

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NOVEL FOODS AND PROCESSES

NANOTECHNOLOGIES: GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO RS/RAE REPORT

ISSUE

This paper provides members with information on the Government's response to the Royal Society / Royal Academy of Engineers report "Nanoscience and Nanotechnology Opportunities and Uncertainties".

BACKGROUND

1. At the last Committee meeting on 26th January 2005, members were asked to comment on relevant issues related to nanoparticles in food and identify aspects that may require further discussion.
2. To inform discussion, members were referred to a report by the Royal Society / Royal Academy of Engineering entitled "Nanoscience and Nanotechnology Opportunities and Uncertainties". This report was commissioned by the Government through the Office of Science and Technology (OST), who have subsequently published the Government's response (Annex 1).
3. Of particular interest to the Food standards Agency and ACNFP, are the following RS/RAE conclusions and the Government's response (in bold)
 - That regulatory bodies and their respective advisory committees include future applications of nanotechnologies in their horizon scanning programmes to ensure any regulatory gaps are identified at an appropriate stage. [Recommendation 9]

The Government supports this recommendation. Government will review the advisory committee structure for the provision of advice on potential risks to human health [and the environment] associated with nanotechnologies. Advice on safety for various aspects or uses of nanotechnologies will rest with a large number of advisory committees. We will ask them to consider issues as they arise and seek to ensure that nanotechnologies will be explicitly mentioned in their terms of reference. There will be co-ordination amongst regulatory bodies and a means of co-opting specialists from a shared pool of expertise.

- That chemicals in the form of nanoparticles or nanotubules be treated as new substances. [Recommendation 10]

The Government accepts that chemicals in the form of nanoparticles and nanotubules can exhibit different properties to the bulk form of the

chemical; sometimes this is beneficial and sometimes it may be potentially hazardous. The Government also accepts that safety testing on the basis of a larger form of a chemical cannot be used to infer the safety of the nanoparticulate form of the same chemical and that therefore individual regulations within the existing framework will need to be reviewed to reflect the possibility that nanoparticulate material may have a greater toxicity than material in the larger size.

4. The Agency will now consider the relevant issues raised by the Government's response and how they might be addressed by the ACNFP and / or the Agency's other expert committees. Progress will be reported back to the Committee at a future meeting.

**Secretariat
March 2005**

Annexes attached:

Annex 1: HM Government Response to the Royal Society and Royal Academy of Engineering Report: Nanoscience and nanotechnologies: opportunities and uncertainties (February 2005).

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HM Government Response to the Royal Society and Royal Academy of Engineering Report: Nanoscience and nanotechnologies: opportunities and uncertainties (February 2005).

This document has been published on the Office of Science and Technology website at:

<http://www.ost.gov.uk/policy/issues/index.htm#Nanotechnology>

**Secretariat
March 2005**