

SUMMARY OF EC WORKING GROUP MEETING 17 December 2007

This was the second Commission working group following publication of the EC orientation paper on setting minimum and maximum levels of vitamins and minerals in foodstuffs at end of July 2007 and initial working group held on 24 September 2007. The FSA met with stakeholders on 14 September 2007 to discuss the paper in advance of the initial working group. The meeting on 24 September was primarily used by the Commission to present the paper to Member States. Many Member States have yet to agree their positions on this issue.

Next working group meeting to be scheduled for February 2008.

1. Tolerable upper safe levels (TUL) for vitamins and minerals in food supplements

In the orientation paper the Commission had previously noted that The Scientific Committee on Food (SCF)/ European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) had only established upper levels for 16 vitamins and minerals and explained that for some vitamins and minerals it was not possible for EFSA to establish upper levels as there was either insufficient scientific data or where studies had been undertaken, there was no evidence of toxicity at the highest level tested. The Commission had listed Safe Upper Levels (SULs) and Guidance Levels (GLs) set by other scientific bodies (including the UKs Expert Group on Vitamins and Minerals (EVM)) where EFSA/SCF had not set levels and at the Meeting on 24 September asked Member States (MS) to consider which level should be used as the upper level for total intake of these nutrients. The Commission and UK prepared papers to facilitate the discussion at the meeting on 17 December.

Nutrients without a TUL set by EFSA/SCF with low/no risk of adverse effects

The Commission held the view that it was not proportionate to set maximum amounts where there was no indication of adverse effects. In its orientation paper the Commission suggested that setting of maximum levels could be waived for Vitamin B1, B2, B12, Biotin, Pantothenic acid, Chromium III and Vitamin K.

Some MS advocated the setting of maximum levels for all vitamins and minerals. The United Kingdom supported the approach proposed by the Commission.

Other nutrients without a TUL set by EFSA/SCF

Vitamin C

Commission suggested the Institute of Medicine (IOM) level of 2g/day as a safe level for total intake, recognizing that the EVM level of 1g/day was for supplement use only.

Beta-carotene

The Commission commented that there is uncertainty in how to approach beta carotene, as the listing in annex 1 is for Vitamin A, which needs to be taken into account in setting limits for overall intake. There were a number of suggestions that there should be an updated review of data on beta-carotene.

Phosphorus

The Commission proposed an UL of 3g/ day as a compromise between the EVM and IOM levels.

Potassium

The Commission proposed using the EVM level of 3700mg/day.

Iron

There was some discussion on the correct level to use and MS agreed to provide more data and also use EVM data to look at intake for whole population.

Manganese

The Commission proposed using an upper level in the area of 10-12mg to take account of variable dietary intake in different MS.

Sodium Chloride

The Commission raised the issue of sodium chloride and concluded that this legislation is not the best place to limit salt intake.

Some MS will have new intake data available early in 2008. The Commission will circulate these data to MS and commented that new ILSI data will also be available in April. An ILSI Workshop will be held in Italy on 16-18 April.

2. Minimum amounts of vitamins and minerals in food supplements

The Commission suggested that there would be an agreement for a 15% of RDA minimum level for vitamins and minerals in foodstuffs (fortified food and supplements) unless any evidence is submitted to support another level.

Your comments are particularly invited on the Commission's suggestion for a minimum level of 15% of RDA per daily dose and request for evidence in support of any alternative proposed minimum level.

3. Maximum amounts of vitamins and minerals in foods and the establishment of tolerance levels in the frame of the revision of the technical aspects of nutrition labelling: possible interactions

The Commission explained that the issue of tolerance levels for the stated content on labels is being discussed under the revision of the nutrition labeling directive, and requested MS comments on the interaction with the setting of maximum levels of vitamins and minerals. Some MS commented on the approaches they currently use. The Commission noted that MS would need to return to this issue.

Contact details:

Clair Baynton (Supplements)

Phone: 020 7276 8566

Email: clair.baynton@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Trudy Netherwood (Supplements)

Phone: 020 7276 8592

Email: trudy.netherwood@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk

Noel Griffin (Fortified Foods)

Phone: 020 7276 8163

Email: noel.griffin@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk