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## ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH

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INFORMATION PAPER ACR 039/4      AGENDA ITEM 12, 28 OCTOBER 2003

### PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARBUTHNOTT RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Executive Summary

This paper updates the Committee on the progress made in implementing the 34 recommendations in the Arbuthnott Report.

The Committee is asked to **note**:

- 13 recommendations have been implemented in full (Annex A);
- progress on implementing a further 13 recommendations covered by papers for this meeting:

3 (reviews of the Agency's research programmes)	ACR 038/4
5 (prioritisation) and 6 (value for money)	ACR 034/4
7 (new areas for research)	ACR 036/4
11 (centres of excellence)	ACR 035/4
12 (postgraduate scholarships)	ACR 032/4
13 (alternative research management systems)	ACR 033/4
23 to 28 (collaborative working)	ACR 040/4, ACR 041/4

- the plans for implementing the remaining 8 recommendations and the schedule for actions proposed for the ACR at future meetings (Annex B).

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### PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARBUTHNOTT RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Issue

1. This paper updates the Committee on progress in implementing the 34 recommendations in the Arbuthnott Report. It also summarises the actions that need to be taken to ensure that the 21 recommendations not yet completed are fully implemented.
2. Members have reviewed and agreed actions the ACR should take in overseeing implementation of the Arbuthnott recommendations at its previous meetings (ACR 005/ACR Minutes 001, ACR 017/ACR Minutes 002 and ACR 029/ACR Minutes 003). Members are asked to **note** the actions being carried out by the executive and the actions proposed for the ACR at its 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> meetings (Annex A).

#### Background

3. The "Review of the Food Standards Agency's Research Portfolio and Research Management Systems" (the Arbuthnott Report) contains 34 recommendations. The Agency's Board has agreed that all should be implemented by mid 2006. The Agency executive's plan ensures that this will be done in a timely manner. The Board has asked that the ACR should oversee the actions being undertaken by the executive. Detailed, day-to-day implementation of the Arbuthnott recommendations and of any other measures needed to manage strategic risks to the Agency arising from research, is managed by the Agency's Research Co-ordination Unit in consultation with other Divisions.

4. At its first meeting, the Committee considered paper ACR 005 that described the background to the Arbuthnott recommendations, the progress made in their implementation and the measures proposed to implement the remaining recommendations. The Committee asked that an update on progress should be a standing information item on agendas for future meetings. It considered the first updates at its 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> meetings (papers ACR 017 and ACR 029).

*Completed recommendations*

5. Of the 34 recommendations in the Arbuthnott report, 13 have now been fully implemented (Annex A). This figure is unchanged from the last update. Of the remaining 21 recommendations, 11 have a definite end point, while the remainder are essentially issues for ongoing management and review.

*Progress and actions proposed for implementation of other recommendations*

6. Good progress has been made on several outstanding recommendations and the Agency is on target to implement all recommendations by mid 2006. Progress on implementing 13 recommendations and, where appropriate, actions proposed for the Committee are described in the following papers:

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Paper</b>
3 (reviews of the Agency's research programmes)	ACR 038/4
5 (prioritisation) and 6 (value for money)	ACR 034/4
7 (new areas for research)	ACR 036/4
11 (centres of excellence)	ACR 035/4
12 (postgraduate scholarships)	ACR 032/4
13 (alternative research management systems)	ACR 033/4
23 to 28 (collaborative working)	ACR 040/4, ACR 041/4

7. Annex A summarises progress and the actions proposed for the executive and for the Committee for all 21 of the recommendations yet to be fully implemented.

**Advisory Committee action required**

8. The Committee is invited to **note** the actions taken by the executive to implement the outstanding recommendations from the Arbuthnott Report and the actions proposed for the ACR in overseeing the implementation.

