

Terms of Reference

Food Standards Sampling Co-ordination Working Group

The Food Standards Sampling Co-ordination Working Group is a joint Group sponsored by the Food Standards Agency and LACORS. Its primary tasks are to encourage better co-ordination of food standards sampling across food authorities and the Agency and to promote focussed sampling programmes in England.

The Working Group will be chaired by LACORS and the secretariat provided by the Agency. The Group will draw its membership from LACORS, FSA, HPA, APA and food authorities⁽¹⁾ and members will be encouraged to feed in their expertise as well the views of their peers and colleagues. Membership of the Group will be reviewed periodically. It will also draw on the expert advice of LACORS advisory groups, including the Food Standards and Sampling and Analysis Focus Groups, and will also provide updates on its progress to the Agency's Enforcement Liaison Group Surveillance Sub Group.

The role of the Group is to:

- promote the benefits for public protection associated with food and feed enforcement sampling analysis;
- facilitate improved coordination and prioritisation of food standards sampling;
- identify mechanisms through which areas of concern can be highlighted to food authorities and to the Agency in a timely manner;
- encourage food authorities to consider any national strategic sampling programmes when formulating their own local programmes for the year ahead;
- develop and manage the implementation of a sustainable series of nationally coordinated food authority-delivered sampling programmes, informed by food authority, food examiner/analyst and Agency concerns, intelligence and priorities;
- seek to add value to current sampling activity undertaken by food authorities through improved collation and analysis of data and reporting and promotion of conclusions to help further improve food and feed law enforcement;
- encourage wider UK support for co-ordinated sampling through liaison with FSA Scotland, FSA Wales and FSA Northern Ireland and appropriate food authority and food examiner/analyst fora; and
- assist in the Government's aim to secure a step change in the co-ordination and delivery of food authority inspection of imported foodstuffs and products of animal origin at ports by inputting to any sampling programme put forward.

The Group will produce its first report on progress in October 2003 to give food authorities an opportunity to take into account its findings and recommendations in their 2004/05 programmes .

⁽¹⁾ food authorities referred to in these terms of reference include both Local Authorities and Port Health Authorities.