

# **FOOD: THE USE OF GENETIC MODIFICATION – A PUBLIC DIALOGUE**

## **STEERING GROUP – TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **Role of the Steering Group**

1. The Steering Group has been convened to assist the Food Standards Agency in taking forward a public dialogue on GM food. The Steering Group will determine the scope, remit and depth of the stakeholder and public engagement process. It will ensure that the guiding principles are reflected in the dialogue process.
2. The Steering Group's role is to facilitate this process drawing on the wide range of expertise and perspectives represented in the Group's membership. The group will work closely with both the dialogue and the evaluation contractor (when appointed) in overseeing the design and delivery of the project, ensuring compliance with best practice and agreeing the evaluation framework. The group will also agree the scope of the dialogue and the materials which will be produced to facilitate this, after taking into account the views of stakeholders.
3. The Steering Group will be required to reflect on and provide input to the evaluation exercise which will be conducted in parallel with the dialogue.
4. The Steering Group should regularly review the existing and emerging risks as the dialogue process moves forward and should recommend mitigating actions where it might be appropriate to do so.
5. The Steering Group's advice will also be sought on appropriate media approaches as the dialogue progresses.
6. As associate members of the steering group Sciencewise will offer advice on the process based on their expertise and experience to inform the Steering Group's deliberations. If a situation arises where there are insurmountable or irrevocable differences of opinion in the Steering Group then the Chair will refer to Sciencewise who will act as the mediator and advise the FSA of the appropriate course of action.

### **Guiding principles**

#### **These principles have been established to govern the operation of the Steering Group**

- Ensure a culture of openness and transparency

- The dialogue should be inclusive of the perspectives of a wide range of UK residents at all stages, in addition to being inclusive of the plurality of knowledge and interests in the topic area
- The dialogue process should be innovative and imaginative, when appropriate, to capture the interest of as broad and inclusive a range of participants as possible, including disadvantaged and vulnerable people and drawing on knowledge of good practice
- Allow the dialogue to be conducted with no built-in bias, non-confrontational, with no faction allowed to dominate
- To be honest about the science and its uncertainties, and clear about how key decisions are reached throughout the dialogue
- The dialogue must include mechanisms that ensure it has clear means of influencing relevant policy making processes
- To be evaluated in terms of processes and outcome, so that experience and learning gained can contribute to good practice
- Policy makers, Steering Group members and the evaluation team should be able to hear first hand the views that are being expressed during the dialogue process.

### **Meetings of the Steering Group**

7. The first meeting of the Steering Group will be convened on 25 and 26 November 2009. The last meeting will centre on a presentation of the final report by the dialogue contractor (to be appointed) and a separate report of the dialogue process by the evaluator (to be appointed).
8. The frequency of interim meetings will be determined by the Steering Group as required. An estimated 7 meetings of the Steering Group will be held during the course of this project. Every effort will be made to find the optimum date when as many of the Steering Group members can attend meetings. For key meetings or items of business where the Group's decision or opinion is sought then those not attending meetings will be invited to submit comments and views in advance and these will be tabled.
9. Papers will be circulated to the Steering Group 10 days in advance of the meeting by email. Hard copies will also be forwarded to members.
10. Agendas and minutes of the Steering Group meetings will be published on the FSA web site. Minutes should accurately reflect the proceedings and discussions that take place and significant points may be attributed to individuals. Minutes will be written by the Secretariat as soon as possible

after the meeting to which they refer and circulated to the Steering Group for comment within 10 working days. The Secretariat will amend the draft minutes in the light of the Steering Group's comments and ensure that the amended draft is placed on the FSA web site. Any corrections will be made at the following meeting when the minutes will be formally adopted. The final version of the minutes will be placed on the FSA web site.

11. The Steering Group may, on occasion, need to discuss matters that are subject to restriction of confidentiality and cannot be put into the public domain. Information subject to such restriction will be placed in the public domain as soon as practicable should the restrictions cease to apply at a later date. Where such discussions have taken place the agenda, minutes and associated papers will explain this procedure, the reasons for withholding any information, and where possible, an indication of when the information withheld may be published.
12. Steering Group meetings will be held in public unless there are credible reasons for conducting them in closed session i.e. discussions regarding tenders or commercial in confidence issues.
13. The minutes of Steering Group meetings will record the substance of discussions, any disagreements and the Group's decision on specific issues.
14. Members of the Steering Group will receive full imbursement for all travel and subsistence costs associated with attendance at meetings. In addition the Chair and each member can claim an honorarium for each meeting attended. The honorarium for the Chair will be £255 and for members £205. Any additional remuneration requirements will be considered and dealt with on a case by case basis.
15. Where appropriate smaller working groups of the Steering Group will be established and will meet separately. Attendance at these working groups will also attract the honorarium.

### **Steering Group Chair**

16. The Steering Group will be chaired by Professor John Curtice. The role of the Steering Group Chair is:
  - To chair the Steering Group meetings, overseeing the operation and output of the Steering Group.
  - Ensure that every member of the Steering Group is heard and that no view is ignored or overlooked, using where appropriate, a structured process which ensures that all views are captured and explored.

- Represent the Steering Group to the public, the media and other interested organisations in consultation with the FSA via the Secretariat

### **Steering Group members**

The role of the Steering Group members is to:

- Attend meetings
- Engage fully in collective consideration of the issues, taking account of the full range of relevant factors
- Liaise and contribute to the evaluation of the project
- Ensure that the minutes of meetings are accurate and that any concerns are recorded
- Liaise with the Secretariat and FSA staff as necessary

### **Associate Steering Group members**

17. Representatives from Sciencewise, Government Officials Group, COI, BBSRC, the FSA project manager, the dialogue contractor and evaluator will be invited to attend meetings as associate members of the Steering Group. The role of the associate members is to provide clarification of any points raised by the Steering Group during the course of its discussions. Associate members will not provide input into decisions taken by the Steering Group.

### **Observers of the Steering Group**

18. Members of the secretariat for the Steering Group will attend the meetings as observers. Their purpose will be to draft the minutes to the meetings and to take forward specific action points as directed by the Steering Group. Observers will not normally be expected to speak during meetings but may be invited to comment at the end of a meeting by the Steering Group Chair.

### **Steering Group Secretariat**

19. FSA staff will provide the secretariat for the Steering Group and any smaller working groups. In fulfilling this role the secretariat will:

- Organise meeting venues
- Support the Steering Group by assembling and preparing papers, and taking minutes of the Steering Group meetings.

- Ensure proceedings of the Steering Group are properly documented so that there is a clear audit trail showing how the Steering Group reached decisions

20. The Steering Group should contact Nathalie Shapiro in the first instance with any enquiries. Nathalie can be contacted on 020 7276 8504 or by email ([Nathalie.Shapiro@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Nathalie.Shapiro@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk))

### **Interaction with the media**

21. The Steering Group Chair will normally represent the Steering Group and its views to stakeholders and the media, after consultation. However, if members receive invitations to speak to organisations or at meetings in their capacity as a member of the Steering Group, they should notify any such requests to the Steering Group Chair and to the Agency *via* the Secretariat who will provide advice and briefing if required.

22. The Steering Group Secretariat will deal with routine correspondence and enquiries from the public or other stakeholders with regard to the work of the GM Dialogue, consulting with the Steering Group Chair as necessary.

### **Conflicts of interest**

23. Steering Group Members should declare any personal or business interest that may, or may be perceived (by a reasonable member of the public) to, influence their judgement. This should include, as a minimum, personal direct and indirect pecuniary interests. If a member is unsure whether an interest might be regarded as influencing their advice they should seek advice from the Secretariat as to whether it should be declared.

**End**