**ANNEX A****PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ARBUTHNOTT REVIEW AND PROPOSED EXECUTIVE AND ACR ACTIONS**

Recommendation	Progress and planned executive action	ACR action
<b>A research strategy</b>		
<p>1: The Agency should adopt a research strategy which is aimed at ensuring that it obtains the scientific information that it needs to be able to meet its aims and objectives in a cost effective way [paragraph 17]</p>	<p>Implemented. The Agency adopted the research Strategy published in the Arbuthnott Report (July 2001). It has also published its related Science and Innovation Strategy in January 2002.</p>	
<b>Proposal for a Research Advisory Committee</b>		
<p>2: The Agency should consider the creation of a dedicated Research Advisory Committee to oversee its research strategy and to advise on and help it to direct and co-ordinate its research effort. This should report directly to the Board [paragraphs 18 to 21].</p>	<p>Implemented. The Advisory Committee on Research (ACR) was launched on 28 February 2002, consisting of 12 fully independent expert members appointed by open competition.</p>	

Recommendation	Progress and planned executive action	ACR action
<b>The Agency's research portfolio</b>		
<p><u>3:</u> Each of the existing research programmes should be reviewed according to a clearly defined timetable to ensure that they meet the aims and objectives of the Agency and are providing value for money [paras. 22 to 24].</p>	<p>Open reviews, in which stakeholders may participate, are completed, underway or planned for all existing programmes. Reports of individual reviews are published and now include a clear summary of recommendations and a response and action plan from the Agency. The targets are to complete reviews for 80% of programmes by the end of FY 2003/04 and the remainder by the end of 2005. [High Priority]</p>	<p>Paper ACR 038/4 describes outcomes of reviews, and invites members to note progress. Members will be invited to comment on a further update at the 6<sup>th</sup> ACR meeting.</p>
<p><u>4:</u> The Agency should hold an annual open research meeting to discuss publicly the direction and balance of its research portfolio with contractors, consumers and other stakeholders [completed]. In addition, a detailed appraisal of the portfolio should also be carried out every five years [para. 25].</p>	<p>The first Annual Open Meeting on Research was held on 25 September 2002. The ACR considered feedback from the meeting at its second meeting (ACR 014). The second meeting will be held on 6 November 2003 with the arrangements and programme reflecting feedback from the meeting and the ACR's recommendations. [High Priority]</p>	<p>Members have been invited to attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting; Professors Lean and Murcott are chairing sessions. Members' comments will be invited on the event itself (for those attending) and on a summary of feedback to drafted by the Secretariat. Members will be asked to discuss the format of the quinquennial appraisal at a later date.</p>

Recommendation	Executive Action	ACR Action
<p><u>5:</u> A prioritisation exercise should be carried out at theme level. A possible tool for this purpose is described [paras. 26 to 38].</p>	<p>The ACR discussed a draft framework for prioritisation and assessing potential value for money at its 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting (ACR 020/3). A revised framework drawing on the ACR's comments is being piloted and the results to date are described in paper ACR 034/4. [High Priority]</p>	<p>Paper ACR 034/4 invites Members' views on a detailed report on a pilot study on prioritisation and potential value for money.</p>
<p><u>6:</u> The Agency should develop a method for assessing the value for money of its research [paras. 39 to 41].</p>	<p>Progress on developing tools for prioritisation and assessment of potential value for money is described in paper ACR 034/4. Development of tools for retrospective assessment of actual value for money will be developed drawing on the outcomes of the prioritisation framework. [High Priority].</p>	<p>Paper ACR 034/4 invites Members' views on a detailed report on a pilot study on prioritisation and potential value for money. Assessment of value for money will be considered at a later meeting, drawing on the results of the prioritisation study.</p>
<p><u>7:</u> In addition to its current research, the Agency should consider carrying out research in areas such as those identified in paragraph 42. It should also consult widely with stakeholders before defining the scope and content of any new Agency research programmes [paras. 42 and 43].</p>	<p>New programmes have begun or are being developed on safety assessment of GM foods, food choice inequalities, food law enforcement, involving consumers in policy making, and risk assessment of mixtures of pesticides. Other funders and stakeholders are consulted in the development of these programmes and on new areas for potential collaborative research. An update on emerging issues is given in paper ACR 036/4. [Medium Priority]</p>	<p>Paper ACR 036/4 describes Agency activities and invites members' comments on emerging issues that may be the subject of new areas of research.</p>

Recommendation	Executive Action	ACR Action
<b>Research procurement</b>		
<p>8: The reasons behind the Agency's request for new project proposals should be made clear to potential contractors in research requirements and tender documents [paragraph 44].</p>	<p>Implemented. More detail has been included from Research Requirements Document 8 (April 2002) onward, reinforced by the Agency's internal Research Guidelines.</p>	
<p>9: As a general rule, the Agency should commission research through an open and competitive process. Different procurement processes should be used depending on the size, urgency, nature, and financial risks of the research to be procured [paras. 45 to 47]</p>	<p>Implemented. This is reinforced by the Research Guidelines and contract audit by the Research Co-ordination Unit (RCU) and general guidance on procurement from the Procurement Advisory Unit (PAU).</p>	
<p><u>10:</u> The Agency should improve its procedures for peer review of research proposals by increasing openness and transparency [paras. 48 to 52].</p>	<p>Revised procedures for review of proposals were introduced in May 2003, including increased feedback to proposers and a 'right to reply' to appraisers' comments. Their effectiveness will be reviewed in light of experience.</p> <p>The ACR discussed draft procedures for assessing and publishing final reports and interim results at its 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting (paper ACR 024/3). Interim guidelines are being developed drawing on the ACR's comments. Final guidelines will draw on the Royal Society enquiry on peer review. [Medium Priority]</p>	<p>Members' views on the interim guidelines for publication have been sought by correspondence. Members' views on the final guidance will be sought at the 6<sup>th</sup> ACR meeting.</p>

Recommendation	Executive Action	ACR Action
<p><u>11:</u> The Agency should consider supporting, preferably in collaboration with other bodies, centres where it wishes to maintain an expertise for which it has a particular requirement over the longer term. Only one or two such centres should be supported at any one time, up to a maximum of 10% of the Agency's research budget [paras. 53 and 54].</p>	<p>Basic principles for centres of excellence are described in paper ACR 035/4. They will be incorporated into detailed proposals for discussion at the 5<sup>th</sup> ACR meeting. [Low Priority]</p>	<p>Paper ACR 035/4 invites Members' views on the basic principles for centres of excellence. Members' views on detailed proposals will be sought at the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ACR.</p>
<p><u>12:</u> The Agency should institute a system for supporting postgraduate scholarships. It is recommended that the Agency should set an upper limit of £150,000 <i>per annum</i> for this scheme and that it should reassess the scheme annually to ensure that work is progressing satisfactorily and that it is obtaining value for money [paras. 55 and 56].</p>	<p>Paper ACR 032/4 presents proposals for the launch of the scheme. The scheme draws on recommendations from the ACR at its 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> meetings, and on other funders' schemes. Adverts and calls for proposals should go out by the end of November 2003 with the aim of awarding the first scholarships by October 2004. [Medium Priority]</p>	<p>The opinions of the ACR on the proposals for launching the Postgraduate Scholarship Scheme are sought in paper ACR 032/4.</p>
<p><b>Research programme management</b></p>		
<p><u>13:</u> The Agency should continue to use the ROAME system for the time being whilst reviewing alternatives for possible adoption in the medium- to long-term [paragraph 58].</p>	<p>Paper ACR 033/4 describes the ROAME system and sets out its strengths and weaknesses. The requirements for an alternative research management system are discussed. These will be developed into firm recommendations by 2004/05. [Low Priority]</p>	<p>Members' views on requirements for a possible alternative to the ROAME system are sought in paper ACR 033/4. Members' views on a more detailed paper will be sought at the ACR's 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.</p>

Recommendation	Progress and planned executive action	ACR action
<p>14: The Agency should consider revising the format of the ROAME A document by September 2001 [paragraphs 59 and 60].</p>	<p>Implemented. A revised format giving increased focus to how programmes support Agency strategic priorities was introduced in 2001. Revised guidance on approval of new ROAMEs was issued in 2002.</p>	
<p>15: Responsibility for the management of research projects and programmes should be devolved to the policy divisions. Policy officials (project officers) should use management tools and systems developed by the Agency's Research Co-ordination Unit to ensure a consistency of approach [paragraphs 61 to 64].</p>	<p>Implemented. Policy Divisions are responsible for their programmes and themes. The RCU provides guidance and procedures through its Research Guidelines (available electronically to all Agency staff). It reviews and updates guidance and exchanges best practice with Divisions through its Research Management Users Group.</p>	
<p>16: Agency-funded scientific surveys should only be placed at laboratories that have implemented quality assurance schemes acceptable to the Agency [paragraphs 65 to 68].</p>	<p>Implemented. This is a central requirement of the Agency's Survey Guidelines under which the Agency has operated since it was established. The Agency will issue revised guidelines later in 2003 drawing on experience with their operation and results of a public consultation.</p>	
<p>17: As a general rule, by 2006 Agency-funded research projects should only be placed at laboratories that have suitable quality assurance arrangements [paras. 69 and 70].</p>	<p>A joint Code of Practice developed with Defra, BBSRC and NERC was launched on 8 May 2003, following discussion by the ACR and wider consultation. Contractors will be expected to declare compliance with the Code for contracts from June 2004 onwards. [High Priority]</p>	<p>Members will be informed of experience and feedback from implementation of the Code at future meetings.</p>

Recommendation	Executive Action	ACR Action
<p>18: Programme managers should ensure that the degree of reporting demanded is proportional to the amount of work being undertaken and the financial, scientific and public health risks involved. Research findings which have significant implications for public health should be reported to the Agency immediately [paragraph 71].</p>	<p>Implemented. This is covered by the Research Guidelines, reinforced by the Research Management User Group. Guidance on reporting survey results is given in the Survey Guidelines. Interim guidelines on handling interim and final results of research projects have been developed drawing on the ACR's comments. Final guidelines will draw on the current Royal Society enquiry on peer review. The Agency is consulting on draft guidelines for assessing and acting on information from food surveys and incidents, developed with input from a stakeholder group (consultation closes 21 November 2003).</p>	
<p>19: The Agency's Research Co-ordination Unit should work with policy divisions and existing programme advisors to review and further develop the set of guidelines on research for programme advisors and managers. It should also develop some guidelines for use by policy divisions when deciding whether and how to use programme advisors [paras. 72 and 73].</p>	<p>Legal consultants are developing revised terms and conditions for programme advisors (PAs) to be in place by January 2004. Internal guidance on making best use of PAs has been issued and PAs have been appointed to several programmes following open calls. RCU organised a workshop for PAs in July 2003 and is considering plans for regular workshops. [Medium Priority]</p>	<p>Members will be informed of experience and feedback from implementation of the guidelines at a future meeting.</p>

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Progress and planned executive action</b>	<b>ACR action</b>
<p>20: Where appropriate, the end of programme review should be supplemented by periodic within-programme reviews to help to maintain the direction of the programme as a whole. Separate evaluations of the extent to which research has contributed to the development and implementation of policy should also be carried out [paragraph 74].</p>	<p>Implemented. Guidance is given in the latest version of the Research Guidelines, backed up by <i>ad hoc</i> advice to Divisions from the RCU and through discussion in the Research Management User Group.</p>	
<b>Funding arrangements</b>		
<p>21: The research budget should be managed on the same basis as other areas of the Agency's budget [paragraphs 75 to 78].</p>	<p>Implemented. Research expenditure is managed with other resources within the Agency's overall procedures for Strategic and Business Planning and resource allocation.</p>	
<p>22: The Agency should combine its budgets for research, surveys and related work [paragraph 79].</p>	<p>Implemented. This has been done as part of the refocusing of research programmes using the revised format of the programme ROAME forms (see 14 above).</p>	

Recommendation	Progress and planned executive action	ACR action
<b>Collaboration with other UK funders and other countries</b>		
<p><u>23</u>: The Review Group strongly recommends that the Agency should explore the potential for joint funding of projects and programmes with other organisations such as the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, Medical Research Council, Economic and Social Research Council, and the Public Health Laboratory Service [paras. 80 to 84].</p> <p><i>[NB – The PHLS, which was not a research funder, is now part of the new Health Protection Agency]</i></p>	<p>Papers ACR 041/4 describes progress on activities to promote joint working. Paper ACR 040/4 describes collaborative work in relation to EU Framework Programme 6.</p> <p>Jon Bell, the Agency’s Chief Executive is a member of the BBSRC Strategy Board. Alisdair Wotherspoon is an observer on the BBSRC Agri-Food Committee.</p> <p>[High Priority]</p>	<p>Members are asked to note the progress on activities to promote collaborative work described in papers ACR 040/4 and 041/4. Further updates will be provided as standing items on the agendas for future meetings.</p>
<p><u>24</u>: The Agency should consider whether there are any suitable opportunities for the joint funding of research initiatives with other organisations, including the food industry, local authorities and consumer organisations [para. 85].</p>	<p>Papers ACR 041/4 describes progress on activities to promote joint working. Paper ACR 040/4 describes collaborative work in relation to EU Framework Programme 6. [High Priority Action]</p>	<p>Members are asked to note the progress on promotion of joint working described in papers ACR 040/4 and 041/4. Further updates will be provided as standing items on the agendas for future meetings.</p>

Recommendation	Executive Action	ACR Action
<p><u>25:</u> The Food Standards Agency should work actively with other parts of government and with other research funders in order to influence the direction of research supported under the next framework programme and encourage UK researchers to collaborate with their European counterparts [paras. 86 to 88].</p>	<p>The Agency takes the UK policy lead on the EC Management Committee for the food safety priority in Framework Programme 6 (FP6), and acts as a National Contact Point (NCP) for the food theme, to ensure the Agency's aims and stakeholders are included in promotion of FP6. The Agency will fund an external service to promote FP6 to Agency stakeholders from late 2003. The Agency is part of the Framework Programme Network and Life Sciences Co-ordination Group which co-ordinate policy on FP6 in the UK. [High Priority]</p>	<p>Members are asked to note the progress on Agency initiatives in relation to FP6 described in paper ACR 040/4. Further updates will be provided as a standing item on the agendas for future meetings.</p>
<p><u>26:</u> The Food Standards Agency should seek to play a part in the development of a network of European organisations interested in funding research in food safety and develop a close working relationship with the proposed European Food Safety Authority and the proposed European Research Area [para. 89 to 92].</p>	<p>Paper ACR 040/4 describes collaborative work in relation to EU FP6. Paper ACR 041/4 describes progress on wider activities to promote joint working. The Agency organised a meeting of European food safety agencies in May 2003, and is exploring opportunities in the FP6 ERA-NET scheme to promote closer working with European funders. The RCU's role as an FP6 Food National Contact Point (NCP) provides links to a network of food research supporters in EU and Associated States. [High Priority]</p>	<p>Members are asked to note the progress on promotion of joint working and on FP6 described in papers ACR 040/4 and 041/4. Further updates will be provided as standing items on the agendas for future meetings.</p>

Recommendation	Executive Action	ACR Action
<p><u>27:</u> The Food Standards Agency should improve its links with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre [paras. 93 and 94].</p>	<p>Richard Burt and Alisdair Wotherspoon met key JRC staff at the IRMM, Geel in July 2003. RCU will build on this and JRC involvement in FP6 to develop links further. Dr Burt sits on the UK group co-ordinating policy towards the JRC. [Medium Priority ]</p>	<p>Members are asked to note the progress on activities to promote collaborative work described in papers ACR 040/4 and ACR 041/4. Further updates will be provided as standing items on the agendas for future meetings.</p>
<p><u>28:</u> The Food Standards Agency should give greater emphasis to exploring the possibilities for funding research in collaboration with other countries where mutual benefit is to be gained [para. 95].</p>	<p>The Agency's Chief Executive, Jon Bell, has an ongoing programme of visits to contacts in other countries. The Agency arranged a meeting of European Food Safety agencies in May 2003, and is exploring potential in the FP6 ERA-NET scheme to promote closer working with European funders. The RCU's role as a Food NCP for FP6 and in the OST's Science and Technology Network provides links to networks of food research supporters in the EU and Associated States, and globally. [Medium Priority]</p>	<p>Members are asked to note the progress on activities to promote collaborative work described in papers ACR 040/4 and ACR 041/4. Further updates will be provided as standing items on the agendas for future meetings.</p>
<p><b>E-science</b></p>		
<p><u>29:</u> The Agency should develop an e-science network [paras. 96 and 97].</p>	<p>RCU operates a Research e-Newsletter (latest circulation 1000 and rising). Research Requirement Documents (RRDs) are promoted using the web/e-mail and include e-submission of proposals. A pilot system for e-procurement and appraisal is in development. The Agency is linked to the Government E-science portal. [Medium Priority]</p>	<p>It is planned to discuss e-science at the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ACR in spring 2004.</p>

Recommendation	Executive Action	ACR Action
<b>Dissemination of research</b>		
<p><u>30:</u> The Agency needs to develop procedures to ensure that the outcomes and implications of the research that it commissions, including any consequential changes in the Agency's policies, are communicated to the public as effectively as possible [paras. 98 to 103].</p>	<p>Interim guidelines are being developed drawing on the ACR's discussion of publication of final and interim results at its 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting (paper ACR 024/3). Final guidelines will draw on the Royal Society enquiry on peer review. Information on all Agency research programmes and 50% of projects has been published on the web. Information on all projects will be published by December 2003. [High Priority]</p>	<p>Members' views on the interim guidelines for publication have been sought by correspondence. Members' views on the final guidance will be sought at the 6<sup>th</sup> ACR meeting.</p>
<p><u>31:</u> Programme managers should be responsible for notifying the Agency's Communications Division when a project, or collection of projects, yields results that need to be communicated widely to stakeholders [paragraphs 98 to 103]</p>	<p>Implemented. This is covered in the Research Guidelines. In addition, the RCU provides a quarterly report to Communications Division highlighting research projects due to finish in the coming quarter with potential stakeholder and media interest.</p>	
<p><u>32:</u> The format and means of dissemination of final project reports should be improved. Executive summaries in particular should be drafted in a clear and straightforward style suitable for non-technical audiences. Research outcomes should be published on the Agency's web-site [paras. 104 and 105].</p>	<p>A revised format and guidance on final reports is included in the Agency's Research Guidelines. RCU is developing mechanisms for assessing performance against these guidelines. The Agency plans to publish final reports on its web-site and is developing guidelines for this. [High Priority]</p>	<p>The ACR will be kept informed of developments.</p>

Recommendation	Progress and planned executive action	ACR action
<b>Intellectual property rights</b>		
<p>33: In general, the Agency should adopt the position recommended by the Department of Trade and Industry as part of a flexible approach to the assignment of intellectual property rights arising from the research that it funds. Care should be taken that transferring Intellectual Property Rights to contractors does not result in a delay in the uptake and use of such data by the Agency or its stakeholders, e.g. the enforcement authorities [paragraphs 106 to 109].</p>	<p>Implemented. This has been adopted in principle. Revised Terms and Conditions reflecting this position while ensuring the Agency has rights of access and use of information wherever necessary are in preparation in consultation with legal and procurement experts.</p>	
<b>Benchmarking of research</b>		
<p><u>34</u>: The Agency should, over the next year, study the feasibility of carrying out an internal benchmarking exercise between research programmes and an external benchmarking exercise against selected public sector research purchasers that are broadly comparable with the Agency [paras. 110 to 111].</p>	<p>The first stage of an internal mapping exercise was reported at the ACR's 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting (paper ACR 009). This will be further developed and used in the external benchmarking exercise. RCU is exploring systems for external benchmarking with the Agency's procurement unit and other funding bodies. Detailed development of the feasibility study will need to be informed by the results of the work on prioritisation and value for money. [Medium Priority]</p>	<p>External benchmarking will be discussed at the ACR's 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.</p>