General

Terms of Reference

Purpose

To advise the Food Standards Agency and Food Standards Scotland on any matters relating to novel foods, traditional novel foods, food and feed products of genetic technologies and novel food processes including food irradiation, having regard where appropriate to the views of relevant expert bodies.

To advise the Food Standards Agency on selected matters where the expert advice of the Committee is requested.

The primary role of the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods & Processes (ACNFP) is the safety assessment of applications for novel and traditional foods under UK legislation (2283/2015 EU) (EU retained law) and the safety assessment of food and feed products of genetic technologies under UK legislation (1829/2003 EC) (EU retained law).

Under UK legislation a novel food is defined as a food that does not have a significant history of consumption within the UK before 15 May 1997. This definition includes traditional foods from third countries. Such foods are subject to a pre-market safety assessment before a decision is made on UK wide authorisations.

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are plants and animals with a genetic make-up that has been modified using techniques of biotechnology. Products of genetic technologies are plants and animals with a genetic make-up that has been modified using techniques of biotechnology. These include Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and Precision-Bred Organisms (PBOs). Before a food or feed product derived from a GMO can be placed on the market in Great Britain (GB) it must be authorised under the retained EU Regulation 1829/2003 on Genetically Modified Food and Feed. PBO's are also subject to authorisation prior to use for food and feed. A definition of ‘precision breeding’ and PBO can be found on legislation gov - precision breeding.

Therefore, a company planning to market a traditional or novel food or process or food and feed products of genetic technologies in the UK must submit an application to the Regulated Product Application Service.

Role and Responsibility

It is the role of the ACNFP to review the safety assessments of traditional food, novel food and food and feed products of genetically technologies applications. Concerns are raised if there is a lack of information or the evidence suggests there is a clear safety concern. The information from the applicant and the advice of the Committee provide the basis for risk management decisions made by the Governments in Great Britain.

The Committee meets approximately six times a year for formal meetings and workshops, where they review dossiers and associated briefing papers on the submitted applications or notifications.

The ACNFP is supported in its work by a Secretariat provided by the Food Standards Agency. The Secretariat has scientific expertise that enables them to provide Members with comprehensive background information and briefing papers on the regulated product notification that inform the processes and advice given by the Committee. An administrative secretary also supports the running of the Committee.

Membership

The Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Process (ACNFP) comprises of one Chair and up to thirty members.

Members are recruited by open competition. The Committee comprises of experts, who cover a range of scientific disciplines, as well as consumer representation who provide insight, advice and the technical knowledge needed to evaluate the safety of regulated product applications.

The normal duration of appointment for an ACNFP member and Chair is three years. Members and Chairs will normally not serve for more than two terms or longer than 10 years in the same Public appointment in accordance with the Governance Code for Public Appointments.

The ACNFP is also able to identify and to draw in wider expertise and inputs across relevant disciplines and perspectives to address the issues at hand.

Independence and transparency

The ACNFP is an independent Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) which operates to the highest standards of openness and transparency. It works in accordance with guidelines by the FSA and relevant guidance and rules established across Government for the operation of Scientific Advisory Committees. These include:

The cross-Government Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees (CoPSAC), which includes the Principles of Scientific Advice to Government

The FSA's Good Practice Guidelines for Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs)

Key elements of practice which underpin and assure this include:

ACNFP meeting agendas, papers, minutes and reports are published in a timely manner.

The ACNFP publishes an annual report and the ACNFP Chair will report to the FSA Board annually at an open Board meeting.

The ACNFP Chair has the right of direct access to the FSA's Chief Scientific Advisor (CSA) and Chief Executive (CE), and to FSA Board members (via the Agency Chair), at all times. Members also have the right of access to the CSA, the CE and Board on any matter which they believe raises important issues relating to their duties as a member.

The ACNFP Chair will report to the FSA CSA biannually via the FSA SAC Chair's meeting. Members of the SAC who wish to raise concerns regarding the CSA's oversight of the committee have the right to do so via the FSA Chair or FSA Chief Executive

In addition to regular contact between meetings, the ACNFP Chair and FSA CSA will meet for a feedback discussion each year to review the work of the Committee against its remit, and the relationship with and support from the FSA.

The ACNFP Chair will meet the FSA Chair annually to discuss the work of the ACNFP.

Reserved Business is any business that is considered confidential and/or containing commercially sensitive information. Access to any related documents, minutes, executive summaries and other outputs of Reserved Business will be released, with appropriate handling to the confidential information discussed, into

the public domain in a timely manner, when an opinion or conclusion has been reached and where confidential or sensitive information has been used and managed.

Resources and Budget

The ACNFP is supported by a Secretariat provided by the Food Standards Agency.

The Secretariat is led by a Secretary who is responsible for the work of the Secretariat and a lead Secretariat who manages overall workflow.

The Committee has no independent budget or expenditure. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) covers the costs for the operation of the Committee (including secretariat support, member's fees and expenses, and administrative costs for meetings and events). These are recorded formally in the accounts of the FSA.

The budget for the Food Standards Agency is agreed every year by the FSA Business Committee.

ACNFP-PGT Terms of Reference

The ACNFP is aware of the pace of developments in the field of genetic technologies used in the production of food and feed, and the relevance of the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act (March 2023). Given the importance and potential complexity of the issues involved, an ACNFP Products of Genetic Technologies (PGT) Subcommittee was established with the ACNFP-PGT Terms of Reference in addition to the ACNFP Code of Practice.