REVIEW OF THE PESTICIDES FORUM

1. The Pesticides Forum was established in the mid 1990s to provide advice to (Defra) Ministers on minimising pesticide use. Its role has evolved over the years to provide advice on responsible pesticide (plant protection products) use and latterly on work undertaken to help deliver the UK National Action Plan (NAP) required by the EU directive on the sustainable use of pesticides. The current terms of reference are attached at Annex 1.

2. The Forum has no formal status (unlike the UK Expert Committee on Pesticides or the Expert Committee on Pesticide Residues in Food), and is a collective of organisations which have some interest in pesticides issues. It had an external Chair to 2015 and previously met three times a year to discuss issues relating to the sustainable use of pesticides (largely under headings related to areas of the directive such as IPM, Water, Training, Amenity issues etc). The Forum (largely through an Indicators sub-group) produces an Annual report compiling the key data on pesticide actions and impacts. HSE provides the secretariat to the Forum, and principal resource uses are servicing the meetings (including proposing the meeting agenda and refining this with the Chair) and preparing the Annual report.

3. Contributing to implementation of the SUD was seen as a key Forum role, and Defra Ministers agreed that the Forum should be reviewed after this work had been done and in line with the term of appointment of the Chair. This review therefore considered, whether the Forum should be abolished, continue in its current form, or in a different one. To reach conclusions on this, the review looked at the relevance of the current aims, terms of reference (ToR) and objectives of the Forum, its effectiveness and the role of the Chair and membership in shaping and delivering its activities.

4. Defra and HSE have concluded that a Forum has a role in delivering the Government’s objectives on the sustainable use of pesticides set out in the National Action Plan and should continue. However, its work should be much more tightly focussed on examination of priority issues identified in the UK National Action Plan (NAP) for the sustainable use of pesticides, and delivery of them by the members. It is also recommended that the Forum continues producing a UK Indicators Report until Government and stakeholders have had the opportunity to assess the suitability of harmonised indicators being developed by the EU. Some revisions to the terms of reference will be proposed to reflect this new way forward.

Key areas

Membership
5. The membership of the Forum has remained largely unaltered since it was established. Criteria for membership (Annex 2) were drawn up by PSD in 2008 and agreed with the Forum. Current members can be broadly categorised as follows:

- Government: ECP; Environment Agency; and Scottish Natural Heritage.
- Industry bodies: ADAS: Agricultural Engineers Association; Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board; Agricultural Industries Confederation; the Amenity Forum; BASIS; Country, Land and Business Association; Crop
Protection Association; Farmcare; British Retail Consortium; LEAF; NFU; NFU Scotland; SRUC; Voluntary Initiative; and Womens Food and Farming Union.

- NGOs/others: Game and Wildlife Conservancy Trust; Pesticides Action Network; Sustain; Unite (trade union); and Wildlife and Countryside Link.

6. Others who attend meetings are:

- Observers: Defra; HSE; DARDNI; Department of Health; BIS; Food Standards Agency; Natural England; Scottish Government; Welsh Government.
- Experts from relevant fields invited to specific meetings to provide information on particular issues (examples of those invited to recent meetings include: the IBMA; City & Guilds; companies redesigning pesticide containers; and market researchers).

7. In reality there is nothing to distinguish between the role/contribution of members and observers when it comes to the Forum’s activities. This distinction will be removed and members will either be Government or non-Government members.

8. If the Forum is to retain its role overseeing activity taken to support the NAP, then the membership should be able to cover this appropriately. The priority areas for the NAP are predicted to remain as: protection of water; improving practice in the amenity and amateur sectors; and promotion of integrated pest management. The membership of the Forum, as currently drawn up does not fully reflect the priorities identified within the Plan. HSE, Defra and devolved administrations are considering what reconstitution of the membership would better achieve this, and will be discussing with individual members as necessary.

**Chair**

8. The Chair plays an important role in shaping the outcome of Forum discussions by working with the Secretariat on the meeting agenda and overseeing the production of the Indicators Report. A range of views can be expressed on subjects under discussion at the meetings and it is the Chair’s role to summarise these and determine the Forum’s conclusions. Defra and HSE propose that in future the Chair should rotate on an annual basis between non-Government Forum members, and would be grateful for any volunteers so that an initial plan can be drawn up for the next few years.

**Frequency of meetings**

9. Previously the Forum has usually met three times a year usually at HSE offices with the costs of coffee/lunch being covered by Government. In recent years occasional meetings have been held ‘off-site’. Even with significant contributions from HSE, or other Government bodies, recent Forum agendas have covered similar topics. Meeting twice (spring and autumn) a year would seem to be sufficient to allow the Forum to review ongoing activities, and give views on relevant issues and new activities needed (and who would do them) and would be a better use of Government and stakeholder resources.

HSE Pesticides Policy Team
2016
Overall aims

To continue to oversee work under the UK National Action Plan, monitor the effects of policies, laws and other initiatives that affect or are affected by the use of pesticides, and offer advice to Ministers and stakeholders as appropriate.

To provide a forum for exchanging views, and wherever possible allowing our stakeholders (the people who have an interest in our work) to come to a general agreement.

Terms of reference

To bring together the views of those concerned with the use and effects of pesticides.

To identify their current interests.

To assist in the effective dissemination of best practice, advances in technology and research and development in results.

To advise Government on the development, promotion and implementation of its policy relating to the responsible use of pesticides.

Specific Objectives

Communications
To promote effective ways of helping all those involved in selling, supplying, storing, using and disposing of pesticides and pesticide waste products to use technologies and techniques which:

- limit the need to use these products (and the risks that can arise from using them) in a way which is consistent with sustainable production and the control of pests, weeds and diseases; and
- share best practice between all farming systems, whether organic systems using pesticides or other control options.

To monitor, review and improve the quality and relevance of information available to all those involved in selling, supplying, storing, using and disposing of pesticides and pesticide waste products.

To prepare and publish an annual report of our activities and maintain a close working relationship with the Advisory Committee on Pesticides

Monitoring impacts
To consider how to most effectively monitor all impacts arising from the use of pesticides (including using indicators), and communicate these findings to Ministers, our stakeholders and the public.
**Knowledge transfer**

To monitor pesticide-related research and development and aim to inform funding organisations of any significant gaps in the programme.

To promote the most effective and practical ways for sharing best practice in technology and research and development, by encouraging discussions between researchers and research funders, and between all those involved in selling, supplying, storing, using and disposing of pesticides.
Pesticides Forum

Criteria for membership

1. The Pesticides Forum is a UK wide stakeholder consultative forum which brings together a range of organisations (both public and private sector) with a role in the sustainable use of pesticides. A diagrammatic representation of the UK plant protection products industry (from Annex 1 of the UK Pesticides Strategy) is shown below.

2. Members represent all aspects of this chain including those areas of potential impact from pesticides (broadly human health and environment). Members therefore include industry, environmental and conservation organisations, trade unions and consumer groups. Representation is designed to ensure that relevant interests in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are covered. However, where there are separate public or private sector organisations with the same responsibilities in each of the countries, a selective approach will have to be adopted to keep the Forum to a manageable size. Thus an English organisation reflecting one area of interest may be appointed with a Scottish organisation representing another.

3. Membership of the Forum will normally be restricted to representative organisations. Individuals will not normally be appointed though they may be invited to particular discussions where they have scientific or technical expertise of value to that discussion.
4. Government representatives (both policy and delivery bodies – including relevant regulators) also sit on the Forum and will contribute to Forum discussions, like members, both in an advisory capacity and to represent their organisations’ views.

5. Member organisations will be appointed by Defra Ministers in consultation with other Departmental Ministers with an interest in pesticides. Membership will be reviewed formally every five years although changes may be made within this period should this prove necessary to ensure that the Forum remains representative of all relevant interests.

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