



PAPER No: SEAC 78/5

QUINQUENNIAL REVIEW OF SEAC

Issue

In October 2002, Defra, the Department of Health and the Food Standards Agency announced a review of SEAC. A review team was set up and consulted with the SEAC Chairman and members and stakeholders such as interested organisations, the European Commission, UK Ministers and various Government officials including the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Chief Medical Officer, Chief Veterinary Officer, and Chairman of the Food Standards Agency.

The report was published on 17 March and is available on the SEAC web-site.

Background

Non departmental government bodies (such as SEAC) are normally reviewed every five years, as such the review of SEAC was a routine obligation. Regular reviews of important advisory committees are necessary to ensure the functions they provide are of high quality and continue to meet the needs of Government.

The terms of reference for the 2002 review of SEAC were " *to examine the need for the Committee, its role, methods, operation and effectiveness; including its terms of reference and composition, the openness and transparency of its procedures and the relationships between the Committee, the commissioning departments and other bodies with related responsibilities, including the EU Scientific Steering Committee.* "

Key conclusions of the report

The report confirms that SEAC still has a crucial role to play, and continues to make a significant contribution to the protection of human and animal health and to the understanding of Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs).

The review acknowledges that the developments in the EU combined with the rapid decline of the BSE epidemic is likely to impact on the functioning of SEAC and recommends another informal review in 2006.

Recommendations

The review offers 23 recommendations for the future to try to ensure that the Committee continues to be used effectively.

Implementation of the QQR recommendations

In terms of implementation, the QQR recommendations can be divided into two categories:

- Recommendations taken forward directly by the SEAC secretariat.
- Recommendations that encompass the wider operation of the Committee and require discussion and agreement with Government Departments before implementation.

Twelve of the 23 recommendations from the QQR report are being directly addressed by the secretariat. Members will receive a verbal update at the SEAC meeting on the progress to date.

The SEAC Secretariat is currently in discussion with the various Government Departments on how best to take forward the remainder of the recommendations in the report.

To date, two recommendations have been agreed across Government and will be implemented in due course.

- The joint SEAC/ACDP working group will be formally uncoupled in due course from SEAC.
- It has been agreed that the CJD Epidemiology Sub-group should report direct to SEAC and the responsibility for running this group will transfer from the Department of Health to the SEAC secretariat. The transfer will provide an opportunity to review the remit of the sub-group.

Comments on the QQR

All members have received a copy of the QQR report but not yet had an opportunity to discuss the review as a committee.

Members are invited to comment, if they wish, on the report.