested that farmers should explore opportunities to add value, differentiate their products and diversify if possible.
22. The report made a number of recommendations, and these formed the basis of the Governments *Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy*. In 2002 Sir Don was appointed by the Government to oversee the delivery of this strategy, and since then there have been a number of dramatic changes in the industry. These include a major reform of the CAP, and the introduction of the new Environmental Stewardship schemes as well as an increasing focus on the market place and an improving environmental performance.
23. In the first three years after the Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy was launched, the primary focus was on putting new structures and initiatives in place to support policy changes. For example, setting up the following; English Farming & Food Partnerships (EFFP), Assured Food Standards (AFS), the Food Chain Centre (FCC), the Non-Food Crops Centre (NFCC), the Food Research Priorities Group (RPG), The Applied Research Forum for Farming and Food (ARF), the Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative (PSFPI), Demonstration Farms and Fresh Start (to encourage new entrants).
24. In addition to these national initiatives, supported from the centre, engagement at a regional level has been important. Therefore each region now has it's own *Sustainable Farming and Food* action plan, overseen by a regional steering group with an independent chair.
25. The pace of change has been quite dramatic. Examples of progress include for example, new and expanding business skills, increasing interest in non-food crops, farmers adding value to their own produce, the huge growth in local and regional food, public sector food contracts and 60% of eligible land is now in stewardship schemes.
26. Much of the activity which has been put in place to fulfil the strategy is now enshrined in mainstreamed policy and the SFFS continues to provide the over arching framework for Defra policy on farming and food.

Self-reporting framework (Matters Arising item SACN/07/29)**Action:**

Members requested clarification on how much value obtaining weighted average data on salt levels in products would add above market basket analysis.

Response:

1. The key purpose of the self reporting framework (SRF) is to track progress by industry towards achieving the Agency's salt targets, which were published in March 2006. The intention is that data will be collected annually for a specific point in time (i.e. 31st March). Reformulation work carried out after that date will be captured in the next round of data collection for the SRF.
2. Sales weighted average data on salt/sodium levels in products has been requested as this is felt to provide meaningful data which is relevant to population intakes. We appreciate that it could take a considerable amount of work to provide a sales weighted average so, in order to make the process easier, we have devised a spreadsheet that will automatically calculate this figure if the appropriate data is entered.
3. In discussions with industry during the development of the framework it became clear that not all organisations would be able to provide a sales weighted average, generally due to the large number of products within company portfolios. In these cases, the Agency will therefore accept a simple average.

[NB: Whilst it has been suggested that differences between sales weighted and simple averages are often slight, it is not possible to determine the variance without undertaking both calculations.]

4. The Agency has also indicated that there is some additional information it would like to receive to place the sales weighted or simple averages in a wider context for each sub-category, including the range of levels (minimum and maximum); the proportion (as a percentage) of products above and below the target; and line by line data on sodium/salt levels in individual products.
5. The Agency anticipates receiving a range of different information from the different companies that submit data to the SRF. All data received will be published in due course on the Agency website.
6. Making use of the data received, including sales weighted averages, will be straightforward. We intend to use the data to review progress by industry, which will feed in to the review of the targets that will take place in 2008. The data collected will give an indication of levels in products and therefore how it may be possible to revise the targets.
7. We appreciate that whilst the data received may not be perfect, it will be the most up to date information available to us and should in some cases reflect most recent reformulations undertaken. Commissioning a survey of salt levels given on food labels would require a considerable resource that is not available at present, and would not give information that is any more up to date, as data quoted on labels can lag behind the most recent reductions achieved.

8. The Agency will conduct a review of the SRF, following completion of the first exercise. This will consider a number of areas, including the type and coverage of the data submitted, and will include consultation with stakeholders, as appropriate.

Dietary methodology in the NDNS rolling programme**Action:**

At the last meeting Members asked for more detail on the rationale for the decision to use a 4-day unweighed diary as the dietary methodology for the NDNS rolling programme.

Response:

1. A comparison study carried out in Spring 2007 compared two alternative dietary assessment methods – the multiple pass 24 hour recall repeated on four non-consecutive days and an unweighed diary completed for four consecutive days.
2. Over 1100 individuals were selected to take part, including adults and children. Half the sample was asked to provide 24 hour recalls and half to complete an unweighed diary. Doubly labelled water assessment of energy expenditure was carried out on a sub-sample of 160 respondents to assess under-reporting in the two methods.
3. There was no real difference between the response rates for the two methods (49% 24 hour recall; 47% diary).
4. Results from the doubly labelled water study were not available at the time the decision on methodology was made. Coding of the dietary records was in still in progress but there had been no indications of major differences in data quality between the methods.
5. The comparison study showed no difference in the response rates for the two methods and no overriding practical reasons emerged for choosing one method over the other so it was difficult to make a decision based solely on these results
6. A literature review was undertaken of studies which compared the 24 hour recall and unweighed diary methods to determine whether there is evidence to suggest that one method is more likely to result in a complete record of consumption than the other. A total of 16 studies were found and the review concluded that there is very little difference between the two methods in terms of energy intake estimates.
7. The NDNS Project Board considered these findings and decided that on balance the four day unweighed diary was the preferred method. It was felt to be a more flexible and adaptable method to cover the wide population age range in the survey (in particular it was thought to be more suitable for young children who may have more than one carer). The unweighed diary had also been used successfully on several occasions by the contractor leading on the dietary assessment component of the survey and their experience with the method could prove useful in future.
8. Results from the doubly labelled water component of the comparison study are expected in the next couple of months and can be made available to SACN members.

Diet and Nutrition Surveys Branch
Food Standards Agency
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