

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NOVEL FOODS AND PROCESSES

EFSA ADVISORY FORUM MEETING ON GMO RISK ASSESSMENT

This paper provides Members with an update on a recent meeting organised by EFSA to discuss GMO risk assessment.

EFSA Advisory Forum

1. The Advisory Forum is one of the four bodies that formally constitute the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)¹ and is made up of representatives from the bodies in the Member States that undertake similar tasks to EFSA. The UK is typically represented by the Chief Scientist of the Food Standards Agency,
2. The main purpose of the Advisory Forum is to advise the EFSA Director on the performance of his duties and specifically on EFSA's work programme. It also provides a mechanism for the sharing of information and the pooling of knowledge. Details of the Advisory Forum and its meetings are published on the EFSA website: www.efsa.europa.eu
3. On 12 November 2007 EFSA held a special meeting of the Advisory Forum to discuss technical aspects of the risk assessment of GMOs. This meeting provided an opportunity for national experts and members of the EFSA GMO Panel to review their current approaches and to identify any areas for future development. The UK was represented at this meeting by the ACNFP Chairman and Secretary, and by a member of the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment.

Overall approach

4. EFSA has published a series of guidelines covering different types of GMO risk assessment:
 - GM plants
 - GM microorganisms
 - plants containing multiple "stacked" GM events
 - post market environmental monitoring
 - renewal of existing products.

¹ The other are: (a) the EFSA Management Board; (b) the Executive Director and EFSA staff; and (c) the Scientific Committee and Scientific Panels.

5. All EU countries apply the EFSA guidelines, which provide an overall framework for the assessment of food and feed safety and for environmental risk assessment. The guidelines are flexible and allow for case-by-case determination of various aspects of safety and environmental risk.
6. In the UK, the EFSA guidelines are recognised as an appropriate basis for food and feed safety assessments and the Food Standards Agency normally relies on the opinions issued by the EFSA GMO Panel. Individual dossiers are not routinely referred to the relevant national committees that advise the Agency on GM food and feed safety – ACNFP and the Advisory Committee on Animal Feedingstuffs – although there may be circumstances where this is necessary (see paper ACNFP/69/7).

Current developments

7. The EFSA GMO Panel has set up Working Groups to examine specific aspects of GMO risk assessment and members of these Working Group provided updates on their current projects:

Statistical Analysis: a report on the data analysis, particularly the large data sets obtained from crop trials and animal feeding studies, is nearing completion and should be published early in 2008. The GMO Panel will then decide whether there are other issues that this Working Group could usefully examine.

The use of animal models for safety testing: A draft of this working group's report was published for consultation in December 2006. The final report has been submitted for publication in the scientific press and is expected to appear in January or February 2008. The report concludes that animal feeding studies are not mandatory for all GM food and feed products, but may be required under certain circumstances.

8. The meeting also discussed a series of issues raised by member states' experts concerning the environmental risk assessment procedures, including the overlap between assessments carried out under the legislation on GMOs and on pesticides in relation to the use of herbicides on GM herbicide-tolerant plants.
9. A report of this Advisory Forum meeting will be published by EFSA in due course.

**Secretariat
September 2007**

Annexes attached:

(none)